

DIVIDED HIGHWAY  
(EXCERPT)

Written by

Dan Harmon & Anthony Wood

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DIVIDED HIGHWAY

FADE IN:

INT. VIDEO SCREEN - DAY.

Close up of a dark, blank video monitor. Suddenly, a small, square image appears in the corner. It's MIRIAM a white haired woman, staring back into the camera. She wears a business suit with a brightly colored scarf around her neck. It's an image from a video conference call.

MIRIAM

(Very upset.)

I swear to Jesus H. Christ, I'm gonna rip that fucker's pecker off in a vice!

Another square video image appears next to MIRIAM's. It's KYLE, a rotund, man with small, round glasses and a pencil-thin moustache. He, too, speaks to the camera.

KYLE

You see? You see what I have to deal with here? This woman is psychotic. I'm fearing for my life!

MIRIAM

Pussy.

A third member of the conference joins them on screen; Hiram, an older, African-American man in a dark green suit and black turtle neck shirt. His hair is cropped close to his head and he wears many jade rings, which we can see as he gestures.

HIRAM

Can I just interject?

MIRIAM

Oh Lord...

HIRAM

Despite all the bitching and moaning, may I remind everyone that my name is on the contracts, and I--

The three people start talking over one another, creating a din.

MIRIAM

--Give a rest, Hiram! Every fucking time we try to address this situation you have to tuck your tail like a coward and hide behind your lawyers!

HIRAM

--and I am not going to let my ass, flabby and wrinkled as it is, hang out to dry so these buzzards can pick at my flesh!

KYLE

--The contracts are not the point, here! They're not the point! We wrote in a host of revisables that were not contingent upon any final drafts, signed or unsigned. We cleared all paperwork through BMT, and they were happy with all the dots and dashes!

As they talk over one another, the camera pulls back to reveal the three people displayed on a huge, wide-screen plasma monitor on the wall of an apartment. A small, digital camera is mounted above the monitor. The wall is white.

The camera pans and we get a glimpse of the apartment; stark, minimal, with modern chrome and black furniture and black and white rugs. No pictures or other decoration can be seen. A sleek Bang & Olufson stereo sits on a glass coffee table.

The camera is now 180 degrees from the monitor. Sitting in a leather chair, opposite the screen, is CHUCK HIGGINS. He is a handsome man in his mid to late twenties. He wears a white strap T-shirt and grey plaid boxer shorts. Angular, European-style sunglasses sit on his face. He wears a headset telephone on his head connected to a touch-pad that he holds in his right hand. In his left hand is an open bottle of Beck's Dark Beer. He interrupts the arguing.

CHUCK

(quieting them.)

People, people, people! Bup, bup, bup, bup...

The three teleconferencers start to quiet down.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

...bup...bup...Good. Now let's just all take a breath here, hmm?

KYLE  
But Charles, he--

CHUCK  
(Interrupting.)  
--Bup, bup...

KYLE  
He just--

CHUCK  
--Bup, bup, bup...

Chuck presses a key on the keypad. Another image joins the three on screen. It is LLOYD, Chuck's personal assistant. He is an affected, gaunt man in his early thirties with a braided blond chin beard.

Chuck works this session like a quick, skilled surgeon.

LLOYD  
Yes, Charles?

CHUCK  
Lloyd, get me Johnny Gilletti in Las Vegas and Fauna Krieg in Contracts and Acquisitions at the BMT Agency.

LLOYD  
Right. You want Mitzie Hallas?

CHUCK  
In due time.

LLOYD  
Got it.

Lloyd blinks off.

CHUCK  
Now folks, we gotta get on the same page here, or everybody's reamed. Now I'm going to ask you to please keep the psychosis to a minimum and let me do my job. I am here for you...Agreed?

The teleconferencers nod, reluctantly. Lloyd pops back on screen.

LLOYD  
Johnny Gilletti, line six.

Lloyd pops off. A new screen pops on. A SLOVENLY MAN in his thirties with greasy hair, a wispy beard and thick glasses appears. He has a strange, bad latex make-up appliance on his forehead. He wears a Foghat T-shirt. Chuck looks at him, confused.

CHUCK

Hello?

SLOVENLY MAN

Hello?

CHUCK

(Impatient.)

What?

SLOVENLY MAN

Is this "Klingon Chat?"

CHUCK

Get the fuck off!

