

LOOT
A Cautionary Tale
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FADE IN:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

An Army truck sits just off the road.

A uniformed SOLDIER, pistol in hand, throws himself behind the side of the truck and crouches at the rear wheel. He's covered with dirt as if he's been wrestling on the ground. He breathes hard but silently.

He looks under the truck:

Nothing underneath, nothing on the other side.

He glides to the front wheel, trying to make no noise. He cranes his neck to look into the cab of the truck:

Nothing visible.

He carefully treads to the front of the truck, where the hood is up and black smoke pours out. No one there.

He looks up --

ANOTHER SOLDIER, also mussed and dirty, stands on the roof of the cab, his pistol aimed at the soldier below.

The soldier on the ground frantically raises his gun --

EXT. PAVED ROAD - DAY

A 1991 FORD COUNTRY SQUIRE STATION WAGON with its hood up is parked just off a potholed single lane desert road between nowhere and Vegas. Someone in boots and overalls leans into the engine compartment.

ABEL (O.S.)

"He fires his gun and realizes his mistake. Minutes later, he's dead."

GARY (O.S.)

Oh, come on, not those.

The mechanic straightens up, revealing a cascade of blonde hair. It's DELTA, Honors student and Kentuckian who bristles fiercely if you call her a southern belle.

She slams the hood down.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Six happy college students are crammed inside:

ABEL, overweight, sprawls in the trunk draped over their luggage and food. BAKER sits in the right rear seat next to FRANKIE, who snuggles up to GARY on her left. Up front, EDDIE rides shotgun and doesn't mind CHARLIE's thigh touching his. Charlie straddles the center, one foot in the driver's compartment and the other by Eddie. The driver's seat is empty.

Delta gets in the driver's seat and starts the car.

ABEL

What? It's a logic puzzle.

GARY

That's right, it's not a trivia question.

Gary is a college quarterback, fit and fiercely competitive.

CHARLIE

(to Delta)

Everything all right?

DELTA

We're fine. Just a loose hose.
(patting the dashboard)
Got to baby this girl.

FRANKIE

What's a logic puzzle?

Frankie has a Swedish accent and a curvy, athletic build to complement her boyfriend Gary's.

ABEL

You have to figure out who the man is, what he's shooting at, why he died. It's like a riddle.

Frankie bounces up and down excitedly in her seat, causing the men in the car to glance at what that does to her equipment and making her boyfriend Gary scowl.

FRANKIE

Ooh, I love riddles.

Charlie flashes Gary a conciliatory smile like the politician she hopes to be one day.

CHARLIE

We'll do one for Frankie, then.

GARY

The answer is, he's on a mountain, he shoots at a bear and starts an avalanche--

ABEL

You ruined it!

Frankie punches Gary on the arm.

FRANKIE

No sex for you tonight.

Gary grits his teeth in embarrassment.

EDDIE

(to Frankie)

If you need a substitute --

Eddie drawls his words, matching his laid back frat boy image.

GARY

I'll kill you.

Charlie puts a hand on Eddie's shoulder.

CHARLIE

Behave.

GARY

You're just confusing her. She doesn't even know what a trivia contest is.

FRANKIE

Yes I do. You answer questions about things that don't matter.

BAKER

That's us in our place.

Baker speaks with cultured Martha's Vineyard vowels that match his expensively casual clothes.

DELTA

They matter to us. And we're good at it. Regional champs.

ABEL

And driving to the Finals.

FRANKIE

Which of you is the best?

CHARLIE

It doesn't work that way. We're a team. Every one of us is an expert in something. Abel knows business and geography, Baker is our culture guy.

BAKER

High and low.

CHARLIE

Delta does literature, and comic books, which always surprises me.

Delta arches her eyebrows at Charlie.

CHARLIE

Eddie knows movies, TV and music.

EDDIE

And beer.

CHARLIE

And sorority girls.

DELTA

Charlie covers politics and history and Gary, our star quarterback -- well, you know what he's good at.

Frankie squeezes Gary's muscular arm.

FRANKIE

Yes, I do.

DELTA

I mean the other thing he's good at!

They laugh, all but Gary.

FRANKIE

But if you had to fight each other for a big prize -- maybe a beautiful girl --

She arches her back coquettishly, again drawing male eyes.

FRANKIE

Who would win?

There is a brief pause, then everyone talks at once:

GARY
(simultaneous)
All right, that's enough of
that --

BAKER
(simultaneous)
Who would you like to see
win, darling?

ABEL
(simultaneous)
I think I would have an
excellent chance of --

EDDIE
(simultaneous)
If you're the woman,
sweetheart, then I would --

CHARLIE
(simultaneous)
Hey, when we get to Vegas,
why don't we --

DELTA
(simultaneous)
That's a ridiculous
hypothetical --

BAM! They hit a bad bump and everyone is jolted. Abel
looks back.

ABEL
Your trunk door just opened.

Everyone turns to look: the trunk door has indeed
flipped open, revealing Abel and the luggage.

DELTA
Yeah, it does that.

Delta brakes. Abel squirms around to face the trunk
door.

DELTA
It's the suspension. Have to
replace the struts.

BAKER
Or buy a new car. And put this
one out of its misery.

CHARLIE
We wouldn't be driving together
without Delta's car.

BAKER
No, we might have gone by air,
as I suggested.

EDDIE
I don't remember you offering to
buy the tickets.

BAKER
No class warfare before lunch,
poor little poor kid.

CHARLIE
Will you guys cut it out?

Abel reaches out and pulls the door shut.

ABEL
Got it.

DELTA
Thanks.

Delta puts the car in gear and resumes the drive.

EDDIE
Take the next right.

BAKER
Is this really the best route?
What happened to the freeway?

EDDIE
A friend of mine lives out this
way.

GARY
Hey, we said no local stops to
your family and friends,
remember?

EDDIE
This is different. He's in the
Guinness Book of Records for the
biggest ball of twine. You've
got to see it.

Groans erupt in the cab as everyone reacts.

BAKER
You took us out here for twine?

DELTA
What's that?

Everyone looks up:

Through the windshield they see the army truck at the
side of the road, hood up, wisps of black smoke rising
from the engine.

GARY

Keep going. Not our problem.

DELTA

They're military. They would stop for us.

Delta slows down and pulls over.

EXT. ARMY TRUCK - DAY

The seven students get out of the station wagon and regard the silent truck.

ABEL

Hello? Anyone there?

No answer. Delta walks toward the driver's side. Eddie bends down and reaches into his boot. When he stands up, he's holding a snubnosed .38 revolver. He flips off the safety, cocks it and holds it up by the side of his head.

CHARLIE

(re: the gun)

What the hell is that?

Eddie puts a finger to his lips and glides cautiously around to the passenger side of the truck.

Delta steps up on the runner and peeks into the cab and then over the front hood. She throws up a warning hand and everyone freezes.

Delta hops down and treads to the front of the truck. On the other side of the truck, Eddie does the same. He uncocks his gun and holsters it in his boot.

Charlie walks toward them.

CHARLIE

What is it?

Delta jogs back to her and grips her firmly.

DELTA

You don't need to see this.

CHARLIE

What? Delta --

EDDIE (O.S.)

(from the front of the truck)

Gary, give me a hand.

Gary trots forward. The others follow. Charlie struggles in Delta's grip.

CHARLIE

Cut it out!

Delta lets her go. She glares at Delta.

DELTA

I'm just trying to --

CHARLIE

Control me.

She brushes past Delta.

EXT. FRONT OF TRUCK - DAY

Charlie runs up and stares in shock:

The two Army soldiers lie dead, torn up by bullets. Eddie and Gary search the bodies.

ABEL

My God. Are they really dead?

No one bothers to answer him. Eddie finds a key and tosses it to Gary. He takes out a wallet, glances at its contents and removes the money.

Charlie stares at Eddie disapprovingly. He looks up at her.

EDDIE

What? You want to split it?

Charlie spins on her heel and stalks away.

EDDIE

(to Gary)

You?

GARY

I'm good. Football scholarship.

Eddie nods and pockets the bills.

Baker sidles over to Charlie, who still looks shaky.

BAKER

There's nothing we can do.

Eddie pries the corpse's service pistol from his hand and ejects the clip.

EDDIE

Their clips are empty. I think
I know where the bullets went.

Delta walks up to Charlie. Charlie hugs her, burying her
face in Delta's shoulder.

EXT. CAB OF TRUCK - DAY

Gary searches the cab for anything of interest but
doesn't find anything.

EXT. FRONT OF TRUCK - DAY

Delta examines the engine under the hood.

EXT. SIDE OF TRUCK - DAY

Abel, Baker, Charlie, Eddie and Frankie sit in truck's
shade. From where they sit, one of the corpses is just
visible past the front tire.

Delta comes around from the front of the truck.

DELTA

The engine is trashed.

BAKER

This is military. Don't they
keep their trucks in better
condition?

DELTA

Look at the tires. No tread
left. Look at the corrosion.
This truck was a junker.

The friends digest this new information.

EXT. REAR OF TRUCK - DAY

Gary walks around the back and examines the padlock on
the rear of the truck. He holds up the keys Eddie took
from the corpse.

ABEL (O.S.)

They stole the truck. They went
AWOL.

EDDIE (O.S.)

Drove out here. On back roads.

Gary fits a key to the padlock.

EXT. SIDE OF TRUCK - DAY

The six continue their conversation.

DELTA

Then their engine blew, and --

BAKER

They quarreled.

EDDIE

"Quarreled," yeah. They killed each other.

CHARLIE

Why? Why would they do that?

A RATTLE startles them as the truck's rear gate rolls up. They all turn to the noise.

GARY (O.S.)

Guys.

EXT. REAR OF TRUCK - DAY

The six friends walk back to see what Gary sees as he stares in wonder:

Dozens of gold bars gleam from the shadows, stacked on pallets in the cargo bay.

INT. CARGO BAY OF TRUCK - DAY

A shiny gold ingot rests in Abel's plump hands.

ABEL (O.S.)

This is the real thing. These look like Good Delivery bars.

The friends are all inside the cargo bay, looking, touching, taking it in. Abel studies the bar.

CHARLIE

Good Delivery?

ABEL

Yeah, that means they're from a trusted source, they're the real thing. You only see them at central banks and bullion dealers.

FRANKIE

What are they doing here?

BAKER

There's a story here we'll never know.

Charlie picks one up.

CHARLIE

They're heavy!

ABEL

About twenty-five pounds.

GARY

How much are they worth?

ABEL

Well - gold's at about nineteen hundred U.S. right now.

EDDIE

Per ounce.

ABEL

That's right.

GARY

How many ounces right there?

ABEL

It varies. Average, 400. Could be as little as 350, as much as 430 --

GARY

Call it 400.

ABEL

-- Well -- of course, if you're not on the Good Delivery list, everyone would know they're not yours --

BAKER

Seven hundred sixty thousand dollars. In that one gold bar.

A beat. Everyone but Gary looks around and mentally counts bars.

GARY

Eighty. I already counted.

FRANKIE

Eighty bars. That's --

ABEL

About sixty million dollars.

An awed silence.

GARY

Eight and a half million each.

DELTA

What do you mean, each?

GARY

You know what I mean.

DELTA

You heard Abel, we couldn't even sell this.

GARY

There are ways.

DELTA

No. We are not even going to talk about this.

EDDIE

Why not?

DELTA

No.

BAKER

We need to at least formulate our response to this unusual event. Discuss the ramifications.

DELTA

I can't believe you guys.

