

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A small New York City apartment, sparsely furnished. MIRANDA PRESLEY, 21, sits on the floor amid moving boxes and suitcases packing to move out. She's sorting through a stack of old record albums, looking through them as she piles them in a box. We catch sight of some relics from the disco era as well as several classic country albums - Donny Osmond and the Saturday Night Fever soundtrack mixed in with Patsy Cline and Hank Williams and Elvis. After a brief look, she piles them in a box and closes the lid. She looks outside her window and sees the sun coming up; she's been up all night.

Miranda goes over to the window and opens it. It's barely light out, but already the sound of someone's radio filters in. We hear a car alarm going off in the distance. Miranda drags a large, full trash bag over to the window, looks down, and heaves it out.

EXT. MIRANDA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

The trash bag falls from a fifth-floor window and into a dumpster overflowing with about ten huge trash bags; Miranda's thrown out a lot of stuff. The garbage truck arrives just as the bag lands in the dumpster.

EXT. MIRANDA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

The sun's all the way up now. It's a bright June morning. Two teenage boys sit on the stoop next to Miranda's building. They have a boom box, and we hear loud street music. Miranda comes out of her building carrying a moving box. She wears Levi's cut off mid-thigh, sneakers, and a black leather jacket over a white y-shirt. She carries the box down the front steps and drops it on a pile on the sidewalk in front of a waiting cab.

The cab driver just leans against his car, watching her work.

MIRANDA

You know what would be great? If you could just stand there, watching me carry all these boxes out by myself. Don't carry out any yourself, don't hold the door for me, and whatever you do, don't put them in your cab. And if you could possibly start the meter running now. . .

She leans over and peers into the cab. The meter's running. She smiles at the cab driver, who doesn't seem to understand English.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Perfect. Good job. Thank you.

She gives him a thumbs up. He smiles and gives her one back. She goes back for another box

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

We see the cab parked in front of a luxury high-rise apartment building. The cab driver leans against the car, waiting.

INT. ELLEN DALY'S APARTMENT - DAY

A large, expensively furnished apartment. Miranda's boxes are piled in the hallway. ELLEN DALY, 43, and immaculately dressed socialite, looks with mild distaste at the boxes cluttering her hallway.

ELLEN

. . . I just never imagined there would be this much, Miranda.

Miranda stands in the living room, looking at pictures of Ellen and a family that doesn't include Miranda - a respectable, clean-cut husband and two perfect little boys. There is one small picture of Miranda; she looks like she's still in high school.

MIRANDA

You should see how much I threw out.

Ellen walks in and sits on the couch. She sits formally; she doesn't exactly radiate warmth. Miranda turns away from the photos.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

You can ship them to me as soon as I get an apartment.

ELLEN

Maybe I should keep them in storage until you come back.

MIRANDA

I'm not coming back.

Ellen looks at her like she doesn't believe her, but she'll go along.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Mom, I told you, I'm moving.

Ellen occupies her hands by compulsively straightening the books on her coffee table, which were already pretty straight.

ELLEN

Saying you're going to do something and actually doing it are two entirely different things. I hate to see you give up everything to go and pursue this . . . fantasy you have about being a . . . country singer. Have you taken a moment to stop and look at your behavior?

MIRANDA

I'll do it on the bus, O.K.?

Ellen assumes the role of the voice of reason.

ELLEN

I know your father made Nashville sound very romantic. I wish he were here now to see you acting this way. He could tell you how difficult it is.

MIRANDA

That's not what he'd tell me.

(sadly, remembering)
Daddy would tell me I can anything in
the world.

ELLEN
Yes, he probably would, but in the real
world, the chances of making it are a
million to one.

MIRANDA
How can I pass up a one in a million
opportunity?

She smiles. Ellen doesn't.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
I don't expect you to understand why I
have to do this. I just want you to send
me my stuff.

ELLEN
I really think you should think about this
for a few days.

MIRANDA
(determined)
I've been thinking about it my whole life.
It's time for me to do it.

Miranda's saying this more for her own benefit; her mother doesn't
seem to be listening.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
I have to go. My cab is waiting.

She goes to her mother and kisses her on the cheek.

APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Miranda comes out of the building and crosses the sidewalk to the
cab. She talks to the
driver, not expecting him to understand

MIRANDA
My mother thinks she can control my life.

Surprisingly, the driver speaks, with a heavy foreign accent.

DRIVER

She stills sees you as a little girl.

Miranda looks only mildly surprised that the driver has understood everything she has said. She gets in the cab.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

We hear a simple country ballad. A Greyhound bus travels through the mountains.

INT. BUS - DAY

Miranda sits in a window seat, asleep, resting her head against her jacket.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Miranda is in the same seat, awake now, staring out the window into the darkness.

EXT. TRUCK STOP - DAY

The bus is making a rest stop. (We see that the destination sign reads Nashville.)
Passengers walk around, stretching their legs. Miranda leans against a wall, checking her watch, impatient.

INT. NASHVILLE GREYHOUND STATION - DAY

We still hear the country music. Miranda comes into the terminal, carrying a huge suitcase and a guitar. She squints at the light, reaches into her jacket pocket, pulls out her sunglasses and puts them on. She looks around. A man in a cowboy hat sits on a bench. He gives Miranda a friendly smile and an almost tip of the hat. She looks at him like she's trying to figure out what species he is and drags her stuff outside.

EXT. GREYHOUND STATION - DAY

Miranda looks around and spots a taxi across the street. She puts her index and middle fingers inside her mouth of whistles. Everyone within earshot turns and looks at her.

The taxi driver looks up from his newspaper.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Miranda gets in the back of the cab. The driver closes the trunk and gets in front.

DRIVER
Where to?

Miranda hands him a newspaper clipping.

MIRANDA
Do you know where this is? Lucy's Caf?

DRIVER
They'd have to take away my license if I didn't.

He starts to drive.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Close on a guitar case. Then another, and another, separated by a row of blue-jeaned knees and cowboy boots.

Now we see faces, some young, some not-so-young, some hopeful, some weary. All are patient, lined up against a brick wall, an incongruous sight at any mini-mall but this one.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
O.K. Listen up. Gentlemen, ladies.

Everyone in line quiets down. They turn their attention to LUCY JENKINS, 30's, the owner of Lucy's Caf.

LUCY
As you go in, make sure you take an application. No one tries out without filling one of these out. Hurry it up, doors close at 3:05. Anyone not inside by 3:05 gets locked out.

Lucy goes back inside. The line files in.

INT. TAXI - DAY

The driver turns to talk to Miranda.

DRIVER

You a songwriter?

MIRANDA

No.

DRIVER

Lucky for you. Town's full of them. I'm
a songwriter myself.

MIRANDA

I'm a singer.

The driver reacts to this silently; she's not lucky after all.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE -DAY

A cozy restaurant with small tables, country music memorabilia on
the walls, and a
small stage.

Lucy stand on the stage with a stack of completed applications in
her hand.

LUCY

Thank you all for coming today. When I
call your name, come right up on stage.
Pretend like you're in a hurry, we got all
day but there's a lot of people want to be
famous here. If it's your first time
here, you should know: if you don't pass,
it just means I don't think you're ready.
Go home and keep at it and come back
again. Don't give up unless you can't
stand to listen to your own material. All
right, let's get to it.

Lucy looks at the first application.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Cash Wilneck, get on up here.

INT. TAXI - DAY

The driver hands the clipping back to Miranda. She takes it, then
moves her hand in the

air over the back of the driver's seat.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Where's the safety glass?

He glances over his shoulder at her; what safety glass?

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

I could shoot you if I wanted.

This is an observation, not a threat.

DRIVER

(smiles)

Appreciate it if you didn't.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - DAY

A young man takes the stage, sits on the stool and begins singing a mediocre country ballad, slightly out of tune.

EXT. LUCY'S CAFE - DAY

Miranda, carrying her guitar in one hand and her suitcase in the other, gets out of the cab and heads for the entrance of Lucy's

At the same time, JAMES WYNN, 23, gets out of his pick-up truck in Lucy's parking lot. James is good-looking in a somewhat dangerous way. He picks up his guitar case and strides over to Lucy's, getting there just before Miranda. He tries the door. It's locked.

MIRANDA

It's locked?

James looks at her, the way she's dressed, the huge suitcase she carries. He looks amused.

JAMES

Was your bus late?

She gives him the same attitude back.

MIRANDA

As a matter of fact . . .

JAMES

Well, it's a long way from . . . New York City.

MIRANDA

Yes it is. Who are you? The psychic welcoming committee?

JAMES

James Wynn. The door is locked.

MIRANDA

Miranda Presley. I'll just knock.

She goes up to the door.

JAMES

No, don't. Lucy doesn't let anyone in late. That'll set me back a month. We'll have to get in some other way.

MIRANDA

I'm sure there's a secret underground tunnel.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - DAY

Another young songwriter auditions. This one plays the fiddle and has a friend backing him up on guitar. He's energetic, but the song isn't very good.

Lucy sits in the back of the crowded room. She reveals no expression as she watches the songwriter, but we see her head shake ~~no~~ slightly as she makes a notation on his application and places it in what is presumably the reject pile

EXT. LUCY'S CAFE - DAY

Miranda sits on the sidewalk outside the cafe. James locks her suitcase in his truck and comes and sits down next to her.

MIRANDA

Maybe someone will come out.

JAMES

There'll be a lot of people coming out in about two hours.

MIRANDA

Did I mention that I can vaporize myself like "I Dream of Jeannie"?

JAMES

A lot of good that does me.

They sit there a moment.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I have an idea. Let's knock.

MIRANDA

It's true. Everyone is slower down here.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - DAY

Onstage, a woman with teased blond hair, fringed cowboy shirt, and matching white cowboy hat and boots, stands with her guitar, dancing around as she sings off-key.

EXT. LUCY'S CAFE - DAY

Miranda knocks quietly on the door. No answer. She knocks a little louder. The door opens. She gives James a look. A face appears from inside; it belongs to LINDA LUE LINDEN, 20, a sweetly attractive Southern belle. She puts her finger to her lips and lets them in.

The blond woman finishes and steps off the stage. Lucy calls out the next name.

LUCY

Nick Reynolds.

NICK REYNOLDS, early 30s, gets up to and goes to the stage.

James and Miranda sit down with Linda Lue at a table near the door. Linda Lue finds some blank applications on the next table and hands them to James and Miranda.

Nick takes the stage. He wears a baseball cap with a trucking company logo. He sits at the microphone and addresses the room.

NICK

Hi, I'm Nick Reynolds. I'm from Memphis, originally. This one's called "Shoot me up, run me down, take me back," and it's dedicated to you, Lucy.

Lucy seems unmoved by the sentiment. A few auditioners smile knowingly. Nick starts to play. He seemed like a pretty soft-spoken guy up till now, but he was apparently saving his personality for his performance. The song is humorous, about cartoonishly extreme devotions to a woman who won't pay him any attention. Nick's fellow musicians are a good audience, laughing in the appropriate places.

Lucy doesn't laugh at the song; she matter-of-factly moves Nick's application into the "yes" pile.

CUT TO:

LUCY (O.S.)

Next. Linda Lue Linden.

We see Lucy look up, amused.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Goodness, honey, is that your name?

Linda Lue hurries toward the stage.

LINDA LUE

I'm afraid so.

(smiling, into the microphone)

Hi, I'm Linda Lue, from Briar Hill, Alabama. I jut finished this one, it's called "Heaven knocked on my door."

Linda Lue starts her song; she has a sweet voice, but it's weak. Her song is cute, using silly metaphors. She's not awful, but she's not especially good, either.

CUT TO:

Onstage, a young singer, eyes closed beneath his cowboy hat, sings a heartfelt ballad.

He's pretty good. While he's performing, James takes his and Miranda's completed applications over to Lucy's table. He presents them confidently, as if he has no doubt she'll accept them. Lucy raises any eyebrow at him, but takes the applications.

CUT TO:

KYLE DAVIDSON, 22, sits on the stool. He's clean cut, wearing jeans and boots, but no hat. He looks a little jumpy.

KYLE

I'm, um, Kyle Davidson. I'm from Texas.
(laughs nervously)

I'm a little nervous, but it doesn't really show.

Kyle clears his throat and stares at the floor.

KYLE (CONT'D)

This song is called Blue and Blue.

Kyle seems to be more than just a little nervous; he barely manages to raise his head high enough to sing into the mike. He sings without confidence, his voice cracking.

The songs sounds like it might actually be good if he wasn't butchering it. Lucy stares at Kyle, deep in thought, holding his application. Miranda watches him too, listening closely to his song.

CUT TO:

Lucy's down to the last two applications. She calls James' name out, an edge in her voice.

LUCY

James Wynn

James gets up and picks up his guitar. He strides up and sits on the stool. He looks straight out at the audience and introduces himself. His stage manner is folksy.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Howdy. James Wynn, from Austin, Texas. I call this one Friends no more.

He strums the guitar and starts to sing. His voice is strong, and he's a charismatic performer. His song is great too (a ballad, e.g. It Only Hurts Me When I Cry). The audience is drawn into his performance.

CUT TO:

Lucy holds the last application.

LUCY

Miranda Presley, looks like you get to be the fat lady.

Miranda takes the stage. She looks good. Not too nervous.

MIRANDA

Hi, I'm Miranda Presley from New York City.

She starts to play. She didn't mention the name of her song, but that's all right because we already know this song. It's Desperado. Miranda closes her eyes as she starts the lyrics

She has a beautiful voice, very distinctive, and the song sounds great. Just as she finishes the first verse, we hear:

LUCY (O.S.)

Excuse me. Excuse me. Miranda? Honey, do you have another song?

Miranda smiles, rolling with the punches.

MIRANDA

Sure. I know lots of songs. What do you want to hear?

LUCY (O.S.)

Try something I haven't heard before. A
Miranda Presley composition, maybe. This
ain't Star Search.

MIRANDA

Oh. Well, I don't have anything right
now.

Lucy picks up her pile of applications and approaches the stage.
Auditions are over.

LUCY

Well, come on back when you do, O.K.?

Miranda hops off the stage, spirit intact.

MIRANDA

Sure thing.

Lucy shakes her head in wonder at the girl and walks up to the
microphone.

LUCY

Now. I'm going to read off the names of
the people who passed for next month's
performances. If I read your name, come
see me to sign up for which night you want
to play. Nancy Butterworth, Nick
Reynolds, Tom Mortenson, Ricky Hogan,
James Wynn. . . .

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

James and Miranda stand next to his truck. He opens the passenger
door and takes out
her suitcase. He sets it on the ground. She looks disappointed;
she doesn't know
where she's going to go now.

JAMES

You want a lift somewhere?

MIRANDA

Why, I would be much obliged if you would
convey me in this Glen Campbell Hee-Haw
pick-up truck.

James picks up the suitcase and tosses it in the back of the truck.

JAMES

Just so you know, I'm not taking this personally, these little jabs and put-downs about what a yee-haw hillbilly town you have landed your cosmopolitan self in. Where are you staying?

MIRANDA

I haven't decided.

Miranda sees Linda Lue crossing the parking lot next to her car and calls to her.

MIRANDA

Linda Lue Linden.

Linda Lue turns around. She looks pleased to be noticed, and comes over.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Thanks for sneaking us in.

LINDA LUE

Oh, you're welcome. I don't normally flaunt the rules, but my little voice told me I should open that door. And I do believe it was right.

(to James)

You were real good. You got a lot of presence up there. Some people, they sing real good, but they got no presence, you know?

JAMES

Thanks.

One of the singers approaches; his truck is parked next to James. We recognize him as Kyle, the one with stage fright. He notices James.

KYLE

James, right? Kyle Davidson.