The Slovenly man pops off. In his place pops JOHNNY GILLETTI. He's cut from the Vegas gangster casino mold; dark hair, crooked nose, thick Italian-New York accent. The one sticking point is his high, almost womanly voice.

Chuck hits a button and the three other teleconferencers go mute. Throughout the following conversation we see them speaking, but their volume is off.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Johnny!

JOHNNY

Hey, Charlie! *Come sta?*

CHUCK

*Molto bene, grazie.* Johnny, I got a favor.

JOHNNY

Shoot.

CHUCK

I got a client here. Ran into an overbooking at the Nottingham Theatre.

JOHNNY

Shit-hole.

CHUCK

It's a big show, Johnny; acrobats,  
gymnasts, flame throwers,  
motorcycles...

JOHNNY

Ooh, I love that shit.

CHUCK

They got over twenty mil in sets  
and promotion alone. Now they're  
swinging with their dicks in the  
wind.

JOHNNY

Say no more.

CHUCK

Can you help me out, here?

JOHNNY

Well...I'm already booked up on the  
main stage. We got that hippie-  
looking kid. He's got that hit song  
about the rich teenager in L.A.  
who's all fucked up...you know.

CHUCK

Right. Right, right.

JOHNNY

But I just...ahhh, fuck it. I love  
all those acrobats and shit. Fuck  
the hippie kid, we'll get you in.

CHUCK

Thank you, Johnny. I'll get you the  
dates later. *Grazie*.

JOHNNY

Only for you, Charlie. *Ciao*.

Johnny pops off. Chuck un-mutes the others.

CHUCK

Okay, people, "Starlight Streamer"  
has found a new home. The Nexus  
Hotel in Las Vegas.

MIRIAM

Oh Jesus...

CHUCK

Miriam, it ain't "Death Of A Salesman", it ain't even fucking "Rent." So put away the Saintly Artist Make-Up Kit and deal with it.

Lloyd pops back on.

LLOYD

Fauna Krieg, line eight.

Lloyd pops off. Chuck mutes the others as FAUNA KRIEG pops on. She is a robust woman in her fifties with a mop of red hair. She wears aviator glasses and a blue sweat suit. She has a no-nonsense attitude. In another life she was probably Annie Oakley.

FAUNA

Hello, Charles.

CHUCK

Fauna. Lovely as ever.

Fauna takes a piece of hard candy from a jar on her desk. She pops it in her mouth.

FAUNA

Cut the crap, is this about TC Productions?

CHUCK

What else?

FAUNA

We're carved in stone here, Charles. You want to dance with flame throwers, you gotta pay the band.

CHUCK

Can you revise a re-book in twenty-four hours?

FAUNA

Re-book where?

CHUCK

Nexus, Las Vegas.

FAUNA

(Chuckling.)  
You gotta be kidding.

CHUCK

Can you?

FAUNA

Only you, Charles... Yeah, sure, whatever.

Chuck un-mutes the others.

CHUCK

Okay, listen up, campers. Fauna has agreed to revise based on the Vegas re-book. Harry, that means a tad more dinero for new advertising, but it beats a bum show.

The Older Man pauses and thinks a moment.

A magazine-beautiful WOMAN passes behind Chuck. She is dressed scantily, in black lace bra and panties. Her hair is mussed. She strokes Chuck's shoulder as she passes by.

WOMAN

(In Scandinavian accent.)

You have milk?

CHUCK

Refrigerator, third shelf on the door. Skim and two percent.

KYLE

I don't see smiling faces on my end.

CHUCK

Yeah, well squeeze a few more quarters out of your ass, it'll be wall to wall grins. Oh, and think about starting some Twitter buzz..."Starlight Streamers" as action film. Get people curious. It has all the elements. I got a cue from Frenz-ee Software in Palo Alto, they did "Cyber Slaughter?" A lot of interest in associating this shin-dig with a video game. So be on your toes and we can all pad our bank books on the back end.

The teleconferencers are silent. Thinking. The scantily clad Woman passes back behind Chuck, drinking from a milk bottle.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Okey-dokey?

The others nod and smile.

KYLE  
Thank you, Charles

HIRAM  
--Thank you.

MIRIAM  
--Thank you, Charles.

CHUC  
(Wearily.)  
That's why I'm here, kids. You'll  
get my bill.

He presses a button, everyone but Fauna blinks off.