FRANKIE

Free speech in America, right?

DELTA

But you see where this is going. You know where this is going.

She turns to Charlie, who has been silent.

DELTA

Charlie?

Charlie shrugs.

CHARLIE
We're just talking, honey.

DELTA
Fine. But not in here. Not
looking at this.

The others unconsciously turn to Gary for his reaction.

Gary smirks and shrugs.

EXT. REAR OF TRUCK - DAY

Delta pulls the cargo gate closed with a RATTLE.

EXT. SIDE OF TRUCK - DAY

The others sit in a circle in the shade of the truck,
with a space left for Delta. Delta stomps over and dumps
herself down in the spot. She glares at Gary.

DELTA
You want to steal it.

GARY
It's already been stolen.

DELTA
We don't know that.

BAKER
How else do you explain all
this?

GARY
The crime's been committed, and
they paid the price.

Some of them glance involuntarily at the one corpse
visible past the front tire.

DELTA
What if they had -- co-
conspirators? Other people
who'll be looking for the gold?

GARY
I doubt it. This operation's
too cheesy. A broken-down
truck, back roads. No one's got
their eye on this gold. It's --

FRANKIE

A tree falling in the forest
with no one to hear it.

GARY

You got it, babe.

DELTA

That doesn't make it ours.

BAKER

I'd say right now it doesn't
belong to anyone.

DELTA

It belongs to the -- central
bank or wherever they got it
from.

GARY

Which has insurance to cover
theft. Right, Abel?

ABEL

You bet.

Charlie is line of sight with the corpse. She shifts
uncomfortably.

DELTA

That doesn't matter. We should
contact the authorities.

GARY

What authorities did you have in
mind?

DELTA

I don't know. Eddie's from
around here.

GARY

(to Eddie)

Who's the local sheriff?

EDDIE

Sheriff Tyler.

GARY

Would you trust him with sixty
million dollars?

EDDIE

I don't know. Maybe.

GARY

Would you bet your life on it?
Because you would be betting
your life on it.

DELTA

Oh, come on, you really think
this sheriff would kill us to
take the gold?

GARY

It doesn't have to be likely
when your life's on the line.

FRANKIE

Pascal's Wager.

EDDIE

What?

FRANKIE

A proof for the existence of
God. If there's even a small
chance of going to Hell if you
don't believe, then it pays to
believe. Same here. If there's
even a small chance the sheriff
might kill us --

Gary pats her leg.

GARY

There you go.

DELTA

Fine. We can call the FBI.

GARY

Sure. When we get in cell phone
range. How long for that,
Eddie?

EDDIE

Hour, hour and a half.

GARY

And your friend lives out here.
The twine guy.

EDDIE

Yeah.

ABEL

Could he come by this way? And find the truck?

EDDIE

Sure.

GARY

Would you trust him with sixty mil?

EDDIE

I wouldn't trust him with a rusty pocket knife.

GARY

And he's in the Guinness Book of Records. Anyone ever come by to see his twine?

EDDIE

All the time. They even have tour buses --

He stops as his own words sink in.

DELTA

It doesn't matter. If someone else steals it, we'll have done the right thing. We call the FBI.

GARY

Come on, Delta. I'm just the jock, and I can see it. Think it through.

BAKER

I see what he's driving at. We tell the FBI, in an hour or so. Another hour or two, or more, before they meet us, and then an hour to get back here. And when we get back --

FRANKIE

The gold might be gone.

GARY

Will be gone.

DELTA

We can hide it.

EDDIE

Where? With what?

GARY

It doesn't matter. Either way.
The gold is here, or it isn't.
We bring in the FBI. To two
dead bodies and a fortune in
gold. And try to explain how we
happen to be here.

DELTA

We'll just tell them the truth.

GARY

They'll like that.

ABEL

Especially if the gold is gone.

GARY

And they take us in for further
questioning. Or just arrest us
outright.

DELTA

They wouldn't do that.

GARY

You sure? You willing to stake
Frankie's visa on it? Baker's
family's reputation? Charlie's
future political career?

Delta shakes his head but has no response.

GARY

See? We're already involved.
Hell, we're already guilty.

BAKER

(slowly)

Then if we already have the
liabilities -- we might as well
avail ourselves of the --
benefits.

GARY

That's what I'm saying.

DELTA

This is wrong.

EDDIE

We may not have a choice.

Delta looks at the others and sees no support. She gets up and strides away angrily.

EXT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Baker, Eddie and Gary heave gold bars into the back of the station wagon.

INT. CARGO BAY OF TRUCK - DAY

Abel, sweating through his clothes, wipes down the truck's cargo bay with a shirt from their luggage.

INT. CAB OF TRUCK - DAY

Frankie swabs the cab with another shirt.

EXT. SIDE OF TRUCK - DAY

Charlie searches for footprints by the side of the road and uses a shirt to scuff them out. She spots Delta standing a ways off the road.

EXT. AWAY FROM THE ROAD - DAY

Delta stares sullenly out into the desert. Charlie walks up behind her.

CHARLIE

Hey. You all right?

She rests her hand on Delta's back.

DELTA

I can't believe you think we should do this.

CHARLIE

I don't know what we should do.

DELTA

We should just leave it.

CHARLIE

For someone else to find? Does that makes us virtuous, to dump it on someone else?

She slides her arms around Delta's waist and presses herself against her.

CHARLIE

You're not always right, you know.

DELTA

I don't think I'm always right.

CHARLIE

You mean you're right about not always being right?

Delta shakes her head ruefully, outmaneuvered.

CHARLIE

Would it be so terrible? If we were rich?

Frankie walks up holding shirts bunched in her hands.

FRANKIE

(to Delta)

The others think it's only fair that you work, too.

DELTA

The others? Or Gary?

FRANKIE

Actually it was Baker. He said something about "Achilles sulking in her tent."

Charlie grins. Frankie holds up the shirts to Delta.

FRANKIE

Help me with fingerprints?

Delta looks at Charlie, who shrugs.

EXT. FRONT OF TRUCK - DAY

Frankie and Delta wipe fingerprints off the guns, belts, wallets and boots of the dead soldiers.

FRANKIE

You were very passionate back there, about right and wrong. Very old-fashioned. I like it.

DELTA

Yeah, that's me, old-fashioned.

FRANKIE

What are you going to do with
your share of the money?

DELTA

I'm not sure I'm taking a share.

Frankie scoots around her dead soldier, bringing herself
closer to Delta as she finishes off the other boot.

FRANKIE

I'm not into ownership either.
I'll give mine to charities.
And throw big parties for my
friends.

Finishing, she leans back against Delta, resting her hand
on Delta's thigh. She turns her head to smile at Delta.

FRANKIE

Like you.

Delta takes Frankie's hand off her thigh. Frankie turns
her hand around to cup Delta's hand in hers.

FRANKIE

Americans are so funny about
sex.

DELTA

You're Gary's girlfriend. And
I'm Charlie's.

FRANKIE

I'm not into ownership.

GARY (O.S.)

We're ready.

They look up to see Gary watching them, poker faced.
Frankie smiles, takes her hand off Delta's and extends it
to Gary. Gary helps her up and she skips away. Gary
stays, staring at Delta.

Delta gets up and walks past him.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Gold ingots lie two deep in the trunk, under the luggage
and covered with a blanket. More ingots cover the seats
and the floor.

Everyone squeezes in, sitting on top of the heavy bars.
Abel squirms into the trunk on top of the gold.

GARY
Footprints all taken care of?

CHARLIE
Yes.

GARY
Fingerprints?

ABEL
Yep.

FRANKIE
Yes, sweetie.

GARY
Anyone leave anything behind?
Trash, anything?

A chorus of no's.

GARY
Then we're ready.

CHARLIE
Wait. Those two men. They must
have worked together to do this.
But they killed each other. We
all have to promise we'll never
fight over this.

ABEL
Of course not.

EDDIE
We're friends.

FRANKIE
And that's more important than
any gold.

BAKER
Here, here.

GARY
We stick together. We have to.
Right, Delta?

DELTA
Right.

GARY
Come on, give it up, girl. We
need to know you're in.

DELTA

I'm in. Who doesn't want to be rich?

GARY

That's right. Let's hear some enthusiasm. We're gonna be rich!

DELTA

We're gonna be rich!

GARY

Everyone!

ALL

We're gonna be rich!

GARY

Who's gonna be rich?

ALL

We are!

GARY

All right! Let's go!

Delta starts the car.

BAKER

I guess we'll miss the trivia contest.

Everyone laughs heartily, a release of tension.

EDDIE

We're on our way!

He WHOOPS. Delta puts the car in gear. There is a horrible SCRAPING NOISE and they lurch forward just a few inches. Delta cuts the ignition.

EXT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Everyone stands around while Delta squirms out from under the car. It's riding a lot closer to the ground.

DELTA

The undercarriage is too low. There's no clearance in the wheel wells.

BAKER

Translation?

DELTA

We're too heavy. We have to leave some gold behind.

GARY

No.

DELTA

You --

GARY

Not because I'm greedy. Think. If those men did their job right, no one knows they stole the gold.

DELTA

We can't be sure of that.

EDDIE

Hell, we can't be sure of anything, but we have to cover ourselves best we can.

ABEL

One thing is sure, if we leave some gold behind, they will know.

BAKER

There'll be a full-on search for the rest. It makes sense.

GARY

And they won't stop until they find it. And us.

DELTA

Then what do you suggest? Dump our luggage?

GARY

No good. It might identify us. And it wouldn't save that much weight.

DELTA

Then we're stuck here.

GARY

Am I the only one who can see the obvious?

CHARLIE

Someone has to get out.

Delta glares at her.

CHARLIE

I'm just saying, that's the only logical choice. Just until we can hide the gold. Then we'll come right back and pick them up.

DELTA

No. We're all in this together.

GARY

That's right. Together. That's why someone can get out. The one who stays can trust we'll be back for him.

FRANKIE

Or her.

GARY

The ones who go can trust that he won't give us away in the meantime. It's because we're friends that this can work.

DELTA

Are you volunteering?

GARY

I would. But frankly I think you need my common sense.

DELTA

I think we can manage.

GARY

(to the others)

If it wasn't for me, you would have let Delta convince you to leave the gold.

BAKER

How do we pick, then? Who's going to stay?

A silence that extends.

ABEL

I'll stay.

They all turn to Abel in relief.

ABEL

I can see the obvious too. I'm the biggest. You get rid of the most weight with me.

CHARLIE

You don't have to do this. We can draw straws.

ABEL

No. I want to stay. This is a little too exciting for me anyway. I'll get my bags.

GARY

I'll help.

ABEL

No, I got it.

Abel heads for the back of the car. Frankie caresses Abel's arm in passing.

FRANKIE

Abel, you are so sweet.

Abel swings open the trunk, leans in and reaches for his bags, revealing his butt crack as his shirt rides up.

Frankie puts her hand on her mouth to stop herself from giggling.

GARY

It's the right thing to do. Thanks, buddy. You won't regret it.

A snort of laughter escapes Frankie. Abel looks back at her and she smiles sweetly.

EXT. AWAY FROM THE ROAD - DAY

Abel sets down his luggage at the bottom of a rise far from the road. He's already sweating. The others, minus Delta, stand around him.

Delta comes over the rise holding a plastic bag.

DELTA

Here's most of the food and water. It's not much.

GARY

Hey!

DELTA

He might need it.

She hands the bag to Abel.

DELTA

Stay safe.

The others hug him one by one.

CHARLIE

We'll be back in a few hours.