They shake hands

KYLE (CONT'D)

Nice job tonight. First time?

JAMES

(nods)

First week in town.

MIRANDA

(to Kyle)

Did you make it?

He seems a little startled by her directness.

KYLE

No.

MIRANDA

Too bad. I liked your song.

He looks at her skeptically; is she making fun of him?

KYLE

Yeah, I liked yours too. Always have.

She laughs, then starts to sing Kyle's song a cappella. If we didn't know it before, we now know it's a beautiful song. She sings just the first verse and stops. Kyle stares at her, drawn into her singing, hearing his song the way it should be. Even after she stops, he stares at her. Finally, he grins.

KYLE

That's it exactly. How did you know that?

Miranda doesn't see what he's so excited about.

MIRANDA

All I did was sing it on key.

KYLE

Are you going to Red's? A bunch of us are going to Red's. For a beer.

Kyle looks like it's important to him that she goes.

LINDA LUE

That sounds like fun.

MIRANDA

(to James)

Are you going?

JAMES

I am.

MIRANDA

(to Kyle)

See you there.

INT. REDS BAR - NIGHT

Miranda, James, Kyle and Linda Lue sit together at a table. We see quite a few familiar faces from Lucy's audition at surrounding tables. Everyone has a bottle of beer except for Linda Lue, who drinks a Shirley Temple.

MIRANDA

(to Linda Lue)

Don't even tell me; you have least . . . three relatives who have died of consumption.

Linda Lue seems pleased with Miranda's accuracy.

LINDA LUE

Well, it's four if you count Eddie. He was my mother's second cousin on her mother's side. He was found at the bottom of my inflatable play pool. I found him, actually.

KYLE

(Whispering, to James)

The bottom of the pool?

Linda Lue goes on cheerfully, oblivious of the stunned reaction.

LINDA LUE

I noticed you have your suitcase. Do you have a place to stay?

Miranda just looks at her.

LINDA LUE (CONT'D)

I have a real cute motel room, with two beds. There's even a pool, shaped like a guitar. We could share it.

JAMES

(To Miranda, pointedly)
She has a pool.

MIRANDA

You've known me fifteen minutes and you want me to move in? I could be a serial killer, for all you know.

LINDA LUE

Oh, I can see that you're not. I'm an excellent judge of character. I've got a touch of the power.

Miranda doesn't want to ask what the power is.

KYLE

My grandmother can tell when a tornado is coming, a week in advance.

Linda Lue nods; she knows exactly what he means.

LINDA LUE

Some things are beyond our comprehension.

(to Kyle)

Let me see your palm.

He gives it to her.

LINDA LUE (CONT'D)

Now you, you got a real strong heart line, see it here.

KYLE

Is that good?

LINDA LUE

Well, sure, but it can also be a little dangerous. My cousin Lester, he had a similar heart line, and he threw himself in front of a speeding train in the name

of love.

Miranda smirks.

MIRANDA
My cousin Leon did the very same thing.

LINDA LUE
Isn't that a coincidence. You want me to
do yours?

Linda Lue reaches for Miranda's hand. Miranda drops the parasol
and lets her have it.

MIRANDA
If I'm going to meet with a bizarre
premature death, I'd just as soon not know
about it

Linda Lue looks up from Miranda's palm and answers her gravely.

LINDA LUE
All right.
(looking at Miranda's hand)
Oh, well I envy you this life line.
You're going to make your mark. People
will remember you when you're gone.

Miranda pulls her hand back.

LINDA LUE (CONT'D)
I'm not saying it'll be soon. Don't you
want me to read your heart line?

Miranda doesn't offer her hand.

MIRANDA
No. Thanks.

JAMES
Hey, let me see your heart line.

Miranda holds out her hand. James pretends to examine it.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You will remain unmarried until the age of
60 . . . at which time you will wed a series

of men with one common characteristic.

MIRANDA
Namely?

He squints at her palm.

JAMES
They will all be named Bubba. Sometimes
it will be a nickname, or a middle name.

Miranda carefully extracts her hand from James's. He looks at her suggestively, as if she's fighting the impulse to jump him. She answers with a "get real" look.

The music on the jukebox has stopped. Miranda reaches for her guitar. She starts to play a song. James watches her, hears the opening chords, and reaches for his guitar.

James starts playing the same song as Miranda, "I don't know why you don't want me." Miranda begins to sing.

MIRANDA
(singing)
It's the right time, and though I feel
fine tonight. . .

JAMES
(singing)
I don't know why you don't want me

MIRANDA
(singing)
It's the right place, I've got the new
face tonight. . .

JAMES
(singing)
I don't know why you don't want me.

Kyle and Linda Lue join in. Soon the other hopefuls from the audition are singing along, commiserating about their rejection.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Linda Lue has apparently had a hand in the decorating of this room; it's hard to believe the motel provided matching floral chintz drapes, bedspreads, and pillows, or a framed photo of Loretta Lynn. Linda Lue's dog, of the tiny furry white variety, sits on his own floral pillow. Miranda throws her suitcase on one of the beds.

LINDA LUE

You can have either bed. I've been using this one . . .

She points to the one Miranda has not chosen.

LINDA LUE (CONT'D)

. . . but you can take whichever you want.

Miranda leaves her suitcase where it is and looks around. There are several stacks of Bibles in the room. She lifts the cover of one, verifying what it is, and decides not to deal with this information.

MIRANDA

Is this the extra, the Loretta Lynn suite?

She flops down on the bed, her eyes closed. Linda Lue's dog comes over and sniffs Miranda, then settles in next to her. Miranda opens her eyes, sees the dog, and closes them again. The phone rings. Linda Lue picks it up.

LINDA LUE

(into phone)

Hello? Hi, Mama. . . Well, I just got in this second, Mama. . . Things are real good. . .

Linda Lue sits up straight, her right hand flat on her bed. Without looking down, she crosses her fingers, first on her right hand, then on her left, the one holding the phone.

LINDA LUE (CONT'D)

Uh-huh.

(brightly)

I passed my audition.

Miranda's eyes open; she tilts her head back and looks at Linda Lue upside down.

She's surprised at the lie but, then again, she really doesn't give a shit. Miranda gets up and opens her suitcase. She takes out a pair of jeans.

LINDA LUE (CONT'D)

Well, I was waiting for you take a breath, Mama, so I could get a word in. . .
Yeah, just like Loretta. . .

Linda Lue rolls her eyes at Miranda, who's changing into the jeans.

LINDA LUE (CONT'D)

Only prettier.

Miranda smiles. She pulls a black leather-bound notebook out of her suitcase and picks up her guitar. Linda Lue covers the mouthpiece with her hand.

LINDA LUE (CONT'D)

Are you going somewhere?

MIRANDA

I'm just going to go to that coffee shop across the street.

She takes her motel room key off the table and puts it on a chain around her neck, next to several other keys and a locket.

LINDA LUE

But it's late. Don't you want to go to bed?

MIRANDA

I'm not tired. I'll be quiet when I come in.

Linda Lue is perplexed.

LINDA LUE

Well, all right. I'll be seeing you.

MIRANDA

Goodnight, Scarlett.

Miranda leaves.

LINDA LUE

(into phone)

I'm listening, Mama. Who died? Well, what was it that killed him?

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Miranda is settled into a booth, a full cup of coffee in front of her, circling classifieds in a newspaper. She doesn't seem to be finding too much. Linda Lue enters the coffee shop, wearing a frilly pink robe over flowered pajamas with feet and furry bedroom slippers. Her hair is pulled back with a pink band. She looks like an exceptionally tall five-year-old. She spots Miranda and pads over to her table. Miranda looks at her and puts down her paper.

LINDA LUE

Did I remember to give the spare room key?

MIRANDA

Annette, I've got a hot tip that Frankie and his friends are going to crash your slumber party. You don't want to miss that.

Linda Lue sits down across from her.

LINDA LUE

Do you hate me?

MIRANDA

How could anyone possibly hate you? You're Miss Congeniality.

LINDA LUE

I was hoping we could be great friends.

MIRANDA

I don't know if that's such a fabulous idea.

LINDA LUE
Why not?

Miranda glances down at Linda Lue's foot, which sticks out from under the table.

MIRANDA
(noticing)
Your pajamas have feet.

Linda Lue waits for an answer.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
Look, I came here to be alone. Nothing personal.

Linda Lue looks hurt. Miranda smiles at her kindly.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
Nothing personal. I swear. Cross my heart.

Linda Lue draws herself up and speaks with conviction.

LINDA LUE
Some people aren't exactly the people you they are when you first meet someone.

She gets up and pads out of the coffee shop. Miranda watches her go.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

The sun's just coming up. Miranda's still in her booth, her head resting on her arm, asleep. The waitress comes up with a pot of coffee and touches her on the arm.

WAITRESS
More coffee, honey?

Miranda looks up, then out the window, squinting at the sun.

MIRANDA
No, thanks.

The waitress leaves. Miranda puts a couple dollars on the table, picks up her stuff, and leaves.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Miranda enters the darkened motel room. The mess she left has been cleaned up; apparently Linda Lue unpacked for her. Miranda pulls off her jeans, removes her bra without taking off her t-shirt, and crawls into bed.

Meanwhile, in the other bed, Linda Lue opens her eyes, sees Miranda, and stretches. She gets out of bed, picks up her robe and goes to the bathroom. The dog jumps off Linda Lue's bed and goes to sleep with Miranda.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Miranda's still in bed, asleep. The air conditioner hums. There's a knock on the door. Miranda reaches for the clock; it's 3:10. She gets out of bed and walks over to the dresser. She opens a drawer, finds a pair of boxer shorts and puts them on. Another knock.

MIRANDA

Who's here at this ungodly hour?

She opens the door. It's Kyle, holding his guitar. She looks out at him sleepily, her hair a mess, pillow marks on her face. The dog stands at her feet.

KYLE

Hi. You look good.

MIRANDA

Thanks.

KYLE

What are you, getting ready to go out?

The dog growls at Kyle.

MIRANDA

I'm thinking there's some reason you're here.

KYLE

I just saw Linda Lue. She said you'd be asleep.

He looks at the dog, who continues a low growl.

MIRANDA

Thanks. Let me know if she says anything else.

She starts to close the door.

KYLE

Wait. I wanted to ask you something.

She opens the door again. The dog steps up the growl.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Is that your dog?

She looks at him; of course it's not her dog.

KYLE (CONT'D)

That's not my question. Will you help me with my singing?

MIRANDA

Is that your question?

KYLE

That's it.

MIRANDA

O.K.

KYLE

(smiles)

Yeah?

MIRANDA

Yeah.

KYLE

Now?

She nods, tolerant of his excitement.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Great. I'll even make you dinner.

MIRANDA

Give me a minute.

She closes the door. The dog stops growling.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING ROOF - DUSK

Kyle and Miranda sit in beach chairs on the roof of his apartment building, with their guitars. There's a grill next to Kyle; he's barbequeing something for dinner.

Kyle's finishing up a song, a beautiful ballad (e.g. "Keep me from blowing away"). His voice is tentative, and he watches his fingers as he plays.

MIRANDA

All right. Now start the song again, but instead of singing, tell me about your guitar.

Kyle starts to strum the chords to the song.

KYLE

What do you want to know about it?

MIRANDA

I don't know, some kind of amusing anecdote about how your daddy traded a pig for it, or the ghost of Hank Williams Sr. Left it on your front porch.

Kyle has started to watch his fingers again. He looks up, decides not to let her get to him.

KYLE

My mom gave me this guitar. She said she could tell I had a lot of creative energy.

MIRANDA

What about your dad?

KYLE

I don't know, what about him?

MIRANDA
Anything. Keep playing.

KYLE
The first time I came to Nashville, I was here four months before I ran out of money and had to turn around and come back home. I thought he'd want me to give it up, since I hadn't made it. But he just put me back to work on the ranch. Said he could use me until I was ready to give it another go.

MIRANDA
Letting life teach you its own lessons, realizing your dreams weren't the same as his dreams.

Kyle laughs.

KYLE
Stop me if you've heard my life story before.

MIRANDA
I saw that episode of Gunsmoke. Anyway, the important thing is you're playing the guitar without looking at your fingers.

He stops playing.

KYLE
Of course I don't have to watch my fingers. It's part of my style.

MIRANDA
Well, don't do it anymore. Now, look at me and sing some of the words.

Kyle starts to play again, looking Miranda in the eye. He stops, and starts the song over. He opens his mouth, then shuts it again. Finally, he stops playing.

KYLE
I can't do it.

MIRANDA
Why not?

KYLE
It's personal. It's part of me. You and me, here alone, my singing to you is practically like stripping down naked.

Miranda raises her eyebrows, as if he might actually disrobe.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Isn't it like that for you, singing one of your songs?

MIRANDA
It seems to me that this is a rather serious handicap for an aspiring performer.

KYLE
I don't want to be a performer. I'd have to be insane to think I could ever make a dime with this voice.

MIRANDA
I thought you wanted to learn to sing.

KYLE
I do. So I can sing on writer's night. I can't get my songs recorded if nobody hears them.

MIRANDA
Is that the only way to get them heard?

KYLE
I've done about a hundred demos, me songs with other singers. Vince Gill put a song of mine on hold last summer, was thinking about putting it on his new album, but he didn't end up cutting it.

Miranda picks up her guitar.

MIRANDA
Well, maybe if you see yourself as an actor, like it's not really you. Play the

part in the song.

She starts to strum a few chords. She looks Kyle in the eye as she sings, acting as if the words were meant for him. The sun is setting behind her.

MIRANDA

(singing)

I loved you yesterday
And I love you just the same
And none of the things you do
Could tear us apart
I loved you yesterday
And I love you just the same
When I gave myself to you
You took only my heart

She puts the guitar down. Kyle fell for the act; he looks slightly lovestruck.

KYLE

That's nice. You write that?

MIRANDA

(shakes her head no)

Lyle Lovett. He's my favorite.

KYLE

You're not proving your point until you play me one of your songs.

He gets up to check on the barbeque.

MIRANDA

One of what?

She smiles at him; she doesn't have any songs.

KYLE

You haven't written any songs?

MIRANDA

You're a songwriter. I'm a singer.

KYLE

You just haven't written any songs yet. Nobody moves from New York to Nashville to be a singer.

MIRANDA
Nobody but me.

Kyle shakes his head no.

KYLE
Country music's all about the words,
having something to say. You wouldn't be
here if you didn't have those words inside
you. You just haven't let them out yet.

Miranda considers the potential truth of this.

MIRANDA
I'm the one who dropped my entire life and
moved someplace I've never even visited
before. I should get to figure out why
the hell I did it.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

Miranda sits at the same table as the day before, a cup of coffee
in front of her. She's
been sleeping; she raises her head from where it was resting on
her arm and squints at
the daylight. She sticks a finger in her coffee; it's cold. She
gets out of her both.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Miranda comes in and gets ready for bed. Linda Lue isn't in her
bed. We hear water
running, then singing as she finishes her shower. The dog jumps
into Miranda's bed.

MIRANDA
Hey, Buster.

Linda Lue comes out of the bathroom. She's cheerful, a morning
person. She seems
a little hesitant about Miranda; she's not sure if they're
fighting.

LINDA LUE
His name ain't Buster.

MIRANDA
What is it?

LINDA LUE
Mr. Dog.

Linda Lue says this as if it's a perfectly normal name. Miranda pulls on boxer shorts.

MIRANDA
How do you know his first name isn't
Buster?

Linda Lue thinks. Miranda picks up the dog, puts him on a different part of the bed, and gets in.

LINDA LUE
Well, he would have told me. We discuss practically everything.

MIRANDA
Did you unpack my stuff?

