

"THE GENE POOL"

FADE IN: EXT. WICHITA KANSAS - NIGHT - (WINTER)

INT. FOUR DOOR SEDAN PARKED ON STREET - NIGHT

An overweight, older MAN is behind the wheel, facing a very young prostitute, VALE JOHANSON, short blond hair, early teens, slender, who looks utterly ravaged by life.

Her bulky coat and slacks are dirty, and she has no make-up on her gaunt face except a bright slash of garish red lipstick. Under better conditions she could be a beautiful girl. Vale stares at the man with a blank expression.

VALE

I can just suck ya' off. Nothin' else.

MAN

That's fine. How much will it cost me?

Vale takes an egg timer out of her purse, so old the numbers are faded. The man tries not to smile. Vale sets the timer.

VALE

You got fifteen minutes. I think that's fair for a ten. My jaw starts hurting after that.

She puts the timer on the dashboard. The man flashes a badge. Vale is completely unmoved. She just looks away and takes the timer back, placing it on her lap. Two UNDERCOVER COPS hop out of a van parked across the street and run up to the car. The first cop yanks open the car door.

FIRST UNDERCOVER COP

Step out of the car, Miss. You're under arrest.

The second cop plucks Vale's purse from her lap. The egg timer falls out of the car into the gutter. He picks it up, looks at it strangely and cracks a smile.

SECOND UNDERCOVER COP

Aren't we Miss Efficiency.

He opens her purse and finds a quart of vodka and a small plastic bottle of Sunny D.

SECOND UNDERCOVER COP

(continuing)

Ah, nice. You went to bartending school.

(The cops laugh)

Come on. Get out.

He helps Vale out of the car. The cop posing as the customer waves at her. She ignores him.

INT. SEARCH ROOM - POLICE STATION - NIGHT - LATER

Two policewomen, each wearing latex gloves, stand in front of Vale. The first woman, OFFICER WHITLEY, African American, late forties, looks through Vale's purse and finds the Sunny D and vodka.

OFFICER WHITLEY

Someone buy this for you?

VALE

(Meekly nods)

One of my tricks

The second woman, OFFICER MALONE, short, stern, late twenties feels around for contraband in Vale's tangled hair. Officer Whitley takes out Vale's wallet and finds her tattered social security card.

OFFICER WHITLEY

Vale Johanson. That an alias?

Vale shakes her head, no. Officer Malone stops her search.

OFFICER WHITLEY

(continuing)

Well, that's a real pretty name. Is this your only identification? I need to know your date of birth.

VALE

I'm fourteen. That's all I got.

The officers exchange looks.

OFFICER WHITLEY

Okay, when we're through here we'll have to transfer you to a juvenile facility. Honey, I'm gonna have to ask you to remove your clothing. We need to perform a cavity search.

Vale begins removing her clothes. Officer Whitley squeezes a small amount of KY jelly onto her gloved index finger. Vale strips down to her bra and panties. She is obviously six or seven months pregnant.

OFFICER MALONE
You're pregnant?

VALE
It's not a beer belly, you dumb bitch.

Officer Malone starts to say something. Officer Whitley shakes her head.

OFFICER WHITLEY
That's enough of that.
(to officer Malone)
Go tell them to notify the clinic.
Set up an appointment for her.

Vale shows fear. Officer Malone leaves the room.

OFFICER WHITLEY
(continuing)
It's not what you think. They just need to give you an exam and check on the baby's condition... Is the baby's father a customer?
(Vale nods, yes)
Have you done drugs during your pregnancy? Tell me the truth.

VALE
I love my baby. I don't do drugs. Just drink... But only a little. I mix it with juice. It's got vitamins.

OFFICER WHITLEY
You really want to keep the baby? You think that's a good idea?

VALE
What did I just say?

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Vale sits alone in the brightly lit holding cell. She stares straight ahead. Her body is rigid. Her hands are gripped together. She breaks down and sobs helplessly.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RHYOLITE NEVADA - DAY - SUMMER - SUPER: (FIVE YEARS LATER)

A small town seemingly in the middle of the desert. One small old casino, one gas station, a small cafe, and various other businesses, some boarded up, are built along the three mile-long main street. Dozens of homes dot the surrounding desert. A few of them are built on bluffs.

An older jeep turns onto the main street, driven by MIKE LANGLEY, nineteen, tall, athletic, black hair, blue eyes, very handsome.

Mike parks in front of the cafe. His best friend, DWIGHT BANKS, nineteen, tall, skinny, with a mop of dark hair, waves at Mike from a window booth. Dwight wears a pair of sleek, unusually shaped sunglasses. Mike gets out of his jeep.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Mike walks inside. KARLA, late forties, dark hair, the day shift waitress, waves at Mike from the cash register where she's talking with the cashier, Russell.

CLOSE ON: A basket on a shelf behind Russell has a sign on it reading: Lost and Found.

KARLA

Hey, Mike.

MIKE

Hi. Hey, Russell.

Russell tips his head and takes a check from a customer. Mike slips into the booth across from Dwight, who peers at Mike from beneath the sunglasses.

MIKE

(continuing)

Where'd you get the shades?

Karla sets a glass of water in front of Mike.

KARLA

Lost and found.

(takes sunglasses off
Dwight)

And I'm putting them back. Customer left them here a month ago. Think they're expensive.

Dwight shoots Mike a look.

DWIGHT

Right. Like he's gonna waste gas and come all the way back here.

KARLA

Hope so. He was a good tipper. I remember him. Had a big bushy beard and wore sunglasses ten o'clock at night. Never took 'em off till he read the menu. Then he put on regular ones.

DWIGHT

(points)

C'mon, giv'em back. We're going swimming.

MARY, swing shift waitress, early thirties, bleached hair, walks into the cafe. She waves at Karla and the boys.

KARLA

Don't know what to tell ya'. Next time build your pool under a tree. Looks like it might rain, anyway.

DWIGHT

I hope it pours. They're hiring out at that gravel pit in Moapa. If it rains I won't have to go.

KARLA

I'm outta here. Give Mary a yell if you need something. See ya'.

Karla walks behind the counter and puts the sunglasses back in the basket.

EXT. DWIGHT'S BACKYARD - DAY - LATER

The entire backyard consists of dirt. A large above-ground pool sits in the middle of it, where Mike and Dwight are swimming. Music blasts out of a stereo with one speaker missing. CINDY, Dwight's ten year old sister lies on a lounge chair. The family cat walks past her and Dwight splashes both of them with water.

INT. MIKE'S JEEP - SUNSET - LATER

Mike drives up the hill toward his house. His hair still wet from swimming. A highway patrol car driven by, LESTER WELLS, tall, silver haired, mid-sixties, passes Mike. The two men wave at one another.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

The simple two story house has a large wrap-around porch and dozens of rose bushes in the yard. The front door opens.

BETTIE LANGLEY, Mike's mother, pretty, late forties, red hair, salt of the earth, walks out onto the porch looking up at the dark sky. Mike drives up to the house, a grim expression on his face.

BETTIE

'Bout time. You see Lester?

(Mike nods)

Better put your top up. Mother Nature's going to water my roses for a change.

Mike gets out cupping his right ear.

BETTIE

(continuing)

Dwight's pool spring a leak?

MIKE

Ma, I have an ear ache like you wouldn't believe.

BETTIE

When did it start?

MIKE

When I was swimming.

INT. BETTIE'S HOME - NIGHT

Mike is in the kitchen opening an aspirin bottle. Bettie holds a wash cloth under the hot faucet water. She wrings it out and Mike takes it from her as he swallows an aspirin.

Bettie sits on the couch and pats her lap. Mike walks up to her a bit embarrassed as he holds the hot wash cloth to his ear.

MIKE

Don't tell anyone I did this.

He lies on the couch and places his head on his mother's lap. Bettie turns on the flashlight.

BETTIE

I used to change your diaper. This is a breeze. Has the pain let up any?

MIKE

Little.

Bettie looks in his ear and grimaces.

BETTIE

Hold still... It's red. Skin's inflamed. Think you have an infection. How clean is the water in that pool?

MIKE

I don't know.

BETTIE

Well, if there's not enough chlorine bacteria grows. You might have swimmer's ear.

Bettie gently pulls the skin back where his ear curves and takes a second, closer look. She flashes the light on it.

BETTIE

(continuing)

Hmmm.

MIKE

What?

BETTIE

Don't know... Hold on. Stay still.

CLOSE ON: Bettie holds back the small section of skin revealing four very small numbers and two letters tattooed on the skin.

BETTIE

(continuing)

Sit up for a sec.

MIKE

What is it?

Mike feels his ear. Bettie gets up and searches through a desk drawer.

BETTIE

I found something... Like tiny little numbers along your skin. Under the part where your ear folds over. I don't know what you call it. Under the rim, I guess?

(finds magnifying glass)

Lay back down. Let me see.

Mike smiles quizzically and lays on his side.

CLOSE ON: Bettie holds back the small section of skin and reads the numbers with the magnifying glass. She grabs a pen off the coffee table and slowly writes them down.

BETTIE

(continuing)

I never saw them when you were a baby. My God, the numbers have been hidden perfectly. Right under the fold. 'Cept now you can see just a bit of the T. I thought it was a mole.

MIKE

Maybe 'cause I grew.

Mike sits up and reads the numbers on the paper.

MIKE

(continuing)

001GT. What is it?

BETTIE

I have no idea.

MIKE

You think my biological mother had it done? Oh, wait, no, she couldn't have. Unless, maybe before I was born she asked the hospital to do it. She could've been scared I'd be switched with another baby. Never know.

BETTIE

I guess it would be more reliable than a wrist band. I've just never heard of it.

MIKE

What's the name of the hospital I was born at? Those look like initials.

BETTIE

No, they don't match. I'll call around tomorrow. If they did it nineteen years ago, they must do it today.

INT. BETTIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Bettie sits on the floor in her nightgown sorting through a box of paper work in front of her.

INSERT: She briefly reads through Mike's old yellowed adoption papers, which state his legal adoption occurred "August 22, 2002". She reads a moment more, then puts them back.

Bettie catches a glimpse of an envelope poking out from under the rest of the paper work. Hesitating a moment, she takes it out and opens it revealing several faded color photos, which she sorts through.

CLOSE ON: In one faded color photo, 20 year old Bettie stands with four other women of various ages all holding infants, except Bettie. Several various aged children stand around them.

A 1973 station wagon is parked nearby. Bettie and the rest of the women all have long braided hair and wear nearly identical floor length cotton dresses.

A very tall husky man in a suit stands in the middle of the women. His face is scratched out. Another photo shows a grim faced teenaged Bettie, wearing a drab wedding dress and holding a bouquet of flowers as the same tall husky man stands next to her. He has been torn out the picture and only his arm and part of his body is visible. Bettie looks up hearing the floor creak loudly outside her door. Mike appears in the doorway.

BETTIE

Can't sneak up on anybody in this house.

Mike sees the photos and looks curiously at Bettie.

MIKE

Are those...

BETTIE

(Nods)

First time I've looked at them in over five years.

MIKE

Think any of the others came to their senses and left?

Mike sits next to Bettie on the floor and glances at the photos.

BETTIE
Doubt it. I call 'em "lifers".

Bettie sorts through the photos and singles out the wedding picture.

BETTIE
(continuing)
He was pushing sixty when my father promised me to him. I was lucky. I was seventeen. Most girls are forced to marry when they're thirteen, fourteen years old.

MIKE
That's wrong on so many levels.

BETTIE
My father was a polygamist, so was his. It's all any of us knew.

Bettie examines another photo and cracks a smile.

BETTIE
(continuing)
If I hadn't left I would've been voted off the island eventually.

MIKE
'Cause you couldn't have kids?

BETTIE
That, and I had a mind of my own, which was actually worse than not being able to have children... But I got away. Met your father, and when I was ready to be a mother, I became one on my terms.

INT. BETTIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Bettie talks on the wall phone as she rinses off some dishes in the sink. Mike is at the table finishing his breakfast.

BETTIE
Okay, well thanks for your help. I appreciate it. Bye, now.

Bettie hangs up the phone and turns off the faucet. She sits at the table.

BETTIE

(continuing)

You weren't born in a hospital after all. And they never heard of tattooing an infant for identification. You were born in a clinic on the hospital grounds that was torn down right after in 2002. Supposedly it was only used as a birthing center for two months.

MIKE

Were all the babies born there sent to an adoption agency?

BETTIE

They didn't know. But somebody has to know what they mean. The other children must be marked.

(pours glass of milk)

It's not every day you find a serial number on your kid's noggin. Maybe it's a warranty.

INT. MIKE'S BATHROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Mike holds a small mirror up to his ear as he tries his best to see the tattooed numbers in the reflection of the larger bathroom mirror.

EXT. DWIGHT'S HOUSE - DAY

It's raining. Mike and Dwight drive up to the house and park.

INT. DWIGHT'S HOME - DAY - LATER

Dwight and Mike hurry into the house to get out of the rain. Dwight's FATHER, husky, late forties, is on the couch. In the small nearby den, a computer and printer are in view on a desk. Dwight's MOTHER calls out from the kitchen.

DWIGHT'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Take your shoes off. Hi, Mike.

MIKE

Hi, Mrs. Banks

Mr. Banks looks back at Dwight.

DWIGHT'S FATHER

You lucked out again, buddy. You and Mike been outside doin' a rain dance?

DWIGHT

It's just not meant for me to work.

DWIGHT'S FATHER

Yeah, I'm beginning to think that.

INT. DEN - DAY - LATER

The Shuttered doors are closed. Dwight types a message on his computer.

DWIGHT

We'll post this on the Info Interstate.

(glances at Mike)

That's the name of the web-site. Kinda cool, huh? But if someone logs on and actually knows what these numbers are they can e-mail me.

Dwight types a moment more and stops. INSERT: Mike reads the message on the screen.

"0001 GT"

"What's the scoop? Explain if you dare. Found in unusual nook and cranny. If you know, hook up and look me up. DESERT RAT."

MIKE

Looks good. But can't you just say they were found in my ear?