EDDIE

We'll keep your gold warm.

BAKER

"'Tis a far, far better thing
you do ..."

GARY

Remember, stay out of sight. If
anyone finds you, you stopped to
help and someone came along and
took your car.

ABEL

Right. And went in the other
direction.

GARY

You got it.

Frankie gives him a lingering kiss on the lips.

FRANKIE

There'll be more where that came
from later.

Gary irritably pulls Frankie away from Abel.

GARY

Let's go.

They turn and march away from Abel.

Abel wipes his sweating face and sits on his luggage. He
reaches into the bag, takes out a candy bar, strips off
the wrapper and bites into it.

EXT. BACK ROAD - DAY

The station wagon bumps down the road.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Clothes have been spread on top of the gold in the trunk to make up for the gap left by Abel and his luggage. The six friends sit in the same places as before. They sway as the car wallows heavily.

CHARLIE

Does anyone else feel guilty about Abel?

GARY

Someone had to stay.

CHARLIE

We all know he has a thing about his weight. He's always trying to make up for it. And we just let him.

GARY

Because it made sense.

EDDIE

We didn't put a gun to his head.

CHARLIE

(to Eddie)

Speaking of guns ...

EDDIE

I grew up with them. We all did, around here. I wouldn't feel dressed without it.

CHARLIE

How could I not know that about you?

EDDIE

(smiling)

There's a lot about me you don't know.

Charlie shoves him on the shoulder.

CHARLIE

Put that leer away before you hurt someone with it.

They hit a bump that slams Baker's head against the ceiling.

BAKER

What I wouldn't give for my Mercedes right now.

GARY

When we get back, you can buy a fleet.

DELTA

We can't just start spending money.

GARY

Of course we have to be careful. Best thing to do is to get the money offshore. Baker can probably help with that.

BAKER

I suggest Lichtenstein.

GARY

Perfect.

DELTA

That's assuming you can even sell that stuff. Anywhere we take it, they'll know it's stolen.

GARY

We just have to find the right buyer. It may take a while. But I know people who know people.

DELTA

Why am I not surprised?

GARY

Something you want to say to me?

CHARLIE

Guys, stop it! We're friends, we have to stay that way --

EDDIE

Car coming!

Everyone turns front to see a dusty sedan approach. They spread their arms and legs to cover the gold on the seats and floor around them.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The sedan approaches the lumbering station wagon.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

The friends hold their breath as the car approaches. They turn to watch the car pass them.

The other driver doesn't even look their way.

The car passes them.

They let out their held breaths.

CHARLIE

This is going to be nerve-wracking. Every time a car --

BAM! The car lurches as it hits a big bump, jerking everyone in their seat belts.

GARY

Everyone all right?

FRANKIE

The trunk door is open.

They turn: the trunk door gapes open. The clothes and luggage that concealed the gold have fallen off and lie on the road behind them as they drive on.

Delta stops the car.

EXT. STATION WAGON - DAY

The friends stand around the car as Eddie and Gary walk back from where they picked up the fallen clothes and luggage. They toss them on top of the gold and rearrange them to hide the ingots.

BAKER

If that had happened just a few seconds earlier, we'd have had a big problem.

EDDIE

Can we tie it off with a belt?

DELTA

There's nothing to hook it to.
I've tried.

CHARLIE

How busy is this road?

EDDIE

I dunno. Probably we'll see a
car every ten minutes or so.

GARY

Are there side roads we can
take?

DELTA

This is a side road!

EDDIE

Sure. It'll take longer. An
hour, maybe two. And they're
bad roads.

DELTA

Harder on the suspension.

GARY

No choice.

CHARLIE

What about Abel?

GARY

He can last a little longer. No
one can see that gold.

DELTA

We can still put it back where
we found it.

Gary smirks and pats Delta on the back before returning
to the car. The others follow, Delta last.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The station wagon bumps along a narrow, pitted dirt road,
scraping the ground with every bump.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

The ride in the wallowing car is hellishly uncomfortable.
Frankie is in the trunk on her back, holding on to the
trunk door latch to keep it from flying open.

Eddie whistles a jaunty little tune, just fifteen notes. Then he repeats it. Charlie looks at him questioningly.

EDDIE

Sorry, I got an ear worm.

FRANKIE

Ear worm? What's that?

GARY

A song you can't get out of your head.

EDDIE

It's from a movie soundtrack. I just can't think of which.

CHARLIE

The way to get rid of an ear worm is to sing another song.

EDDIE

Not till I remember the movie.

He whistles the fifteen notes again.

CHARLIE

I think you need to do that on your own time.

EDDIE

Sorry.

DELTA

How's our schedule?

EDDIE

We should still get back to Abel by sundown.

CHARLIE

We can't leave him here after dark.

GARY

We can bury it in the woods off campus while someone drives back for him.

FRANKIE

Buried treasure. Ahoy, matey!

Baker turns to admire Frankie's curves on display.

BAKER

What's your major, dear?

FRANKIE

Philosophy.

BAKER

Philosophy. I'm impressed.

FRANKIE

See, that's discrimination. You think because I'm beautiful and Swedish and have fun that I must be dumb. But I'm not.

BAKER

You're right, it was terribly narrow-minded of me. What will you do with your degree?

FRANKIE

I'll probably model.

BAKER

Yes, your other talent. You know, lying there like that, you might attract more attention than the gold.

Baker doesn't see Gary's glare. Frankie smiles at Baker.

FRANKIE

That's sweet.

Baker faces front again with a smile on his face.

GARY

What are you so happy about?

BAKER

It just occurred to me. You're all going to be as rich as me. Then we can really be friends.

CHARLIE

Oh, Baker, don't be silly, we're already friends --

Bam! They hit another bump and the car shakes. Frankie is knocked around the trunk and cries out in pain. The rear door flings open.

DELTA

Shit!

Delta hits the brakes.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Delta and Gary jump out of the car and head for the back. Delta stops at the rear tire while Gary races around to the trunk.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Gary leans in to check on Frankie.

GARY
Are you all right? -- You're
bleeding!

Frankie's leg shows a red gash.

FRANKIE
A brick hit me --

Gary leans in and picks up Frankie like a child.

GARY
Come on, honey. I got you.

He carries her away from the car.

DELTA (O.S.)
Guys --

Gary turns to Delta's voice.

EXT. CAR - DAY

The friends gather around Delta at the left rear tire. Gary holds Frankie in his arms.

DELTA
We've got a flat.

Baker groans.

GARY
Stay calm.

GARY
Options.

DELTA
I've got a spare. But it's
lighter. It won't carry as much
weight.

GARY

Do it.

DELTA

We have to unload the gold first.

Delta raises his hand to quell the beginning of an outburst from Gary.

DELTA

I can't jack the car up with all this weight.

GARY

Fine. Everyone works. Except Frankie. The gold goes off the road, alongside the car. As soon as the spare is on, the gold goes back. Got it?

Everyone nods.

GARY

Then move!

The friends spring into action.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Later. The rear of the car has been jacked up. Delta tightens the bolts on the spare.

The others stand around except for Frankie, who sits on the ground with a bandage on her leg. The gold, with their luggage on top, is stacked alongside the car.

They turn when they hear a CAR APPROACH:

The car is down the road, shimmering in the heat haze.

GARY

Fuck! Everyone stand around the gold. Quick!

They array themselves to flank the gold where it isn't blocked by the car. Frankie gets to her feet.

BAKER

Frankie, dear, why don't you walk down the road a bit? Provide visual distraction.

GARY

No!

FRANKIE

It's a good idea.

She smiles at Baker and limps a few feet past their car.
The approaching car gets closer. They try to act casual.

APPROACHING CAR'S POV: The friends grouped unnaturally around the car look awkward, guilty and suspicious. Frankie, though, looks like a model posing for a shoot. She throws an irresistible smile at the car.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The friends watch the car go by. The car's driver has eyes only for Frankie, turning his head to ogle her as he passes, veering off the road a bit.

The car drives on, fading in the distance. The friends smile in relief.

BAKER

Frankie, you were fabulous. I could have lit my pants on fire and he wouldn't have noticed.

Frankie gives him a big smile.

GARY

All right, enough. Get the gold back on board.

EDDIE

Wait. Delta said the spare won't carry as much.

DELTA

Right. That's a ton of gold. Literally. Plus the six of us.

GARY

Then make it five. Someone stays behind.

Several voices raise in protest.

GARY

There's no choice.

DELTA

We could drop some gold.

GARY

We've been through this. We can't risk it being found. And I'll be damned if I'm going to give up my share after all this.

An uncomfortable moment of silence as no one volunteers.

CHARLIE

We should draw straws. Everyone equal.

GARY

But everyone isn't equal. Eddie was born and raised here, he knows the roads, he knows the people. And he's got the gun, right Eddie?

EDDIE

Uh, yeah.

GARY

You guys obviously need me. And I'm not taking any chances with Frankie.

DELTA

Or Charlie.

CHARLIE

Stop it, Delta, I don't need protecting, that's insulting.

FRANKIE

I'm not insulted.

DELTA

(to Charlie)

You're not going.

(to the others)

She's not going.

Everyone looks at Delta. She shifts uncomfortably.

DELTA

It's my car.

GARY

Yes, it is.

Delta takes out her keys and holds them up. Ready to throw them into the desert.

DELTA

And my keys.

Gary studies her. He turns as he feels Frankie shift next to him. He catches her winking at Baker.

Gary regards Baker.

BAKER

What? -- No.

GARY

You're already rich.

BAKER

So what?

EDDIE

You need this money less than us.

BAKER

That's illogical. Dumping me here has no relation to how much I do or don't --

GARY

Someone has to stay.

BAKER

Who's the heaviest? That would be you, muscle man.

GARY

You need me to make the tough decisions. Like this one.

DELTA

You see what's happening to us?

GARY

Shut up.

BAKER

We can leave some gold. Bury it.

EDDIE

We have no tools. The ground is hard.

BAKER

With our bare hands!

GARY

Time, Baker, we don't have time.
We have to get out of here
before they start a search.

BAKER

You said there wouldn't be one
if we took all the gold.

EDDIE

We don't know for sure, we have
to cover all the bases.

BAKER

What about me? No food, no
water. I could die out here!

GARY

Don't be a baby. We'll be back
at least an hour before sundown.
Right, Eddie?

FRANKIE

(to Baker)

It'll be fine. Like an
adventure. You'll see.

She plasters herself against Baker, caressing him.

FRANKIE

Do it for me. I'll make it
worth your while. I promise.

BAKER

Get off me.

Baker pushes her back. She cries out as her leg is
jarred.

GARY

Hey, watch it!

BAKER

(to the others)

You can have my share.

GARY

No.

EDDIE

Wait --

BAKER

You're right, I don't need the money. If someone else stays, I'll give it to them.

A beat - no takers.

BAKER

Or you can all split it. Just pick someone else.

EDDIE

Huh. Maybe we should --

GARY

He's fucking with your head. He's trying to split us up. Destroy our friendship.

BAKER

That's crazy. You're all my friends. Eddie. Charlie. Delta. You know this is wrong.

GARY

(to Eddie)

Give me your gun.

DELTA

Gary, don't!

GARY

Give it to me.

BAKER

That's crazy. What are you going to do, shoot me?

DELTA

Eddie, don't do it.

CHARLIE

Eddie. Please don't. For me.

Delta looks at Charlie, surprised by her words and tone, but Charlie holds Eddie's eyes.

Eddie winks at Charlie and hands Gary the gun.