CHUCK  
Thanks, Fauna. I owe you.

Fauna shakes her head, smiling.

FAUNA  
Charles, like my dear old aunt used  
to say, "You are one cold blooded  
mother fucker."

CHUCK  
Awww, that's sweet. Bye Aunt  
Tilly.

FAUNA  
Bye, Charles.

Fauna pops off. Lloyd pops on.

LLOYD  
Charles, I have a call on line  
five.

CHUCK  
Not now, Lloyd.

LLOYD  
They say it's an emergency.

Chuck takes off his glasses and rubs his eyes.

CHUCK  
Yeah, yeah...they're all  
emergencies.

LLOYD  
They're calling from Tulsa,  
Oklahoma.

Chuck stops and looks up, stunned. We close in on his face.

CHUCK  
Shit.

CREDITS ROLL:

MUSIC: "TRANS EUROPE EXPRESS" BY KRAFTWERK .

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOWY, DESERTED MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - DAY

--Majestic, snow-capped peaks of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

--Snow laden fir trees.

--A chickadee lands on a branch of a tree.

--Two white rabbits huddled by a log.

--Broken asphalt of the old, two lane highway.

WIDEN TO:

A 1964 Aston Martin DB5, charcoal grey, speeding down the mountain highway.

END CREDITS.

INSIDE THE ASTON MARTIN

Chuck sings along with Kraftwerk, in the same, monotone, East German drone. He wears a different pair of designer sunglasses, a black silk shirt, a grey cotton jacket and khaki shorts. His hair is slicked back and he has a Bluetooth headset in his ear.

CHUCK  
*Trans - Europe - Express...Trans -  
Europe - Express!*

Chuck stops singing, pauses, then boots up an iPad mounted on the dash. He taps an icon on the iPad.

A small video image appears on the screen. It is ANGELICA, Chuck's therapist.

She is a serious, severe looking woman in her forties with dark hair pulled into a tight bun. She wears stylish, horn-rimmed glasses and a dark, Japanese designer dress.

ANGELICA  
Yes, Charles?

Chuck glances into the iPad as he drives.

CHUCK  
Okay, remind me again why I'm doing this?

ANGELICA  
Charles, this is a very important step for you.

CHUCK  
Uh-huh...

ANGELICA  
You've suffered a great loss to a close family member.

CHUCK  
Uh-huh...

ANGELICA  
And this funeral is a perfect opportunity for you to confront your deep inner conflict--

CHUCK  
--Right...

ANGELICA  
--that stems from unresolved issues in your early childhood and adolescence.

CHUCK  
Right...Right, right.

ANGELICA  
It's the best thing for you right now, Charles. Believe me.

CHUCK  
You really think so?

ANGELICA  
More importantly, do you think so?

CHUCK  
I'm asking you.

ANGELICA  
Ask yourself.

CHUCK  
No, but I'm asking you...

ANGELICA  
You really need to ask yourself--

CHUCK  
--If I could ask myself I wouldn't  
have to pay you six hundred fucking  
dollars an hour!

There is a pause.

ANGELICA  
That's very hurtful, Charles.

CHUCK  
I know...sorry...I know...

ANGELICA  
You're using your negative emotions  
as a club--

CHUCK  
--Club, right...yeah...sorry.

ANGELICA  
It is the best thing, Charles.

CHUCK  
Right.

ANGELICA  
Although I don't really condone  
driving, alone, all that way...

CHUCK  
Angelica, please. L.A. to Tulsa is  
just the amount time I need to  
prepare for this.

ANGELICA  
I told you, I have a very effective  
fear of flight group...

CHUCK  
I know...

ANGELICA

"Learn To Fly, Learn To Be Free."

CHUCK

Reality check, sweetie; jet airplanes are eighty fucking tons of sheet metal and cheap screws put together by a bunch of retarded, assembly line monkeys who care more about overtime than passenger safety.

ANGELICA

Charles...

CHUCK

They can plummet from the sky if the in-flight movie has a glitch. They are a fucking disaster waiting to happen--

As Chuck comes up over a hill he sees a deer; a small spotted fawn, standing in the middle of the road. His eyes go wide as he swerves and hits the brakes.

CHUCK(CONT'D)

Shit!!!

The car careens around the fawn and flies off the road into an embankment. The front end plows a mass of snow.