DWIGHT

Don't be a wuss. Make them figure it out.

EXT. BETTIE'S HOME - NIGHT

Bettie and Mike sit on the porch enjoying the evening.

BETTIE

Your father loved nights like this. The crickets, even the humidity... All it needs are fireflies and a Whippoorwill calling out and I'd swear I was back in Vermont.

INT. BETTIE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Bettie watches TV in her bathrobe. Mike hangs up the phone.

MIKE

There's still no answer.

BETTIE

Maybe they all just drove out to Moapa. It stopped raining... Oh, I forgot to ask. Wanna make fifteen dollars? Jean wants to know if you'll mow her lawn tomorrow.

MIKE

It's gonna be a hundred and ten out.

BETTIE

Do it in the morning. It'll only be a hundred and nine.

EXT. BETTIE'S HOUSE - SUNRISE

Mike gets in his jeep wearing jean shorts and no shirt. Bettie stands on the porch in her pajamas.

MIKE

You go. I'll be recuperating from sun stroke. I'll will my fifteen dollars to you.

BETTIE

You got a deal. Let me have my coffee first. Have fun.

Mike gives her a look and takes off in his jeep.

INT. BETTIE'S CAR - DAY - LATER

Bettie drives up the short dirt road that leads to Dwight's house. She enters the yard and drives through a large section of mud. Her back tires get stuck.

BETTIE

Shit.

Bettie revs the engine. The car won't budge. She looks toward the house, beeping the horn twice.

BETTIE

(continuing)
Any day now...

She sighs, opens the car door and carefully gets out, trying unsuccessfully to side-step the mud. Making it to a dry area, she hurries to the front door, where the cat waits to be let in.

BETTIE
(continuing)
Hey, cat.

Bettie knocks, waits a moment and knocks again.

BETTIE
(continuing)
Vivian... Viv.

Bettie tries the door. It opens and she sticks her head in. The cat runs inside and goes around the corner into the kitchen.

The house is silent.

BETTIE
(continuing)
Viv... Charlie... Are you here?

Bettie removes her shoes.

INT. DWIGHT'S HOME

Bettie walks inside and looks around.

BETTIE
Vivian... It's Bettie. You here?

Bettie walks up the stairs with slight trepidation and stops at Vivian and Charlie's closed bedroom door. She knocks.

BETTIE
(continuing)
You all right? It's Bettie.

Bettie reaches for the knob and slowly turns it. She pushes open the door, looks inside and gasps. Vivian and Charlie lie dead in their king-size bed. Both of them have been shot in the head. Blood has sprayed the wall above the head board.

Bettie staggers back and looks at Cindy's closed bedroom door.

She rushes downstairs and hurries into the kitchen, where she stops short and shrieks. Dwight lies on his back on the kitchen floor. His pajama top has been torn off his shoulders and pulled down to his waist.

The cat sniffs a massive puddle of blood surrounding Dwight's upper body.

Dwight has been decapitated. His head is no where in sight.

Bettie turns away and falls to her knees. She half crawls out of the kitchen, then makes it to her feet. She grabs the phone in the living room and discovers the cord has been cut. Bettie sees the desk in the den has been pulled away from the wall. The computer tower is gone. The printer, key board and monitor are still in place.

EXT. DWIGHT'S HOUSE - DAY

Bettie walks unsteadily out of the house in complete shock. She stops at her car, stares at the stuck tire, then hurries down the dirt road.

INT. CAFE - DAY - LATER

Karla is at a window booth dropping off a customer's check. She looks out the window spotting a very dazed, Bettie, crossing the street bare foot. A trucker pulling up to the cafe slams on his brakes and lays on the horn, narrowly missing Bettie, who barely notices.

Karla turns to Russell and snaps her finger.

KARLA

Russell, go outside. Something's wrong with Bettie.

Karla and Russell hurry out. The booth customer watches as Bettie crumples into Karla's arms and cries out.

EXT. DWIGHT'S HOUSE - DAY - LATER

A highway patrol car, four police cars, and two Nye County Sheriff department cars are parked next to three FBI sedans.

Two Coroner's vans are nearby.

Several policemen are searching the surrounding desert area near Dwight's home. Dwight, Cindy, and their parent's covered bodies are wheeled out of the house and put in the coroner's vans. A tow truck drags Bettie's car out of the mud.

INT. DWIGHT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Two men dust for fingerprints. Lester Wells, a SHERIFF and an FBI AGENT, stand next to the large puddle of blood where Dwight's body was. All of the men in the room wear plastic booties over their shoes to avoid contaminating any evidence.

SHERIFF

Might as well call off the search.
It's not out there. If it was carried
outside it would've left a blood
trail. It had to have been put in a
container... There's nothing.

(points)

Just this arterial spray from the
weapon's impact.

LESTER

You think he was dead, before...

AGENT

Had to be. Kitchen's too clean.
Course, we don't see it much, but
with a clean, quick decapitation, the
heart would still beat, four, five,
six seconds from pure adrenaline.
Blood would've literally shot out and
covered everything.

Lester looks away.

A SECOND AGENT, African American, older, enters the kitchen.

SECOND AGENT

We found something in the garage.

INT. BETTIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Mike sits on the couch very distraught. He holds his head in his hands. A car pulls up outside. In a moment, there's a knock on the door. Mike gets up and answers.

JEAN, early fifties, Bettie's friend, walks inside and hugs Mike.

JEAN

Mike, I'm so sorry. I can't believe
it. I just cannot believe it.

Mike closes the door.

JEAN
 (continuing)
 Are you okay?

Mike nods.

JEAN
 (continuing)
 Honey, is your mom here? They told me she found them. Is that true?

MIKE
 Yeah, Frank Martin came over and gave her a sedative. She's upstairs, but she's not sleeping. I just heard her.

JEAN
 I'll bring her up some tea. You want something?

Mike shakes his head. Jean goes into the kitchen. Mike goes upstairs and knocks lightly on Bettie's door.

BETTIE (O.S.)
 Come in.

INT. BETTIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mike enters. Bettie sits up in bed, looking haggard and drained, still in the rumpled clothes she fell asleep in.

BETTIE
 Who's here?

MIKE
 Jean. She's making you some tea.

Bettie smooths down her hair, then grabs a brush from her purse.

MIKE
 (continuing)
 Did you sleep?

BETTIE
 (brushes hair back)
 A little. Mike, close the door.

He closes the door and sits on the bed.

BETTIE
 (continuing)
 Honey... We have to talk.

MIKE

What?

Jean softly knocks on the door.

BETTIE

It can wait.

JEAN (O.S.)

Bettie. You up?

BETTIE

Yes, come in.

Mike stands and looks at Bettie curiously.

EXT. DWIGHT'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

The police and FBI cars are still out front. The entire house is lit up from large klieg lights.

INT. BETTIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Jean sits in a chair. Mike and Bettie are on the couch, looking up at a very solemn Lester.

LESTER

It just doesn't make sense. I've never seen any unusual activity out there. The FBI claims they found traces of chemicals used to make Methamphetamines.

MIKE

(shaking head)

Uh, uh. No way.

LESTER

Mike, they think at one time a lab was set up in the garage, and it was a revenge killing over a previous drug deal.

(sits in chair)

It's crazy.

MIKE

Dwight didn't do drugs. None of 'em did. And who'd wanna rob them? They only had two things worth money. The damn stereo had a missing speaker.

Bettie squeezes Mike's arm as if to quiet him down.

BETTIE

The place was ransacked. It could've been a robbery. People will kill you now if you even look at them funny.

EXT. BETTIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

The house is dark. The porch light is off. Mike is by himself on the porch, quietly crying.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Several dozen towns people surround the four coffins containing Dwight and his family. Bettie and Mike are in the front of the crowd listening to the priest.

Behind them, outside the cemetery, a new Corvette pulls over driven by a woman.

INT. CORVETTE - DAY

The driver is Vale Johanson, nineteen years old, now, and literally transformed. She is quite beautiful and very polished. Her long hair is blond and straight. Her nails are perfectly sculpted and manicured. From Vale's point of view, Mike has his back to her.

Vale watches the funeral a few moments and drives off.

EXT. LYDIA'S MOTEL - DAY - LATER

The old motel is situated by itself a short distance off the main street of Rhyolite. A small school is across the street. Vale's Corvette is parked in front of room 8.

INT. ROOM 8 - SUNSET

Vale, dressed in a short t-shirt and panties looks out the window, bored and restless. Behind her, on the dresser, a camcorder battery is on it's charger. A high-end digital camera and laptop computer are on the night stand.

On the bathroom vanity, expensive Chanel make-up and pricey body lotions by Lancome and Estee Lauder line the small shelf. Louis Vuitton luggage is on the floor. Vale has definitely moved up in the world.

She sits on the bed and idly watches the small TV a moment, before looking despairingly around the bleak room. She gets up and finds a pair of jeans.

EXT. OLD CASINO - NIGHT - LATER

INT. OLD CASINO - NIGHT

Vale sits at the snack bar listlessly eating fries. Several shriveled hotdogs slowly turn on a spit nearby.

EXT. CASINO - NIGHT

Vale walks out and continues a short distance toward the cafe. She stops, noticing Mike pull up to the cafe and park. He goes inside. Vale crosses the street, very intrigued now.

She walks quickly up the sidewalk and stops directly across from the cafe, where inside, a large group of funeral goers mill about and talk in the booths. Vale tries to see through the small mass of people for a better look at Mike, who is greeted and hugged by different people.

Bettie sits in a nearby booth. Mike then turns toward the window to greet a group of elderly people.

Vale gets a full on look at him. She stares in awe and softly gasps.

VALE

Oh, my God.

Vale covers her mouth, profoundly affected by seeing Mike. She walks quickly down the sidewalk and sits on a bench, taking in the enormity of it. She stares at her shaking hands. Tears well up in her eyes and it takes a moment to get her wits about her. Vale stands and hurriedly crosses the street to where her car is parked.

INT. BETTIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

All the lights are off. Bettie stands at the window in her bathrobe staring out into the darkness. She turns away and sits on the bed looking consumed with worry.

EXT. VALE'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Vale leaves the room holding her purse and car keys. She stops short, seeing Mike's jeep parked on the other side of the school near the playground area.

VALE

Shit.

Vale thinks a moment, then unlocks the motel room door and goes inside to get the camcorder. She picks it up, then puts it back down. Vale tosses her purse on the bed. She re-locks the door and walks toward the school.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Mike plays basketball by himself. He shoots a basket and sees Vale walk by. She stops and smiles at him, trying not to stare at his bare chest. Mike sees her and ignores the ball that rolls into the street.

VALE

Hi.

MIKE

Hi... Excuse me.

He retrieves the ball and walks up to her, equally smitten.

VALE

Do you happen to know if there's any place close by to eat?

MIKE

Yeah, there's a cafe about a mile up this street.

VALE

Really? I've been driving to that truck stop on the interstate. It's about five miles out.

MIKE

I know it. I was born here. I mean, I've been here since I was, like, a week old... You're not from here, right?

VALE

Chicago. I'm taking the long way home.

MIKE

Real long.

VALE

I love being on the road. I almost brought my daughter with, but I didn't want to take her out of school.

MIKE

You have a kid?

VALE

Mmmhmm. She's five... I got divorced a while back, so I just took off awhile.

They don't say anything a moment. Vale studies Mike's face. She smiles.

MIKE

Would you like a ride to the cafe? I was getting ready to leave, anyway.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Mike parks at the curb. They stare at one another. Vale shyly smiles.

VALE

Well... Thanks for the ride.

She gets out and faces Mike, who's building his courage.

MIKE

Any time.

Vale steps back and waves. She turns to go.

MIKE

(continuing)

Hey...

VALE

Yes?

MIKE

Would you like to do something? I mean, only if you're gonna be here awhile. If not, it's okay, I-

VALE

Sure. Yeah.

MIKE

Oh... Okay. Great. Well, you got two choices. This place or the dreaded casino snack bar. The town's only a few miles long, so we all have to put on our thinking caps before we make a move.

VALE

The cafe's fine.

MIKE

Really? How bout' tomorrow night, then?

Vale smiles and nods.

MIKE

(continuing)

Can I call you later tonight?

VALE

I'd like that. Oh, I'm in room eight, okay?

Vale smiles and goes inside the cafe. Mike let's out his breath.

MIKE

Yes!

He drives off and turns the corner. Vale walks back out of the cafe and heads back to the motel.

INT. VALES MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Vale walks inside, smiling. She leans back against the door and sees the message light on the phone is blinking.

She loses her smile.

INT. MIKE'S HOME - NIGHT - LATER

Bettie is on the couch looking up at a very enthusiastic Mike, who stands a few feet away. Bettie seems distracted and forces a smile.

MIKE

I think she's my age. But she's so beautiful, Ma. She's not stuck up or anything.

(more)

MIKE (CONT'D)

I can tell she's down to earth. She said going to the cafe was fine.

BETTIE

You don't have a little crush on her, do ya'?

Mike smiles and plops down in the recliner, quiet a moment.

MIKE

You know, I've never felt this way about anyone, ever.

(quickly stands)

Oh, shoot. My, God, we forgot to tell each other our names! I don't believe it.

BETTIE

That would be helpful to know on your date. "Hey, you. Pass the salt".

MIKE

She's divorced... And has a brat.

BETTIE

What? At nineteen?

Mike sits back down and winks at Bettie.

MIKE

You know how those city slickers can be. I've never dated a girl who's lived in the fast lane.

BETTIE

And she's never dated a guy who just fell off the turnip truck. Match made in heaven.

Headlights flash into the house and a car drives up.

MIKE

Who's that?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Mike and Bettie stand in the middle of the room. Mike looks up the stairs, listening to a female real estate agent. The floor creaks above Bettie and Mike as the realtor and two other people walk about.

REALTOR (O.S.)

This house has lots of charm. In addition to the three bedrooms, there's an attic. Nowadays, a lot of people convert them into bedrooms or studies...

Mike speaks in a hushed tone, fairly incredulous.