LINDA LUE
I put your t-shirts in the second drawer,
your underthings are in the top drawer,
and pretty much everything else is in the
closet, light to dark.

Miranda looks at her disbelievingly; Linda Lue gets nervous.

LINDA LUE (CONT'D)
Left to right. There was a lot of black.
I guess you know that. I can't wear
black, it just washes me out. You ain't
mad, are you?

She doesn't seem the least bit mad.

MIRANDA
Where are my tapes?

LINDA LUE

(pointing)

There, in the night table. You are mad.

MIRANDA

I was thinking about what you said in the coffee shop.

Linda Lue sits at the foot of the bed, her tone apologetic.

LINDA LUE

I'm trying to be more forthcoming.

MIRANDA

Well, then let me ask you something.

Linda Lue nods.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Don't most motel rooms have one Bible?

Linda Lue hops up and takes a Bible from one of the piles.

LINDA LUE

I made these myself. I work at the Praise The Lord print company.

MIRANDA

You didn't steal these. . .

LINDA LUE

Oh, lord no. These are all misprints.

(picks one up, pages through it)

This one has Chapter Four from Yogi Berra's autobiography right in the middle of Revelations.

Jesus comes back and says (CONT'D)

LINDA LUE (CONT'D)

It ain't over till it's over. We couldn't ship it that way. People might think Jesus had already come back, and he's been Yogi Berra all along.

MIRANDA

You're making this up.

Linda Lue nods.

LINDA LUE

Did you think it was funny?

MIRANDA

(laughs)

Yes, I thought it was funny.

LINDA LUE

These really are misprints, they're just mostly upside down, though. But here's a booklet that's supposed to be on how to accept Jesus Christ as your lord and savior, and see, it's all recipes for fun desserts you can make with Cool Whip. I didn't make that up, swear to God.

MIRANDA

I'm going to have to remember not to swear to anything in this room.

INT. MUSIC ROW OFFICE - DAY

Miranda, holding her guitar case, stands in front of the receptionist desk, talking to the RECEPTIONIST, an attractive young woman with a Tennessee accent.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry, he doesn't see anyone without an appointment.

MIRANDA

O.K. Let's make a appointment, then. Wednesday is good for me.

RECEPTIONIST

You realize I go through this eleven times a day. I don't let anyone slip through.

MIRANDA

Ever? Not even like a really cute guy?

The receptionist smiles and holds out her left hand, revealing her wedding ring.

RECEPTIONIST

That's how I met my husband. I'm afraid I'm going to have to tell you what I tell

everyone: when you're rich and famous,
you can look back on this and thank God
people like me no longer have any control
over you life.

Miranda realizes she's not going to get anywhere, and leaves the
office.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE of shots of Miranda trying to get past the front office at
other
management companies on Music Row:

She stands in front of another receptionist and pages through the
receptionist's desk
calendar, pointing out an empty appointment time. The girl
shakes her head no firmly.

A receptionist pulls out a large cardboard box and shows it to
Miranda; we see that it's
filled to overflowing with tapes.

Miranda open the door at another company and finds a four-piece
band auditioning for
an expressionless receptionist in the waiting area. Miranda turns
to leave, hoping she
doesn't look as ridiculous as that.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - NIGHT

The place is about half-full; the show hasn't started yet.
Miranda, Linda Lue, Kyle, and James share a table near the stage.

MIRDANDA

So he told me to come back after they
closed and try out, in quotes and
italics, because he's be alone and his
wife is like in Tulsa and I was like,
Yeah! Absolutely! I'll be back. Is
there any possibility you could gain some
more weight by tonight, because I would
fine that really sexy.

KYLE

You didn't say that.

MIRANDA
I did, actually.

She looks around for their waitress.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
Don't we have a waitress?

LINDA LUE
(to James)

Now, don't you be nervous. You're going to be just fine. You get a case of the nerves, your arteries can explode. You could look healthy as a horse, except you'd be dead. I've seen it myself.

JAMES
I don't get nervous. Thanks for trying to calm me down, though.

MIRANDA
I'm going to the bar. Anyone want anything?

KYLE
Beer.

JAMES
Nothing till after I go on.

Miranda looks at Linda Lue

MIRANDA
I'm not ordering a Shirley Temple.

LINDA LUE
Nothing for me, thanks.

Miranda makes her way over to the bar. Nick, the auditioner who dedicated his song to Lucy, sits on a barstool. Miranda orders from the bartender.

MIRANDA
Two beers and a Shirley Temple.

The bartender raises his eyebrows. Miranda nods to confirm her order, then notices Nick.

MIRANDA

Hey, I know you, from the audition.

NICK

Nick Reynolds

MIRANDA

Miranda Presley.

NICK

That's right. Miranda Presley. Wrote
"Desperado" when you were eight years old.

Miranda smiles; she doesn't seem embarrassed.

MIRANDA

I'm famous already, and I can't even find a job.

NICK

Lucy just lost a waitress. Maybe she'll
give you a job.

MIRANDA

No. I'm not a waitress, I'm a singer.

NICK

I'm not sure I see the difference.

(calls to the back room)

Lucy, come on out here.

Lucy comes out of the back room, a look of annoyance on her face.

She recognizes

Miranda.

LUCY

Well, if it isn't Miss Presley. What can
I do for you, honey?

NICK

She's interested in the waitress position.

I told her you'd probably want to hire
her.

Both women look at Nick like they wish he'd butt out. The
bartender pages through a
booklet, looking for a Shirley Temple recipe.

MIRANDA

Look, I don't want to be a waitress.

LUCY

Then why am I out here?

Miranda looks at Nick accusingly.

NICK

I don't know, but you sure do look nice tonight, Lucy. You want to go out later?

LUCY

Nick, I've got a million things to do. Darcy called me at four in the afternoon to tell me she was quitting.

NICK

(mock surprise)
Quitting? Why?

LUCY

Oh, she's going on tour with Rodney Crowell or some fool thing.

NICK

What's she going to do? Drive the bus?

Nick knows very well what Darcy's going to do.

LUCY

(to Miranda)
Darcy's a singer. She met Rodney Crowell right in the very establishment, slipped him a tape, which is against the rules, and now she's singing back-up on his tour. Nick's a sucker for a happy ending, but they're few and far between, if you ask me.

Lucy heads for the back room.

MIRANDA

Lucy.

She turns around.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

I just wanted to apologize. For singing
◆Desperado◆ at the audition. I knew I was
supposed to sing something I wrote.

LUCY

No apology necessary. Just don◆t pull
that again. You◆re welcome to try out
anytime with something of your own.

(sighs)

And you can have the waitress job, if you
decide you◆re interested by tomorrow
afternoon. But no passing tapes to the
customers.

Lucy goes into the back room. The bartender has finally finished
the Shirley Temple,
and Miranda picks up her drinks.

MIRDANDA

(to Nick)

You think I should take this job, don◆t
you?

NICK

If you think opportunity keeps dropping by
until you like what he◆s wearing, you
might as well pass this up.

MIRANDA

Ever since I crossed the border into
Tennessee, It◆s been an exercise in logic
to get a yes or no answer.

NICK

Personally, I think you should take the
job. You got the voice to make it
someday.

Miranda is surprised at the flattery, but still concerned.

MIRANDA

How long did Darcy work here?

NICK

You don◆t want to know.

Miranda goes back to her table. James is going onstage. The
audience applauds.

He's confident, poised. Two or three musicians assemble behind him to back him up.

JAMES

Hi. I'm James Wynn. I'm from Austin, where we like our music with a few rough edges. I hope that's all right with y'all. If you like this one, maybe you can tell Lucy, let her know Nashville's ready for something new for a change.

Miranda looks confused. She turns to Kyle.

KYLE

I heard he wanted Lucky to let him play without an audition. He had all these reviews from when he played in Austin. I also heard that he shot a record executive in Austin, but I don't think that part's true.

James signals the band and they kick in with an energetic rockabilly-flavored song.

He's definitely showing he has the talent to back up his attitude.

EXT. LUCY'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT

James leans against his truck, drinking a beer, talking to the guys who played behind him. Miranda, Linda Lue and Kyle come out of the bar. James says goodnight to the musicians and calls out to Miranda.

JAMES

Miranda. Come here.

She walks over to him, leaving Linda Lue and Kyle waiting for her.

MIRANDA

You were good.

JAMES

Did you ever have a nickname?

MIRANDA

Is that why you called me over?

JAMES

No. That was an icebreaker.

He reaches out and takes her hand, surprising her.

MIRANDA

No. Did you?

He shakes his head.

JAMES

You want to go out? Right now?

MIRANDA

Only if you do.

Kyle's talking to Linda Lue. He looks over and sees James holding Miranda's hand and stops mid-sentence. Linda Lue turns to look and sees Miranda get into James's truck.

LINDA LUE

I guess she found a ride.

(calls out)

James. How many beers have you had?

James hold up his beer bottle and tosses it in the trash.

JAMES

One half. O.K.? I promise not to run down any of your relatives.

LINDA LUE

Have a nice time.

EXT. EMPTY PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A large, empty bowling alley parking lot. James's truck travel in circles, tires squealing.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Inside the truck, we see that Miranda is driving. She grinds the gears and wrestles with the steering wheel. Speed seems to be her only objective.

JAMES

I can't believe you've never driven

before.

MIRANDA

I'm doing that well?

JAMES

No. I put that wrong. I believe you when you say you've never driven before. A blind man could see you've never driven before.

Miranda gives him a look and drives over a cement parking divider. James gets an idea.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I know. Step on the middle pedal.

She hits the brake. The car stalls.

JAMES (CONT'D)

My fault. I forgot to remind you about the clutch.

He opens the glove box and pulls out a bandana. He holds it up in front of Miranda, trying to put it on her like a blindfold. She looks at him like he's nuts.

MIRANDA

Maybe this works with other girls . . .

JAMES

Trust me.

She lets him blindfold her.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Miranda drives with the blindfold on. She's doing much better driving in slow circles. James periodically tells her when to turn, putting his hand on the steering wheel to help her.

JAMES

Not too many people know this, but

Nashville has a giant magnet - it's right under this very parking lot - that pulls things in. People, pick-up trucks, old Roy Orbison eight-tracks. It pulled you here. Turn left.

She turns to look at him, but can't because of the bandana.

MIRANDA

Why didn't it pull anybody else I know?

JAMES

It doesn't attract everyone. Just hicks and hillbillies and a few rednecks. Songwriters. People who own cowboy hats,
(CONT'D)

JAMES (CONT'D)

guys with mustaches. If you have a pick-up, sometimes it'll get pulled with you in it. Some people try to ignore it; they get used to the pull and just never come. My theory about you is that you've got this stray piece of hillbilly lodged in you, probably in one of your shoulders. You were smart not to fight it.

MIRANDA

You know how you can have a job and an apartment and friends and you think, this is my life. If I leave this, I have no life.

JAMES

Mmm. Turn right.

She makes the turn easily, not thinking about the driving.

MIRANDA

Well, I woke up a few weeks ago and it was really hot out and sunny and there were kids everywhere. It was the first day of summer vacation, and it was just like every other day to me. I wanted to be out, like they were. I just wanted out. And I thought, nothing's holding me here, I can do whatever the hell I want. And if I don't do it now, I'll keep going

forever doing what I think I have to do when actually the only thing that's definite about my life is that I'm in it. I'm the fucking lead. I left the next day.

JAMES
That happened to me when I was seventeen.

MIRANDA
And I've always wanted to see Graceland.

JAMES
How fast are you going?

MIRANDA
About twenty?

JAMES
Fourteen. Shift down and make a sharp right when I say now. . . . Now.

Miranda follows his instructions and pulls smoothly onto the highway

JAMES (CONT'D)
Speed up.

She does, shifting into third.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Faster. Get into fourth.

MIRANDA
Fourth? I can't go that fast in a parking lot.

JAMES
Promise me you won't panic.

He pulls off her blindfold and she sees that she's driving on the highway. She smiles, proud of herself.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Miranda and James lie on their stomachs in the back of his pick-up truck, looking off

into the distance.

MIRANDA

You've got a strange idea of a good time.

JAMES

It's better this way.

We see that they are watching a drive-in movie, except they're not at the drive-in;

they're parked overlooking the drive-in. They have a good view of the screen, but no

speaker. It's a clear summer night, just barely dark out. The movie is "Love Story."

JAMES (CONT'D)

You can make up your own story.

James sits up and reaches for his guitar. He starts to strum the guitar, nods in the direction of the screen and sings the first line of a song, making it up as he goes along.

He plays, waiting for Miranda to do the second line. She doesn't.

He keeps making up

lines, making the song about the characters in the movie.

Suddenly, Miranda comes up

with a line of her own; it's just as good as one of James'. She

makes up the chorus and

they sing together.

Miranda rolls over on her back and stares at the sky, her head flopped out the back of the truck.

MIRANDA

I didn't know there were this many stars.

JAMES

Giant magnet. What's your favorite song?

Miranda answers without hesitation.

MIRANDA

"Hooked on a Feeling".

JAMES

Me too.

MIRANDA
Liar.

JAMES
I think you can feel secure in your
position as the only person on the planet
whose favorite song is ♣Hooked on a
Feeling♣.

MIRANDA
What♣s yours?

JAMES
Y.M.C.A.

MIRANDA
Yeah. Me too.

James laughs.

JAMES
What can you do that no one else can do?

MIRANDA
Nothing.

JAMES
There♣s always something.

MIRANDA
I can do a country version of any Bon Jovi
song. Any Bon Jovi single. Except ♣Lay
Your Hands on Me.♣ What about you?

JAMES
I speak Spanish.

MIRANDA
So do a billion other people.

JAMES
Last month, I punched a record producer in
the face.

MIRANDA
I heard you shot him. Only he was a label
executive.

JAMES

See, you should never believe rumors.

MIRANDA

So what happened?

JAMES

I met this producer in Austin, who wanted to do some demos with me, try and get me a record deal. then as soon as we got into the studio, he started changing my songs, fucking with them so they'd sound more like everyone else. We had a fundamental difference of opinion. And he was a dick.

MIRANDA

So you punched him.

JAMES

I believe in doing what you feel like doing at any moment in time.

MIRANDA

What's it like, when you sing something you wrote?

JAMES

Don't you write songs?

MIRANDA

No. I think I might try it, though. This singing thing isn't really working out.

JAMES

The first time I played one of my songs and people connected with it, it was like sex. Well, not exactly. Like the first time you kiss someone and your heart kind of flips, except it doesn't make you feel weak, it makes you feel strong. If you think it's something you want to do, you should try it.

MIRANDA

I think it's something I want to do.

They look straight at each other, lean towards each other and kiss.

EXT. LUCY'S CAFE MALL - DAY

Miranda walks down the sidewalk toward Lucy's. she passes a laundromat. Inside, a man sits on a washing machine playing his guitar and singing while his clothes spin in the dryer. Miranda stops and listens to him a moment; he's not bad. She continues down the sidewalk and goes inside Lucy's

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - NIGHT

Two singers perform on stage. We see Miranda moving through the crowd, working as a waitress. She's not having an easy time; she sets a beer in front of a customer and he indicates that it's not what he ordered and makes her take it back. She carries the bottle back to the bar, where Nick sits at his usual post.

MIRANDA

Did I thank you for bringing glamour and excitement into my dreary life?

NICK

Did you mess up another one?

She slides the bottle over to the bartender.

MIRANDA

(to bartender)

Michelob.

(to Nick)

Beer all tastes the same to me. Did you ask her out yet today?

NICK

(nods)

She declined. Thanks for inquiring.

MIRANDA

Maybe it's time to fish or cut bait.

NICK

You know that Lyle Lovett song? Waltzing Fool?