Inside the car, Chuck lurches like a rag doll as his high-tech gear fly around him, smashing against the doors and windshield.

The car comes to a steaming halt, it's nose buried deeply in the snow. The rear of the car is off the ground, pointing up around 45 degrees. Snow from the trees falls in great heaps on top of the car.

Chuck climbs out of the car, stunned. The broken headset dangles from his ear. He breathes heavily, getting his bearings. He is cold; breathing steam. He looks around inside the car; his iPad and cellphone are smashed to bits. He leans, weary, against the fender. His head down. His hands on his knees.

The small fawn steps up to Chuck, timidly. It's nose is inches from Chuck's head as it sniffs at his hair. Chuck looks up at the deer, slowly. They stand eye to eye for a moment. Then--

CHUCK(CONT'D)  
(Screaming.)  
Thanks a fucking lot, Bambi!!!

The fawn jumps back and runs away. There is silence, except for the cawing of crows in the distance.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - HOURS LATER.

Chuck is sitting on a stump near the car. He wears four different shirts for warmth. A small soft-leather suitcase sits on the ground next to him. He has his arms folded tightly around his chest. He rocks back and forth, singing softly.

CHUCK  
*Hot blooded, check it and see. Got  
a fever burnin' inside of me...*

He stops. He listens intently. The sound of a car engine is heard in the distance. He stands and looks down the highway.

A car comes up over the hill. It is a 1962, mustard colored Corvair convertible. The top is down. Chuck smiles and waves weakly at the car. The car pulls up to a stop in front of him. He looks hard at the driver.

ROSE -- She is mid-twenties. Very attractive, but real. There's something different about her; her hair, her clothes, her confident, slight smile. Something unconventional. She wears a thin, sky blue jacket, slacks and a bright green scarf around her flowing hair. She seems unaffected by the cold, even with the top down. She wears fifties-style RayBans and sucks on a grape Tootsie-Pop. She peers out over her glasses at Chuck, then at his car.

ROSE  
Have an accident?

Chuck looks back at the car, then at her.

CHUCK  
What tipped you off?

ROSE  
You hurt?

CHUCK  
No. No, no...I'm okay, just...you know...got a cell phone? Mines toast.

ROSE  
 (shaking her head.)  
 Mmm, don't believe in them. Need a  
 lift? Heading east?

CHUCK  
 Yeah, thanks.

ROSE  
 Hop in.

WIDEN TO  
 HIGHWAY:

Chuck throws a gym bag in the back seat and SLAMS his door as  
 the car pulls away.

INT. THE CORVAIR - DAY

Rose smiles at Chuck.

ROSE  
 I'm Rose.

CHUCK  
 Charles...Rose, I like that.  
 Rosalind?

ROSE  
 Rose is fine. So where ya'  
 headfin', Chuck?

CHUCK  
 Charles...Oklahoma. By way of the  
 next pay phone...if that's OK.

ROSE  
 They still have pay phones?

CHUCK  
 I'd make do with a flare gun right  
 now.

Rose laughs, amused at Chuck's awkwardness. Chuck looks out  
 the window, turns, fidgets. He gestures to the radio.

CHUCK (CONT'D)  
 Mind?

ROSE  
 Fine, but it doesn't work. There's  
 some tapes in the glove box.

Chuck opens the glove box and pulls out some cassettes.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
You promise you're not a murderer,  
right?

Chuck rummages through the tapes.

CHUCK  
I promise.

CLOSE ON THE CASSETTES -- Gloria Estefan, Paul McCartney, the  
Soundtrack to Evita, Celine Dion...

CHUCK (CONT'D)  
I'd like to retract my promise.

A beat, then a smile from Rose. Chuck smiles back, relieved -  
- he seems to have regained his emotional footing.

ROSE  
It's a convertible, Chuck. There's  
plenty of things to listen to.

Rose means: 'the world... everything.' And Chuck nods, but  
he doesn't get it.

CHUCK  
Right.  
(Chuck shudders and folds  
his arms.)  
Brisk.

ROSE  
Great, isn't it? It's my brother's  
car. He used to live in L.A., so  
he asked if I'd drive it back.

CHUCK  
Why were you in L.A.?

ROSE  
An audition. I'm an actress.

Pause. Chuck deflates. Rose notices.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
Disappointed?

CHUCK  
I didn't say anything.