Gary approaches Baker. Baker spreads his hands out in supplication.

BAKER

Gary. Buddy. It's me. Don't --

Gary raises the gun.

CHARLIE

Gary!

Gary reverses the gun and pistol whips Baker across the temple. Baker folds.

GARY

Get his luggage.

Eddie grabs Baker's luggage off the pile of gold and sets it down next to Baker.

Charlie bends over Baker and looks him over. He's out cold.

DELTA

Now he's got to stay with us.
He needs a doctor.

GARY

Then you stay behind.

DELTA

I'm not leaving Charlie alone
with you.

GARY

That's a convenient excuse.

CHARLIE

(to Delta)

You're doing it again. Do you
know how that makes me feel?
I'm not some naive little waif
that needs your protection!

DELTA

Yes, you are. You have no idea
how much you are.

Charlie reacts like she's been slapped.

GARY

So, not volunteering?

Delta says nothing. Gary sneers at her.

GARY

Didn't think so. You've got
very high ideals -- for everyone
but yourself.

DELTA
You talk tough with a gun in
your hand.

GARY
You think that makes a
difference?

Gary hands the gun back to Eddie and squares off with
Delta.

CHARLIE
Guys. Come on.

Gary flicks his fingers: "Bring it."

CHARLIE
This is childish!

GARY
I have no problem hitting a
woman.

DELTA
Good. Because I have no problem
hitting a man.

Delta launches a front kick from nowhere that catches
Gary under his chin and sends him sprawling.

Gary scrambles to his feet with blood in his eyes but
Eddie restrains him while Charlie holds back Delta.

CHARLIE
Stop it! We're friends! All of
us!

EDDIE
(to Gary)
Let it go. She got you fair and
square, bud.

Gary calms down fractionally.

GARY
Fine. Whatever.

Gary looks down at Baker.

GARY
He'll be all right, I didn't hit
him hard.

Gary turns away and heads for the station wagon.

GARY

He'll thank me later. When he's got his eight million.

Gary gestures at the gold.

GARY

Let's get this back in the car.

Eddie and Gary each grab an ingot and carry it to the trunk. Frankie joins in. After a troubled look at Baker, Charlie does the same.

Delta hesitates, then picks up a gold bar from the pile.

EXT. SIDE OF THE DIRT ROAD - DAY

Baker's expensive luggage looks incongruous on the desert floor near Baker. Charlie cradles Baker, who bleeds from a head wound. He stirs.

CHARLIE

I think he's waking up.

The others wait for her in the car, once again fully loaded with gold.

Baker groans. Charlie gives him a sip of water from an almost empty bottle.

CHARLIE

It's okay. You're going to be okay. We don't have bandages but it doesn't look bad.

Eddie comes over.

EDDIE

We have to go.

CHARLIE

You hear me, Baker?

EDDIE

Now. Unless you want to stay.

Baker struggles to sit up. Charlie helps him.

CHARLIE

He's okay!

EDDIE

Now, Charlie.

Charlie sets down her water bottle and gets up.

CHARLIE

I'm giving you my water. We'll
be back soon. You'll be okay.

Baker doesn't respond. Eddie tugs her by the arm and leads her to the car.

CHARLIE

He'll be okay.

They walk off. Baker sits dully.

The car revs O.S. and can be heard pulling away, leaving a cloud of dust that billows past Baker.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The station wagon lumbers along, sending up a shower of dirt in its wake.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Frankie and Gary sit in back with Eddie. Charlie and Delta are in front. No one speaks as the car's heavy bouncing pounds them unceasingly.

Eddie whistles the fifteen jaunty notes.

Charlie hugs Delta's arm and puts her head close to Delta's ear.

CHARLIE

(whispering)

I'm worried about Baker.

DELTA

(whispering)

We have to get to a phone.

GARY

You want to share that with the
class?

CHARLIE

I just said I have to pee.

FRANKIE

Me too.

CHARLIE

Is there a gas station? Eddie?

GARY
No gas stations.

DELTA
We have to. We're running low.
This weight is killing the
mileage.

Gary leans forward to look at the gas gauge.

GARY
What do you think, Eddie?

Eddie cranes his neck to look.

EDDIE
I think we need gas.

Gary smacks the seat back in front of him in frustration.

EDDIE
It's all right. There's a farm
up ahead.

Gary nods.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The station wagon is parked off the road near a rutted
turnoff to a distant farmhouse.

Gary sits next to Frankie and Delta next to Charlie in
the small shade provided by the station wagon.

FRANKIE
I'm thirsty.

CHARLIE
There's no water.

GARY
Because Delta gave it all to
Abel.

FRANKIE
How long do we have to wait?

GARY
Until Eddie gets back from that
farmhouse.

Frankie nuzzles Gary.

FRANKIE

I know what we can do to pass
the time.

GARY

Not now.

Miffed, Frankie stands up.

FRANKIE

This isn't fun any more.

She stalks off.

GARY

(calling after her)

I have to watch Delta and
Charlie, don't I? To make sure
they don't take off with the
car!

(to Delta)

No offense.

DELTA

None taken.

GARY

Women. I don't know how you two
do it.

CHARLIE

You have to work at it.

GARY

Maybe we're just not compatible.

DELTA

Gary, maybe we should talk
things over.

GARY

What's the point? It's not that
I don't love her --

DELTA

I mean about the gold.

GARY

You don't think I'm constantly
re-evaluating? That I'm not
worried about Abel and Baker?
About all of us?

DELTA

Then you admit it's falling apart.

GARY

No, it's not.

DELTA

We can't even trust each other anymore.

GARY

I can't trust you. You've made that plain from the beginning.

DELTA

What about Baker? You think he's happy about what happened?

GARY

He will be.

DELTA

What if someone finds him? What do you think he'll say?

GARY

Nothing. He's a friend.

DELTA

Friends don't pistol whip friends.

GARY

He knows what's at stake.

DELTA

What about Eddie? He's been gone a long time. Long enough to find a phone.

GARY

Who would he call?

DELTA

The FBI. Maybe he's decided to settle for a reward. Or maybe he's called his local buddies. They're friends, too. And they all have guns.

GARY

Eddie's fine.

DELTA

Are you sure? Are you sure of anything?

GARY

What is your point?

DELTA

(pointing at the gold)
That this is destroying us.
Like it did those soldiers. But
it's not too late.

GARY

To do what?

DELTA

Dump that gold. Walk away. Get
our friends back. Get our
friendship back. And go play
some trivia.

Gary looks at Delta like someone trying to recall an old forgotten friend.

EDDIE (O.S.)

You miss me?

Eddie walks toward them carrying two heavy spare fuel containers. Gary stands briskly.

GARY

Good man. Anyone see you?

EDDIE

I've been stealing from old man
Roper since I was ten.

GARY

Let's get gassed up.

Eddie takes the fuel cans over to the car.

FRANKIE

What about food and water?

GARY

No time.

Eddie fills the tank. Gary turns to Delta.

GARY

The plan is holding up. But you
aren't.

Delta stands, soberly facing off with Gary.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The station wagon bumps along in a cloud of dust.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

The five continue as before. Silence except for Eddie whistling his fifteen notes. Charlie looks at him and he stops in mid-phrase.

They hit a bump. Everyone's knocked around.

EDDIE

Road's a little rough here.
Maybe we better --

BAM, BAM, BAM! They hit three bumps in quick succession.

EDDIE

Slow down.

DELTA

Thanks.

FRANKIE

Your trunk is open.

As they turn to look, there is a GROAN OF METAL. The car drops down with a sudden lurch. Everyone is thrown forward as the car brakes itself to a stop amid the SCREECHING of tortured metal and rubber.

A long beat. No one moves.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Everyone gets out of the station wagon at once. The car is flanked by a rise of the ground on either side of the road.

GARY

Fucking suspension. Fucking
car.

Gary kicks the fender.

EDDIE

We have to drop weight again.

Everyone turns to Delta.

DELTA
It's my car.

GARY
So?

Delta holds her keys up in her hand.

DELTA
So I will toss the keys as far
as I can throw them if anyone
tries to dump me or Charlie.

GARY
And then I will beat the crap
out of you.

DELTA
Which will take time. And so
will finding the keys. Hours,
maybe.

A beat. Heads turn slowly to Frankie.

FRANKIE
It's about value here, isn't it?
Relative value. Well, I have
value.

She arches her body to show off her assets.

FRANKIE
I will fuck everyone here if you
let me stay.

CHARLIE
Frankie!

FRANKIE
(to Charlie and Delta)
You, too.

CHARLIE
No thanks.

FRANKIE
And I'm very good. Just ask
Gary. A once in a lifetime
fuck. And not just once. As
many times as you want.

EDDIE
Gary --

FRANKIE

Don't ask him. He doesn't own me. You're the one with the gun. You decide.

GARY

All right, all right, we don't need to settle this right this second. Let's cool off, think it over. Stretch our legs.

Gary crosses to Frankie and gently takes her arm.

GARY

Come on, baby, I think we need some alone time.

FRANKIE

At last! See what it takes to get his attention?

Gary leads her away.

GARY

(to Eddie)

Keep them out of the car.

EDDIE

Right.

Frankie winks at them as Gary leads her away.

FRANKIE

This may take awhile. Ignore any screams you hear.

Gary leads her up the rise.

Eddie grins and gestures at the rise on the other side of the road.

EDDIE

If you two want to --

DELTA

No thanks.

EDDIE

Whatever.

Eddie leans against the car. He watches Gary and Frankie descend the far side of the rise and disappear from sight.

Delta goes to him.

DELTA
Eddie --

EDDIE
You need to stay away from the
car.

Delta stops.

DELTA
This all right?

EDDIE
Back a little would be good.

Delta steps back.

DELTA
You okay with all this?

EDDIE
All what?

DELTA
Taking orders from Gary, for
one.

EDDIE
He's giving the right orders.

DELTA
So this -- leaving people behind
--

EDDIE
Long as I stay, I'm fine.

DELTA
We can all stay, if we just take
some of that gold and bury it.

EDDIE
Let me tell you something about
this dirt. I grew up with this
dirt. Right now it's hard
enough to break shovels. When
the winds kick up, it'll be
everywhere. You'll wipe it off
anything flat six times a day.
It's in your eyes. Your food.
You can't get away from it.

(MORE)

EDDIE (cont'd)
That's why I loved the movie
theater. It was the only place
that was clean.

DELTA
I know you had it tough --

EDDIE
Baker's rich. Abel already has
his own startup. Gary will go
pro in a few years. Frankie can
write her own ticket with her
body. You and Charlie -- I
dunno, maybe you'll make it too.
You're smart, anyway. But I
know my limits.
(gestures at the gold)
That's my one chance out of the
dirt.

Delta frowns, disturbed.

EXT. OVER THE RISE - DAY

Out of sight of the others, Gary turns to Frankie
uncertainly. His anger shows in his clenched jaw but he
strokes her arm tenderly as he searches for words.

Frankie grabs his shirt and rips it open, popping
buttons. Gary grabs her and kisses her.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Eddie lounges against the car with Delta and Charlie
sitting together some distance away.

DELTA
(quietly)
You still have my extra car key?

Charlie nods.

CHARLIE
In my purse.

DELTA
Don't tell anyone.

CHARLIE
I'm not an idiot.

DELTA

Of course. Sorry. We shouldn't fight. We always seem to end up fighting lately.

CHARLIE

Because you're over-controlling.

DELTA

I know. I do. I'm sorry. But we can't fight. Not now.