MIRANDA
Of course.

NICK
(singing a capella)
The waltzing fool, he just might be crazy,
cause the waltzing fool keeps the moon in
his car.

MIRANDA
What about it?

NICK
Nothing.

Silence. Miranda stares at Nick, waiting.

NICK (CONT'D)
Just might no be so crazy, that's all.

EXT. MUSIC ROW - NIGHT

It's the middle of the night, pitch dark. A few of the houses
have their lights on.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

Miranda is in a recording studio, singing the last few lines of a
ballad (e.g. "Is there
life out there?") over a guitar track recorded earlier. Kyle is
in the booth alone,
operating the board.

MIRANDA
I could do it better. Let me do it one
more time.

KYLE
No. I'm keeping that one.

MIRANDA
We have fifteen minutes. I can do it
better.

KYLE
Miranda. That one was perfect. Wynonna
Judd would use that one.

EXT. MUSIC ROW - NIGHT

Kyle and Miranda come out of the building where they were recording. The walk down the sidewalk, Kyle carrying Miranda's guitar. Miranda looks down, not stepping on cracks.

MIRANDA

So what are you going to do with the demo?

KYLE

They'll put it on a list of available songs, and if someone comes in and wants something like this, they might listen to it.

MIRANDA

That's it? That's how you're getting it heard? That's a great song, better than most of the stuff on the radio.

KYLE

They all sound that way at first, when you're the only one who's ever hear it.

MIRANDA

I'm telling you, someone wants this song. Wynonna Judd want this song, she just doesn't know it yet.

KYLE

If that's true, she'll find out soon enough.

MIRANDA

O.K. It's your song. I'm going to say two more words.

KYLE

Two words.

MIRANDA

No wonder.

She keeps walking. Kyle stops.

KYLE

No wonder what?
She doesn't answer. He thinks.

KYLE (CONT'D)

No wonder I can't get anything recorded?
No wonder I'll be just another guy who
never did what he said he was going to? No
wonder I work in a record store? Because
I didn't push my songs on every singer I
met?

(seems to realize something)
Well, I did that, for awhile, but those
songs weren't that good . . .

Miranda stops walking. She turns and looks at Kyle.

KYLE (CONT'D)

For your information, I stopped putting
all my energy into every new song because
I didn't want to be so damned disappointed
all the time.

Miranda looks guilty. She begins an apology.

MIRANDA
Kyle. . .

Kyle sits down on the curb. Miranda sits next to him.

KYLE

(realizing)
You're right. No wonder. How can I
expect anyone else to get excited about my
songs if I don't? I shouldn't just sit
back and wait for someone to find my
songs; I should do something to get my
songs heard

He tries to think of an idea.

KYLE (CONT'D)

What do you think I should do?

Miranda takes the demo tape out of her pocket.

MIRANDA

I think you should - we should - take this
song to Wynonna and get her to listen to

it.

She stands up. Kyle remains sitting. She tilts her head - a gesture for him to come on, then starts walking away.

KYLE

What, right now?

He gets up and follows her.

EXT. WYNONNA JUDD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

There's a car parked in the circular driveway. Kyle and Miranda approach the car, trying to be inconspicuous.

MIRANDA

Are you sure this is the right house? She parks right out front? Anyone could break into her car.

KYLE

I guess we're the only ones who thought of it. It's her house. I came to a party here once.

MIRANDA

So you're in her social circle, but we have to lurk around at dawn to give her a tape.

KYLE

I was parking cars, and this wasn't my idea.

MIRANDA

Give me the thing.

Kyle hands her a slim jim.

KYLE

The thing? I thought you had done this before.

MIRANDA

What do you think I am, a criminal? I've see it done. My sixth-grade boyfriend is

doing eighteen months for this.

Kyle puts his hand on her wrist to stop her.

KYLE

O.K. Time to go.

MIRANDA

That was a joke. He got probation.

She carefully inserts the slim jim between the car window and the door. She moves it around expertly, and after a few seconds the door lock clicks. Kyle jumps.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Give me the tape.

Kyle hands her the tape. She opens the car door. As soon as she raises the handle, the car alarm goes off.

KYLE

Shit. Let's go.

MIRANDA

Wait. Let me put the tape in.

She sits in the driver's seat and pops the tape in the car radio.

KYLE

Take that out. It has my name on it.

Miranda rolls her eyes at him.

MIRANDA

How else is she going to know whose song it is?

KYLE

But she'll know I broke into her car.

MIRANDA

Of course she will. That's the one drawback to the plan.

KYLE

I can't believe I didn't think of that.

The alarm continues to blare. A light comes on inside the house. Kyle looks up and sees it. Miranda follows his gaze and sees it too.

MIRANDA

Don't people ignore these things anymore?

She gets out of the car. Kyle gets in a pushes buttons on the tape player.

KYLE

Where's the eject?

Miranda hears something; she looks down the driveway and sees a police car pulling up.

MIRANDA

And when did the cops start responding so quickly?

INT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

Kyle sits in one of a row of chairs against the wall. He looks angry. Miranda leans over the receiving desk, pleasing with an unsympathetic cop.

MIRANDA

I told you, we weren't trying to steal anything. We were giving her a tape.

KYLE

(weary)

Don't arrest her. It was my idea.

MIRANDA

It was my idea.

The cop looks from one to the other; he doesn't care whose idea it was.

KYLE

At least you admit that.

MIRANDA

Why are you mad at me? You agreed to it.

KYLE

You didn't mention the one drawback.

MIRANDA

Any idiot would have figured out the one the one drawback.

WYNONNA JUDD walks into the police station, a police officer at her side. Everyone turns to look at her. The unsympathetic desk cop seems particularly impressed to see her.

POLICEMAN

. . . and my daughter just loves your last album. I like that one you did with your mama . . .

(singing)

Girls night out, honey there ain't no doubt . . .

He notices everyone looking at him and stops singing. He points at Kyle and Miranda.

POLICMAN (CONT'D)

These here are your perpetrators.

Kyle extends his right hand.

KYLE

Hi. Kyle Davidson. It's a pleasure to meet you.

Wynonna shakes his hand. Miranda looks at him like he's nuts.

KYLE (CONT'D)

This is Miranda Presley.

MIRANDA

Hi.

WYNONNA

Kind of polite for hardened criminals. Which one of you jimmed open my car door?

Miranda raises her hand. The cop behind the counter stops staring at Wynonna and rushes over to a desk. He starts rummaging through drawers.

KYLE

We weren't trying to steal it . . .

WYNONNA

(to Miranda)

Thanks for not scratching it. You're the one singing on the tape?

MIRANDA

(nods)

It's his song. You listened to the tape?

WYNONNA

(to Kyle)

I guess this song is available? Or are you waiting to hear from everyone else whose car you broke into?

KYLE

Yours was the only car we broke into

WYNONNA

Well, I'm flattered. I just wish I wasn't flattered this early in the morning. Is your phone number on the tape?

Kyle nods, embarrassed at his stupidity.

WYNONNA (CONT'D)

I'll have my manager give you a call about putting it on hold.

Kyle's mouth drops open. Miranda smiles. Wynonna turns to leave the police station.

POLICEMAN

Miss Judd? Do you want to press charges?

WYNONNA

All I want is to get some sleep.

KYLE

(to Miranda)

Don't think this means I forgive you.

The copy going through his desk finds what he's looking for. He holds up a tape,

triumphantly, looks up and sees Wynonna leaving.

POLICEMAN #2
Excuse me, Miss Judd?

She turns to look at him. He hurries to catch up with her.

POLICEMAN #2
Since you're looking for new material. . .

He offers her the tape. She takes it from him patiently, promising to listen to it.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Miranda sits in her usual booth, but this time she's awake. She has her guitar next to her and her notebook open in front of her, trying to write a song. It doesn't seem to be going too well, most of what she's written has been crossed out. She reads what she still has and crosses that out too.

INT. JAMES' TRUCK - AFTERNOON

Miranda and James are in the truck. Miranda drives.

MIRANDA
I'm having trouble even getting started.
Maybe I can't do it.

JAMES
You learned how to drive two weeks ago and you're already the best driver I know.

MIRANDA
Writing songs is different.

JAMES
Maybe you need to try it with your eyes closed.

She looks at him and shakes her head, swerving expertly around a car at the same time.

MIRANDA
Tried it. Didn't work.

JAMES

When's your night off?

MIRANDA

Wednesday.

JAMES

Wednesday. I'll show you a few tricks.
But you have to promise not to get better
than me.

Miranda pulls into the parking lot for Lucy's.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - AFTERNOON

The cafe hasn't opened yet. Miranda opens the door, showing up
for work. James is
with her; they kiss goodbye passionately. Lucy looks at them
disapproving. Miranda
comes in and ties an apron around her waist. Lucy puts glasses
away behind the bar.
Nick is onstage, doing a sound check for his performance later.

NICK

(into microphone)

Check, check. Lucy . . . Lucy? Is this
working right?

Lucy finally looks up.

LUCY

The microphone is fine, Nick.

NICK

You're pretty fine, yourself, Lucy.

Lucy goes back to work. Miranda smiles.

MIRANDA

Can I ask you something?

LUCY

If you think there's something you don't
already know.

MIRANDA

How long has he been after you like this?

LUCY
A little over a year.

In the background, Nick starts to strum his guitar.

MIRANDA
And you've never even gone out with him?

NICK
(singing)
She won't even give me a chance. . .

Lucy sighs; she doesn't think this is nearly as interesting as Miranda does.

LUCY
I expect you'll keep asking me about this until you hear the whole sorry story.

Miranda looks at her expectantly.

NICK
(singing)
She calls me sorry, and that's just what I am . . .

LUCY
I met Nick about . . . eight years ago. My husband and him. . .

MIRANDA
Your husband?

Nick starts a new song, with a different melody.

NICK
(singing)
That no good man wasn't no good for you. . .

LUCY
My husband played guitar in Nick's band. Nick started acting pretty much the way he acts now, only then I was young and didn't have much sense.

NICK (singing)
I wouldn't give you a dollar, for all the sense in the world. . .

LUCY

I eventually left my husband and took up
with him

She jerks her head in Nick's direction.

MIRANDA

What happened?

NICK

(singing)

It was the right love, at the wrong
time. . .

LUCY

Nick got a record deal. He cut an album
and went on tour. His first night on the
road, he called me up and started talking
about. . . what was it, Nick? Space?

NICK

(singing)

Now it seems all the space in the world,
is between me and you. . .

LUCY

Well, his album didn't exactly set any
sales records, and his record label
dropped him. Before I knew it he was
hanging around here, thinking I was fool
enough to take him back.

NICK

(singing)

You don't want to fool, with this fool in
love with you. . .

MIRANDA

Maybe he's learned his lesson.

NICK

(singing)

But I've learned my lesson, you taught me
the hard way to fall. . .

LUCY

He hasn't said anything so far to make me
think he's learned one damn thing. I'm

going to open up.

She walks over to unlock the front door.

NICK

(singing)

Open up your heart to me, darling, this
time I won't let you down.

LUCY

Get off my stage, Nick.

EXT. LUCY'S CAFE - NIGHT

Miranda's just getting off work. She comes outside and looks
around for something.
She sees Kyle, leaning against his truck. Miranda stays where she
is. Kyle walks over
to her.

KYLE

I told Linda Lue I'd pick you up. I
thought we might celebrate.

She looks at him doubtfully.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Any idiot would have figured out the one drawback.
Miranda smiles.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Miranda and Kyle walk along the strip on night clubs and souvenir
shops. It's a warm
night, and they pass musicians playing on the sidewalk for tips.
They pass an open
bottle of champagne back and forth, drinking straight out of the
bottle.

KYLE

It's lucky for both of us that my song was
so good, or we'd be in jail right now.

MIRANDA

It's lucky for you that I sang on that
demo.

KYLE

Hey, I can sing pretty good, I'll have you know.

MIRANDA

You'll have to show me that sometime.

Kyle walks over to one of the street musicians and borrows his guitar. He leans against a wall and begins to play; Miranda and the musician watch him. He starts to sing; it's the love song he did at the auditions, the one Miranda sang to him in the parking lot. Kyle does it a lot better than when he auditioned; he looks right at Miranda and sings the words to her. He finishes, showing no signs of embarrassment, and hands the guitar back to the musician.

KYLE

Thanks, buddy.

He and Miranda walk away.

MIRANDA

Not bad.

She hands him the champagne bottle.

KYLE

Not bad? Not bad!

MIRANDA

You're Johnny Cash. You're Vince Gill.
You're George Strait.

He puts his arm around her, and she leans her head against his shoulder.

KYLE

You know what's funny?

Miranda doesn't answer.

KYLE (CONT'D)

The first time I saw you, I didn't even realize how beautiful you were.

She seems affected by this, but only for a moment. She pulls away from him.

MIRANDA

Just once, I'd like a sober man to call me beautiful.

KYLE

It's not just that, it's you. I didn't even care that I got arrested, really, because I was with you. You know how I got better at that song?

Miranda's look says she doesn't want to know.

KYLE (CONT'D)

I thought about you. About everything I wanted to tell you about how I feel. And I was sober at the time, I promise.

Kyle moves toward her. She moves away, starts walking again, trying to lighten the mood.

MIRANDA

So you realize there's a song for everything that happens in life? Sometimes there are dozens for one moment in time, like now. Yours could be that REO Speedwagon song about wanting to be more than friends, and mine could be "Baby don't get hooked on me."

KYLE

I've always hated that song.

MIRANDA

I got you arrested and I'll always remind you of a song that you hate. That should be two strike against me.

KYLE

Don't count on it.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

James and Miranda come up to a gate, carrying their guitars. James walks up to the

window and watches a plain taxi up to the gate. Miranda plops down in a chair.

MIRANDA

I think you're mistaken about how easy it is to amuse me. It's harder than this.

James walks over and sits next to her. He takes out his guitar.

JAMES

We're not here to amuse you, we're here to get you some inspiration. Look at him.

He points at an old man carrying a small bunch of daisies. The man stands looking expectantly at the gate. Miranda looks at him, unimpressed.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Waiting for his wife. The woman he married when she was barely seventeen. The woman he loves just as much today as the day he met her.

MIRANDA

You could write a song from that?

JAMES

No. Not me. I don't write about everlasting love.

MIRANDA

Say he's waiting for Gregor, his thirty-year-old Dutch lover. They met in Venice last Valentine's day, and have been apart since then.

JAMES

How come?

MIRANDA

Howard over there had to have his wife killed, and her collection of exotic parrots converted into hatbands.

JAMES

Should be a touching reunion. Not a country song, though. What about him?

James points at a man, about 35, who looks anxiously out the window at the plane.

MIRANDA

He married his high school sweetheart, they have a lovely home and a wonderful marriage, or so everyone think. She's returning from a Mary Kay convention.

JAMES

Or so she says. That has possibilities.

He plays a few chords and sings a line about the American Dream gone wrong.

The door opens and passengers start coming into the gate area. The old man searches each face, almost as if he's frightened. Suddenly his face lights up. A short blue-eyed woman comes to him, her smile just like his. He holds her tightly, his fist clenching the daisies behind her back. Nearby, a young couple kisses passionately.

James looks at Miranda; he told her so. Miranda stars at the old couple, who break apart as if slightly embarrassed. The man picks up the woman's bags. He's forgotten to give her the flowers. The young couple continues to kiss.

The man who was looking out the window is standing on the edge of the crowd of passengers, searching for someone.

JAMES

Watch him.

Finally the man sees who he he's looking for; a five-year-old girl gets off the plane, holding the stewardess' hand. The little girl sees him and breaks free of the stewardess.