MIKE

We've lived here all our lives. Why do you wanna move? Have they already bought the house and you didn't tell me?

BETTIE

No, no... Mike, I was going to tell you. I just didn't expect any lookers this soon.

MIKE

Why'd they come at night?

BETTIE

Because I want it that way.

(steps back)

If we didn't need the money we'd be gone already.

MIKE

What? You'd just take off and never see Jean or Lester ever again. Why? What's going on?

The visitors upstairs walk out into the hallway.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Mike and Bettie step onto the porch.

MIKE

Ma, it might not even sell. Who'd wanna move way out here?

Bettie looks at him intently.

BETTIE

Mike... You have to listen to me, now.

MIKE

What?

BETTIE

I'm sorry. I know this is a surprise,
but...

(Beat)

Mike, only Dwight's computer was
taken that day. Nothing else. They
even left the key board and the
monitor.

MIKE

They're not worth much. Maybe-

BETTIE

(lowers voice)

Mike, who ever it was, must've taken
it to see what's on the hard-drive or
whatever. I don't know, but... I...
I'm almost certain whoever killed
them might've thought Dwight was you.

Mike is completely shocked. He sits on a porch chair and
looks gravely up at his mother.

INT. BETTIE'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT - LATER

The hallway is dark. Muffled talking can be heard from
downstairs. Bettie walks sleepily out of her bedroom tying
her bathrobe around her. She walks downstairs hearing Mike
laugh. Mike lies on the couch talking on the phone. He sees
Bettie and raises his voice so Bettie can hear the name.

MIKE

Hold on a sec, "Vale".

BETTIE

Mike.

(looks at clock)

You've been on the phone for five
hours?

MIKE

It's not long distance.

BETTIE

I know, but why don't you say
goodnight. It's late.

Bettie goes back upstairs and pauses outside her bedroom
door, listening uneasily to Mike's conversation.

MIKE (O.S.)
 Hi, I'm back... You heard?... Yeah,
 I lost track of time, too. I'll just
 see you tomorrow, then, okay?

Bettie goes into her bedroom.

INT. VALE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Vale smiles and hangs up the phone. She lies back on the bed and the phone rings. Vale sits up and looks at the phone warily, clearly not wanting to answer.

VALE
 Fuck.
 (she answers)
 I'm sorry. I had the phone off the
 hook.

The CALLER is a man with a deep voice. He sounds dubious.

CALLER (V.O.)
 Really? Why is that?

VALE
 I have a migraine. Look, I know it's
 late. I'll send it tomorrow, I
 promise.

EXT. BETTIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Bettie cuts roses from the various bushes.

INT. MIKE'S ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Mike stands in front of a full length mirror combing his hair, dressed casually. Bettie walks up to the open doorway with her hands behind her back. She whistles at Mike. He turns and smiles.

BETTIE
 Pretty spiffy.
 (gives him once over)
 No cowlick. Even put your false teeth
 in. What's her name must be "All that
 and a bag of chips".

Bettie smiles and holds out a bouquet of cut roses, which consists of several buds and one old full blossom.

BETTIE
 (continuing)
 The roses weren't cooperating, but
 it's the thought that counts.

MIKE
 (Takes bouquet)
 Thanks, Ma.

INT. MIKE'S JEEP - NIGHT

Mike and Vale drive down the street in his open jeep. Vale holds the bouquet. All of the petals have fallen off the old rose and are on her lap.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT - NIGHT

Highway Patrol Officers, BRENT, Late twenties, and SAM, late thirties, sit at a back table on their dinner break. Nearby, Mike and Vale are finishing their meal at the window booth.

MIKE
 Where'd you grow up?

VALE
 All over... My parents are dead.

MIKE
 That's too bad. Did your grandparents raise you?

VALE
 No. But I am named after my step father's grandmother. It's not the name my mother wanted, but I was told you kind of had to do what he said.

MIKE
 I think your name's cool.

A highway patrol car drives up and parks in front of the cafe. Lester gets out.

MIKE
 (continuing)
 Hey, there's Lester. I'll introduce ya'. I've know him my whole life.

Lester walks inside. It's obvious, Mike is eager for him or anyone for that matter to meet Vale, who smiles to herself.

LESTER
Hey, Mike. Who's your friend?

MIKE
Lester, this is Vale. She's staying
over at Lydia's place.

Vale shyly smiles.

VALE
Hi.

LESTER
It's real nice to meet you. Listen,
your mom's over at Jean's playing
cards. She said if I saw you to tell
you to stop by. Bring your date.

MIKE
Want to?

Vale nods.

MIKE
(continuing)
Thanks, Lester.

LESTER
Anytime. Nice meeting you, Vale. Hope
I see you again.

Lester joins Sam and Brent. Vale smiles and looks intently at
Mike, who finishes his soda.

MIKE
What?

VALE
I don't know. It's nice here.

MIKE
It is. It's nice knowing the same
people all your life. Wanna drive
around awhile before we go over?

Vale nods and they get out of the booth and go up to the cash
register. Mary heads for Lester's booth.

MARY
Be right there, Mike.

Vale glances at the lost and found basket on the shelf and is
taken aback. She looks closely at something.

CLOSE ON: The sunglasses lie at the top of the items.

Vale is shaken. Mary hurries up to the register.

MARY
(continuing)
All set?

Mary takes the check from Mike. Vale looks back at the sunglasses.

EXT. BLUFF - NIGHT - LATER

Mike and Vale are parked at the edge of the bluff, which affords a complete view of the entire town and nearby Interstate. Below them, a police car on the outskirts of town drives slowly past a house, then stops. The driver flashes a beam of light on the house.

VALE
Is he after someone?

Mike is quiet a moment.

MIKE
No... Something really bad happened in that house. I knew the people who lived there... They all got killed. Even my best friend. It was a robbery or something.

VALE
That's terrible.

MIKE
It even made the news in Vegas. People actually drive out here just to see the house. Even look in the windows. Lester chases them off.

VALE
I think I saw the funeral.

MIKE
You did? It was more than a week ago.

VALE
I was here. I didn't leave my room for a week. Just slept and watched TV. I had to be alone for awhile... Mike, I'm real sorry about your friend.

EXT. JEAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Mike and Vale drive up in his jeep. A little party is going on. Bettie, her friend Jean, and four other women, all play cards at a table on the porch. A man barbecues food on the lawn. Three girls in their early teens sit on a blanket. Younger children play nearby.

Bettie stands and watches a beaming Mike help Vale out of the jeep. She appears concerned that Mike is so obviously enthralled with Vale.

EXT. JEAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Mike plays frisbee with two of the teen girls. The card game is still going. Vale sits at the end of the big porch away from everyone. Bettie's in the yard serving one of the younger kids a hamburger. She sees Vale by herself and walks over.

BETTIE

Having a good time?

VALE

Yeah, I am. Just trying to stay cool.

Bettie sits next to her on a bench

BETTIE

Good idea. Sometimes in the summer, even at midnight, it's a hundred degrees still.

VALE

I know. I've never been anywhere this hot.

BETTIE

Yeah, well, I lived back east until my husband drug me back out west. Living in this heat is an acquired taste, like eating oysters. You play cards?

VALE

Not really. I never learned.

BETTIE

Not even as a child? Go Fish or Old Maid? Five card stud?

VALE

No.

BETTIE

Well, guess you had better things to do, huh?

Jean sticks her head out the front door.

JEAN

Bettie, that beer's going right through me and I have popcorn in the microwave. Come inside and watch it while I run to the bathroom.

BETTIE

One of my many duties.

Bettie stands. Mike runs up to the porch.

MIKE

Hey, let's have Vale over for dinner tomorrow night. She needs a home cooked meal.

INT. BETTIE'S HOME - DAY

Bettie is at the table filling out a grocery list. She hears a car pull up and goes to the open front door. Mike gets out of Vale's Corvette and walks inside. Bettie shoots him a look.

BETTIE

Is Vale in the trunk?

MIKE

Huh? No, back in her room. I told her before dinner we were driving out to Vegas to stock up on groceries. She said to take her car.

BETTIE

Mike, I really don't feel right about taking her car.

MIKE

She said I can drive it anytime I want. I'll be careful.

BETTIE

That's not the point. You've known this girl two days and you're driving her new car.

MIKE

It's pretty awesome.

BETTIE
I bet it is. But it's also-

MIKE
Come on.

INT. VALE'S CORVETTE - DAY

Mike and Bettie are driving back to town. The back is filled with groceries. Bettie looks uncomfortable.

INT. BETTIE'S HOUSE - SUNSET

The front and back doors are open. Vale, Mike and Bettie are seated at the table eating roast beef.

BETTIE
What made you think of this place, anyhow? You throw a dart at a map of the United States?

VALE
No. I drove through here several years ago with my Mom and Dad. We were on our way to California to visit relatives.

BETTIE
Oh... Well, that's nice. Are you planning on staying awhile?

VALE
Couple months, I guess.

MIKE
My birthday's in two months. Now you can't leave.

VALE
Well, I kind of have no choice. I have to stay.

BETTIE
Why's that, if I'm not being too nosy?

VALE
No. I was divorced not too long ago. Mike knows, but...
(looks at Mike)
There's things I didn't tell you. He's kind of crazy. I'm actually hiding from him.

BETTIE

Vale, is your daughter safe?

VALE

Yes, but he's not her father. I mean, she... she thinks of him as her dad, but... She's fine.

Vale forces a nervous smile. Bettie does her best to appear unfazed.

MIKE

You sure there's no way he can find you?

VALE

I covered my tracks.

(Glances at kitchen clock)

I'm sorry. I have to go back to my room and make a call.

MIKE

You can call here.

Vale catches Bettie shoot Mike a look.

VALE

Oh, it's in Illinois.

MIKE

Use your cell.

VALE

I lost it. But I need to call a girl friend back home. My husband- ex-husband has an older son who's really sick. I wanna see how he's doing.

(Scoots back chair)

I better go.

MIKE

Can you come back?

VALE

Half hour, okay?

INT. VALE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Vale sits stiffly on the edge of the bed, waiting. The telephone rings. She flinches and reluctantly answers.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bettie rinses off a dish in the sink.

BETTIE

She kind of let it slip she's never
been out west. Let alone good ol'
Rhyolite.

MIKE

You think she was lying?

Bettie dries her hands.

BETTIE

Not exactly. Let's just say my
antenna went up... A few times. But
to me there's two types of lying. One
is malicious, the other is what you
wish could have been, because it
hurts so much it wasn't.

INT. VALE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT - SHORT TIME LATER

Vale inserts the digital camera chip into the laptop. The
phone call has obviously shook her up. She clicks on a video
file.

CLOSE ON: Footage plays on the computer monitor. Several
quick scenes, filmed at a distance, show Bettie and Mike
around town, or driving to and from their house at different
intervals.

Vale clicks off the video and types an email address.
Attaching the video file, she pauses not wanting to complete
the transaction.

CLOSE ON: With trepidation she clicks send.

Vale unplugs the laptop and pushes it under the bed.

INT. BETTIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

A chocolate cake remains untouched on the kitchen table.

INT. BETTIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bettie knits on the couch. Mike watches TV, very restless,
waiting for Vale to return. He looks at the clock.

BETTIE
A watched pot never boils.

Headlights flash into the window. Mike hops off the couch.

BETTIE
(continuing)
Maybe it does.

INT. MIKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Vale sits on Mike's bed looking through his year book.

CLOSE ON: She finds Mike's senior picture and stares at it.

She closes the book and looks around the room at his football trophy, photographs of his friends that hang on the wall and his football jacket. She takes it all in. A look of deep regret is on her face as it's a life she's never known. Vale gets up.

CLOSE ON: She examines a photograph of Mike and Dwight at a lake.

Mike walks into his room holding a plate with a very large piece of chocolate cake on it.

MIKE
My mom's wrapping up a couple of
slices for you to take home. Nothing
goes to waste around here.

Mike realizes what picture she's looking at. He sets down the plate.

MIKE
(continuing)
That was my best friend, Dwight. The
one I was telling you about.

VALE
You almost look like brothers.

MIKE
Yeah. We always heard that...
Sometimes I wonder if I do have a
brother, or a sister, even.

Vale sits on the bed and looks at him a little too intently.

VALE
What do you mean?

MIKE

I was adopted.

VALE

Really?

MIKE

Yep. My mom couldn't have kids.

VALE

Have you ever considered finding your biological mother?

MIKE

No, she died giving birth to me. How long you been divorced?

VALE

Almost a month.

MIKE

That's it? When did he... turn crazy?

VALE

After I said I do. He's rich. Very rich. But you'll never see him in the Fortune 500. He's obsessively private.

MIKE

That's a magazine or something, right?

Vale nods and Mike takes a bite of his cake.

MIKE

(continuing)

What's he do?

VALE

You name it. He owns several companies. And he's used to having his ass kissed twenty-four seven.

MIKE

He didn't hit you, did he?

VALE

He didn't have to. He prefers mind games. But people fascinate him. He's very interested in nature versus nurture. How a person's environment affects them as they grow up. Things like that.

MIKE

You lost me on nature versus nurture.
But I think it's cool the money
didn't matter to you.

VALE

Don't give me too much credit, Mike.
It did at first. I guess in my own
way I did love him. But I never
really had anyone I loved before to
compare him to.

Mike sits next to Vale.

MIKE

What? You could have anyone you want.

Vale just shakes her head, no. They stare at one another a
moment and Mike kisses her.

VALE

Will you take me back to my room?

INT. VALE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Vale and Mike make love. It's very passionate and Mike holds
her tightly. It's obvious Vale feels genuine pleasure and
she's surprised at herself, but at the same time trying not
to surrender to it. She stiffly holds onto Mike's arms as if
she's trying to keep his body at a distance.

Mike moans with pleasure lost in the moment.

Vale can't hold back. She pulls Mike close and tries to
suppress her intense pleasure, but it's no use.

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Mike lays next to Vale breathing deeply. Tears roll down
Vale's face. She quickly wipes them away. Mike sits up
looking into her face.

MIKE

What's wrong? Why are you sad?

Vale is quiet a moment.