Charlie kisses Delta's shoulder.

EXT. OVER THE RISE - DAY

Gary and Frankie embrace passionately. Frankie pulls Gary down to the ground.

Gary strokes her hair.

GARY

I'm sorry. I'll make it up to you.

Gary wraps his hands around her throat.

FRANKIE

Oh! Kinky --

Gary chokes her. Her eyes widen in panic.

Gary strangles Frankie. She calls out but manages only a croak. She tugs at Gary's wrists, then reaches for his eyes with clawed hands. Gary turns his head away and she manages only to scratch his face.

Frankie subsides. Gary keeps it up for a few more seconds. He lets her go and her head lolls to the side.

Gary checks her pulse and watches her regular breathing. Satisfied, he sits back on his heels.

GARY

You're mine. No one else's.

Gary folds his torn shirt and gently places it under her head as a pillow.

He kisses her unresponsive lips.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Eddie, Charlie and Delta wait.

Gary appears over the rise and jogs down.

GARY
All set. Let's go.

CHARLIE
Where's Frankie?

GARY
She decided to stay.

EDDIE
With your shirt buttons?

DELTA
Really? What changed her mind?

Gary opens the trunk.

GARY
She knows it's for the best.
She's a good kid.

He takes out Frankie's bags and dumps them off the road.

EDDIE
Guess I won't be getting laid,
then.

Gary swats Eddie playfully.

GARY
Come on.

Gary and Eddie get in the back seat. Charlie and Delta exchange doubtful glances.

DELTA
Why isn't she saying goodbye?

CHARLIE
Your face is bleeding.

Gary swipes at his cheek, surprised to see blood.

GARY
Yeah, well, we got pretty
active. She's sleeping
actually.

EDDIE
You boned her to sleep? My man!

CHARLIE

But --

GARY

Get in or stay with her.

Charlie and Delta hesitate. Eddie gets out of the car, his gun in his hand. He rests it casually on the car roof and smiles at Charlie and Delta.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The station wagon lumbers along.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Gary and Eddie sit in the back seat, conferring in low tones, occasionally laughing. Delta drives and Charlie sits next to her. She leans in and they speak in whispers.

CHARLIE

What are we going to do?

DELTA

Wait our chance.

CHARLIE

What if we don't get one?

EDDIE

Someone up there.

They all look through the windshield:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

A battered pickup truck has its front hood up. Someone in dusty coveralls stands over it looking at the engine.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Everyone tenses.

GARY

All right. Nice and easy. Just keep moving.

They approach the truck. The man in coveralls - old MR. ROPER -- looks around and stares at them expressionlessly.

GARY
 Don't slow down, don't speed up.
 No problem --

BAM! They hit a bump. Gary twists around frantically in his seat to see:

The rear trunk door flies open. Clothes fall out the back revealing all that lovely gold.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Mr. Roper watches expressionlessly as the station wagon full of gold bumps down the road.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Gary slams the seat in frustration.

GARY
 (to Delta)
 You hit that bump on purpose!

DELTA
 I did not! Why would I?

GARY
 Pull over.

DELTA
 No.

GARY
 Pull over. We have to deal with this.

DELTA
 No we don't.

EDDIE
 Yes, we do.

GARY
 Pull over or I'll break your neck.

DELTA
 And we crash.

GARY
 Then I'll break Charlie's neck.

Charlie, stunned, turns to Eddie for help. He smiles. Gary leans forward.

DELTA

Okay.

Delta stops the car and pulls over.

GARY

We have a situation.

DELTA

Maybe not.

GARY

He saw the gold.

DELTA

We can't be sure.

EDDIE

We have to assume. Cover the bases.

DELTA

And how do we do that?

GARY

(to Eddie)

Do you recognize him?

EDDIE

Yeah. Old man Roper.

GARY

What's he likely to do?

DELTA

If he even saw anything.

EDDIE

Call the sheriff.

CHARLIE

You think he saw the license plate?

GARY

He saw the car. Sheriff can search for the car.

EDDIE

I think he recognized me.

GARY

Great.

DELTA
Then it's over. Simple as that.

GARY
You're not thinking. Sheriff
decides to keep it for himself.
We're all dead.

DELTA
So what do we do?

GARY
We have to go deal with old man
Roper.

DELTA
Deal with him how?

GARY
However. Find out what he
knows. Convince him to keep his
mouth shut.

CHARLIE
We can't drive back there, then
he will see the license plate.

GARY
Eddie. Walk back there.

EDDIE
No. He'll recognize me.

CHARLIE
You just said he already did.

EDDIE
Maybe not. Have to cover --

DELTA
(ironic)
Cover the bases.

EDDIE
(to Gary)
You go.

GARY
No. I'm needed here.

EDDIE
Afraid we'll leave you behind?

GARY

Delta.

DELTA

What the hell am I going to do?
This is your play.

CHARLIE

Christ, we'll all go.

EDDIE

Not me.

CHARLIE

We're not letting you stay and
hotwire the car. Something
tells me you know how.

EDDIE

Fine. We'll all go.

No one moves.

GARY

What are you all waiting for?

EDDIE

I don't see you moving.

GARY

Don't worry, no one's getting
left behind. We'll count to
three and all go. One. Two.
Three.

No one moves. Charlie laughs with an edge of hysteria.

CHARLIE

We can't even get of the car.

GARY

Delta. Take the key out of the
ignition. And get out of the
car.

Delta does so.

EXT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Delta gets out.

GARY

See? Car's going nowhere. On
three.

(MORE)

GARY (cont'd)

And I will break the neck of
anyone who stays. One. Two.
Three --

Everyone gets out at once. They look at each other like they've just accomplished some difficult feat.

Eddie bends down and takes his gun from his boot. Everyone tenses but he just shoves it in his belt behind his back.

DELTA

We don't need that.

EDDIE

Probably not. Just covering
bases.

He walks down the road. The others follow.

EXT. MR. ROPER'S TRUCK - DAY

Mr. Roper tinkers with his engine. He looks up to see:

The four friends approach.

Roper returns to working on his engine.

MR. ROPER

(without looking up)
Eddie.

EDDIE

Mr. Roper. How you doing?

Mr. Roper doesn't answer.

EDDIE

Looks like you're stuck here.

No response from Mr. Roper.

DELTA

Want some help with that engine?

Mr. Roper turns and spits on the ground.

MR. ROPER

What you want?

EDDIE

Just trying to be neighborly.

MR. ROPER

Yeah? You gonna buy me a new truck with some of that gold?

He steps back from the engine and walks around his truck. They back away as he nears them.

EDDIE

You need to stay quiet about that if you know what's good for you.

MR. ROPER

What you gonna do, shoot me with the gun in your boot?

Mr. Roper reaches for something in the truck bed.

Eddie pulls his gun from behind his back and shoots him dead.

Gary, Delta and Charlie freeze in surprise.

Charlie moans quietly, escalating to a scream. Delta clamps her hand over Charlie's mouth.

EDDIE

He was reaching for his rifle. You saw him.

DELTA

What rifle?

EDDIE

In the back. He keeps it in the back.

DELTA

I don't see any rifle. I see tools. I see oil cans --

EDDIE

It's there.

Eddie pushes Delta aside and rummages through the truck bed looking for the rifle.

EDDIE

It's always there.

Gary pulls him away.

GARY

What's done is done. Let's go.

EDDIE
It was him or us!

GARY
Come on. Back to the car.
Quick.

EDDIE
Let's take the truck. Problem
solved.

DELTA
It's not running. He was fixing
it.

GARY
How long to get it running?

DELTA
I don't know! I don't know
what's wrong with it! I don't
know if we have the tools, the
parts --

GARY
OK. We can't stay here with a
dead body. Forget the truck.

Charlie, still screaming, shakes violently.

GARY
Shut her up. Shut her up or I
will.

Delta embraces Charlie fiercely while keeping a hand on
her mouth.

DELTA
Charlie. Charlie. Please.
Breathe. Come on, I need you.

Charlie subsides into sobs. Delta looks up with a stony
face at Eddie and Gary.

DELTA
Well, I'd say we covered the
bases.

Charlie continues to weep.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Later. The car drags down the road.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Delta driving, Charlie beside her, Gary and Eddie in the back. No one speaks. Charlie sits huddled in on herself. Delta glances at her worriedly.

EDDIE

It was him or us.

No one responds.

EDDIE

I saved our fucking lives.

No one responds.

EDDIE

You're welcome.

No one responds. Eddie whistles his jaunty fifteen notes. Charlie shrinks further.

The car lurches. BANG, CRASH, SCREECH! Charlie shrieks in fear. The four are tossed about as the car slows to a stop.

They sit up. Delta has to help Charlie.

No one talks or moves for a moment.

Delta reaches for the keys.

Eddie snaps out his gun and presses it to the back of Delta's head.

EDDIE

Leave the keys.

Delta freezes. Charlie cringes away, looking in horror at Eddie and the gun.

GARY

Time for one of you to go.

Delta turns cautiously.

DELTA

Not Charlie --

EDDIE

Don't turn around.

Delta freezes again.

GARY

It's relative value. You know your car. You're good at repairing it. What does Charlie have to offer?

DELTA

Look at her. You can't leave her out here.

GARY

Don't worry. She does have something. The same thing Frankie offered. What do you say, Charlie?

DELTA

You son of a bitch --

Eddie cocks the gun. Delta freezes again.

GARY

Charlie. You willing to take care of me and Eddie? In return for staying in the car?

DELTA

You don't mean that.

GARY

Okay, just Eddie. It won't be her first time with him.

DELTA

What?

Charlie is shocked into lucidity. She straightens up.

CHARLIE

That's ridiculous.

DELTA

Is it, Eddie?

CHARLIE

He's just trying to make me look as big a slut as Frankie.

GARY

Frankie's not a slut!

DELTA

(to Eddie)

What about it?

CHARLIE
 No! We didn't!
 (to Eddie)
 Tell her!

EDDIE
 It was just once.

CHARLIE
 Eddie!

EDDIE
 You said tell her.

CHARLIE
 (to Delta)
 He got me drunk.

DELTA
 That makes it okay?

CHARLIE
 We just killed a man in cold
 blood. What does it matter?

GARY
 I don't know, what does it
 matter, Delta? That your
 girlfriend decided to bat for
 the other team?

CHARLIE
 He's messing with you. He's
 trying to shame you like Frankie
 shamed him. He's trying to make
 you glad to get out of the car.

DELTA
 I know what he's doing. And now
 I know what you did.

She stares at Charlie coldly.

EXT. DIRT ROAD

Moments later. Delta stands outside the car with her
 luggage. Eddie is in the driver's seat, Charlie next to
 him. Gary sits in the back.

CHARLIE
 I'm sorry.

DELTA

Stay in the car. Do whatever
you have to to stay in the car.

CHARLIE

I love you.

GARY

Don't worry, we'll take care of
her.

CHARLIE

Say it, Delta. Please.

Delta says nothing. Eddie drives off, leaving a cloud of
dust hanging over Delta.

EXT. FRANKIE'S DROP-OFF POINT - DAY

Frankie lies unconscious. Sweat speckles her face. She
twitches, stirs.

EXT. BAKER'S DROP-OFF POINT - DAY

Baker sits where he was abandoned, slumped over and
holding his head. His hair glistens with sweat.

EXT. ABEL'S DROP-OFF POINT - DAY

Abel sits slumped on a low rock, his clothes soaked with
sweat. His eyes are closed and he breathes raggedly
through his mouth. He raises a candy bar to his mouth,
bites and chews it slowly as if he were drugged.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The station wagon drives on, obscured by dust.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Eddie cranks up the air conditioner.