She yells "Daddy!" and runs to her father, who kneels down and catches her, lifting her in his arms. She wraps her little legs around him and hugs his neck tightly; you couldn't find an inch of space between them.

The father closes his eyes for a moment, smiling.

James looks at Miranda, who stares at the father and daughter. She looks like she's about to cry. She turns away, embarrassed.

MIRANDA
Let's go.

She picks up her guitar and walks quickly away from the crowded gate, down the corridor. James hurries to catch up with her.

JAMES
What's the matter?

MIRANDA
Nothing.

JAMES
O.K. You don't have to tell me.

Miranda steps at an empty waiting area and takes a seat. James sits next to her.

MIRANDA
I hate that. Someone goes away for two weeks and it's like the end of the fucking world.

JAMES
What's wrong with missing someone?

MIRANDA
If you know they're coming back, you have no right to miss them. It's not like they're dead.

They sit there a little while, James sensing that Miranda's really upset about something.

JAMES
I remember when my grandfather died. I kept waiting for him to come to Sunday dinner.

MIRANDA
How old were you?

JAMES
Twenty.

Miranda looks at him, a little surprised. She hesitates, then opens her locket and shows him inside.

MIRANDA
That's my dad.

One side has a black and white photo of her father, a handsome man with a wide grin. The other side has a black and white photo of Elvis pouting. James tries a little joke.

JAMES
He looks just like Elvis.

MIRANDA
That is Elvis. He gave me this when I was ten. My decitennial accolade, he called it. He raised me since I was five. Just me and him.

She looks at the pictures, then snaps the locket shut drops it around her neck.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
Presley's my middle name. He had this kind of Elvis thing. Nothing weird.

JAMES
When did he die?

MIRANDA
Three months ago.

JAMES
That's not very long. It's only natural that you miss him.

MIRANDA
I don't miss him. He told me not to.

Miranda's quiet. James just sits with her, comfortable with the silence.

JAMES

You want to go?

MIRANDA

O.K.

EXT. MOTEL POOL - NIGHT

James sits in a deck chair. Miranda sits on the diving board, dangling her toes in the water. It's a hot summer night; she wears a t-shirt and shorts. She has her guitar, and is singing "Bad Medicine", which she's transformed from pop/metal to country. She does the first verse, then:

MIRANDA

When I get married, I'm going to have them play "Bad Medicine" as I walk down the aisle. The Bon Jovi version.

Miranda climbs off the diving board and sets her guitar in a chair. She goes over to the pool stops and starts to climb in fully dressed.

James starts to play something; it's the song he started writing earlier, in the airport, about living the American dream, but only on the surface. He has a few really good lines. By the he's done, Miranda has gotten all the way into the pool, except for her head. She's been watching him intently the whole time he's been singing. James puts down his guitar and sits at the edge of the pool.

JAMES

Why do you always stay up all night?

MIRANDA

Linda Lue snores.

JAMES

Are you afraid of the dark?

MIRANDA

If I was afraid on the dark, I wouldn't spend so much time in the dark, would I?

James pulls off his shirt and starts to climb into the pool.
Miranda ducks underwater
and comes back up.

JAMES
Nightmares?

MIRANDA
Not since I was eight.

JAMES
What'd you do then, when you a
nightmare?

MIRANDA
I would wake up my dad, he'd come get me,
and he'd let me stay up all night. We'd
light candles and make cookies and play
poker. We used to crank call foreign
countries. I learned the twist at four in
the morning. Then when it got light out,
I'd go to bed and miss half a day of
school. My dad once wrote a not for me;
Miranda was unavoidably late to school
today due to a slight pterodactyl crisis
at home. The problem has been remedied
and it is unlikely that this will happen
again.

They move around the shallow end of the pool, not approaching each
other.

JAMES
So you've been sleeping during the day
since he died?

MIRANDA
At first, I couldn't sleep at all, then
the only time I could even remember what
he looked like was in the middle of the
night. I sometimes think about what I'll
say when I see him again, and if I'll
recognize him, then I realize I won't see
him again at all.

James moves over to Miranda and stands in front of her.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

I've been thinking about something. (He takes her hands.)

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

I wonder if I'll know you in a year.

JAMES

I don't know.

James moves toward her, trying to seduce her. It's not clear if she's going to respond.

MIRANDA

If we go out, and we break up, I probably won't. I'll be just another girl you used to go out with. And someday there'll be so many you won't know which one I was.

James backs away from her.

JAMES

You want me to say we'll be together in a year? Because I can't say that.

MIRANDA

No. That's not what I want.

A look of realization crosses his face. He lets go of her hands.

JAMES

You don't want to do this.

MIRANDA

I don't think it's a good idea.

James gets out of the pool; he's angry and he's leaving. He picks up his shirt and starts to walk away, then stops and turns to Miranda.

JAMES

I'm going to have to ask you to tell me why.

MIRANDA

I told you.

JAMES

I need the real reason. Then we'll be friends or whatever it is you want.

Miranda sits on the top step on the pool. She looks away from him and tells him the truth.

MIRANDA

I've been trying to write a song. Just one song, to prove I can do it. Not even a good song. And you, you see two strangers at an airport and you turn it into something so . . . incredible. Your song was incredible.

JAMES

What, you're jealous? I might not even finish that song. I have a song I started three years ago that's not done yet.

MIRANDA

I'm not jealous. I'm overwhelmed. I just can't give you that, see?

JAMES

I don't care.

MIRANDA

I do.

She stares at him. He sees she's set on this and gives up, walking away. She sits in the pool, holding her knees to her chest, watching him go.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - NIGHT

Later that night. The performances are over, and only a few songwriters hang around, making arrangements to get together and write. Miranda puts the last chair up. She goes over to Lucy, who's counting receipts at one of the tables.

LUCY

You can leave if you want, honey.

Miranda sits with her.

MIRANDA

Lucy, do you think anyone can be a songwriter

LUCY

I've seen some people who tried about as hard as a person can try and just never get it, you know? I don't think you can learn it. I can't do it.

Miranda looks discouraged.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to bring you down.

MIRANDA

I always thought I wanted to be a singer, then I came hear and realized I like to sing, but it doesn't seem like enough. But songwriting's so different; I just don't know if it's worth it to try. It comes so easily to some people, like James.

LUCY

You know what's in this case?

She points to the glass case on the wall behind her, which contains tacked-up papers with handwriting on them: pages torn from notebooks, cocktail napkins, an air-sickness bag. Miranda looks and shakes her head no. Lucy stand up and examines the writing.

LUCY (CONT'D)

These are all songs, by my songwriters. They're not all hits, but they're special songs. Like a miracle, some golden words roll off of someone's tongue. Some of the took ten minutes, some if them took years. Every one of these songwriters would tell you it's worth it. You write a song like one of these, and you can't ever give up again. You know what it feels like to be special, and there's nothing

and no one that can give you that same kind of special.

Lucy sits back down to get back to work.

LUCY (CONT'D)

That's why I worry about you, being with James.

MIRANDA

James and I decided we'd just be friends.

Lucy nods.

LUCY

It doesn't matter how wonderful he is if he's only going to break your heart.

MIRANDA

Yeah, that's what I decided. I'll see you tomorrow.

LUCY

Goodnight, honey.

Miranda leaves. Nick's standing nearby. He watches her go.

INT. ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

James is onstage, singing. There's a band behind him. Some people are dancing down front; Linda Lue is among them. Miranda enters and finds Kyle sitting down front. She sits with him. James sees her come in and smiles at her.

MIRANDA

How's he doing?

Kyle hesitates, then answers sincerely,

KYLE

Great.

Linda Lue returns, flushed, from the dance floor.

LINDA LUE

Hey, good, you made it. Come and dance. This old stick-in-the-mud

(points to Kyle)
hasn't danced with me once.

KYLE

(to Miranda)
Who knew she was such a party girl?

MIRANDA

Do you know how to do that?

She gestures toward the dance floor, where they're doing an elaborate country step.

KYLE

Sure.

MIRANDA

Come on and show me how.

He hesitates only a moment before getting up and escorting Miranda and Linda Lue to the dance floor.

INT. ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

Miranda, Kyle and Linda Lue are on the dance floor. Linda Lue and Kyle are expertly performing the steps. Linda Lue smiles flirtatiously at the guy next to her; she seems to be in her element. Miranda stands in between them, trying to follow. She smacks Linda Lue on the arm to get her attention away from the cowboy. Linda Lue does it slowly to demonstrate, then smiles and nods when Miranda gets it right.

We watch the dancing for awhile - a dance floor full of people performing intricate steps in rapid, perfect unison, having the time of their lives.

INT. ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

James finishes a song. Miranda, Kyle and Linda Lue are still on the dance floor. They stand and applaud.

JAMES

O.K. Thank you. We're going to do one more for you all tonight. I've got a special guest singer on this number.

He looks straight at Miranda and smiles.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Her name's Miranda Presley and I think
you're gonna like her.

Miranda just stands there, disbelieving.

LINDA LUE

Go on up, Miranda.

JAMES

Miranda, get on up here.

Miranda shakes her head. The other band members lean into their
microphones and
chorus her name, taunting her. She smiles and climbs onstage. The
band starts the
song. James takes off his guitar; he takes her hand and speaks
into her ear.

JAMES

You know this one.

Miranda realized they're playing "Hooked on a feeling". She
laughs. The bassist hands
her a microphone. James starts to sing, then Miranda comes in,
grinning, not nervous
at all once she starts to sing. We haven't heard the song quite
like this before; the
sound couldn't be more country. They're both having a good time.

Couples start to dance. Linda Lue watches, standing still among
the dancers, smiling
like a sentimental fool.

Kyle stares at James and Miranda, his expression serious, his
broken heart on his
sleeve.

The song ends and the audience applauds enthusiastically. James
hugs Miranda.

EXT. ROADHOUSE PARKING LOT- NIGHT

James, Miranda, Linda Lue, and Kyle come out into the parking lot.
James holds a

business card in his hands.

JAMES

(to Kyle)

Do you know this guy? Doug Roberts?

KYLE

Yeah. He's a good manager, been around for twenty years. He has a good reputation.

JAMES

He wants to do some master demos with me.

KYLE

That's great. He can get you a record deal. Congratulations.

JAMES

Thanks.

MIRANDA

Congratulations.

JAMES

Come here a minute.

He takes Miranda's hand and pulls her over to his truck. He looks into her eyes.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Do you have the feeling that no matter how conclusively we decide not to be attracted to each other, forces beyond our control will pull us together?

He moves slowly toward Miranda.

MIRANDA

You think the entire universe is controlled by magnets, don't you?

JAMES

Yes and no.

He's standing right next to her now, and she's not moving away.

MIRANDA

What was the question?

He kisses her. She doesn't resist.

INT. JAMES'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A country love song plays on the stereo. James leads Miranda by one hand into the darkened bedroom. Miranda chatters nervously.

MIRANDA

We've been thinking about moving out of the motel, but we don't have any furniture, and the dog seems to like it, and they wrap the glasses in cellophane, even though Lou always washes them again before she lets me drink out of them.

They're standing at the foot of the bed.

JAMES

I need for you to shut up now.

MIRANDA

Why?

JAMES

I'm trying to picture you as Earlene Mandrell, and you don't sound a think like her.

MIRANDA

Well, lucky for me, you sound exactly like Jim Nabors.

JAMES

I really need for you to shut up now.

He kisses her on the neck and unbuttons her shirt. She responds, undoing his belt buckle. They fall onto the bed and continue to make love.

INT. JAMES'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Later that night. James wakes up and looks around. He notices Miranda is gone, then hears music from another room. He gets up.

INT. JAMES'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Miranda sits at the kitchen table, quietly playing guitar, wearing a loose denim shirt that must be James's. Her notebook is open in front of her and she writes something down, then looks up and sees James standing in the doorway.

JAMES

Maybe I'll start staying up all night. The best things in my life happen after dark. He passes by her, pulling back her shirt to kiss her shoulder, and sits at the table. She keeps playing quietly.

MIRANDA

Lucy told me you'd break my heart.

JAMES

I guess you didn't believe her.

MIRANDA

Maybe I just decided to risk it.

JAMES

How's your song coming?

MIRANDA

I have one line.

JAMES

Every song starts with one line.

MIRANDA

I don't know if it's any good. My dad always said I could do anything. I keep thinking about this song he wrote for me.

JAMES

Do you remember it?
She nods.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Let me hear it.

Miranda plays the song. The lyrics are about a father's unending devotion to his daughter. She stops after the first chorus.

JAMES

That's a nice line, about falling out of the sky and landing in love.

He's hesitant, like he's searching for something nice to say.

MIRANDA

Is that the only thing you liked?

JAMES

It's just. . . well, devotion is a tricky theme. Of course a parent's devoted to his child. You have to have a point of

(CONT'D)

JAMES (CONT'D)

view. Like he wants a better life for you than he had for himself. This song starts at the end of the story.

MIRANDA

Every song doesn't have to be about something you can relate to.

JAMES

A good song has something to say, even to people who haven't been in that situation.

MIRANDA

(hurt)

So it's not a good song, because you don't like it.

JAMES

I'm just telling you what I thought. I've spent half my life writing songs, I know something about it. I thought you were trying to learn.

She stands up.

MIRANDA

If you had thought about it, you would

have realized this wasn't a good example.

She picks up her notebook and walks out of the kitchen. James looks like he's realizing his mistake.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Miranda has decorated her half of the room; there are photos of Lyle Lovett and Jon Bon Jovi over her bed.

Miranda sits in her bed, the dog on her lap. She looks terrible. She rummages through the drawer of her nightstand and pulls out a cassette. She puts it in the player on top of the nightstand and presses play. We hear a man's voice, speaking.

VOICE

And I gave Fish-head four gallons of ice cream for dinner, just like you said. Of was that supposed to be one can of cat food? I couldn't remember, and Fish-head insists that she always has ice cream on Thursday. She also said to tell you she misses you, and she caught a giant spider that I thought looked a lot like that Billy Warren kid you think is so cute. I told her you'd be home soon. Remember, if you get homesick, just keep your chin up. . .

Miranda hits the fast-forward button. When she hits play again, we hear her father singing, the same song she played for James. We hear the second verse this time. Miranda is visibly upset. She raises her chin; apparently she takes that literally. She doesn't cry. She hits the stop button, her chin still in the air. She reaches for her notebook and opens it.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Kyle's pick-up pulls up outside a house. He and Miranda get out.

MIRANDA

How many people will be here?

KYLE

Five or six. Everyone just plays something they're working on. Don't worry, no one's going to insult your song. They'll only say what they like about it.

MIRANDA

What if they don't say anything?

KYLE

There are so many things a person can do with her life. That girl in Flashdance was a welder.

MIRANDA

Do you think they'll notice if I play Livin' on a Prayer?

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kyle and Miranda sit in Nick's kitchen, with Nick and three other musicians, KEVIN, ERICA, and JOE. They're sitting in a circle around the small kitchen table. There's a tape recorder on the table. Everyone has a beer and one or two of the guys smoke cigarettes. Erica has the only guitar in the room, and she sings a song, substituting la's for one of the lines. Kevin sings a line she might use there. Erica sings it back, changing a few words.

CUT TO:

Later that night. Nick has the guitar now, and he sings a song that's uncharacteristically sober for him. It's an apology to a woman he betrayed; he admits that he had no excuse to hurt her. The tape recorder is on, recording Nick's performance. Miranda watches him intently.

CUT TO:

Everyone's laughing. It must be getting late, because they're getting a little giddy. Joe sings a song about how broke he is and they all join in the chorus

CUT TO:

Miranda takes the guitar from Kyle and begins to play her song. She's a little shy about it but manages to perform pretty well. Her song isn't bad; it has a nice melody, but the lyrics are not especially moving. All she has is the first verse.