ROSE  
You didn't have to. You think I'm  
going to talk to you about my hair.

CHUCK  
I think you're projecting,  
Rosalind. I deal with actors all  
the time, I see the Yin and the  
Yang.

ROSE  
Right.

CHUCK  
If you feel guilty about being an  
actress--

ROSE  
--Chuck?

CHUCK  
Yes.

ROSE  
I don't feel guilty about anything.  
A beat. Chuck is off guard again. He tries:

CHUCK  
That's because you're an actress.

ROSE  
Right.  
Nothing.

CHUCK  
It was a joke.

ROSE  
Aha...You know, every joke is  
twenty percent true.

CHUCK  
Okay.

ROSE  
So twenty percent of you thinks all  
actresses are stupid.

CHUCK  
At least twenty percent of all  
actresses are stupid.

Pause.

ROSE  
At least.

Chuck laughs.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
So you deal with actors...What are you, a director? Agent?

CHUCK  
I'm a Media and Management Conflict Consultant.

Rose blinks and shakes her head.

ROSE  
Really?

CHUCK  
Really.

ROSE  
Sounds like "crumb work."

Chuck looks at her, confused.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
You know, there are these huge corporations and business folk, and they have all the cake. More cake than they need. They pass around the cake and some crumbs fall off. Other folks position themselves to grab the crumbs that fall. Lawyers, agents, managers, consultants.

CHUCK  
Hmm...

ROSE  
You grab enough crumbs, you got your own cake.

CHUCK  
Yeah, well...there's a shit-load of crumbs comin' down.

ROSE  
Well, there's a lot of cake up there.

## WIDEN TO MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY

The convertible speeds down the two lane road, leaving the peaks of the Sierras behind it. The weather gets warmer as the road winds down out of the mountains. A lone rabbit shrouded in snow and silence.

CUT TO:

## BACK IN THE CORVAIR

Chuck looks Rose up and down. She seems oblivious to him. Chuck fidgets. He adjust his mirror. A beat. He adjusts his mirror again, and then fiddles with his seat. He moves it forward, then back a bit. Chuck looks back at Rose, he can't take it any more.

CHUCK

What's the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to you?

A moment.

ROSE

Excuse me?

CHUCK

Come on... you know. Your most embarrassing moment.

ROSE

(deciding)

OK. Hmmm. Well, when I was in fifth grade, in Manzanola, I was Annie, in the musical..."Annie?"

CHUCK

That's not so bad.

ROSE

I really, really wanted to be Annie. We did the play in front of the whole school, in the gymnasium. All of our parents...god. So, here it is...

(a beat)

I vomited on the dog.

CHUCK

Sandy?!

ROSE

I was so nervous. Worse yet, Sandy was Timmy Milligan's dog. I had a huge crush on Timmy.

CHUCK

That's an ice breaker. Did he see it?

ROSE

He was playing Daddy Warbucks.

Chuck laughs.

ROSE (CONT'D)

It was like 'instant cooties,' you know? I became the girl you had to marry if you stepped on a blue tile in the hallway.

CHUCK

'Step on white, marry Ellen Fisch tonight!'

ROSE

Who's Ellen Fisch?

CHUCK

That's the girl in my school you had to marry if you stepped on a white tile.

ROSE

Obviously your school didn't see my stage debut.

Chuck laughs.

CHUCK

So... did anyone...eventually step on a blue tile?

ROSE

(smile)

No...I'm not married. Are you?

CHUCK

No.

The moment stretches out -- they're both aware of the exchange that just occurred. They catch each other in a look. Chuck turns away as the silence hits like a bomb. Rose, unfazed, looks back at the road. Chuck adjusts his seat again.

ROSE  
What about you?

CHUCK  
I said 'no.'

ROSE  
Your most embarrassing moment?

CHUCK  
Oh. Um. The truth?

ROSE  
Yeah!

CHUCK  
Uhhh...no...wait a sec.

ROSE  
The truth, Charles.

Chuck looks at Tracy and begins to speak. He stops himself.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
Come on! I told you mine.

CHUCK  
All right. OK. When I was twelve,  
my mother found a...device that I'd  
created.  
(testing)  
An...auto-erotic device.

ROSE  
Come again?

CHUCK  
You better believe it!

Rose laughs. Chuck is relieved.

ROSE  
What do you mean by "device?"