EDDIE

Damn, it's hot.

Eddie drives with Charlie to his right and Gary in the
back seat. Charlie hunches over, hugging her misery to
herself.

Eddie whistles his little tune. He interrupts himself:

EDDIE

Hey. Freeway's up ahead. We'll
be home soon.

GARY

We did it. You and me, bud.

CHARLIE

And me. And all the others.

GARY

Sure, sure.

CHARLIE

We have to go get them.

GARY

First things first. Get home,
bury the gold.

CHARLIE

And go back. With some food and
water.

GARY

If that's what we want to do.

CHARLIE

What?

GARY

I'm just saying. We're doing
all the hard work. They were
dead weight. Why should we
share?

CHARLIE

They can die out there!

GARY

They won't die.
(to Eddie)
Will they?

EDDIE

They might. Gets hot out there.
And real cold at night.

CHARLIE

They're our friends. We're not
murderers.

EDDIE

Some of us are.

CHARLIE

Gary?

A beat. Gary laughs, reaches over and musses Charlie's hair. She flinches.

GARY

I was just messing with you.

Charlie looks over at Eddie, who shrugs. Charlie straightens up, her jaw set in determination.

CHARLIE

Stop the car.

GARY

No.

CHARLIE

It's time for sex.

Eddie hits the brakes.

EXT. STATION WAGON - DAY

The car slows to a stop.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Eddie and Gary stare at Charlie.

GARY

What?

CHARLIE

That was the bargain, right?
Sex if I stay in the car.

GARY

I was bullshitting. Like you
said. To psych out Delta.

CHARLIE

Were you? You don't want me?

Charlie unbuttons her shirt.

GARY

Why are you doing this?

CHARLIE

I don't want you to decide I'm
dead weight.

GARY

Eddie?

CHARLIE
Why are you asking him?

GARY
You're Eddie's.

CHARLIE
I'm Delta's. And she's not here.

Charlie gets out of the car.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Charlie strides across a field of dirt and dead grass flanking the road, heading for a lone tree with a bit of shade. Gary and Eddie follow.

CHARLIE
Who's first?

She puts a sway in her walk.

GARY
If this is a trick --

She stops at the tree, turns to them and dances to silent music, running her hands up and down her body.

CHARLIE
You've got the car keys. What can I do? Come on, who's first?

EDDIE
(to Gary)
I think I am, buddy.

CHARLIE
Why? It was Gary's idea.

She angles toward Gary, dancing for him.

GARY
I'm first.

EDDIE
Hell no.

GARY
She's right. This was all my idea. We wouldn't be here now if it wasn't for me.

EDDIE
Bullshit. I let you lead.

GARY
You let me?

EDDIE
Since you were going in the
right direction. But I was
never gonna leave without that
gold. Whatever it took.

Eddie glances down at his boot significantly - the boot
where he keeps his gun.

Charlie continues dancing as Gary and Eddie face off.

GARY
You try to pull that gun now and
I'll kick the shit out of you.

Charlie sways and dances.

CHARLIE
Who's first?

Eddie goes to his boot for his gun. Gary tackles him
before he can straighten up. Eddie drops the gun as Gary
rocks him with punches.

Charlie watches carefully. The gun fell close to the
fighters and they both struggle to reach it.

Gary overwhelms Eddie until Eddie throws a handful of
dirt at Gary's eyes and follows up with some vicious
elbow strikes. Eddie rolls away from Gary, reaches for
the gun --

-- Gary drags him back and renews the fight. As Eddie
rolls around, his attention is grabbed by something and
his eyes widen.

EDDIE
Hey!

Gary gets in another punch as Eddie stops fighting.
Eddie points toward the car.

EDDIE
Charlie!

Gary looks:

Charlie runs for the car. She's almost there.

Eddie and Gary scramble to their feet.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Charlie jumps in the driver's seat. She grabs her purse and frantically rummages through it. She pulls out a duplicate car key and jams it in the ignition.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

The station wagon REVS to life. Gary runs toward it as Eddie grabs his gun. Gary leans down and scoops up a rock without slowing his pace. He throws --

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Charlie slams the door shut and hits the gas just as the rock shatters her side window. Startled, she brakes suddenly, rocking herself forward.

Gary lunges through the shattered window and grabs her with one hand.

Charlie hits the gas again.

EXT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Gary's upper body is through the side window as the station wagon lurches forward. He lifts his feet off the ground, holding on with one hand to the driver's side mirror for balance while his other hand thrusts into the car.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Charlie struggles to keep Gary's hand from punching or strangling her as she tries to drive. She lets go of the wheel.

EXT. STATION WAGON - DAY

The car turns slow circles. A GUNSHOT shatters the windshield. Charlie brakes and the car stops. Shocked, Charlie looks out:

Eddie stands in front of the station wagon holding his smoking gun.

EXT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Second later. Gary yanks Charlie out of the car and pulls her to the dirt.

GARY
Scheming bitch!

EDDIE
Leave her here.

CHARLIE
No!

EDDIE
Then kill her.

GARY
Shut up.

Gary grabs Charlie and hauls her up.

GARY
This was her idea, wasn't it?

CHARLIE
No. I was going along. But you
talked about leaving her!

GARY
Nobody takes our gold!

CHARLIE
I wasn't! I was just going back
for Delta!

EDDIE
Gary. Look at this.

Gary turns to Eddie, who stares into the trunk.

EDDIE
We put sixty bars in the trunk.
I counted.

GARY
So?

EDDIE
There's fifty-nine now.

GARY
What? You sure?

Eddie nods. Gary strides over and looks in:

The originally neat layers of gold bars in the trunk have moved around a lot, but in one corner near the hatch, a gap in the top layer is clearly visible.

GARY

God damn. God damn thieving
bitch.

Gary whirls around and strides over to Charlie. He yanks her up by her hair.

GARY

Don't worry about going back for
Delta. We're definitely going
back for her.

Gary manhandles her into the back of the car.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The station wagon is headed in the other direction, back into the desert.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Gary drives, his face grim, shattered glass around him, bleeding from cuts he got from the broken window. Eddie sits next to Gary and Charlie sits in the back.

The wind buffets them through the broken windshield and broken driver's side window so that they have to shout.

CHARLIE

Delta didn't take the gold. She
wouldn't. Don't do this.
Eddie, don't let him do this.

GARY

I'm not leaving an enemy behind
my back.

CHARLIE

She's not an enemy!

GARY

Fine. If she's innocent, she's
got nothing to worry about.

CHARLIE

Eddie, this is crazy. We're
losing time. We should be
burying the gold. Before this
car breaks down.

EDDIE

It's doing all right with three
of us. And we can always drop
weight.

He winks at her.

EDDIE
We can't leave a bar of gold
lying around. Gary's right.
Gotta cover the bases.

Eddie leans back in his seat and relaxes.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The station wagon approaches Delta's suitcases by the side of the road and pulls over. Gary and Eddie open their doors and look out.

EDDIE
Where is she?

GARY
(shouting)
Delta!

GARY
She's hiding.

EDDIE
Nowhere to hide around here.

Eddie's right - the ground is flat to the horizon in all directions.

GARY
Check the luggage.

Eddie rips open the luggage and picks through it.

EDDIE
No gold.

GARY
Someone picked her up.

EDDIE
No. Then she'd take her
luggage.

GARY
Right. Right. She left it here
because she's walking.

EDDIE
To Old Man Roper's truck.

They look at each other, a shared realization, a shared decision.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Gary driving, Eddie next to him, Charlie in back.

GARY
That arrogant bitch. This proves it.

CHARLIE
Proves what?

GARY
She's out to get us.

CHARLIE
You threw her in the desert. What was she supposed to do?

GARY
Trust us for two hours.

CHARLIE
Trust you? She was right. She was right all along. This damn gold --

Charlie turns around and wrestles out a bar of gold.

GARY
Hey.

She opens up her car door.

GARY
Hey!

Eddie stops the car. Gary grabs her before she can toss it out the door.

EDDIE
Should we get rid of her?

CHARLIE
No. I'll help you stop her. Just threaten to kill me. She'll do whatever you want. You can beat her to an inch of her life. Just don't kill her.

Charlie settles down. After a moment, Eddie drives on.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The ground drops away from the road fairly steeply here. Delta walks along the road, heading back into the desert toward Mr. Roper's truck.

She hears a car approach behind her. She turns to see the station wagon bearing down. She stops, smiles, and waves.

The station wagon stops near him. Eddie, Gary and Charlie get out. Eddie holds his gun.

CHARLIE

She doesn't have the gold. See?

Eddie and Gary ignore her.

Delta's smile fades when she sees the gun and Gary's stony face

CHARLIE

Delta, run!

Delta turns and runs into the desert. Eddie raises his gun.

CHARLIE

No!

Eddie shoots.

Delta pitches forward and rolls down the slope.

Charlie plows into Eddie, swinging wildly at him, throwing him off balance. Eddie fends her off.

CHARLIE

You bastard!

Gary grabs Charlie and pins her down.

GARY

Is she done?

Eddie gazes out over the desert. Delta lies still at the bottom of the rise.

EDDIE

Yeah.

Charlie breaks down into sobs.

GARY

Go check.

EDDIE

I'm staying with the car. You check.

Gary looks in surprise at Eddie. In his first moment of uncertainty, he looks out to where Delta fell, then back at Eddie.

GARY

Let's go.

Gary picks up Charlie and hustles her to the car.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Gary throws Charlie in the back seat where she curls up, disconsolate. Eddie gets in the driver's seat. Gary crosses to the driver's side door.

GARY

I'll drive.

EDDIE

I'll drive.

Eddie starts the car.

EXT. STATION WAGON - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Alarmed, Gary scuttles around the front of the car to the passenger door and gets in just as Eddie takes off.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Charlie sits in the back, wrapped in despair. Gary is in the passenger seat.

Eddie heads deeper into the desert. He holds his gun as he drives. The hot wind through the broken windows buffets them all.

GARY

Turn the car around. Get back to the highway.

Eddie shakes his head.

EDDIE

If we can't trust Delta, we can't trust anybody. No telling what they're doing.

GARY
Where are you going?

EDDIE
To check on Frankie.

GARY
She wouldn't do anything.

EDDIE
After what I figured you did to her, she might do just about anything. And there's still that gold bar out there. Maybe you slipped it in Frankie's luggage.

GARY
I didn't!

EDDIE
We'll see.

GARY
This isn't the plan. We have to get this gold buried.

EDDIE
We seem to have a misunderstanding about who's in charge.

Gary eyes Eddie and his gun.

EDDIE
It's funny. They say the second time is easier than the first, but the first time was really pretty easy. Just like a video game. Except the blood. There's a lot more blood in video games.

Contradicting his words, Eddie's hand is shaking. Eddie whistles his fifteen notes.

EXT. BOTTOM OF SLOPE - DAY

Back where Delta lies still, the sound of the station wagon recedes and vanishes.

When it's gone, Delta sits up. Her arm is bleeding. She wobbles to her feet and gazes at the dust cloud of the station wagon driving further into the desert.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - MR. ROPER'S TRUCK - DAY

Mr. Roper's truck sits by the side of the road.

The station wagon approaches and roars past it.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Delta stumps along the road heading for the truck. The ripped sleeve of her shirt makes a tourniquet around her bloody arm. Her face is marked by pain and determination.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - FRANKIE'S DROP-OFF POINT - DAY

Frankie's luggage is near where they left it, but it's been opened. Frankie is not in sight.