MIRANDA

I don't like that last line.

ERICA

No. Keep that one. I like that line.

MIRANDA

I'm not sure what it means.

NICK

If you wrote it, you'll figure out what it means eventually. That's the best line in your song.

Miranda isn't sure if she agrees with them.

INT. LAUNDROMAT - NIGHT

Linda Lue folds laundry while Miranda sits cross-legged on top of a table, playing her guitar.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - NIGHT

After the bar has closed, Miranda sits at the bar, playing her song for Nick.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Miranda sits cross-legged on her bed, her notebook open on her lap. Linda Lue's bed is neatly made. Linda Lue emerges from the shower.

LINDA LUE

Oh good, you got in. Are you coming to the audition today?

MIRANDA

I don't know. I don't think my song is ready.

LINDA LUE
Has it changed any in the last two weeks?

MIRANDA
Yeah, but I changed it back.

Linda Lue looks at her.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
Fine. I'll go.

Linda Lue smiles. She sits in front of the mirror and proceeds to examine every inch of her face, looking for wrinkles.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
What are you looking for?

LINDA LUE
Signs of aging.

MIRANDA
Find any?

LINDA LUE
Well, I like Barry Manilow more than I used to. You know what I don't get?

MIRANDA
What?

LINDA LUE
You and James. You have one little spat and you don't call him and he doesn't call you.

MIRANDA
I guess we both realized our mistake.

LINDA LUE
I thought you really liked him

MIRANDA
That was the mistake.

Miranda gets under the covers.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Wake me up for the audition.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - DAY

The weekly audition is in progress. Miranda and Linda Lue share a table. Nick sits at the bar. Lucy sits at her usual table in back. Kyle is onstage, doing a nice job with one of the songs we've heard before. He finishes triumphantly, breathes a sigh of relief, and walks back to the table.

LUCY

Miranda Presley.

Miranda takes the stage. She introduces herself quickly and sings the song she sang at Nick's house. She's left in the line that the other musicians liked. It's the most evocative line in the song, and it seems out of place with the rest of the lyrics. Luc

watches Miranda with a small smile on her face; she's impressed that Miranda is taking this seriously.

We see now that James is standing just inside the door; he must have been there since before Miranda started playing.

LUCY

Linda Lue Linden, go on up and show us your stuff, honey.

Miranda passes Linda Lue on her way back. They exchange smiles. Linda Lue takes the stage.

LINDA LUE

Hi there. I'm Linda Lue, from Alabama. This song is called "I went looking for Jesus."

Linda Lue begins to sing; her song is about misprinted Bibles, and, true to her style, it's unrelentingly cute. Miranda glances at Lucy to get her reaction, but is unable to read her expression.

James walks over and sits next to Miranda. She's surprised to see him. Kyle isn't happy to see him. They speak in low voices.

JAMES
I like your song.

MIRANDA
(cold)
Thanks.

JAMES
I've missed you.

Kyle doesn't have any choice but to leave. He makes a fist and presses it firmly against the table as he gets up.

MIRANDA
Since my phone still ain't ringin', I assume it still ain't you.

JAMES
I'm sorry I didn't call. I couldn't call you, I don't now. That night, after we made love. . .

Miranda's eyes widen; she looks around as if someone might have heard.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Well, we did. And then I was a jerk. I should have just kept my mouth shut. I'm sorry. I should have told you then. . .

MIRANDA
Look, it wasn't that big a deal. You've apologized. Let's forget it, O.K.?

She glanced over at Lucy, who glares at her to be quiet while Linda Lue is singing.

JAMES
It wasn't just my fault, you know.

Miranda looks at him questioningly.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You said you were willing to risk it, but you weren't.

Miranda shakes her head no, agreeing with him.

MIRANDA

I'm sorry.

She means she's still not willing.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I should have told you that night. . .

Lucy appears behind them and shushes him. They look at her guiltily. She leaves.

James reaches for Miranda's hand. She's reluctant to give it to him, but he gives her a pleading look and gently takes her hand, placing it palm up in his left hand. With his right, he spells something onto her hand with his finger. When she realized what the message is, she turns and watches him finish spelling. He looks into her eyes. She closes her hand into a fist, turns away, and pulls it under her other arm, hugging herself. She watches Linda Lue finishing up her song. James, recognizing the impact his message had, reaches across Miranda to take her hand again. She lets him take it in his. James smiles.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - DAY

Lucy announces the results of the audition. She calls out Kyle's name; he passed this time. Linda Lue lets out a whoop and hugs him. Miranda smiles too.

Lucy get to the end of the list. Linda Lue wasn't on it; neither was Miranda. Linda Lue looks disappointed. Miranda takes the news well.

JAMES

You should have passed.

Miranda shakes her head.

MIRANDA

I knew it wasn't ready. I can do it better.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - NIGHT

Later that day, after the auditions are over, Miranda has shown up for work and is tying on an apron around her waist. Lucy comes in. Miranda smiles at her, showing her she's not angry about the audition.

LUCY

Hey, I thought you did real good today.

MIRANDA

You're supposed to pass the ones you like.

LUCY

You know why I bought my own place?

MIRANDA

So you could play God.

LUCY

That's exactly right, honey. I think you got a real good start, but I wouldn't be doing you any favors if I let you play this soon.

MIRANDA

Oh, I brought you something.

Miranda holds out a cassette . Lucy takes it.

LUCY

What's this?

MIRANDA

If I tell you to just trust me and listen to this, will you?

Lucy shakes her head.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

It's Nick, a song of his. I think you should hear it.

(smiles)

It's all about you. And it won't get any laughs.

Lucy sets the tape on the counter. Miranda won't take it back; she walks away. Lucy looks at the tape.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Miranda and Linda Lue are taking the dog for a walk. Miranda holds a flyer advertising the Miss Nashville pageant.

LINDA LUE

And there's prizes, and scholarships, and the winner goes to the Miss Tennessee pageant.

They come up to a playground.

MIRANDA

I hope you won't be insulted if I tell you I already think of you as Miss Nashville. What about your illustrious songwriting career?

They come up to the slide. Miranda picks up the dog and carries him to the top of the slide.

LINDA LUE

You have no way of knowing this, since you are asleep during most of my waking hours, but I have been having serious doubts about my future as a songwriter, which has been my one goal since I was eleven years old and saw Coal Miner's Daughter for the first time.

Miranda places the dog at the top of the slide and hold him steady, facing towards the drop. The dog starts to wiggle eagerly and she lets him go. He slides to the bottom, where Linda Lue catches him and carries him around to do it again.

LINDA LUE (CONT'D)

But lately I've been thinking about something my late grandmother Tilly use

to say. She would say, "Look at your breakfast. You've got your bacon, and your eggs. Now, the hen was involved in your breakfast, but that hog was committed."

Linda Lue releases the dog down the slide to Miranda. They continue to take turns putting the dog down the slide.

LINDA LUE (CONT'D)

Lately I've been feeling more like that hen. If I thought I could really do it, that might be another story.

MIRANDA

The pageant's next week? Do you have time to get ready? Don't people train for months for these things?

LINDA LUE

Miranda, I believe it is within my ability to learn to walk in high heel, discuss (CONT'D)

LINDA LUE (CONT'D)

the role of the woman in today's society, and tease my hair in one week.

MIRANDA

If you could have one wish for today's children, what would it be?

LINDA LUE

World peace. No, clean air.

MIRANDA

You wouldn't want them to be sick, or go hungry, would you?

LINDA LUE

What do I care? I hate kids.

MIRANDA

You're beautiful and queen-like, Lou. You're a beauty queen. You've got this locked up.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

James is in the recording studio with a band of session musicians. DOUG ROBERTS, the manager who gave James his card at the Roadhouse, sits in the booth with the engineer. The musicians are all in their thirties and forties; most of them look like somebody's father. They're doing one of the songs we've heard James do before, but this version seems to lack energy. James is clearly dissatisfied with the way things are going, but is trying to be patient. He stops singing in the middle of the song and cuts the band.

JAMES
We need to bring up the snares.

DOUG
(over microphone)
They sound fine in here.

JAMES
This tempo's all wrong.

DOUG
Don't worry. It sounds great.

JAMES
I'm not deaf. I can tell how it sounds.

From the way he says this, we know he hates the way it sounds.

DOUG
We'll just get it down once this way, o.k.
James?

JAMES
No. That's not the way I wrote it.

James looks determined. Doug leaves the booth and comes into the studio to talk some sense into James. The musicians watch, uninterested. They've seen this before.

DOUG
James, I know you feel strongly about your

song. You should, it's your baby. But I've been doing this since you were a baby. I know what a hit sounds like.

Doug's matter is soothing, condescending.

JAMES

I know what shit sounds like.

DOUG

It doesn't sound like shit. It sounds like what every country radio station is looking for. I have to think in terms of radio play.

JAMES

I record this the way I wrote it, or I don't record it at all.

The musicians start to take notice; the fight is finally heating up.

DOUG

I'm already taking a big risk with you. . .

JAMES

Don't do me any favors.

He starts to gather up his stuff.

DOUG

Go ahead. Walk out. No one else will touch you. Everyone knows about you.

James stands face to face with Doug.

JAMES

What does everyone know about me?

DOUG

You've got a hell of an attitude for a pretty boy with a couple of good songs.

This is just part of Doug's act, the way he keeps singers in line, but James' anger flashes. Before Doug can see it coming, James punches him in the eye.

The musicians look at each other, entertained. James walks out.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Miranda, wearing her t-shirt and boxer shorts with a glittery pair of high heels, paces the floor with a Bible balanced on her head.

MIRANDA

I pledge allegiance, to the flag, of the United States. . .

Linda Lue calls to her from the bathroom.

LINDA LUE (O.S.)

I think it's highly unlikely I'll be reciting the pledge of allegiance.

Linda Lue sticks her head out the bathroom door, pulling rollers out of her hair.

LINDA LUE

Much less with a Bible on my head.

Miranda puts her arms straight out at her sides and the Bible falls off her head.

MIRANDA

I would think this is exactly the kind of thing you'd be doing. I still think you should learn that tap dance to Dixie. Come on out.

Linda Lue throws open the bathroom door and strikes a pose in the doorway, one arm raised, head thrown back. She wears a low-cut sequined gown and heavy make-up and has her curled hair piled on top of her head. Miranda gasps.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Oh, you look beautiful.

Linda Lue drops the pose and looks down at herself.

LINDA LUE

You think so? Is it enough?

MIRANDA

Yes. It's enough.

LINDA LUE

It's not too much?

MIRANDA

No. You look perfect. Except. . . let me try one thing.

She reaches up and loosens a few strands of Linda Lue's hair so they fall around her face. Miranda steps back and appraises her work.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Better. Wait.

Miranda reaches to the dressing table and gets a Q-tip. She runs the Q-tip under Linda Lue's eye, removing some of the eyeliner, then does the same for the other eye.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

What did you do, follow some kind of eyeliner diagram in the beauty queen handbook?

LINDA LUE

I'll be on stage, I want them to see my eyes.

MIRANDA

They will see your eyes. On the other girls, all they'll see is eyeliner.

They turn to face the mirror and look at themselves, standing side by side. Linda Lue gets a little emotional.

LINDA LUE

You're my best friend, you know.

Miranda's emotional too, but embarrassed. She turns away from the mirror.

MIRANDA

Yeah, well that's cause you're such a sap, Lou.

Linda Lue smiles.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - NIGHT

It's closing time. Lucy's behind the bar, Nick is there at his usual seat. He gets up to leave.

NICK
Goodnight, Lucy.

LUCY
Goodnight.

NICK
I don't suppose you want to go out with me tomorrow night.

LUCY
Tomorrow night?

Nick nods. If he's surprised, it doesn't show.

LUCY (CONT'D)
What time?

NICK
Eight o'clock.

LUCY
Eight o'clock. That'll be fine.

NICK
Goodnight, then.

As he turns to leave, we see a small smile on his face.

EXT. ERNEST TUBB RECORD SHOP - NIGHT

A record store with a small outdoor stage behind it, where free jamborees are held at night. There's an all-night miniature golf course next door, and Miranda and Linda Lue's motel is just across the parking lot. It's a warm night, and people are playing golf, sitting in the adjacent picnic area or on top of their cars in the parking lot, listening to the music. This is a traditional country music affair; the band is also made up of older musicians, all men, and includes a banjo and fiddle.

Miranda and Linda Lue sit on top of a picnic table. James walks up to them

JAMES
Hey. I got your note.

He holds up a note which reads "James, JAMBOREE!" with an arrow.

MIRANDA
I never miss a jamboree.

LINDA LUE
Hey, James. How's your career coming?

JAMES
I punched an influential member of the record industry in the face.

They don't react to the news.

MIRANDA
We know.

JAMES
Again. Today.

MIRANDA
Oh. What happened?

JAMES
I'll tell you on the way.

MIRANDA
On the way where?

JAMES
It's a surprise.

James takes her hands to help her down off the table. Miranda says goodbye to Linda Lue.

MIRANDA
This had better be better than the jamboree.

JAMES

It is.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

James and Miranda in James's truck, driving.

MIRANDA

So when do I find out the surprise?

JAMES

There are clues everywhere. We're in a truck, on the highway. . .

MIRANDA

You're talking me somewhere.

James points to a road sign.

JAMES

Clue.

MIRANDA

(reading)

Memphis. What's in Memphis?

James moves his lip in an Elvis sneer. Miranda screams.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Graceland? Graceland! Way cool.

JAMES

You do not know what it is to worship Elvis until you've seen his personal shit.

MIRANDA

They should put that on a plaque and hand it on the gate.

(singing)

Graceland, Graceland, Memphis Tennessee.

We're going to Graceland. . .

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

James and Miranda are at the check-out stand, buying chee-tos and suzy-q's and Dr. Pepper.

MIRANDA

Only six hours to kill.

JAMES

We'll drive by the gate. I thought you would want to see it at night.

They walk out of the supermarket. James stops by the gumball machines. He puts a quarter in one of the machines and turns the dial. He looks at the prize, puts it in his jacket pocket, and tries another quarter. This time he takes the prize out of the plastic bubble. He goes to Miranda and takes the grocery store bag from her. He sets the bag on the ground and kneels in front of Miranda.

James takes her left hand and shows her the prize - it's a gold colored ring with a blue plastic star.

Miranda looks around, embarrassed. The checkers, two middle-aged women (one white, one black), are both watching with smiles on their faces.

MIRANDA

They think you're proposing.

James doesn't reply. He tries to put the ring on her ring finger, but it doesn't fit. He puts it on her pinky.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Get up.

James looks over at the checkers.

JAMES

Say yes first.

MIRANDA

Yes to what?

JAMES

Say yes, or I'll look like a loser.

MIRANDA

You are kind of a loser.

JAMES

(loudly)

Say yes. I can't live without you.

One of the checkers says, "how romantic." They ignore a customer trying to buy a six-pack.

MIRANDA

(loudly, angrily)

Yes. I said yes. Is that what you want?
Are you happy now?

James acts overjoyed; he smiles gleefully and hugs Miranda.

JAMES

Happy? I'm the happiest man on earth!

He looks at her and smiles stupidly until she finally has to drop the act and laugh. They grab the groceries and run out of the store, leaving the checkers bewildered.

EXT. GRACELAND - NIGHT

James' truck is parked across the street. James and Miranda sit in the back, eating chee-tos, looking at the gate.

JAMES

His aunt still lives there.

MIRANDA

I bet she used the TV room at night.

JAMES

I would.

James looks pensively at the house.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You know what this reminds me of?

He looks at Miranda; she has no idea.