VALE

I... I'm not... I honestly didn't
know it felt good.

Mike practically whispers as he gets the nerve to ask.

MIKE

Did you... did I make you... you know...

Vale nods and looks away. Mike strokes her face and she turns to him and they embrace. Vale closes her eyes and revels in being close to him, as he does with her.

INT. VALE'S MOTEL ROOM - LATER

The lamp is on. Vale and Mike sit up in bed naked under the covers. Vale gives Mike a curious look.

MIKE

What?

VALE

How old were you when you lost your virginity? There's hardly any girls here.

Mike groans, a bit embarrassed, now.

MIKE

You had to ask... Well... It was only five months ago. And she went off to college.

VALE

Really? I think it's sweet.

MIKE

Glad you think so.
(slyly smiles)
Now, how old were you?

Vale wishes she hadn't brought it up. She turns away from Mike and lies down with her back to him.

VALE

It was a while ago... If he knew we made love, he'd kill me.... Slowly. He doesn't love me or like me, even. But I am his property. So are you. I mean-

MIKE

What?

VALE

Nothing. Nothing. I just meant, you know, if he knew about us, he'd want to get you. He wouldn't give up. I told you how he is.

MIKE

He sounds like a real jerk. I'd never let him hurt you.

Mike lies beside her. Vale turns to him and holds him tightly, looking troubled.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT - LATER

Mike drives away in his jeep.

INT. VALE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Vale watches as Mike's jeep turns a corner. Tears fill her eyes. The phone rings. Vale spins around, startled.

INT. VALE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Vale's hand is clenched around the phone as she reluctantly listens to the same deep voiced caller.

CALLER (V.O.)

What was it like?

VALE

It wasn't like anything. I felt like I was with a customer.

CALLER (V.O.)

That's good. But it's not really like you're cheating on me, if you think about it. Still, it had to be real fucking strange, huh? Surreal.

VALE

I guess. I don't know.

CALLER (V.O.)

Did he go down on you?

VALE

No.

CALLER (V.O.)

(Laughs)

Oh, fuck. Lemme guess. He loves Jesus and only does it in the missionary position. Hell, if he met you awhile back he could've had the works for ten bucks.

Vale hangs her head, completely demoralized.

VALE

Will you please let me have a cell phone. The motel manager's really old. She has to wake up each time to put the call through.

CALLER (V.O.)

Vale. You don't need one... The line to your room is monitored 24/7.

VALE

(Stunned)

What? You heard every-

CALLER (V.O.)

I have to know what's going on at all times. This is too impor-

Vale hangs up the phone.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Bettie is on the couch knitting. Mike walks inside and sees Bettie. He looks very self-conscious and smiles almost bashfully. Bettie smiles back, trying to be nonchalant.

Mike goes upstairs. Bettie stops knitting. She sits a moment, then sighs in frustration.

BETTIE

Shit.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT - LATER

Vale stands near the cash register looking at the Lost and Found basket. Mary faces her.

VALE

I was here during the day and I think it fell off while I was eating. Did anyone turn in a bracelet?

MARY
 Not tonight, no.
 (hands basket to Vale)
 You're welcome to look.

Vale sees the sunglasses. She rummages through the basket as if she were looking for something else. A customer motions for Mary. She walks away. Vale picks up the sunglasses and looks closely at one of the handles.

INSERT: "Ray Ban" is printed on the handle.

Vale is taken aback. Mary walks up to the register.

MARY
 (continuing)
 Everybody likes those.

VALE
 What?

MARY
 The sunglasses. I'm ready to put them
 in a safe.

VALE
 How long have they been here?

MARY
 Over a month, now. Be awhile till I
 give 'em away. You find your bracelet?

VALE
 It's not here.

MARY
 Hold on. I'll go look between the
 cushions.

VALE
 No, no. Please, that's all right.
 Thank you.

Vale abruptly leaves the cafe. Mary watches her drive off.

INT. BETTIE'S BEDROOM - NEXT DAY

Bettie puts on her bathrobe. She starts to leave the room, then stops and picks up the phone.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - LATER

Bettie waters some house plants. Mike walks into the kitchen wearing Levi's and no shirt. He stops short, seeing his mother. Bettie cracks a smile to break the ice.

BETTIE

Will you relax. You look like Adam after Eve pulled off his fig leaf.

(waters another plant)

Listen... I... I didn't want to, but I called Vale this morning. Invited her to supper again. Guess she was still sleeping, so I told Lydia to knock on her door later and let her know.

MIKE

Thanks.

Bettie strains to keep her tone light.

BETTIE

Yeah, well, before I met your dad, I was ga ga over a couple guys. I know how it can be the day after. Staring at the phone... wondering.

MIKE

Wondering what? We just talked.

BETTIE

You stick to that story.

MIKE

Ma, I was thinking. When we go. Let her come with.

BETTIE

Mike... No, you just met her.

MIKE

You told me after your second date you knew dad was the one. That's how I feel about her.

(Sits at table)

I don't think you should sell the house, now. Everything's fine.

EXT. BETTIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Mike sits on the porch. He stands and looks anxiously toward the dirt road. He glumly turns and walks into the house.

EXT. LYDIA'S MOTEL - DAY

Bettie and Mike are in his jeep. LYDIA, early seventies, skinny, big hair, stands near the passenger side.

LYDIA

She's gone, Mike. Left sometime last night. The maid found her key on the bed. All of her things are gone.

Mike is stunned. Bettie's relief is palpable. She hides it and turns to Mike.

BETTIE

Honey, I'm sorry.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Bettie and a very sullen, Mike, eat dinner in a booth. The juke box plays a song. Lester walks inside dressed in jeans, a cowboy hat and boots. He goes over to Bettie.

LESTER

Hi. Thought that was your car.

Bettie scoots over and pats the seat.

BETTIE

Pull up some vinyl.

LESTER

Can't stay. I'm on my way to work... Mike, last night I pulled your friend over on the interstate. I let her go with a warning, but she asked me to tell you she was sorry. Apparently, she's spending the night in Vegas, then driving back to Chicago.

Mike is crestfallen. He nods and looks away.

EXT. BETTIE'S HOME - NIGHT - LATER

Bettie turns on the hose and places it under a large rose bush. Lester drives up in his patrol car and waves at her. Bettie walks up and Lester squeezes her hand.

LESTER

How's Mike holding up?

BETTIE

As well as a heart-broken nineteen
year old can be.

LESTER

Time heals all wounds.

BETTIE

So they say. He's taking this one
hard. And I hate to say it, but it's
for the best. Just be awhile until he
thinks so.

EXT. INTERSTATE - NIGHT - LATER

Lester walks away from a car, whose passenger he just
ticketed. He takes a second look and notices Vale's Corvette
exit the interstate back into Rhyolite. Lester gets into his
patrol car.

INT. LESTER'S PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Lester watches as Vale drives the Corvette partially up on
the sidewalk a moment, then park in front of Lydia's Motel.
Vale gets out fairly drunk and walks unsteadily up to the
office and rings the bell. Lydia answers the door and Vale
goes inside. Lester drives off.

INT. BETTIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Bettie washes dishes. She hears the floor squeak upstairs.
She shuts off the water and walks over to the stairs and
looks up at Mike.

BETTIE

Mike...

He stops at the top of the stairs.

MIKE

Yeah?

Bettie hides her disappointment.

BETTIE

Honey... She's back.

MIKE

What?

(walks downstairs)

How do you know? Where is she?

BETTIE

Lydia's. She showed up last night
around two in the morning.

Bettie starts to say something, then stops.

MIKE

I knew she cared about me. I knew it.
Ma, what should I do?

BETTIE

You have to figure this one out. My
crystal ball's not working.

Bettie goes back into the kitchen. Mike looks in a quandary.
He walks back upstairs.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Mike slowly drives by Lydia's Motel. Vale's car is parked out
front. Her room light is on. Mike drives off.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT - LATER

Mary reads a magazine behind the counter. Vale is seated at
the booth farthest from the cash register with her back to
Mary. She is the only customer.

Vale looks out the window. It's very windy. A tumbleweed
blows across the empty street. The telephone rings. Mary
looks at the clock, surprised someone called this late. She
answers.

MARY

Hello...

Vale takes a sip of her drink.

Behind her, Mary glances back at Vale and turns around so
Vale won't hear. She begins writing something on a piece of
paper as she remains on the phone.

Mary finishes writing. She hangs up and smiles, then walks
over to the juke box and punches in the numbers to a song. An
old scratchy 45 record plays "Magnet and Steel" by the singer
"Walter Egan".

Mary walks up to Vale's booth and sets the paper on the table.

VALE

Oh, you already gave me the check.

MARY

Open it.

Mary walks away. Vale opens the paper, which is a note that reads:

INSERT: "Vale, please listen to the words to this song. It's been on the juke box for twenty years. But it finally means something other than background noise. I miss you. With Love, Mike."

Vale listens to the words as tears stream down her face. She looks out the window and Mike pulls up in his jeep. Vale takes out a ten and drops it on the table. She hurries out of the booth, smiles at Mary and rushes outside.

Mary watches as Mike and Vale kiss passionately and hold one another.

They get in the jeep and drive off. Mary smiles and wipes the counter as she softly sings aloud to the love song she's heard a hundred times.

INT. VALE'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Mike and Vale lie in bed.

VALE

I drove off and realized I had no where to go. The closer I got to Vegas, I didn't know what to do. You're the only person I feel like I've known all my life.

MIKE

I thought you went back to him.

VALE

I could never do that. Not now. You know, my mother told me a story once about a bird that was kept in it's cage since the day it was born. Then one day someone opened it to let it out, but it wouldn't budge. That's how I've been... I wanted back in my cage.

Mike kisses her. The phone rings. Vale freezes. It continues ringing. Mike sits up.

MIKE

Who's that?

VALE

It can't be for me. Maybe it's the office.

The phone keeps ringing.

MIKE

I don't think Lydia would call this late. She has to connect whoever it is to your room. Shouldn't you answer?

VALE

It's not for me. What do you want to do tomorrow?

The phone continues ringing. It's very awkward. Vale looks ready to jump out of her skin.

MIKE

We can...

The phone stops ringing.

MIKE

(continuing)
... do whatever you like.

Vale lies there clutching the sheet.

INT. MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Bettie cooks breakfast. Mike sits at the table.

MIKE

I think he found out she's here. But I guess she figures if she doesn't answer, it'll fool him into thinking she's not. I don't know.

Bettie turns off the burner and faces Mike.

BETTIE

Mike... Before she left, she answered when you called, right?

MIKE

Yeah.

BETTIE

If he called her, she told him where she's at.

(more)

BETTIE (CONT'D)

(sits at table)

Mike, compared to her you've lived a very sheltered life. You can't just ignore something and expect it'll go away. For what ever reason, she's doing that and you're going to get hurt.

MIKE

Has anyone else called about the house?

Bettie is taken aback.

BETTIE

Yes. A few people...

MIKE

I don't think I'm leaving.

EXT. LYDIA'S MOTEL - DAY

Lydia is on her knees sticking a bunch of plastic flowers in the dirt in front of the office. Bettie crosses the street and walks up to Lydia. Mike's jeep is parked in front of Vale's room.

BETTIE

What are you doing?

LYDIA

Bettie, hi.

(stands, brushes off
knees)

Trying to spruce this place up. Only a cactus could grow in this awful dirt. You come to see Vale? She's off with Mike in her fancy car.

BETTIE

Figured as much... Look, I know how this might sound, but could I ask you a question? By any chance does Vale have any visitors besides Mike? Maybe someone who shows up late at night?

LYDIA

No, Bettie. No one at all. But she does get an awful lot of calls. Most of them late at night. From her father, I think.

BETTIE

When did they start?

LYDIA

Two weeks, now. Since the day she checked in. I have to wake up and connect them to her room. If she hadn't paid me in advance, I wouldn't put up with it.

BETTIE

How far in advance?

LYDIA

Um... The first week of September... The 7th, I think.

BETTIE

The 7th? That's Mike birthday.

LYDIA

Oh, yeah... Bettie, the girl carries around the biggest wad of new one hundred bills I ever saw. That's what she paid with.

BETTIE

Do you know where the calls are from?

LYDIA

I can find out. I'll star sixty nine em'.

BETTIE

No... Well... All right. Just this once.

LYDIA

You don't think she's some kind of con artist or something, do ya'? I'll give her back her money if -

BETTIE

No, nothing like that. When should I get back to you?

LYDIA

Try tomorrow. I imagine soon as my head hits the pillow, it'll start ringing off the hook.

INT. BETTIE'S HOME - DAY

Bettie dials the phone as she watches Vale and Mike drive off in the Corvette.

BETTIE

Hi, Lydia. You get the number?

(Beat)

He didn't call once?

(Beat)

Yeah, that's Murphy's law for you.

(Beat)

Okay. Well, I'll try back tomorrow...

EXT. BETTIE'S PORCH - NIGHT - LATER

Bettie sits on the porch knitting. The front door is open. Mike and Vale are inside watching TV.

INT. BETTIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

The phone rings and Bettie sleepily answers.

BETTIE

Hello...

INT. OFFICE - LYDIA'S MOTEL - DAY

Lydia is behind the counter facing Bettie.

LYDIA

They started right back up. His finger must be sore from dialing. But I star 69'd each one of 'em. Five of them were blocked. But the sixth call wasn't. It was from Chicago.

BETTIE

Illinois. I knew it.

LYDIA

Yes, 312 area code. It's some company. I called this morning.

BETTIE

You shouldn't have done that. Let me pay you for it.

LYDIA

Oh, no. Don't bother. This is fun.
Here's the number. Let me know if you
need anything else.

INT. BETTIE'S HOUSE - DAY - LATER

Bettie dials the number Lydia gave her. A young woman answers.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

GenTech Engineering. Do you know your
extension?

BETTIE

No. What are the extensions?

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Ma'm, some of them are classified.
You have to know the code. Is there
anyone in particular you'd like to
speak with?

BETTIE

Actually, I'd like to know what this
place is. What you do here, I mean?