The station wagon pulls up and stops. They open their doors and look out.

Eddie gets out and pokes through Frankie's luggage with his boot. No gold.

EDDIE

She might still be where you
left her. Go check.

Gary hesitates.

EDDIE

I won't leave you behind. We're
buddies.

Gary doesn't get out.

EDDIE

I'll go with you.

Gary stays in the car.

EDDIE

Get out. Unless you want me to
talk to her alone.

GARY

No.

Gary gets out. So does Charlie.

EDDIE

(to Charlie)
Stay in the car.

Charlie gets back in the car.

Eddie turns to Gary and gestures "after you." Gary walks up the rise, looking back to make sure Eddie follows.

EXT. OVER THE RISE - DAY

Gary tops the rise and comes down. The land is broken by small hills and tall grass.

GARY
(calling out)
Frankie? It's all right. We're
just gonna check on you, then
we'll be on our way. Okay?

With a snarl, Frankie jumps him from some hiding place behind him. They roll.

Frankie slugs him with a rock in her hand. Dazed, Gary grabs her. She tries to knee him in the groin and he shifts his hips and holds her in a bear hug. She bites him on the neck. He screams and releases her.

Frankie rises up and slams him on the head with the rock again. And again. She raises the rock high --

BAM! Frankie convulses and collapses on Gary. Gary stares into her blank eyes.

GARY
Frankie?

Blood pours from her, covering him, pooling in the dirt. He pushes her away -- to reveal Eddie a short distance behind her, his gun smoking. Eddie winks.

EDDIE
Saved your life, bud.

Gary stares at him in horror.

EXT. MR. ROPER'S TRUCK - DAY

Delta hobbles up, white with exhaustion.

INT. MR. ROPER'S TRUCK - DAY

Delta throws open the driver's door. There's a half a bottle of water on the passenger seat. She grabs it, screws off the cap and guzzles it down.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The station wagon drives further into the desert.

INT. STATION WAGON

Eddie drives. Gary sits next to him, bleeding from multiple head wounds, looking dazed and devastated. Charlie watches from the back seat.

EDDIE
 (to Gary)
 No gold on Frankie. I knew I
 could trust you.

He pats Gary on the shoulder. Sunk in misery, Gary doesn't even notice.

EDDIE
 Has to be one of the others.

CHARLIE
 Where are you going?

Eddie doesn't answer. His face is calm but his hands shake.

CHARLIE
 Why not turn around? Head for
 home. Get this stuff buried.
 Happy ending.

EDDIE
 Things to take care of first.

CHARLIE
 Things? Baker and Abel. Are
 they things?

Eddie shrugs.

CHARLIE
 They're your friends. Baker
 loaned you money to stay in
 school. Remember that?

EDDIE
 His parents' money.

CHARLIE
 So that makes this okay?

EDDIE
 It's what it is.

CHARLIE

No, it's what you're making it.
Your choice. They've done
nothing to you.

EDDIE

Baker's a rich prick.

CHARLIE

You don't kill pricks! You're
not a murderer!

EDDIE

Apparently I am.

Gary sobs.

EDDIE

What's the matter?

GARY

Frankie!

EDDIE

You mean the bitch who tried to
bash your brains in?

GARY

Frankie!

EDDIE

You mean the slut who offered to
cheat on you with everyone?

GARY

I loved her.

EDDIE

Come on, have the courage of
your convictions. She was just
as dangerous as Delta. More.
You know it had to be done. And
it's more gold for us.

GARY

Frankie ...

EDDIE

What is the matter with you?
Don't quit on me now. Don't
leave me all alone.

CHARLIE

You are alone.

Eddie looks at her through the rear view mirror.

CHARLIE

Even Gary knows now. This is wrong. It was wrong from the beginning. It's turned us into monsters. You most of all.

EDDIE

It's turned us into rich men. And women. If you don't want your share, you can give it to me.

CHARLIE

(shakes her head)

I'll keep it because it keeps me alive. You know I don't dare turn you in if I'm equally guilty.

EDDIE

Smart girl.

CHARLIE

But I'm not with you on this. You're alone now. You'll always be alone. Just you, and old man Roper, and Delta, and Frankie.

Eddie grabs Gary's chin and turns his face towards him. Gary is pale, sweating.

EDDIE

He's got a concussion. That's all. He'll come around. I'm not alone. I got my bud.

Eddie whistles his fifteen notes.

EXT. MR. ROPER'S TRUCK - DAY

Delta crouches under the hood. She straightens up and slams the hood down.

INT. MR. ROPER'S TRUCK - DAY

Delta sits at the wheel. She turns the ignition -- and breathes a sigh of relief as the truck roars to life. Her foot clunks against something.

She reaches down to the floor well between her feet -- and freezes.

She straightens up holding a lever action rifle.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Mr. Roper's truck tears down the road, much faster than the heavily laden station wagon has ever managed.

INT. MR. ROPER'S TRUCK - DAY

Delta eyes the speedometer:

She's doing 80.

The rifle rests on the seat next to her.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - BAKER'S DROP-OFF POINT - DAY

Baker sits pretty much where he was when Charlie left him. Charlie's mostly empty water bottle still stands at his feet, untouched.

The dust rises as the station wagon pulls up O.S. A door opens and slams shut. Footsteps.

Someone stands before Baker. He looks up:

It's Eddie.

Baker looks around him at the car, squinting.

BAKER

I count three. Where are the others?

EDDIE

Where's the gold?

BAKER

Did you manage to lose that, too?

Eddie opens Baker's luggage and dumps it on the ground. The gold bar isn't there. Baker shakes his head slowly.

BAKER

Survival of the fittest. Great. The barbarians at the gate again. You and Gary, right? And Frankie?

EDDIE

Frankie's dead.

BAKER

Great. Going smoothly, I see.
Job well done.

Eddie takes the gun out of his boot. Baker laughs sardonically.

BAKER

My father warned me. He said, "stay away from the riff-raff." That would be you. There are the people like me, and there are scum like you. I speak six languages. I've dined with barons. I'm the product of centuries of breeding. My mother -- this is a good story, it's worth your listening to for a minute before you murder me -- my mother had some stemware that used to belong to Napoleon. Crystal, very delicate. Priceless. We were having sherry with a friend of mine, someone not of our class. He was nervous, he knew he was over his head. He held the glass too tightly and broke the stem. He was hugely embarrassed, I thought he'd cry. You know what my mother did? She broke her own stem on purpose. And she said, "Oh, these old things, you see how easily they break, I don't know why I keep them." That's breeding. What would you have done? Scream at him? Shoot him? Sue him? Because you come from a long line of breeding, too. The first cave man who clubbed his neighbor and raped his woman. The asshole who killed Archimedes. The shitheads who sacked Rome. That's your bloodline. You stand on the shoulders of pigmies, and you're brought them to new heights. Betrayer. Murderer. Thief. Greedy mindless soulless crude opportunistic bastard --

Eddie shoots him. Baker collapses, dead before he hits the ground.

EDDIE

Shut up.

Eddie bends down and picks up the water bottle. He takes off the top -- difficult, because his hands are shaking so much-- and drinks down what's left.

He discards the bottle and walks away, whistling his fifteen notes.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Gary is still slumped in his seat. Eddie gets in the driver's seat smiling blandly.

EDDIE

That was even easier.

Charlie looks at him from the back seat, white-faced. Eddie has trouble getting the key in the ignition because of his shaking hands.

CHARLIE

Eddie. Stop. Please stop. Look at yourself.

EDDIE

What?

CHARLIE

Your hands are shaking.

Eddie looks at his hands like he hadn't noticed before.

EDDIE

Huh.

He tries again with the keys.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - BAKER'S DROP-OFF POINT - DAY

The station wagon pulls away and drives on, deeper into the desert, headed for the army truck and Abel.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - FRANKIE'S DROP-OFF POINT - DAY

Mr. Roper's truck is parked by the side of the road.

EXT. OVER THE RAVINE - DAY

Delta kneels over Frankie where she fell.

She grabs Frankie's arms and drags her toward the truck.

EXT. MR. ROPER'S TRUCK - DAY

With the help of the truck's winch, Delta heaves Frankie's corpse into the back of the truck.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The station wagon lumbers along, further into the desert.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Eddie drives. Gary slumps beside him, shivering and sweating. Charlie reaches over and touches his forehead.

CHARLIE

He's feverish. We have to get him to a hospital.

EDDIE

Later.

CHARLIE

Later might be too late.

Eddie touches Gary's shoulder.

EDDIE

You're all right, aren't you, bud? You can take it.

With a roar, Gary lunges for Eddie and wraps his hands around Eddie's throat.

EDDIE

Hey!

Eddie tries to pull Gary's hands away, but Gary is stronger and pumped up with rage.

GARY

Murderer! You killed her!

With no hands on the wheel, the car swerves.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The car veers off the road onto rough ground.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

The car shakes on the rough ground and everyone bounces around as Eddie and Gary struggle. Eddie punches Gary on his head wound and Gary's stranglehold weakens.

Eddie rips Gary's hands from his throat but Gary throws himself at Eddie again.

Charlie, gauging the action, picks up a gold ingot and holds it ready, looking for a clear shot at Eddie.

Everyone pitches forward as the car lurches to a stop. Eddie is twisted around so he's half-lying on his seat, fighting off Gary above him. Charlie rights herself and raises the ingot --

Eddie grabs his gun and points it in Charlie's face, freezing her with the gold in her hands.

Eddie pushes Gary away with his legs and then kicks Gary on his head wound. Gary screams in pain and curls up. Eddie kicks him again. And again. Gary doesn't move.

Eddie straightens up and glowers at Charlie. She puts down the gold ingot.

EDDIE

That's it. That is it.

Eddie reaches over and opens Gary's door. He pushes Gary out of the car. Gary falls on the ground and doesn't move.

CHARLIE

Don't shoot him. Don't shoot him.

Eddie REVS the car but it doesn't move.

EXT. STATION WAGON - DAY

The wheels spin on the broken ground.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Eddie keeps revving the car without result.

EDDIE

I tried to carry him. Make allowances. And that's the gratitude. I thought he was my friend. He's just dead weight. Worse.

CHARLIE

We're stuck.

EDDIE
 (shaking his head)
 I know this dirt.

Eddie keeps revving, revving -- and the car lurches forward. Eddie drives on. Charlie looks back and cries out in relief:

CHARLIE
 He's alive!

Eddie stops and looks through the rear view mirror:

EDDIE'S POV: Gary painfully climbs to his feet.

Eddie puts the car in reverse and looks back over his shoulder as he drives back.

CHARLIE
 Give him another chance. We can tie him up, keep him in the back seat. I'll watch him.

Eddie picks up speed.

CHARLIE
 Eddie, no!

Eddie floors the accelerator.

EXT. BROKEN GROUND - DAY

Gary stands up and stares dully at the station wagon bearing down on him.

GARY
 Murderer.

The station wagon looms up --

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Charlie shrieks at the thud of impact.

Eddie keeps going back, then puts the car in Drive.

Through the front windshield they can see Gary lying still on the ground.

Eddie accelerates. Charlie moans as the car lurches when it rolls over the body.