JAMES (CONT'D)

When I was a kid, my dad used to take me out every weekend. Told my mom we were

having a boys' night out, going bowling or to the movies, or the rodeo, if there was one. Then we'd go to his girlfriend's house; for a long time he was seeing my fifth-grade health teacher.

Miranda studies him, looking for signs of sadness at the memory and finding none.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And I'd sit in the car, we had a blue Pontiac, and he'd leave me the keys, and I'd listen to the radio.

(laughs)

One night, I taught myself how to drive in that car, waiting for my dad. The antenna had this bend in it. . .

(motions with his hand)

. . . and no matter what I did I couldn't get one damn FM station in that car. So I'd sit there and listen to the country music station and stare at the house. I never could take my eyes off the house.

He takes Miranda's hand, his eyes still on Graceland.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Just like all those damn cheating songs. And all my life, people would tell me, 'James, you're just like your father.' And I never said it but I thought, no I'm not. I never lie. I don't pretend to be a great guy. The high point of my father's life was a football game in high school. No way was I going to be just like him. But now I wonder if I can help I it.

Miranda looks confused.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Sometimes I feel like I'm going to spend the rest of my life with everyone thinking I'm someone I'm not.

MIRANDA

It's hard to think about what you're going to do for the rest of your life. You have

to pick one thing. What if it doesn't work out?
James nods.

JAMES
You look stupid. You're a failure.

Miranda takes his chin in her hand and turns his face toward her.
She kisses him.

MIRANDA
I don't think you could ever be a failure.

She climbs out of the truck bed. She reaches inside the truck and turns on the radio, tuning it to a slow song (e.g. "Asking us to dance"). She climbs back up into the back and stands next to James, holding her hand out to him. He slowly gets up, his eye

locked with hers, and takes her hand.

They start to dance underneath the stars, holding each other close. James pulls her closer, tight against him, until they aren't dancing anymore.

JAMES
(softly)
I'm scared.

MIRANDA
So am I.

The song plays on as they hold on to each other. Finally, James pulls away until he isn't touching Miranda anymore. He takes his hand and moves it along her arm, from the shoulder down to her wrist, without touching her.

JAMES
Do you feel that?

MIRANDA
Yeah.

The skies have become cloudy. There's lightning in the distance. Elvis comes on the radio and it begins to sprinkle.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

It's pouring now. James and Miranda con in, drenched. The same two checkers are there. Their names are SELMA and MARY. Mary is black.

SELMA

Look, Mary, if it ain't the newlyweds.

MARY

You two get married already?

JAMES

No. We couldn't find an all-night wedding chapel.

Miranda plays her role low-key, convincingly bitchy.

MIRANDA

Well, maybe if you had any sense at all, you might have planned this a little better and we wouldn't have gotten lost in the rain.

(to the cashiers)

He doesn't have the sense he was born with.

MARY

(to James)

You sure you wanna marry this one?

James smiles fondly at Miranda

JAMES

I know she's a handful, but I'd die if I lost her.

MIRANDA

That's cause you'd forget to breathe if I didn't remind you.

MARY

Well, if you're sure, maybe I can help you. Selma, you can cover me for five minutes?

SELMA

Sure can. You gonna wake Raymond?

Mary gets her purse from under the counter and pulls on a coat and rain hat.

MARY

I'm going to wake that man and tell him there's two young folks here and can't wait till morning to get married.

Mary hurries out of the supermarket.

SELMA

She'll be right back, she just lives down the street.

MIRANDA

Who's Raymond?

SELMA

Raymond's her husband. He's a minister. This is so romantic.

Miranda and James look at each other, amused, mildly panicked.

JAMES

Cold feet, honey?

MIRANDA

I left. . . something blue in the truck. Come with me.

They leave the supermarket.

INT. JAMES' TRUCK - NIGHT

They sit inside the truck, parked outside the supermarket.

MIRANDA

Let's go.

JAMES

We can't just go. We have to at least tell them we changed our mind.

MIRANDA

(laughs)

We'll have a big blow-out of a fight. I'll pretend to shoot you in the leg.

JAMES

I've got another idea.

She looks at him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Let's get married.

She seems to consider this, then come to her senses.

MIRANDA

You don't get married as a joke.

JAMES

It's not a joke. We're in love. What the hell, let's get married.

MIRANDA

You're serious.

JAMES

We are in love, aren't we?

MIRANDA

Yeah.

JAMES

Then why haven't you ever told me?

MIRANDA

You're the one who had to write it on my hand.

JAMES

I love you.

MIRANDA

I can't say it.

JAMES

Why not?

MIRANDA

I'd be afraid to tell you how much.

James seems happy with this answer. He notices something behind Miranda,

outside the window. Mary is back with her husband. He's a huge black man with a lumbering gait. He wears a black raincoat and carries a black bible. Their skinny teen-age son is with them.

JAMES
Jesus.

MIRANDA
Oh my god.

Raymond comes up to the truck and puts his face against the passenger window. It's a frightening sight. Miranda covers her mouth. James reached over and turns Miranda's face towards his.

JAMES
Marry me, Miranda

MIRANDA
O.K. Yes.

She looks back at Raymond.

MIRANDA
I don't see an alternative.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

The frozen foods section has been selected as the wedding site. Mary and Selma drape pastel toilet paper over the aisles. Raymond stacks some crates to use as a podium, placing one behind for him to stand on. Mary's son leans against the freezer, flipping through a Playboy.

James is in the toiletries section, putting gel in his hair. Miranda comes up next to him and takes a toothbrush and toothpaste.

MIRANDA
I have chee-tos stuck in my teeth.

JAMES
You know, this is exactly how I pictured my wedding.

MIRANDA

Yeah, mine too. Except. . . oh, shit.

She quickly walks away, then back to James. She takes off her ring and puts it in his hand.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

The ring. See you at the altar. Aisle twelve.

Miranda hurries away.

She goes to the frozen food section. Raymond has discovered his son reading Playboy.

RAYMOND

(bellowing)

Benjamin, I have told you that pornography will guarantee you reservation in the depths of hell.

He gives special enunciation to the word **pornography**. Ben seems unconcerned. He puts down the magazine, revealing the Metallica logo on his t-shirt. Raymond hands Miranda a piece of paper.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

Here's your marriage license. Can't no one tell you for certain that's not the genuine article.

MIRANDA

Thank you.

She takes Ben's arm and pulls him aside.

MIRANDA

Ben, I need a favor.

BEN

(wicked smile)

You want a lesson from the master. Before your honeymoon.

She gives him a look.

MIRANDA

Do you have a Bon Jovi tape?

BEN

Bon Jovi's for girls, man. I ain't a girl. My sister likes Bon Jovi.

MIRANDA

Does your sister have a Bon Jovi tape?

BEN

She's got every Bon Jovi tape.

Miranda smiles.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

It's time for the ceremony. Raymond stands behind his podium, towering over James. Selma and Mary stand off to the side, beaming.

MARY

Ben, where are you? Get out here and be a witness.

BEN (O.S.)

Coming

There's a click, then music comes over the supermarket sound system. It's

Bad Medicine. Ben escorts Miranda up the aisle until she is standing next to James, then runs back and cuts the music.

Raymond being the ceremony. He's a fundamentalists preacher and, apparently, even his wedding ceremony is delivered with the threat of fire and brimstone.

RAYMOND

(bellowing)
Dearly beloved. . .

TIME CUT TO:

Later in the ceremony. Sweat drips down Raymond's face as he towers over

Miranda and James.

RAYMOND

Do you, James, take this woman to be your wife, to love and treasure like gold, forsaking all others, turning your back on earthly temptations, or you will surely know the fires of hell in the inferno of eternal damnation.

Raymond glares down at James, pointing his finger. James didn't think it was a question, but it seems safer to answer.

JAMES

I do.

James slips the ring on her finger. Raymond draws a deep breath and pulls back.

RAYMOND

And do you, Miranda, take James to be your husband. . . .

Miranda seizes the opportunity to cut this short.

MIRANDA

I do.

RAYMOND

Then by the power vested in my by Almighty God, his son, our savior, the baby Jesus, and the state of Tennessee, I hereby pronounce you man. . . .

He points at James.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

. . . and wife.

His finger swings over to Miranda. Raymond wipes the sweat off his forehead.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

You may kiss the bride.

James and Miranda kiss. Ben cranks up **Bad Medicine** and Mary and

Selma throw Minute Rice.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

James and Miranda dance. Eric Clapton's "Pretty Girl" plays over the sound system. Mary dances with Raymond, and Ben reluctantly dances with Selma.

INT. GRACELAND - DAY

It's morning. James and Miranda are inside Graceland. The tour guide describes the room in a loud, rehearsed voice. Miranda leans against James and gazes dreamily at Elvis' stuff.

MIRANDA

I had this dream that we got married.

JAMES

We did, remember?

MIRANDA

No. Me and Elvis. I had my hair in a huge bee-hive.

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

The theater where the beauty pageant is being held. Linda Lue is onstage, doing a scene from "Coal Miner's Daughter". Someone read the other parts woodenly from off-stage. Linda Lue is an extremely emotional actress and several women in the audience wipe tears from their eyes at the end of her performance.

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

The pageant's nearly over. There are five girls on stage: Linda Lue is one of them. Miranda and James slink into the darkened theater and take two empty seats next to Kyle.

KYLE

(whispering)

Where were you two?

MIRANDA

We picked up a hitchhiker that turned out to be the ghost of Elvis. Had to take him to Graceland. She's a finalist?

KYLE

She was the best one. People were crying when she did her scene.

MIRANDA

So she's going to win?

KYLE

I don't know. I think that redhead is married to at least one of the judges.

On stage, Linda Lue walks over to stand next to the host.

HOST

And now, our last finalist, Louise Linden.

Miranda mouths the name Louise, amused.

HOST (CONT'D)

You look lovely tonight, Louise.

LINDA LUE

Well, that's the idea, ain't it?

The host chuckles.

HOST

Yes, it is. Now, Louise, here's your question: Which do you consider more important, family or career?

LINDA LUE

By family you mean the family I plan to have.

HOST

Yes.

LINDA LUE

Well in that case, I would say neither.

My friends are more important to me than my career, whatever that may turn out to be, and my career is more important to me than a husband and a bunch of screaming kids.

The host clears his throat.

HOST

Thank you. A very good answer.

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

Later. Linda Lue and the redhead are the only contestants left on stage.

HOST

And this year's Miss Nashville is. . . Tammy Sue Phelps!

Tammy Sue squeals. Linda Lue hugs her, looking relieved.

INT. THEATER BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Linda Lue stands among a group of contestants, holding a bouquet of roses.

Miranda come up to her and hugs her.

MIRANDA

Congratulations. Personally, I thought you should have won.

LINDA LUE

I can't believe they gave me runner-up after I said that about screaming kids.

Miranda laughs.

MIRANDA

You threw it? Cool. How come?

LINDA LUE

Did you see my talent?

MIRANDA

No. James and I got married. We got here late.

LINDA LUE

Married?

MIRANDA

Sort of. I'll tell you all about it.
Tell me how your scene went.

LINDA LUE

I was really good. I found something I
can do, Miranda. I can't spend a year
cutting ribbons at supermarket openings.

MIRDANA

Well, you'll always be a beauty queen to
me.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Kyle is in his pick-up, playing with the radio as he drives. He
switches from
station to station to station, trying to keep an eye on the
traffic.

KYLE

(to himself)

Love songs, nothing but love songs . . .
Whose idea was love, anyway?

He pauses on a station where the dee-jay is introducing a song,
his hand
poised over the dial.

DEE-JAY (V.O.)

. . . . we've all been waiting for, here's the
new one from Wynonna.

The song starts; it's Wynonna Judd, singing Kyle's song. Kyle
realizes what
it is, lets out a whoop and turns up the radio. In his
excitement, he also puts
his foot on the gas and runs right into another truck. Even after
the accident,
he's still grinning and listening to the radio. He opens his door
but stays in his
truck. The driver he hit gets out, more surprised by the accident
than angry.
He approaches Kyle, looking at him curiously. Kyle beams at him.
He points
at the radio.

KYLE

That's my song.

The driver doesn't say anything. He leans against Kyle's truck so he can hear the song, and listens appreciatively. Then he calls out to the people who are gathering around because of the accident.

DRIVER

That's his song. He's got a song on the radio!

The on-lookers move in closer so they can hear the radio.

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM - DAY

Kyle's song continues over:

James and Miranda in bed. Miranda's wide awake, staring at the ceiling. James is still asleep. He stretches, waking up.

Miranda turns and closes her eyes, pretending to be asleep. James looks a little surprised to find Miranda in his bed; we see the memory of the wedding coming back to him. Now it's his turn to stare at the ceiling. He reaches over and takes Miranda's hand; the situation is serious but at least they're in it together. She doesn't look at him.

INT. JAMES' BATHROOM - DAY

James is alone in the bathroom. He opens the medicine cabinet and has to search for his shaving cream. He looks down and sees two tubes of toothpaste resting on opposite sides of the sink. He closes the medicine cabinet and starts at the sight of his own reflection, as if he's looking at himself for the first time.

INT. JAMES' KITCHEN - DAY

Miranda looks in the refrigerator, which is nearly empty. She lifts the lid on a pizza box, takes out a slice and takes a bite. She sits down at the kitchen table and looks out at the quiet street. Her eyes move down to her hands. She holds them in front of her and examines them, like someone else's hands. She touches the ring James gave her, which looks cheap in the bright morning light. She twists it off her finger and holds it in her fist, drawing her knees up to her chest.

EXT. MUSIC ROW - DAY

James pulls his truck up outside one of the houses, the office for Doug Roberts' management company. He stays inside the truck, looking at the building.

INT. JAMES' KITCHEN - DAY

Miranda sits at the table, her notebook open in front of her, a blank page. She slides the ring back and forth on her pen.

INT. DOUG ROBERTS' OFFICE - DAY

Doug sits behind his desk. He has a black eye. James stands in front of him, pleading his case.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - NIGHT

The music ends. Miranda shows up for work. Lucy looks surprised to see her.

LUCY

You're early.

Miranda looks at her watch.

MIRANDA

I am?

LUCY

Forty-five minutes. You feeling all right? You look exhausted.
Miranda sits down at the bar.

MIRANDA
(matter-of-fact)
We got married.

LUCY
You and James? Congratulations!

Miranda looks at Lucy like she thinks she might be joking.

MIRANDA
I thought you might disapprove.

LUCY
Well, honey, I got me a whole new attitude on the subject of love.

She holds out her left hand. There's a diamond ring on her finger. Miranda smiles.

MIRANDA
This can't be from Nick. You can't even tolerate Nick. You're never going to forgive him for as long as you live.

LUCY
I changed my mind.

MIRANDA
I tried to tell you about that song.

LUCY
I don't know why he didn't just come out and tell me how he really felt.

MIRANDA
Maybe the same reason you didn't tell him.

LUCY
We're having an engagement party Friday.
We'd like you to sing.

MIRANDA
O.K.

LUCY
Original material only.

MIRANDA
Oh. I don't have anything good enough

LUCY
Well, you've got two days. You'll come up with something.

MIRANDA
When did you turn into such an optimist?

LUCY
I have to admit, I'm starting to believe in happy endings. Looks at you and James - I never did figure that boy to be the type to commit.

MIRANDA
It kind of happened when he wasn't looking.

LUCY
I don't think he does anything without looking first. If he said "I do", then he does.

Miranda smiles, reassured.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - NIGHT

Later that night, Miranda brings some customers their drinks and heads back to the bar. On her way, she runs into James.

MIRANDA
Hey. I know you.

JAMES
Can you take a break?

MIRANDA
Not right now.

JAMES
You want to know what I did today?