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Well, personally, I never get beyond
the foyer, myself. But it consists
mainly of scientific research
involving advanced nuclear medicines.
I could send you a brochure if you
like.

BETTIE

Yes, please. Thank you.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Okay, I'm going to connect you to our
automated line. Thank you for calling
GenTech.

Bettie suddenly looks disturbed. She grips the phone, deep in
thought a moment. A robotic pre-recorded voice comes on the
line. Bettie snaps out of it and listens.

VOICE

Hello. To receive a brochure of our
comprehensive services please press
one, now.

Bettie presses 1. Her hands tremble.

VOICE
 (continuing)
 Begin speaking...

BETTIE
 Yes, My name is Bettie... "Jones". I
 live at, 451... I mean...

Bettie quickly grabs the county phone book and opens it to the first page. She sees Mike and Vale drive up to the house in Vale's Corvette.

INSERT: Bettie puts her finger under the address of the Highway Patrol sub-station and speaks quickly.

BETTIE
 (continuing)
 ... 1855 State Highway Road. Junction
 7. Nye county, Nevada. 86753

Mike and Vale walk inside. Bettie abruptly hangs up and forces a smile. She crumples up the paper with GenTech's phone number and clutches it in her hand.

BETTIE
 (continuing)
 Hi, there. Where have you been?

MIKE
 Just driving. We're gonna hog the
 couch, okay?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

Bettie sits at the table filled with apprehension. A cook book is in front of her, but she isn't reading it. The TV is on in the living room. Bettie hears Mike tromp down the stairs.

MIKE (O.S.)
 You ready?

VALE (O.S.)
 Uh huh.

MIKE (O.S.)
 Ma, I'm taking Vale to her room. Be
 back in awhile.

VALE (O.S.)
 Bye, Mrs. Langley.

BETTIE
Drive careful.

Mike and Vale leave the house. Bettie hears the Corvette drive off. She goes quickly into the living room and peels back a small corner section of the carpet behind the television set. She takes out the paper with the numbers and initials written on it that are tattooed in Mike's ear. She unfolds it and places it on the coffee table and gets a pen.

INSERT: Bettie writes the letters "en" after the G, then writes the letters "ech" after the T.

She softly gasps, realizing they spell GENTECH.

INT. BETTIE'S CAR - DAY

Bettie slows down beside Lydia's motel and writes down the license number of Vale's car.

INT. HIGHWAY PATROL SUB-STATION - LESTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Lester is at his desk. Bettie sits across from him near a window, where outside, cars drive by on the interstate.

LESTER
I don't mind at all. Why'd you have
it sent here?

Bettie just sits there at a loss for words. She forces a smile.

BETTIE
I... I just thought it would be a
good idea. Can you accept that answer
for now? I don't even know what I'm
doing exactly. Just please call me
when the brochure comes in.

LESTER
Is something wrong? Mike isn't in
trouble, is he?

Bettie can barely say it.

BETTIE
No.

LESTER
Is it that young lady?

BETTIE
I don't know.

LESTER
You think she's a criminal or something?

BETTIE
No, I don't think that. I'm sure she's not, but...
(opens purse)
Could you please run her plates for me? I'd like to at least know where she's actually from. Anything.

Bettie takes out the paper with Vale's license plate number and hands it to Lester, who sits in front of the station computer. He punches in the license plate number.

LESTER
It'll just be a sec. It's verifying the number.

Lester looks strangely at the screen. A black bar flashes across it, followed by the words:

INSERT: "PLEASE STATE YOUR LOCATION AND REASON FOR INQUIRY"

LESTER
(continuing)
What the hell is this? It knows a law enforcement agency has entered the system.

He presses enter.

BETTIE
Don't answer, Lester.

LESTER
What?

BETTIE
Don't type in where we are... Please.

LESTER
What's going on?

BETTIE
Lester, why would there be a block or what ever on her license plates?

LESTER

If they're even hers. I seriously doubt it now... Only thing I can figure, the car's registered to a government agency. Possibly FBI or C.I.A. Could be an agent's car. Hell, maybe she stole it.

BETTIE

I don't think so.

LESTER

I could find out if I respond.

BETTIE

Lester, I'm not asking you to violate your duties...

LESTER

I'm actually not allowed to run someone's plates for a private citizen. I kind of already have.

BETTIE

(Softly)

I know that... But please hold off on this for, now. The brochure I sent for should arrive in a couple days. And I don't think Vale's going anywhere soon. You could watch her in the meantime.

Lester is quiet a moment.

LESTER

All right. We'll do it your way...
For the time being.

EXT. BETTIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Bettie prunes her roses. She looks drained and is trying to keep her emotions in check. Vale drives up in her car and gets out. She smiles at Bettie, who tenses up and tries to hide her discomfort.

VALE

Hi, Mrs. Langley.

Bettie forces a smile.

BETTIE

Hi, Vale.

(turns away)

Mike should be right down.

Mike comes to the open doorway in his bare feet.

MIKE

Come on in. I'm still lookin' for
clean socks.

Vale hurries past Bettie. She glances back and catches Bettie watching her.

INT. LESTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Lester is seated at his desk tearing open a manila envelope.

INSERT: He looks curiously at the name Bettie "Jones".

He takes out the brochure from GenTech Engineering, that is more like a thick magazine. He leafs through it a moment, then dials Bettie's number.

INT. LESTER'S OFFICE - DAY - LATER

Bettie looks through the GenTech brochure. Lester stands nearby.

LESTER

They have their hands in a lot of
different pots, don't they, "Mrs.
Jones?"

Bettie smiles, then examines one of the pages.

CLOSE ON: There is a photograph of an egg cell being punctured with a micro-fine needle.

BETTIE

Pretty amazing stuff. I had no idea.

LESTER

What's that?

BETTIE

Their fertility clinic. They can take
out a single egg from a woman, alter
the genes or remove a defective one.

(more)

BETTIE (CONT'D)

(Skims page)

... Currently doing a study involving pre-implantation genetic diagnosis... A new technology to pre-determine eye color, hair type.

Bettie flips back a couple pages and reads silently a moment.

BETTIE

(continuing)

Look at this. They grow skin for burn victims. I didn't even know you could grow skin. She wasn't kidding when she said they were advanced.

LESTER

Who?

BETTIE

The receptionist. I have a feeling Vale's ex-husband works here. When I called I was told some of the extensions were classified. That I had to know a code. Maybe he's somebody important.

LESTER

Yeah. Maybe working on something not listed in the brochure. You think the car belongs to him?

BETTIE

Maybe. I don't know.

Lester crosses his arms.

LESTER

I can find out. Bettie, what's going on?

She wants very badly to tell him.

BETTIE

She... I... I just don't want her to hurt Mike. He's crazy about her, Lester. So much so, that if she lies it's a minor detail.

EXT. BETTIE'S PORCH - DAY - LATER

Bettie sits deep in thought. Her eyes are teary. Worry and indecision eat away at her.

A station wagon filled with people drives up to the house. Jean beeps the horn. Mike walks out of the house. Bettie stands and Jean gets out of her car.

JEAN

Hi. It's Saturday. You forget?

EXT. BETTIE'S HOME - DAY - LATER

Jean plays cards on the porch with two women. At the end of the yard, Mike sits on Jean's station wagon talking to another man as they drink beer and soda.

Mike looks beyond them, watching for Vale. Jean cranes her neck and looks into the house.

JEAN

We're gonna start cheating if you don't get out here. Bettie, what are you doing? It's your hand.

Bettie walks outside holding a soda. She notices Mike walk toward the house. He stops and looks a bit woozy, then falls to his hands and knees. Bettie rushes off the porch just as Vale drives up in her Corvette and gets out. Mike collapses on his stomach.

Vale and Bettie run up to him, as do the others.

BETTIE

Mike... Mike.
(Kneels down)
Honey, what's wrong?

Mike sweats profusely and looks in great pain. He gasps for air. Vale watches him closely and looks at the portable table where only empty cans and a bowl of chips are left.

MIKE

Ma, I can hardly breathe...

VALE

Jesus, did he eat Strawberries?

JEAN

Yes, yes. I made strawberry pie. He ate the last slice about ten minutes ago.

VALE

Oh, my God. He's having a severe allergic reaction.
(more)

VALE (CONT'D)

(To Bettie)

He'll die if he doesn't get help. You don't have time to drive him to Vegas.

BETTIE

Vale, how do you know?

VALE

It doesn't matter. Call someone, now! His throat is swelling shut. He's going to need an emergency tracheotomy. You have to call a hospital with a medical emergency flight. Call them!

Bettie runs into the house.

EXT. BETTIE'S HOUSE - DAY - LATER

A Las Vegas U.M.C flight for life helicopter has landed on the edge of Bettie's large front yard. Two paramedics carry Mike on a stretcher towards the copter. A tube has been inserted into his throat so he can breath.

Mike is unconscious. The sheet around him is spattered with blood from his throat. Bettie has her hands over her mouth as she cries. Vale is next to her. The others stand nearby shielding their faces from the intense wind from the helicopter blades.

EXT. INTERSTATE - NIGHT - LATER

Bettie's car speeds down the vast expanse of highway.

INT. EMERGENCY WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

A female DOCTOR speaks with Vale and Bettie.

DOCTOR

He's very lucky. But it's more common than you think. You can eat something for years then one day develop an allergy to it that can kill you. Does he eat them much?

BETTIE

Not really. Few times a year, if that.

Bettie glances at Vale, who looks away.

INT. MIKE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Mike is hooked up to an I.V., asleep. Vale sits next to the bed holding Mike's hand. Bettie walks into the room with a cup of coffee. She sits in a chair on the other side of the bed.

There is tension in the room. Both women don't say a word.

EXT. U.M.C LAS VEGAS - DAY

Bettie and Vale help Mike into the backseat of Bettie's car.

EXT. INTERSTATE - DAY - LATER

Bettie's car comes around a bend in the road.

INT. BETTIE'S CAR - NIGHT

Bettie drives. Mike is asleep in the backseat with Vale. Bettie watches Vale in the rear view mirror.

EXT. BETTIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

The wind blows fiercely kicking up a dust storm.

INT. MIKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mike is in bed. Bettie props a pillow behind his head.

MIKE

She saved my life, Ma. I don't understand. I thought you liked her.

Bettie keeps her voice low.

BETTIE

Mike, I do. It's just that she's not a very good liar.

(sits on bed)

But that's good. I'd be more scared of her if she were.

MIKE

What?

BETTIE

She hasn't been completely truthful.
How did she know that... Mike,
someone has been calling her all
along. Please, don't be upset with me.

MIKE

Did you spy on her? Who called her?

BETTIE

It's not like that. And I don't know
who called. But I am afraid, now.

(forces herself to say
this)

Mike, she came here right after
Dwight and his family were killed.
Don't you think that -

MIKE

She's just hiding. I know how she is.
She... holds things inside. I feel
sorry for her in a way, but I love
her.

Bettie stands.

BETTIE

This isn't the time. Get some rest.
I'm sorry if I upset you.

MIKE

Tell her to come up.

BETTIE

Mike, lie down. You can see her later.

INT. BETTIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The house creaks from the strong howling wind. Vale stands at
the sink drinking a glass of water. Bettie walks inside. Vale
drops the glass in the sink and it breaks.

VALE

Oh, God. I'm sorry.

BETTIE

It's all right... Vale... I'd like to
thank you. I can't imagine what
would've happened if you hadn't known
what to do. He may have died. You
saved his life.

VALE

How is he?

BETTIE

Resting. I need to go sit down myself. I wouldn't mind some company.

Vale follows Bettie into the living room. Bettie sits on the couch. Vale sits rigidly in a chair. Bettie speaks not looking at Vale.

BETTIE

(continuing)

How did you know what was wrong with Mike?

VALE

I don't know. I guess I just sensed it. I've read about food allergies and...

Bettie looks up at her and sighs wearily.

BETTIE

Vale, please. You knew what he ate without seeing it. You knew what his symptoms would be. I don't understand... There's a lot I don't understand. I don't even know if I should trust you.

VALE

I don't know what you mean.

BETTIE

Vale, stop it!

Bettie looks up and sees Mike walking down the stairs in sweats and a t-shirt. He has heard Bettie and is looking at her quizzically.

MIKE

What's going on?

Bettie leaves the room. Vale puts her head down and holds herself. Mike kneels in front of Vale.

MIKE

(continuing)

Vale...

She looks up. Tears roll down her face.

MIKE

(continuing)

What's wrong? Were you arguing or something?

(Calls out)

Ma, what's going on?

Bettie walks back into the room holding the thick brochure from GenTech. She gently lays it on the coffee table in front of Vale, who stares at it, obviously mortified.

VALE

Oh, God... Where did you get that?
Where did you get it?

Vale breaks down into convulsing sobs. Mike sits next to Vale and holds her.

BETTIE

Vale knows why Dwight was killed.

MIKE

What?

Vale pulls away from Mike.

MIKE

(continuing)

Is that true? Do you?

VALE

I'm sorry. I begged him not to involve you.

BETTIE

Who are you talking about? Stop crying. Tell me!

Bettie is trying her best not to lose it.

VALE

Mike, I didn't want to leave that time, but I felt so guilty. Like I was setting you up. But he made me come back and I'm glad I did. I'm just sorry I helped him.

BETTIE

Does "he" have something to do with you leaving on Mike's birthday? What the hell is going on, Vale?

Vale is very flustered.

VALE

Mike... He... Had a twin brother...
I know Mike's real father.

(looks at Mike)

I was very close to your twin, but he
died. I moved here to see what you
were like. I was just curious.

BETTIE

No, Vale. Mike didn't have a twin. He
was a single birth. You aren't
telling the truth again... Do you
know about the tattoo?

Vale looks away and sits in silence a moment. She shakes her
head, yes.

VALE

(to Mike)

You and I are very much alike. We're
unique.

(touches ear)

I have a set of numbers, too.

Vale looks at the floor. Bettie stares at her intently.

BETTIE

Go on, Vale.

VALE

The same man marked both of us for
identification.