Eddie keeps driving. He whistles his fifteen notes. His shaking hands drum audibly on the wheel.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - GARY'S DROP-OFF POINT - DAY

The station wagon climbs back on the road and heads further into the desert, heading for Abel and the army truck.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - BAKER'S DROP-OFF POINT - DAY

Delta winches Baker's inert corpse into Mr. Roper's truck. She gasps with the effort and holds on to the truck as a wave of dizziness sweeps her.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The station wagon heads further into the desert, wallowing heavily, moving slowly.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Mr. Roper's truck tears down the road, eating the distance more than twice as fast as the station wagon.

INT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Eddie drives. Charlie hugs herself in the back seat, watching Eddie the way you'd watch a dangerous snake.

Eddie whistles his fifteen notes and smiles blandly while his hands shake.

CHARLIE

I guess I should thank you for one thing.

EDDIE

What?

CHARLIE

Not telling Delta the rest of it.

EDDIE

I didn't need to.

CHARLIE

She died thinking I just slipped once.

EDDIE

See? There is some good in me.

CHARLIE

Yes. And that's why you won't kill Abel.

EDDIE

I won't?

CHARLIE

No. He's harmless. He's the sweetest man we know. He would never betray you. He's no danger. Let him live. Please.

Charlie reaches for Eddie in the front seat. She runs her hands over his chest, caressing, soothing.

CHARLIE

If you let him live I'll stay with you. I'll do whatever you want.

Charlie kisses his neck. Eddie allows it but doesn't respond.

CHARLIE

I'll do that thing you've been wanting me to do. Eddie. Please.

Eddie whistles his fifteen notes again.

EDDIE

On the tip of my tongue. What is it? "Charade?" "King's Road?" "To Catch A Thief?"

He shakes his head and whistles his fifteen notes again.

EXT. GARY'S DROP-OFF POINT - DAY

Delta winches Gary's corpse into the back of Mr. Roper's truck. Her gunshot wound bleeds through her bandage and she's exhausted.

She stops to catch her breath as she regards the corpses of her friends.

EXT. ARMY TRUCK - DAY

The station wagon approaches and comes to a stop.

Eddie gets out and looks around. No sign of Abel.

EDDIE

Stay in the car.

Eddie draws his gun and walks over the rise looking for Abel.

EXT. CLUSTER OF ROCKS - DAY

Eddie stalks a cluster of tall rocks. His shaking gets worse -- his whole body trembles.

He spies one of Baker's suitcases. It's open. The gold bar rests on top of Baker's underwear like a jewel on velvet.

Tense, ready for anything, Eddie approaches.

He whips around the rocks:

Abel sits slumped, white and motionless, eyes closed, on a low rock surrounded by his water, food and belongings. He has slung a blanket above him to provide some shade.

EDDIE

Abel. Abel.

No response. Eddie approaches cautiously. He nudges Abel with his boot.

Abel slides bonelessly to the ground. He's dead.

A beat. Eddie laughs. His laugh becomes hysterical as he bends down and ravenously wolfs down water and candy bars between guffaws.

EXT. STATION WAGON - DAY

Eddie returns to the station wagon lugging the gold bar and flings open the door to the back seat, where Charlie waits. He looks relaxed, happy, a free man.

Eddie tosses the gold bar in the car.

EDDIE

Baker was a naughty boy.

CHARLIE

You didn't shoot him.

Eddie hauls Charlie out.

EDDIE

He was already dead from the heat.

He holds Charlie close.

EDDIE

I was good. I didn't touch him, just like you asked.

(MORE)

EDDIE (cont'd)
 Now you're going to do that
 thing I've been wanting you to
 do.

He kisses her hungrily. She resists.

CHARLIE
 Not now.

He pulls her to the ground.

CHARLIE
 Let's get out of here. Before
 anyone comes. Hide the gold.

EDDIE
 In a minute.

There is a GROAN of tortured metal. They turn in
 surprise to see the station wagon settle a little lower,
 barely clearing the road.

Eddie looks back at Charlie with regret.

EDDIE
 Too bad.

Eddie pulls out his gun from his boot.

CHARLIE
 No!

She lunges up and throws a handful of dirt in his face.
 Eddie roars and swings the gun around. Charlie grabs his
 hand and bites it. Eddie cries out and the GUN GOES OFF
 as he drops it.

They scramble in the dirt for the gun. Charlie grabs it
 and shoves it into Eddie's ribs. He freezes.

CHARLIE
 You son of a bitch. Murdering
 bastard.

She scrambles to her feet and backs away, keeping the gun
 on him.

Eddie whistles his fifteen notes.

EDDIE
 Sounds like a Cary Grant movie,
 don't you think? "North by
 Northwest?" "His Girl Friday?"
 "That Touch of Mink?"

CHARLIE

I should shoot you like a mad dog.

Eddie gets up.

EDDIE

But you won't.

CHARLIE

Don't move. Don't move!

EDDIE

You can't.

He takes a step toward her.

EDDIE

You're not strong enough.

Another step. Charlie fires: CLICK. She pulls the trigger again: click, click.

EDDIE

Well, look at you. I guess you are.

Charlie throws down the gun and runs toward the army truck. Eddie picks up the gun.

Charlie runs for the far side of the army truck and hides behind the back wheel.

EDDIE

There's no point in running. You're already --

The turn at the sound of a car approaching:

Mr. Roper's truck drives up.

Eddie strolls to the station wagon, whistling his fifteen notes. He reaches into his pants pocket and takes out some loose bullets.

Delta opens the truck door and drops out of the truck with the rifle. She has to hold on to the door with her blood-soaked arm to keep from falling down. She stays behind the door for cover.

Charlie runs to the front wheel of the truck.

Eddie loads his revolver, staying behind the station wagon for cover.

Delta levels her rifle at Eddie.

EDDIE
Hello, Delta. How's the arm?

DELTA
I'll make it.

EDDIE
No, I don't think you will.

Charlie runs to the front of the truck. She bends down and grabs a pistol from one of the dead soldiers.

EDDIE
You're bleeding pretty bad.
Feeling faint yet?

DELTA
Not yet.

CHARLIE
Delta!

DELTA
Stay back.

CHARLIE
I'm on your side!

EDDIE
Is she? Then why has she been
getting it on with me for six
months?

DELTA
I don't know, why?

EDDIE
Because I excite her. You bore
her. You tie her down, I set
her free. Though I have tied
her up a few times.

CHARLIE
Shut the fuck up.

EDDIE
It was her idea to kill you, you
know.

CHARLIE
That's a lie!

DELTA
But the other part wasn't?

CHARLIE
Delta --

EDDIE
I wish we had time to work this out like adults. But I have to be going, and you have to be dying.

DELTA
I've got a rifle.

EDDIE
Do you even know how to use it?

DELTA
Looks like point and click to me.

EDDIE
Safety off?

DELTA
I'm pretty sure you just --

Delta works the lever, forward and back: CLICK. SNICK.

EDDIE
Aren't you glad I made you watch all those Westerns? Is it loaded?

No answer.

EDDIE
Do you even know if it's loaded?

DELTA
You know. It's old man Roper's gun. If it wasn't loaded you'd have killed me by now.

CHARLIE
I've got a gun too.

EDDIE
With an empty clip.

DELTA
Might be one in the chamber. Right? I watch movies, too.

EDDIE
 (to Charlie)
 Good. Shoot her if you get the
 chance, darling.

CHARLIE
 (to Delta)
 I'm on your side!

EDDIE
 So difficult to know who to
 trust. What to do. You've got
 maybe one shot. Maybe more, but
 you don't know how many.
 Charlie has none. Maybe one.
 To use against who?

CHARLIE
 Against you!

EDDIE
 I've got six in the gun, more in
 my pocket. I'm healthy. I've
 had food and water. I can
 outlast you.

Delta sags and has to hold herself up.

EDDIE
 See?
 (beat)
 Famous three-way movie duels for
 ten points. Anyone? Come on,
 even you guys should know one.
 No takers? You're going to kick
 yourself when I tell you.
 (beat)
 All right, I'll put you out of
 your misery. "The Good, the Bad
 and the Ugly." 1966, Clint
 Eastwood ---

DELTA
 It doesn't have to be like this.

EDDIE
 It has to be exactly like this.

Delta's eyes roll up in her head as a wave of weakness
 overcomes her.

CHARLIE
 Delta!

Delta shakes her head and gets a firmer grip on the rifle. Charlie watches her worriedly.

Eddie starts his fifteen notes -- and stops himself.

EDDIE

Got it!

Eddie laughs in delight.

EDDIE

James Garner. Sandra Dee.
Melina Mercouri. 1966. Know
it? I'll give you another clue:
music by Bert Kaempfert
featuring his most famous
composition, "Strangers in the
Night." This bit is just sound
track but it's the same show.
Got it yet? It's perfect.
You're gonna laugh.

Charlie watches Delta sway as if drunk.

DELTA

You're the movie guy.

EDDIE

The name of the movie is, "A Man
Could Get Killed."

Charlie steps out of the shelter of the army truck, aims and fires at Eddie. Her gun goes off, shattering the rear windshield of the station wagon.

Eddie pivots out of cover and fires at her.

Delta fires when Eddie does.

Eddie spins and returns fire at Delta.

They all stand stock still for a long moment.

Eddie chuckles.

EDDIE

Just like the Westerns. They
make you wait to find out who --

Charlie makes a choking sound and crumbles to the ground.

Delta lurches out of cover toward Charlie and then stops, frozen in horror at having opened herself up to Eddie's next shot. She looks over at Eddie:

Eddie raises his gun like it weighs a hundred pounds. A bloodstain blossoms on his shirt.

Eddie collapses.

Delta staggers across the road to Eddie.

Eddie lies gasping on the ground, his chest a red mess. His gun has dropped out of his hand. He reaches for it but it's inches too far.

He winks at Delta and mimes shooting her with his thumb and forefinger. His hand drops to the dirt.

EDDIE
 (speaking with
 difficulty)
 Famous last lines from movies.
 Gotta go with Casablanca.
 (quoting)
 "Louie, I think this is the
 beginning of a beautiful --"

He dies.

Delta turns and looks over at Charlie.

EXT. ARMY TRUCK - DAY

Charlie lies on the ground, white and shaking with the onset of shock, staring at the blood soaking through the side of her shirt.

Delta walks up and regards her for a moment.

She bends down and, with a groan, helps Charlie up with her good arm. Charlie cries out in pain.

CHARLIE
 I'm sorry.

DELTA
 Forget it. Not important.
 Abel?

CHARLIE
 Dead.

DELTA
 We'll have to leave him.

Delta and Charlie lean on each other and stagger over to Mr. Roper's truck. Charlie whimpers in pain.

CHARLIE
Eddie?

DELTA
Leave him.

CHARLIE
The gold.

DELTA
Not important. Have to get to a
hospital.

Charlie stops, making Delta stop. She looks over at the station wagon with all that gold in it, hesitates.

CHARLIE
You're right. Not important.

They get moving again. Delta helps her into the truck.

CHARLIE
Are we going to make it?

Delta doesn't answer.

EXT. ARMY TRUCK - DAY

A minute later. The corpses of the army soldiers lie in front of their truck.

Abel lies dead in his makeshift shelter.

Eddie lies dead in the dirt.

Mr. Roper's truck, with Delta driving, Charlie slumped in the passenger seat and three corpses in the back, drives off, back in the direction of home.

The station wagon full of gold bars sits abandoned.

After a moment, the suspension groans and gives way completely, dragging the chassis down to the dirt.

A beat.

Something approaches from down the road in the opposite direction:

It's a small tour bus.

The tour bus pulls up and stops a short distance from the abandoned station wagon and truck. After a moment, curious TOURISTS emerge.

They walk toward the scene.

FADE OUT