MIRANDA

What did you do today?

JAMES

I went to see Doug. I told him he'd be all kinds of sorry if he let me get away. That kind of line works like you wouldn't believe.
Miranda smiles.

MIRANDA

I might.

JAMES

I leave for Austin day after tomorrow. I start recording next week.

The smile leaves Miranda's face.

MIRANDA

Austin? You're aware you're already in the country music recording capital of the world.

JAMES

I get to use my musicians this time. This is everything I wanted. I thought you'd be happy for me.

MIRANDA

How long will you be gone?

JAMES

I don't know. A month or two.

MIRANDA

You're just taking off? Day after tomorrow. And you aren't going to ask me if I want to come.

James is surprised that she's upset. He looks around to see if anyone is looking at them. No one is.

JAMES

What are you going to do, quit your job so you can hang around and watch me record

all day? I thought you'd want to stay here.

MIRANDA

(loudly)

The fact that we're married doesn't mean that you get to decide what I want.

Now a few people turn to look.

JAMES

What does it mean?

She's getting progressively louder, and so is James. Lucy notices that they're fighting.

JAMES

I'm not even sure we are married, so if you want out, just let me know. I can tear up the certificate.

MIRANDA

Don't pull this on me. You're the one who's leaving. Maybe you've gotten what you wanted out of this. You proved to yourself that you could commit to something. Well, a commitment lasts more than two days.

They notice everyone staring at them and lower their voices.

JAMES

You think you've got me all figured out.

MIRANDA

Maybe you can only commit to one thing at a time. I guess we know what your one thing is.

JAMES

You're the one who can't see past two months from now. I don't think you can see this marriage in a week from now.

MIRANDA

I just don't think there'll be anything to see.
(hurt)

You asked me to marry you.

She twists the ring off her finger and holds it in her fist, looking like she might throw it. Instead she drops her fist, turns around, and walks away. James watches her for only a second before he turns and leaves.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Miranda sleeps in her old bed. In the other half of the room, Linda Lue is packing to leave. The dog climbs in her suitcase and she pulls him out and sets him on the bed. It looks like she's almost done. Her side of the room now looks like a typical tacky motel room; no floral bedspread, no picture of Loretta Lynn. Miranda opens her eyes.

LINDA LUE

Hey, you. I thought you were going to sleep through my departure.

MIRANDA

And miss the opportunity to see another piece of my life crumble away?

Linda Lue looks concerned.

LINDA LUE

Do you want to tell me what happened with you and James?

Miranda sits up.

MIRANDA

I think the marriage just woke him up. We realized he didn't want to be with me for the rest of his life. The wedding thing was a big mistake.

LINDA LUE

(meaningful)

And you didn't have any second thoughts of your own.

MIRANDA

He's the one who left me.

Linda Lue sits next to her on the bed.

LINDA LUE

Can I tell you a story?

MIRANDA

How many people die in this story?

LINDA LUE

Just one. When my Aunt Lydia was eighteen, she was engaged to marry Henry Esterbrook. However, the week before the wedding, Henry eloped with Marianna Fine. Aunt Lydia was so devastated she thought she'd rather be dead than be without Henry, so she decided to hang herself.

MIRANDA

Has it occurred to you that this story is completely inappropriate for this situation?

LINDA LUE

There's more. Lydia went to the hardware store to buy a length of good strong rope, she couldn't have weighed less than two hundred pounds, and the man that sold her that rope turned out to be her destiny. She married him that summer. My Uncle Ernie.

MIRANDA

Which one of them dies?

LINDA LUE

My Uncle Ernie was bitten by a poison centipede later that same year. He died instantly. But that is beside the point and you know it. There is someone out there for everyone, and even if your head doesn't know it, your heart does.

MIRANDA

So her heart led her to the hardware store.

LINDA LUE

Just like yours took to Memphis.

Remember the night I met you? I read your palm?

MIRANDA

Yeah. But you didn't read my heart line.

Linda Lue gives her a knowing look.

LINDA LUE

Sometimes people want to be surprised.

Linda Lue reaches for Miranda's hand. Miranda lets her take it. Linda Lue examines it; we get the idea she may inventing the reading.

LINDA LUE (CONT'D)

See, it's the same as before. You are not one to settle for the easiest thing - I think that's true. A challenging relationship. . . that can be very romantic; to me that seemed like you and James, both of you so pig-headed.

MIRANDA

This isn't helping.

LINDA LUE

The important thing to know is to follow your heart. Don't go against what it's telling you, and don't bury anything that ain't dead.

Miranda pulls her hand back.

MIRANDA

Who's going to die now?

Linda Lue smiles.

LINDA LUE

No one that you don't kill with your own two hands. You know, maybe next week would be a better time for me to leave.

MIRANDA

No, honestly, I couldn't stand you or Mr. Buster Dog another day. Go to Hollywood

and tell them who the hell you are.

Linda Lue hugs her, then gets up and closes her suitcase.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Linda Lue and the dog are gone. Miranda sits cross-legged on her bed, her notebook open in front of her. We hear Pam Tillis passionately singing

◆Maybe it was Memphis.◆

Miranda picks up a piece of paper that looks like her marriage certificate. She folds it in half and cuts it into a heart shape. She unfolds it, and cuts the heart into pieces with a jagged break. She positions them on a page of her notebook.

There◆s a knock at the door. Miranda opens it to find Kyle standing there.

EXT. RED◆S BAR - NIGHT

Kyle leads Miranda out of the bar; she◆s a little tipsy. They pass a man in a cowboy hat standing on the sidewalk, singing for tips. Miranda sings along with him.

KYLE

I don◆t know how productive this was . . .

MIRANDA

Well, I◆m having a pretty good time.
Let◆s go somewhere else. Wanna go to Graceland?

Kyle◆s just trying to get her into the car without incident.

KYLE

Let◆s get you home.

MIRANDA

I don◆t get it.

KYLE

What.

MIRANDA

This whole thing. What's the matter with me?

KYLE

Nothing. You are perfect.

MIRANDA

No. There's something wrong with me. Nobody wants me. Nobody cares about me.

She's really getting upset. Kyle wraps his arms around her, holding her like a child.

KYLE

(soothing)
I care. I want you.

She shakes her head no. He strokes her hair back off her face.

KYLE (CONT'D)

I care. I care about you.

Miranda still doesn't look like she's herself.

MIRANDA

Do you love me?

Kyle loosens his hold on her; he has to protect himself now.

KYLE

Miranda, don't ask me that right now.

MIRANDA

(persistent)
Are you in love with me?

Kyle pulls away from her altogether.

KYLE

Yes.

She pulls him to her slowly and kisses him, passionately. He kisses her back, then breaks away gently and looks at her, quietly angry.

KYLE (CONT'D)

I don't know what you're doing, but stop it now. I won't let you use me.

She feels terrible; she was using him.

MIRANDA

I'm sorry. Really.

KYLE

Damn it, Miranda, what do you want me to do?

MIRANDA

I don't know. I want you to stay in love with me always, and I want you to get over me and be my friend forever.

KYLE

Do you think I have some kind of choice?

Miranda gives him a questioning look; she really doesn't understand how he feels.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Sometimes you hear a song on the radio, and it's just the song you wanted to hear right then. It's like a gift. Then it's over, and you're just glad you heard it. You don't want them to play it again right away. You'll hear that song again, or another one that's just the perfect song when you hear it.

MIRANDA

And I'm like that song, the first one.

KLYE

No, you are nothing like that first one. You're like if there was only one song in the world I could hear for the rest of my life, what song would that be. You're that song.

MIRANDA

Maybe the needle's just stuck.

KYLE

You're the song that stays in my head all day, and I don't even mind it. You're my favorite song.

MIRANDA

For awhile, my favorite song was "Shadow Dancin'". It's not anymore.

KYLE

(angry)

You know what the problem with you is? You make it so hard for someone to care about you that once they do, there's no turning back. It's hot or cold, there's no lukewarm.

Kyle realizes something, sadly.

KYLE (CONT'D)

That's why James'll come back

Miranda won't allow herself to hope for this.

MIRANDA

No he won't. It's o.k. This kind of thing happens to me all the time.

KYLE

Miranda. What are you going to do when he comes back?

Miranda sits down on the curb. Kyle sits next to her.

MIRANDA

I'm not going to be here. I'm going back home.

This is the last thing Kyle wants to hear.

KYLE

This is your home.

MIRANDA

Do you know how hard it was to leave New York? I had wanted to do it for years and

then my father died, and I just did it, left everything behind. I think I thought I could pay him back, for giving up his dream. Now I know he would've given it up sooner or later anyway. When you think you have a dream, all it does is give you hope that you can have something good, then you find out you can never have that. Maybe it wasn't even there to be had.

KYLE

Don't think that. You can't live your life thinking that.

MIRANDA

Kyle, all the signs are pointing in the same direction. Away from Nashville. Away from country music. At some point, I have to pay attentions. I have to start again.

KYLE

You could do that here. You didn't come here because of your father. You came here to write songs.

MIRANDA

Saying you're going to do something and actually doing it are two different things.

KYLE

You have them inside you. What if you go to New York and you never get them out?

MIRANDA

Don't make me feel any worse. This is all I have left.

Kyle shakes his head, disagreeing.

KYLE

You still have everything that matters.

She doesn't answer. They sit side by side, watching traffic pass by.

EXT. JAMES' HOUSE - DAY

It's early in the morning. James comes out to his truck, throws a bag in it, and gets in.

INT. GREYHOUND STATION - DAY

Miranda, carrying her guitar and suitcase, buys a bus ticket.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

We see the Greyhound travelling down the highway.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAY

Miranda sits by a window, staring out. She reaches into her backpack, pulls out her walkman, and puts on the headphones.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A different highway. We see James in his truck, heading out of Nashville in a different direction.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAY

Miranda fumbles through her backpack until she finds what she was looking for; a Bon Jovi cassette. She takes the tape out of its case and pops it in her walkman. She presses play. We hear what she hears, but it's not Bon Jovi.

It's country music - her father singing one of his songs. Miranda is startled.

She quickly hit stop, taking out the tape to look at it. Verifying what it is, she puts it back in her walkman and hits play.

INT. JAMES' TRUCK - DAY

James is driving, absently singing "Bad Medicine" to himself.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAY

Miranda stares out the window, the tape still going in her walkman. We hear what's on the tape - now it's a letter from her father.

VOICE ON TAPE

. . . . that one was your favorite when you were two, you probably don't remember. And that concludes the musical portion of our program. I hope they're teaching you how to skin rattlesnakes at that camp, I've been setting snake traps all over the yard. I used Ding-Dongs for bait. I expect to have about thirty-seven by the time you come home. So don't worry about me, I'm doing fine without you. I'll miss you now, and you can miss me when you get home. That way I'll be there. Chin up.

That's the end of the tape. Miranda listens to the silence. She raises her chin, then lowers it and gives into her tears.

INT. JAMES' TRUCK - DAY

James has picked up a hitchhiker, and old man who listens passively while James rambles on.

JAMES

. . . thinks she knows everything about me. Probably thinks I decided to leave because of her, like the world revolves around her . . . she thought she had me with that marriage thing . . . I might have better things to do with the rest of my life . . .

He trails off.

HITCHHIKER

Like what?

James looks at the old man, startled.

EST. TRUCK STOP - DAY

The Greyhound is stopped at the truck stop. Miranda gets off. She puts on her sunglasses and looks around.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

James pulls over and lets the hitchhiker out at a gas station. The old man

waves as the truck pulls back onto the highway. James drives in the same direction as before for about ten seconds, then pulls a U-turn and heads back toward Nashville.

INT. TRUCK STOP COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Miranda sits in a booth in the coffee shop, looking out the window as her bus pulls away.

INT. JAMES'S BEDROOM - DAY

James goes through a dresser, opening and closing drawers. They're all empty. He goes into the kitchen and finds a house key on the table.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Miranda has fallen asleep on the table. The waitress comes by and touches her arm. Miranda raises her head and squints at her.

WAITRESS

You've been asleep for an hour. I've been watching your stuff, but my shift's over now.

MIRANDA

Thanks.

The waitress fills her coffee cup. Miranda looks down at the table. Her notebook is open; the page is filled with words. She looks at them, as if for the first time. She doesn't seem sure if she likes what she sees.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - NIGHT

James comes into the cafe and finds Lucy and Nick's engagement party in progress. A singer onstage dedicates a song to the happy couple, who sit at a table near the back. James looks around for Miranda and, not seeing her, goes over to Lucy and Nick.

JAMES

Is Miranda here?

LUCY

No, honey, I'm sorry.

Lucy doesn't want to have to tell him

LUCY

She told me she was going back to New York.

This is a blow, but James still has hope.

JAMES

(urgent)

When?

LUCY

She left this morning.

James deflates, his hope gone.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Honey, why don't you sit down. I'll get you some champagne.

James shakes his head.

JAMES

Beer.

Lucy nods and gets up. James sits down next to Nick.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Congratulations.

NICK

Thank you.

JAMES

You want some advice from an old married man? Don't leave her.

NICK

The important thing is you came back for her. No matter what happens, you did the

right thing.

James finds this little consolation.

INT. LUCY'S CAFE - NIGHT

Later that night. Kyle is onstage, performing a love song for Lucy and Nick.

James has moved to the bar; he faces away from the stage.

Miranda walks in, carrying her guitar. She finds Lucy and goes to her. Lucy

is happy to see her. They have a brief conversation, which we don't hear

because Kyle is singing. We know that Lucy tells her James is here, because

Miranda looks over to where he sits. She looks apprehensive, then takes a

deep breath and regains her resolve.

Kyle finishes his song. Lucy comes onstage and speaks into the microphone.

LUCY

Kyle Davidson. Thank you, Kyle.

Everyone applauds as Kyle climbs off the stage. He sees Miranda waiting to

go on and grins, surprised and glad that she's back. He hugs her, and we see

from the look on his face that he knows he's really lost her now.

The applause dies down.

LUCY

Now, this next performer is kind of special to me, and I'm real glad she could make it here tonight. Here she is, Miranda Presley.

James turns around. Miranda sits on the stool and positions the stand so that

she can read the pages she tore from her notebook. She looks nervous, but

determined. She doesn't look at James.

Miranda begins to play. She begins to sing the lyrics, looking down and

reading them. The song she's written is beautiful, and expresses a personal journey. She's realized that she has to accept her painful emotions before she can experience joy. The song hardly resembles the one she auditioned with earlier, but the one line she said she didn't understand is still there, and fits perfectly in the new version of the song.

The audience recognizes the beauty of this song. Most just enjoy it, but we see pride on the faces of Nick, Lucy, and Kyle. James looks like someone who'd fallen in love all over again. Miranda realizes that everyone is listening to what she has to say, and she loves it. She looks at James, letting him know the man she loves in the song is him. She finishes the song, and there's a pause before everyone applauds. James's seat is now empty. She smiles triumphantly and gets off the stage. She's looking for James but she doesn't see him. People are congratulating her, but she's starting to worry. Suddenly, someone takes her hand. She looks next to her and sees James.

MIRANDA
(relieved)
I thought you had left.

JAMES
I did, but I came back. I thought you had left.

MIRANDA
I did, but I came back.

She notices something in her hand.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
What's this?

She looks; it's a thin silver wedding ring.

JAMES

I figured out the best thing to do with
the rest of my life.

She holds the ring out to him. Confused, he takes it back. She
presents him
her left hand, and he slips it on her finger. They kiss. When
they break
apart, James notices something behind Miranda. He puts his hands
on her
shoulders and turns her around to look.

Lucy opens up the case where she keeps original copies of special
songs, and
pins Miranda's song up next to them. Miranda watches, smiling.

THE END