MIKE

Are we related? Are you my sister or
something?

VALE

No, nothing like that. But you are
related to him. His name is Ethan.
He's... Like your father, but he's
not... You come from him... You're
his exact copy. So are the others.

BETTIE

What do you mean?

VALE

The woman who was my mother...
wasn't... I was her.

Bettie sighs wearily.

BETTIE

No, Vale. You're wrong. Humans have never been cloned, if that's what you mean. Only animals.

Vale shakes her head and looks intently at Bettie, whose voice slightly quavers, now.

BETTIE

(continuing)

Anyone could've tattooed the numbers on you and Mike and not for the reasons you were told.

VALE

No. The technology was there in 2002. They suppressed it so they could study us... GenTech had a contract with the government. They funded research to study eight cloned males the first 25 years of their lives.

MIKE

What about you? Why'd they-

VALE

I... I wasn't part of the study. Ethan... did things that weren't approved. After the program was stopped they tried planting false information about the cloning process so no one else could do it.

MIKE

How many are there?

VALE

Only four. Including myself and you. Most of the embryos died invetro... You're seven months older than the other two. But you share the same DNA. The same fingerprints. You develop allergies in your late teens because Ethan did.

BETTIE

(still skeptical)

Who gave birth to them?

VALE

Surrogate mothers. They carried them full term and handed them over. They didn't know.

Bettie is taken aback. The truth is sinking in.

BETTIE

(nods)

I was told Mike's mother died giving birth.

VALE

All the families were.

BETTIE

Vale, they killed an entire family over this. What was the point?

Vale can't meet Bettie's eyes. Her voice is evasive.

VALE

Things... went wrong. They decided to termi-... end the program in two months. One of the "subjects" killed a store clerk in a robbery. And despite constant monitoring they lost track of the other.

BETTIE

Does Ethan run GenTech?

VALE

Yes. I know him very well. He's my... he was married to my mother. The person I was cloned from... She was twenty when she met Ethan. He was on a business trip in Wichita when he met her...

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY (1991)

CLOSE UP: Vale's mother, 20 year old Rosemary Johanson, whom Vale is an exact copy.

Rosemary is visibly pregnant, wearing no make-up and old clothes. She's a shy, withdrawn woman, worn down by life. She sits across from her THERAPIST, bearded, late forties, as they talk.

THERAPIST

Rosemary, it is just not physically possible...

Rosemary looks at him helplessly.

THERAPIST

(continuing)

... It's not. And you know it isn't. We've discussed at great length about your parent's rigid Southern Baptist beliefs. Now we're back on this track. It's as if we've taken a step backwards.

ROSEMARY

But the Virgin Mary, she -

THERAPIST

Yes, to some people that is literally the gospel. But in a reality based world a virgin conception and birth did not happen. And it isn't happening to you. You've come up with the idea that you haven't been with a man, despite your various pregnancies, as a way to cope with your guilt over having had sexual intercourse.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Rosemary waits on the sidewalk. A new 1991 Mercedes, driven by a man wearing sunglasses, pulls up to the curb. Rosemary gets in and the car drives off.

EXT. ROSEMARY'S HOUSE - DAY - LATER

The Mercedes is parked in front of the old run down home.

VALE (V.O.)

Despite being rich, Ethan kept her down. Living in the same place with no car. He paid for her therapy sessions and bought her groceries. But not much else.

INT. HOSPITAL DELIVERY ROOM - NIGHT

Rosemary is in labor, moaning and wailing in pain. A DOCTOR and attending nurses surround her. Rosemary squeezes a black nurses hand.

DOCTOR

We're almost there, Rosemary. Keep pushing. I see the head. Come on, Push.

Rosemary pushes and moans. Vale is born.

DOCTOR
(continuing)
Here she is. You've got a girl, Rose.

The doctor places Vale on a table. Newborn Vale doesn't make a sound. Rosemary looks up at the black nurse and speaks in an almost hopeful voice.

ROSEMARY
Is it dead?

Vale begins to cry. Rosemary shrieks in anguish. The nurse let's go of Rosemary's hand in disgust. The door to the delivery room has a small window built into it.

A man looks through it. It is ETHAN, 35, wearing glasses, an exact copy of Mike only older.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROSEMARY'S HOUSE - DAY

One year old Vale is in her play pen. Rosemary and Ethan watch television.

VALE (V.O.)
My mother assumed Ethan thought she kept getting pregnant behind his back. But he still came around. Even married her. But six months later he dumped her. She never heard a word from him again. He knew she'd never get over it. She was alone now, with all the time in the world to watch me literally turn into her before her eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROSEMARY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Vale, now 4 years old, plays on the floor. She takes several crayons out of a cigar box, which has an intricate design on the cover. Rosemary, now 25 years old, sits on the couch with an open photo album on her lap.

Rosemary stares strangely at Vale, looking sick and confused.

VALE (V.O.)

I wasn't allowed to look through photo albums that had pictures of my mother as a child. She hid them and would never take any pictures of me.

INT. VALE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Vale is asleep. The room is dark. A loud gun shot rings out from Rosemary's bedroom. Vale bolts upright in bed, then hurries out of her room.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Vale runs to her mother's open bedroom door. The room is dark. A wisp of smoke hangs over the bed. Rosemary lies over the side of the bed, a gun shot wound to her head.

An open photo album is on top of the covers.

Vale walks quickly into the living room and picks up the phone. She dials 911. An OPERATOR answers.

OPERATOR

911. What's your emergency?

VALE

My Mama's sick or something. Please help...

INT. VALE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Paramedics and police are in the house. Vale sits on the couch, too stunned to even cry. She has a coat on over her pajamas and a small suitcase is beside her.

Her mothers photo albums and several books are on Vale's lap. Rosemary's covered body is wheeled out of the bedroom.

VALE (V.O.)

I finally got to see my mother's photographs. Now I knew why she could never touch me. Why she'd push me away if I hugged her. Looking at me, how could she not think she'd somehow given birth to herself. A week later I was put in my first Foster home.

INT. MIKE'S HOME - NIGHT

Bettie and Mike listen intently.

MIKE

What happened after that? Where'd you go?

Mike takes her hand.

VALE

Until I was fourteen I lived in dozens of foster homes, then...

Tears stream down Vale's face. She takes her hand away from Mike.

VALE

(continuing)

Mike... I ... I did things. A lot of things. Even... I... I was a prostitute. You have to understand. I was such a mess. I was drinking, doing drugs... That's how I ended up meeting Ethan.

(Looks at Bettie)

I didn't know who he was. I just thought he was a customer who wanted to rescue me... And I let him.

Bettie takes Vale's hand and squeezes it. They share a kinship of sorts now.

BETTIE

Vale, where's your daughter?

Vale's eyes tear up.

VALE

Ethan didn't want her around. He sent her off to a private school.

FLASHBACK: INT. ETHAN'S MANSION - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

18 year old Vale, dresses. She notices a cigar box on a nearby shelf that she hadn't noticed before. She looks at it curiously, opens it, and sees it's filled with cigars.

INT. ETHAN'S MANSION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Ethan and Vale eat dinner. Vale drinks a large glass of wine.

VALE

If you stopped smoking them why
didn't you throw them out?

ETHAN

I don't know. I suppose I like the
design on the box. It's unique... Oh,
I meant to tell you. I'm going out of
town tomorrow on business. I'll just
be gone two days.

Vale nods and finishes her wine.

INT. ETHAN'S MANSION - KITCHEN - DAY

Vale sorts through the mail.

She comes across an envelope from Connecticut, addressed to
Mr. and Mrs. Ethan LaCross. Vale opens the envelope and finds
a short note, which reads:

INSERT: "Dear Ethan,

It was so nice to hear from you after so long. I have
enclosed the remembrance card from Grandmother's memorial
service, as you requested. Time has flown by, hasn't it?

I hope to hear from you soon. Love, Thelma."

Vale takes out the small remembrance card, which reads:

"In loving memory of Vale Elizabeth LaCross. Beloved
Grandmother. 1902-1971. May you rest in the Lords capable
hands."

A mystified, Vale, sets down the card.

EXT. ETHAN'S MANSION - NIGHT

Ethan takes luggage out of the trunk of his current Mercedes.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Vale stands in front of Ethan. She is very upset, holding
back tears.

VALE

My name isn't very common. When I
read the letter I was surprised Vale
was your grandmother's name, too...
(more)

VALE (CONT'D)

I don't remember much from my childhood, but I know my stepfather smoked the same brand of cigars... That... it's possible he might even be the same age you are now.

Ethan just stares at Vale intently, which unnerves her.

VALE

(continuing)

Ethan...

ETHAN

(stands)

We are the same age. And we are the same person.

Vale steps back, stunned.

VALE

But your name. You-

ETHAN

I went by Charles when I was with your mother. It's my middle name.

VALE (V.O.)

He told me everything. Even about my mother. That two months after meeting her he began taking her to a prearranged gynecologist for pap smears. This was how all the embryos were implanted. I was created from a single strand of hair taken from her brush. The follicle was still attached, so it was ripe with DNA, as Ethan put it. Before I was born, my mother miscarried five times. She'd become pregnant, and each time she knew she hadn't had sex. My mother really was a virgin. Everyone thought she was crazy. She thought she was.

INT. ETHAN'S MANSION - NIGHT - LATER

Vale walks downstairs holding a large bundle of clothes and toiletries. She goes into the guest room and closes the door.

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Vale has moved most of her things into the room. She sits on the bed crying. Ethan takes her arm and she pulls away.

VALE

If what you told me is true, it's like you committed incest. You had both of us. Don't ever touch me again.

ETHAN

You're entitled to your opinion, Vale. But it is true. The pieces all fit now, don't they? The confusion is gone. That, at least has to be a relief.

VALE

Fuck you.

Ethan sits on the bed.

ETHAN

I know this is a shock. But you can't tell anyone. They could harm your daughter if they feel threatened.

Vale gets off the bed and looks at Ethan as if he hit her.

INT. GUEST ROOM - SUNSET

Vale is asleep. She wakes up and hears a slight commotion outside the room. Men's anxious voices are heard. Vale gets up and looks out the window. Three government sedans are parked in the driveway. A fourth sedan drives up.

INT. ETHAN'S MANSION - NIGHT - LATER

The house is dark. Vale quietly leaves the guest bedroom and enters the living room, where Ethan sits on the edge of the couch, his head down.

VALE

Ethan... Is something wrong?

Ethan looks up and turns on the lamp.

ETHAN

Yes... yes, there is. It's the damndest thing.

(more)

ETHAN (CONT'D)

A flagged message came across the internet two days ago. Someone wanting to know what a series of numbers are.

VALE

How do you know it's like the one's I have?

ETHAN

We know, Vale. He was adopted by a couple living in some small town shit hole in Nevada. The agency's sending someone out tomorrow.

VALE

What do you mean?

ETHAN

He'll be terminated earlier than planned. I can't stop it. They think it's better to sacrifice one now than jeopardize the years of study we've invested in them. He was my only chance.

VALE

What do you mean?

ETHAN

It's self-explanatory. He was a perfect tissue match for my son. The other fucker is on death's doorstep. He's useless... In two months my son would've had a healthy new heart from the "Desert Rat".

EXT. DWIGHT'S HOME - NEXT NIGHT

A new silver van slowly drives up the dirt road to Dwight's home. Two men exit the van wearing night vision goggles. The first man holds an axe. The second, a gun with a silencer.

INT. DWIGHT'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

The first man leaves Dwight's parents bedroom. He pulls the door shut. Farther down the hallway, the second man leaves Dwight's sister's bedroom, having just killed her.

Both men stop, hearing a noise downstairs. They peek over the railing and spot Dwight walk into the dark kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dwight looks around and peeks through the window into the backyard. He suddenly turns, seeing the two men enter the kitchen. The second man shoots Dwight between the eyes. He falls to the floor, dead, on his back.

The first man tears Dwight's pajama top down to his waist, then tilts his chin up so his neck is exposed. The second man hurries into the living room, where the axe leans against the front door. He grabs it and goes back into the kitchen.

The first man stands back as the second man raises the axe, bringing it down and decapitating Dwight's head from his body.

He picks up Dwight's head and places it in a plastic bag, then puts it in an ice chest marked DONOR ORGAN.

VALE (V.O.)

They removed his head so it couldn't be examined during an autopsy. But a day later they realized they killed the wrong person.

INT. HELICOPTER - NEXT DAY

The pilot flies Ethan over Rhyolite, Nevada.

VALE (V.O.)

Ethan was elated when he found out Mike was still alive. He became obsessed with how you turned out... Then completely paranoid. Was afraid you'd leave town or something. He wanted to make sure for two months you wouldn't want to go anywhere.

INT. ETHAN'S MANSION - NIGHT

Vale is in her bedroom packing.

VALE (V.O.)

I was instructed to move here and get to know you. Ethan said this would buy me some time. That if I did this for him he'd try to make them reconsider my termination.

EXT. MAIN STREET - RHYOLITE - NIGHT

Vale is on the sidewalk watching Mike in the cafe with the other funeral goers.

VALE (V.O.)

I literally was seeing Ethan standing before me as he looked at nineteen. I hated Ethan with all my heart and never thought I could feel anything for Mike. Never thought I could get past their resemblance...

INT. BETTIE'S HOME - NIGHT

VALE

... But I did. And I knew in two months he'd kill you.

Bettie and Mike sit in stunned silence. Tears stream down Vale's face and Bettie's.

BETTIE

My, God. You have to leave. Both of you. Ethan might not wait two months. I'll call your dad's sister in Dallas. You're not safe here.

VALE

I can't leave until he says so.

Bettie gets up.

BETTIE

Vale, you can. You have to. We'll figure something out.

MIKE

We can leave tonight. Buy our plane tickets under different names.

BETTIE

You can't do that now, Mike. Your I.D has to match the ticket. I think I know what we can do.

INT. LYDIA'S MOTEL - OFFICE - DAY

Lydia is behind the counter facing Bettie. She squeezes Bettie's hand.

LYDIA

Bettie, I've known you since you were twenty-one. I'd do anything for you. Vale can leave her car parked there until it gets cobwebs. Now what's this man's name again?

BETTIE

Ethan... Ethan LaCross.

Lydia writes it down.

LYDIA

As rude as he was on the phone, I can sure believe he's one of those wife-beater types. You give Mike my love, and I'll keep telling that creep Vale's still registered here.

BETTIE

Thanks, Lydia.

INT. VALE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

The front door is open. The Corvette is parked out front. Vale has all of her things packed. Mike drives up and Vale leaves the room.

INT. MIKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vale looks out the window. Mike walks into the room.

MIKE

Ready?

Vale nods. Mike walks over to her and she stiffens up.

MIKE

(continuing)

You okay?

VALE

Mike... You know... If you feel funny about my past, I'll understand. You don't have to be with me.

Mike kisses and holds Vale, putting a stop to her fears.

EXT. BETTIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mike, Vale and Bettie stand next to Bettie's packed up car. Mike's jeep is parked nearby.

BETTIE

If you want to get in touch with me call Lester at the sub-station. He can get back to me, or I'll call you from there.

(takes out money)

Here, take this...

VALE

Mrs. Langley, no. I have enough money to last us awhile. Just keep it. We'll be okay.

Mike hugs Bettie tightly. Bettie wipes tears from her eyes and turns to Vale. She hugs her a moment, before pulling back and looking into Vale's eyes.

BETTIE

You're braver than I ever was, or could be. Be careful.

Vale chokes up and nods.

INT. BETTIE'S CAR - DAY

Vale drives. Mike is asleep next to her. Vale crosses the state-line into New Mexico.

EXT. INTERSTATE - SUNSET - LATER

Bettie's car drives under an overpass. Vale is behind the wheel. It's lightly raining. Thunder rumbles in the distance.

INT. BETTIE'S CAR - SUNSET

Vale drives along the New Mexico interstate. Mike looks through several color and black and white photographs of Rosemary as a child and young adult, the latter of which, are identical to Vale.

CLOSE ON: He looks at the back of the photographs. Some of them are dated from the late 1970's.

One color photograph is of Ethan at thirty five. Rosemary stands next to him holding an infant Vale. Mike is in awe.

MIKE

When you told me it was one thing.
But actually seeing them...

VALE

That's how you'll look in your
thirties. You'll need glasses in your
late twenties... That's me they're
holding.

(Passes car)

Ethan was in Rhyolite a month ago.

MIKE

How do you know?

VALE

I saw his sunglasses at the cafe. He
told me he left them on a plane.

Mike puts up the pictures and stares out the window at some
lightning. He turns to Vale.

MIKE

Do you think we have souls? I've been
thinking about it so much.

VALE

I don't care if I have a soul. I
don't worry about it, Mike. We're no
different than anyone else. But if
you think about it, humans can't be
that special if we can be duplicated
so easily. It sure makes us less
wondrous or whatever.

EXT. LYDIA'S MOTEL - OFFICE - DAY

Lydia drives up in her car and gasps. Vale's Corvette is
hooked up to a tow truck, which begins to pull away.

Lydia gets out and rushes over to the TOW DRIVER.

LYDIA

What do you think your doing? That
car belongs to a registered guest.

TOW DRIVER

Not anymore, it doesn't.

LYDIA

What do you mean?

TOW DRIVER

Look, all I know is I was sent out here to get it, and it's all legal. I have to go.

LYDIA

She wouldn't do that.

TOW DRIVER

It wasn't a she. It's a company car. They let her borrow it and now they want it back. You have a nice day, now.

EXT. BETTIE'S HOME - DAY - LATER

Lydia drives up to Bettie's house beeping the horn.

INT. BETTIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Bettie leans against the counter, listening to an out of breath, Lydia.

LYDIA

I'm sure it's that Ethan person. I tried to put him off, but he's been calling for two days. Almost on the hour.

BETTIE

He knows they left.

LYDIA

Who knows? Bettie what is going on?

BETTIE

I was just getting ready to call Lester, but I think you better drive me over, now.

EXT. LESTER'S HOME - DAY

Bettie gets out of Lydia's car holding a small overnight bag. She walks up to his front door. Lydia watches a moment and drives off. Bettie knocks on the door. LESTER'S WIFE, answers and glances at Bettie's overnight bag.

LESTER'S WIFE

Hi, Bettie. Come on in. We're just finishing supper.

EXT. LESTER'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

The sliding glass door is open. Lester and Bettie are seated in patio chairs as Lester listens.

BETTIE

She told me her husband was very violent. I guess he did terrible things to her, Lester. That's why she came here. She's been hiding from him all this time and he's found her.

LESTER

How?

BETTIE

I'm not sure, but he knows that she and Mike have run off together. He's capable of anything.

(fights back tears)

Lester... He had something to do with Dwight's family being murdered. I know it for a fact.

LESTER

What? My, God, Bettie...

Lester gets up and shuts the back door.

LESTER

(continuing)

... Why the hell would Vale come here? Does she know why Dwight was killed?

BETTIE

Yes, that's why they left. They had to. He wants to kill Mike. Don't ask me why. I'm not even sure, but I have to assume I'm not safe either.

LESTER

Listen, I'll get some men and we'll watch the house a few days... You say he's an older man?

BETTIE

Yes. In his fifties. Six two. Blue eyes, grey hair.

EXT. DESERT AREA NEAR BETTIE'S HOME - NIGHT

Lester and his two deputies, Brent and Sam, are parked in the desert several hundred feet from Bettie's dark home. Lester holds binoculars. Brent eats a sandwich and Sam walks into the desert to relieve himself.

BRENT

Moon's gonna be full in a few days.
Be a good place to bring out a
telescope.

Sam runs back out from the desert zipping his fly.

SAM

Jesus, I just saw a car. Its
headlights just went off. It's right
below the hill from Bettie's place.

LESTER

Come on. Must be him.

The men position themselves around the area, walkie-talkies in hand. Lester goes up on a bluff which gives him a clear view of Bettie's home. He looks through the binoculars and sees a figure dressed in black, scramble up the hill.

The man, who sports a goatee, stops near Mike's jeep and looks around.

LESTER

(continuing)

What the...

Lester thinks he's seeing Mike. He speaks into the walkie-talky.

LESTER

(continuing)

It's Lester, copy.

BRENT (V.O.)

Yeah, Lester. What do you see?

Lester continue's watching "Mike" through the binoculars.

LESTER

It's only Mike. He came back.

BRENT (V.O.)

What's he doing?

Lester watches the man go onto the porch and pull a screw driver out of his jacket and begin prying open Bettie's front door. It opens and he goes inside.

LESTER

Brent, you and Sam try and get a little closer to the house. Mike's gone inside. Think he was locked out.

Lester runs to the end of the bluff and goes down it, stopping near Bettie's garden. Brent and Sam meet up with him.

LESTER

(continuing)

Sam, go down to the street. See if Vale's in the car. I don't understand this.

Sam hurries away. Brent takes a step forward.

LESTER

(continuing)

Hold up...

Lester and Brent watch as "Mike" walks through the dark house looking around with a flashlight.

BRENT

What's he doing? Why doesn't he turn on a light?

EXT. BOTTOM OF HILL - NIGHT

Sam hurries over to the empty car, looks in the backseat, then notices the keys are still in the ignition. He scrambles back up the hill.

EXT. BETTIE'S HOME - NIGHT

Lester and Brent walk toward the porch. Lester calls out.

LESTER

Mike, it's Lester.

Sam comes back into the yard. Two gun shots go off. The bullets come out the front window narrowly missing Sam, who hits the ground, as do Lester and Brent.

LESTER

(continuing)

What the hell. Mike, it's us. It's Lester. Don't shoot!

They hear the person inside knock things over as he runs through the house. There is a loud pounding noise.

SAM

What the hell's he doing?

Lester crouches down and runs around the side of the house. Sam and Brent go round the other side. The kitchen door is kicked out from inside. The man runs outside and sees Lester, who thinks he's face to face with Mike.

Except this "Mike" is THOMAS JARRET. He has a pierced eyebrow and points a gun at Lester.

LESTER

Mike, put it down. What the hell are you -

Thomas shoots at Lester. The bullet grazes Lester's arm. Thomas starts to run. Lester is stunned. He fires his gun and shoots Thomas in the shoulder. Thomas falls and Sam and Brent overpower him. Lester rushes over and picks up the large gun.

SAM

Mike, knock it off. It's us.

THOMAS

Who the fuck is Mike!

Thomas' dark jacket has come half off. The three men are shocked. A large, intricate tattoo adorns his upper arm. Dozens of track marks line his inner arm, but he is identical to Mike in all other respects, except one.

Brent motions to Lester and Sam.

CLOSE ON: Thomas' eyes are dark brown instead of blue, Like Mike's.

BRENT

Jesus. Lester, what's going on?

Lester just shakes his head. Sam and Brent hold Thomas down.

LESTER

Who are you?

THOMAS

You shot me, mother fucker.

LESTER

Turn him over and cuff him.

INT. HIGHWAY PATROL SUB-STATION - NIGHT - LATER

Lester, Sam and Brent stand near the counter. Bettie is a short distance away, standing in the hallway, staring into the holding cell window at Thomas. She steps back and walks over to the bench and lowers herself onto it.

THOMAS (O.S.)

I am in pain, goddamit. Take me to a fucken hospital.

Lester walks up to Bettie.

LESTER

Bettie, you all right?

She nods, still dumb struck. She speaks softly.

BETTIE

Can't you give him something? He was shot, Lester.

LESTER

Bettie. He went to your house to kill you.

BETTIE

I know that.

LESTER

Well, I ran his name through. It's Thomas Jarret. He has two felony convictions. Robbery, assault... And a murder warrant for his arrest from when he was a juvenile. He would've been a helluva lot better off if you had raised him.

Bettie stands.

BETTIE

I want to talk to him.

LESTER

You can't go in there.

BETTIE

Then bring him out here... Please.

INT. SUB-STATION FOYER - NIGHT

Lester stands beside Thomas, who is shackled to a chair. His hands are cuffed in front of him.

His shoulder is wrapped in bandages. Officers Sam and Brent stand nearby.

Bettie is seated across from Thomas, staring at him intently.

THOMAS

Gimme a cigarette or I'm not saying
shit.

Lester puts a cigarette in Thomas's mouth and lights it. Thomas reaches up, takes a drag, and looks at Lester.

THOMAS

(continuing)

Look, before I open my mouth you
gotta tell the feds I cooperated,
'cause... there's something I need
when I'm sent up.

Lester sits on the edge of his desk.

LESTER

I can do that. What do you want?

THOMAS

Good drugs.

Lester stands and looks wearily at Bettie.

THOMAS

(continuing)

Dude, not the one's you think. I'm
done with that shit. I don't wanna
die like a dog in the infirmary... I
got AIDS. Three months ago it was
full blown, till some rich dude
started paying two thousand dollars
a month for my meds. And I ain't even
met him yet.

BETTIE

Is his name Ethan?

THOMAS

Don't know. Only talked on the phone.
But when I was sick no one wanted to
catch my cooties. I was alone with my
broke ass and no insurance, picking
out clothes to be buried in. Then I
get a call out of the blue with an
offer I couldn't refuse. Fucking life
on a platter waiting for me across
the street at Walgreen's.

Thomas takes a drag from his cigarette and looks directly at Bettie.

THOMAS

(continuing)

All I had to do was come here and shoot your ass dead... And before I did, I had to make sure you got a real good look at me first. What ever that means.

BRENT

Lester, we should call Metro in Vegas. Let them deal with him.

Bettie gets up and faces Lester.

BETTIE

We need to talk. Can we go into your office?

LESTER

(To Brent)

Take him back to the holding cell. You and Sam go on back out.

Bettie and Lester go into his office and the door is closed.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Sam starts the patrol car and looks at Brent.

SAM

It's real strange Lester keeping him here and all. I don't get it. He should've been transferred hours ago.

Sam drives out of the parking lot.

INT. LESTER'S OFFICE - NIGHT - LATER

Lester stands next to his desk with his arms crossed, taking in what Bettie has just said. Bettie sits in a chair studying his reaction.

BETTIE

I know what you must be thinking. But I believe Vale. Lester, you know yourself, Dwight wasn't killed in a robbery.

Lester takes a set of keys out of a metal cabinet.

INT. LESTER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Bettie stands to the side as Lester shackles Thomas' arms to the back of the chair. Bettie looks at Thomas' brown eyes. Thomas resists and groans in frustration.

THOMAS

You two havin' fun? Lemme guess. It's time for bible study? Get me the fuck out of here or let me call someone. This is bullshit. You and Granny Smith are violating my civil rights. Quit staring at me bitch.

Lester grabs each side of Thomas' head and jerks it back.

LESTER

You show her respect and watch your mouth, or I'll knock your teeth out.

BETTIE

Lester...

Bettie gives Lester a reassuring look and calmly sits in front of Thomas.

BETTIE

(continuing)
Thomas...

THOMAS

Granny Smith.

BETTIE

Please, listen to me. Have you been sick this past year from a severe allergic reaction?

THOMAS

What is this?

BETTIE

Have you almost died from an allergic reaction?

THOMAS

Yeah... I have. Two years ago. How the hell do you know?

BETTIE

You have a birthmark on your right calf, too. And both your wisdom teeth impacted when you were sixteen, right?

THOMAS

Yeah.

BETTIE

Thomas, besides your other tattoos you have one you don't know about... In the fold of your right ear, I'm almost certain there's a series of numbers and two initials that stand for GenTech.

THOMAS

What?

LESTER

I'm gonna take a look. Hold your head still.

Lester gently pulls back the curved skin on Thomas' right ear.

CLOSE ON: Lester sees the numbers and initials.

LESTER

(continuing)

Christ.

Thomas angrily jerks his head back.

THOMAS

What the hell's going on?

Bettie opens her purse and takes out a photograph of Mike from her billfold. She holds it up for Thomas to see.

THOMAS

(continuing)

Fuck. I have a twin?

BETTIE

Not exactly, but I'm his mother.

THOMAS

Wait. You're his fucking biological mother? That means-

BETTIE

No, he's adopted like you were. But I know about the man that hired you to kill me. I've never met him either. But you're in as much danger as I am and don't even realize it.

INT. SUB-STATION - NIGHT

Lester pours a cup of coffee. The clock reads 1:10. The door to Lester's office is open. Bettie is inside taking a nap on the small couch. The phone rings. Lester answers.

LESTER

Hello... My, God, Mike. Where are you?

INT. LESTER'S OFFICE - NIGHT - LATER

Bettie sits up from the couch having just awakened. Lester stands in front of her.

LESTER

They rented a car and they're on their way. He called Lydia four hours ago. She told him she heard gunshots and saw police at the house. They got lucky and caught a red-eye back to Vegas.

INT. SUB-STATION - NIGHT - LATER

A car's headlights flash into the foyer. Bettie hurries outside. Lester walks to the entrance. Mike gets out of the rental car and Bettie tearfully embraces him.

Vale gets out of the car. Bettie squeezes her hand.

BETTIE

Honey, you shouldn't have come back.
I'm okay.

Bettie looks at Mike, intently.

MIKE

What?

BETTIE

Mike... One of them is here.
(looks at Vale)
Ethan sent him.

INT. SUB-STATION - NIGHT

Mike and Vale walk away from the holding cell door. Mike is stunned. He sits in a chair. Vale walks up to Lester.

VALE

May I please go inside and talk to him?

LESTER

I don't know about that, Vale. Let's wait.

VALE

Please. He has a right to know what's going on.

LESTER

All right. Five minutes.

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

A shackled, Thomas, sits on the bench facing Vale, who is seated in a chair. Lester peeks in the small window to check on Vale.

VALE

He told me the family that adopted you failed on all counts to meet the criteria for adoption. They were denied by three agencies the year before because of... "Profound psychological issues"... Ethan pulled strings. Made sure you were placed with them.....

THOMAS

I don't understand half the shit you just told me, but I believe you. My fake dad was a violent piece of shit from day one.

(Raises voice)

That's so fucked up.

Lester unlocks the holding cell door and opens it. Vale stands and looks at Thomas.

VALE

I'm sorry.

INT. SUB-STATION - NIGHT

Lester sits behind the foyer counter, yawning and rubbing his eyes. Bettie dozes in a chair. Mike and Vale sit together holding hands.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT - LATER

Sam drives. Brent drinks a cup of coffee.

SAM

Take a look at that.

A new Lincoln Towncar turns left a block up, and slows down near Lydia's motel. Sam turns off the headlights and turns left down a side street, then right, and travels a block before stopping.

They have a clear view of Lydia's motel, where the driver of the Towncar parks and gets out. He walks straight to Vale's room and knocks, then tries the door knob as he looks in between the drapes.

Brent turns on the car's side spotlight and flashes it on the tall man, who turns and shields his eyes. Sam speeds up and stops ten feet from the man.

BRENT

What the hell...

Brent looks at Sam, who is equally taken aback by this older man's remarkable resemblance to Mike. Brent and Sam get out.

SAM

Sir, please step to the front of the car and take out your identification.

Ethan, walks to the front of the patrol car and smiles, knowing why they're staring at him so intently. He takes off his glasses so they can have a better look.

ETHAN

Hello...

Sam radios in.

SAM

Lester, come in. Copy...

INT. SUB-STATION - NIGHT - LATER

Lester peeks out the shades. He sees the Towncar following the patrol car. They park in front. Bettie, Mike, and Vale stand behind Lester.

LESTER

They're here. Stay back so he can't see you. I won't let him in.

VALE
Is he alone?

LESTER
Yes.

VALE
That doesn't mean anything. Someone's
with him. They're just not around.

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Thomas listens at the cell door.

EXT. SUB-STATION - NIGHT

Lester walks outside holding a rifle. Sam parks the patrol car. Ethan parks beside it. Everyone gets out. Ethan looks curiously at the rental car, then at Lester's rifle.

ETHAN
What's this all about? You don't take
kindly to strangers round here?

LESTER
Something like that.
(cocks rifle)
What do you want?

ETHAN
To get out of this heat for starters.

Lester shakes his head.

ETHAN
(continuing)
This building belongs to the public.
You can't deny me access. My tax
dollars helped pay for it.

LESTER
Not tonight.

Ethan calls out.

ETHAN
Vale... Vale. If you're inside,
please, come out here... Vale, I have
important information about your
daughter. Come out here.

The door opens. Vale and Mike walk outside holding hands. Ethan stares at Mike intently. Mike is taken aback seeing himself as an older man. Bettie walks outside.

LESTER

They've all been here for three days under police protection. We have cots set up and food's been sent in.

(Motions to Bettie)

After what she told me I thought it best.

ETHAN

Mike, I assure you. There's nothing going on. But you are my son. I gave you up for adoption and I've been looking for you for quite some time.

VALE

He's lying.

ETHAN

We only look alike because we're father and son.

VALE

You're identical.

Lester whispers something to Sam, who nods and goes into the sub-station.

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Sam unlocks the holding cell and walks inside. Thomas is being a little too nice.

THOMAS

Hi. What's going on out there?

SAM

C'mon and get up. I have to take you out.

THOMAS

Oh, sure. What's going on?

SAM

Good question.

Thomas stands and Sam takes hold of his arm. Thomas savagely hits Sam across the forehead with his cuffed wrists. Sam falls and Thomas hits him over the head, knocking him out.

Thomas grabs Sam's handcuff keys, then hurriedly tries to unlock his cuffs. He drops the keys, picks them up and tries again.

EXT. SUB-STATION - NIGHT

Ethan tries to get closer to Mike. Lester blocks his path.

ETHAN

Vale is emotionally unstable. Just like her mother was. I don't know what wild story she told you, but I know how she can be. Mike, she's a compulsive liar.

BETTIE

I know it's true. I know the name of your company. I've read your brochure... And I found the tattoo.

Ethan is quiet a moment. He smirks.

ETHAN

Oh, I see. We have an enlightened hick on the premises.

BETTIE

You have to watch out for them, now and then.

ETHAN

You're very predictable, Vale. I knew this would happen. It's a fantasy to be with a younger version of your lover. Who wouldn't want that opportunity?

VALE

You're not my lover.

ETHAN

You certainly don't love Mike.

(to Mike)

This may be difficult to hear, but you're a safe, non-threatening extension of me. That's all. I'm who she loves. She craves being treated badly. You'll bore her eventually.

Thomas walks outside with his hands behind his back. Ethan is very shocked. Lester is concerned that Sam isn't with Thomas.

Thomas whips out Sam's gun and fires at Ethan, who fires back.

Everyone dives for cover except Lester and Brent, who draw their guns. Ethan is shot several times, as is, Thomas, who is shot in the side of the head and bleeding profusely.

He lies dead on the pavement with his eyes open. Ethan dies within seconds. His cell phone rings.

LESTER
Get inside, now!

Bettie, Vale and Mike hurry inside. Brent stays outside.

LESTER
(continuing)
Go check on Sam. See if he's all right.

Lester takes the cell phone from Ethan's suit pocket and checks the number.

INT. SUB-STATION - NIGHT

Lester comes inside. An injured, Sam, is seated on the bench. Bettie and Brent are attending to him. Mike and Vale stand nearby.

LESTER
You all right, Sam?

Sam nods and gives him a thumbs-up. Lester hits re-dial on Ethan's phone.

LESTER
(continuing)
Yes, hello. Who am I speaking with?
This is Lester Wells. I'm a lieutenant with the Nye County Highway Patrol. There's been an incident here. A double homicide.
(Beat)
Yes, I'm afraid so.

The person called abruptly hangs up. Lester walks up to Bettie and Sam.

LESTER
(continuing)
We're going to have company. They were parked at the truck stop in Farley. It'll only take fifteen minutes if they haul ass. Mike, give me your wallet and keys.

Mike hands them to Lester. Lester starts to walk outside, then stops.

LESTER
(continuing)
Sam...

SAM
Yeah?

LESTER
You okay to drive?

SAM
I'm fine. Why?

LESTER
I'd rather whoever's coming, not see your condition. Go to my house and pick up my wife. Take her to that car below Bettie's place. The keys are in it. Tell her to drive it to Lydia's and hide it in the back where no one can see it.

Sam leaves. Lester turns to Mike.

LESTER
(continuing)
I think you and Vale better hide too. Brent, take them up in that crawl space where we keep the extra ammunition.

EXT. SUB-STATION - NIGHT

Sam drives off in the patrol car. Lester goes over to Thomas' body and removes the bandage from his shoulder. Lester tries in vain to remove the small, round hoop earring in Thomas' eye brow.

LESTER
Shit... Bettie... Bettie!

Bettie hurries outside.

LESTER
(continuing)
Help me with this, please. I can't get the damn thing out.

Bettie kneels down and grimaces as she unhooks the earring out of Thomas' brow. Lester stares at Thomas' face, then turns and calls out:

LESTER
(continuing)
Brent, get out here!

BETTIE
Lester, what if his identification number is different than Mike's.

LESTER
That side of his head is gone. I doubt it'll matter.

Brent appears in the doorway.

BRENT
Yeah?

LESTER
Get my electric razor out of that little bag I keep in the restroom. And some latex gloves. Hurry.

Brent dashes back inside. Lester checks Thomas' pockets. There's no I.D. He puts Mike's wallet and Jeep keys in Thomas' pockets.

EXT. SUB-STATION - NIGHT - SHORT TIME LATER

Bettie stands in the doorway, watching Lester, who props up Thomas' bloody head with the palm of his gloved hand as he shaves off the last bit of Thomas' goatee. Lester stuffs the gloves and razor into a garbage bag.

INT. SUB-STATION - NIGHT - LATER

Brent and Bettie are at different windows looking into the parking lot, where a large black truck with darkened windows, is parked near Lester.

Two tall husky men, wearing suits and holding walkie-talkies, are in front of Lester. The FIRST MAN flashes a government badge at Lester.

The SECOND MAN kneels down and checks Ethan's pulse.

Bettie watches as the second man stands and listens dubiously to Lester a moment. The two men walk toward the sub-station with Lester behind them.

Bettie hurries over to a chair and buries her face in her hands.

Brent crosses his arms and stands by the door. Lester and the two men walk inside. The first man begins looking around. The second man sees Bettie.

SECOND MAN

That's his mother?

He walks toward her. Lester takes his arm.

LESTER

Yes, it is. Leave her alone. Christ, she just saw her own son shot to death.

The first man looks into the empty holding cell.

INT. CEILING - NIGHT

Mike and Vale lie on the floor of the crawl space watching what's going on below them through the grates of a vent.

SECOND MAN (O.S.)

Why is she even here in the first place?

INT. FOYER OF SUB-STATION - NIGHT

LESTER

She was with her son filing a harassment report against Mr. LaCross.

SECOND MAN

What?

LESTER

He showed up at their home insisting Mike was his son. That he gave him up for adoption. Mrs. Langley wouldn't let him come inside and he became verbally abusive. He left and they called me.

SECOND MAN

And Mr. LaCross followed them here?

The first man peeks into Lester's office.

LESTER

Yes, he did. He was out of control. I had to restrain him from coming inside. Even threatened to kill Mrs. Langley... Mike has always been a hot-head. He came outside with a gun and... Well, you see the end result. He had no idea Mr. LaCross carried a weapon, too.

The first man walks up and gets in Lester's face.

FIRST MAN

What about Mr. LaCross' wife? Do you know her whereabouts?

LESTER

What? You mean the young lady? They were married? Jesus, what's going on? She was bothering them, too. Always showing up at the house wanting to see Mike. Bettie finally told her to stay away. A week ago she up and left. I was glad to see her go.

Bettie peeks up from her "anguish" surprised by Lester's quick thinking.

EXT. SUB-STATION - NIGHT

Bettie and Brent stand in the doorway. Ethan and Thomas' bodies are covered with sheets. The first man unlocks the two back double doors of the truck, and opens them.

Lester quickly steps forward for a better look. He sees clamps on the bumper of the truck.

FIRST MAN

Sir, please step back. Better yet, if you have to observe, do it from the doorway.

Lester only moves back a few feet. The two men pick up Ethan's body and put it inside the back of the truck. The first man closes the back doors and looks back at "Mike's" body.

FIRST MAN

(continuing)
What about him?

SECOND MAN

Leave him.

(sees Bettie in doorway)

Let her bury him. We'll find the other one.

The men get in the truck and drive off. Lester walks up to Bettie and Brent.

LESTER

I think they're heading out to the test-site. They have a runway.

BRENT

How do you know?

LESTER

The clamps on the bumper. The truck was flown here on an army transporter plane. It lands and they drive right out the back. This must've been their last stop.

Bettie looks at Thomas' covered body, then turns away and sees Mike and Vale walk up to the sub-station window and look out. Bettie hurries inside to be with them.

INT. SAM'S PATROL CAR - NIGHT - LATER

Sam drives up the dark interstate. Lester has radioed in to Sam's patrol car.

LESTER (V.O.)

Just stay behind them, Sam. Let 'em get to the Lathrop annex, then pull 'em over. I already put out a bulletin they're suspected of carrying a large arsenal of weapons and drugs. The news stations in Vegas think there's going to be a major drug bust on I-95.

EXT. I-95 - SUNRISE - LATER

The black truck is pulled over. Sam's patrol car is parked behind it. The second man is outside talking with Sam. A moment later, two news helicopters from Las Vegas stations flash their lights on the truck.

The second man hurries back into the truck. Several highway patrol cars, sirens blaring, come up the highway and block the truck.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A big U-Haul truck tows Mike's jeep as it travels through a lushly forested area. Bettie drives. Mike holds Vale's daughter on his lap. Vale is beside him. They smile and talk. The truck crosses the state-line into Vermont.

INT. HIGHWAY PATROL CAR - DAY

The sun is setting. Lester drives up the hill and stops in front of Bettie's empty house.

He stares at it thoughtfully, then drives off. FADE OUT:

THE END