CHUCK  
You'd have to be a twelve year old  
boy to understand. When you  
discover...you know...

Chuck stops himself.

ROSE  
(unfazed)  
Buzzing off?

CHUCK

(taken aback)

Masturbation, yeah... it's like a miracle. You've heard of other people doing it, but you figure everyone else lacks your...vision. My creativity and lust reached a simultaneous peak, resulting in the cutting edge of sixth grade virtual...

A beat.

ROSE

Hair pie?

CHUCK

Vagina, right.

ROSE

My brother had a rabbit pelt.

CHUCK

Pfft. Check it out.

(mock proud)

A toilet paper tube with cotton balls glued to the inside perimeter.

ROSE

Incredible. A toilet paper tube?

CHUCK

Right!

ROSE

What's the diameter of that?

CHUCK

Um... I don't...

(flushed)

Can I change it to a Quaker Oats box?

Rose laughs.

ROSE

And your mother found it?!

CHUCK

And she's smirking at me... she can't conceive that this is a living nightmare for me!

(MORE)

CHUCK (CONT'D)  
Ah, man...I told her it was a toy I  
made for my pet mouse.

ROSE  
That's clever!

CHUCK  
I didn't have a pet mouse!

ROSE  
She didn't point that out, did she?

CHUCK  
Of course.

ROSE  
What did you say?

CHUCK  
"Can I have one?"

They both laugh.

CHUCK (CONT'D)  
She said, "I'll think about it.  
But if you play with it on the  
carpet -- try to catch the  
droppings in a Kleenex!"

All inhibitions are gone. The laughter rolls.

CHUCK (CONT'D)  
It was my first encounter with  
subtext. It was the only blackmail  
material my mother ever needed.

ROSE  
Oh God, I wonder if your Mom still  
remembers it?

CHUCK  
I doubt it. She's dead.

ROSE  
I'm sorry.

CHUCK  
That's why I'm headed east,  
actually. Her funeral's in Tulsa.

ROSE  
(Mortified.)  
Oh Jesus, I'm really sorry...

CHUCK

It's okay.

ROSE

No...someone pull by foot out of my mouth.

CHUCK

It's all right, you didn't know.

Chuck pats her knee, casually, but reassuringly. She looks at his hand, then into his eyes.

ROSE

Thanks, Charles.

Chuck pauses a moment.

CHUCK

Call me Chuck.

She smiles warmly at him.

The car lurches and slows.

The Corvair pulls into a lonely ESSO Station parking lot that sits on a flat part of the highway at the base of the mountains. It stops by one of the pumps.

Rose turns off the car.

ROSE

You said you wanted a payphone.

CHUCK

Right. I guess this is... right.

EXT. ESSO STATION

They get out of the car. Chuck looks over at the payphone. An enormously obese trucker is talking on the phone. He gestures wildly as his bare stomach rests on the ledge by the phone books.

CHUCK

Looks like I'm on deck.

ROSE

Listen, I'm gonna grab some snacks, mind filling the tank?

CHUCK

Sure.

Chuck pulls the nozzle from the pump and begins filling the tank of the Corvair. He leans against the car and watches, transfixed, as Rose walks into the station.

Through the glass of the building he sees her grab some candy bars and chat with an older, grey-haired woman who stands behind the counter. The woman laughs and pats Rose's cheek as she hands Rose her change. Rose shakes her hand. Chuck is enthralled. The pump shuts off.

Rose walks out of the gas station with two candy bars. Chuck approaches and she offers him a Zagnut Bar.

ROSE  
Power up.

CHUCK  
Thanks.

Chuck takes the candy bar and gestures at the fat trucker, still on the phone.

CHUCK(CONT'D)  
Looks like a conference call.

ROSE  
No hurry.

They sit on the hood of the car and munch their candy bars, contentedly.

CHUCK  
So, uhmm...How about your parents?  
Close family?

Rose seems unsettled and answers a little too eagerly:

ROSE  
Yeah, yeah...They're great... I  
don't know. I go back to Colorado  
every Christmas.

Chuck notices her unease, and it surprises him.

CHUCK  
Colorado, huh?

ROSE  
Chapel Hill.

CHUCK  
Good for you guys. I kinda wish my  
family was closer.

Chuck pauses, stares at the trucker and thinks for a moment. He looks sideways at Rose.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

You know, Rose...That guy might be on there all day.

ROSE

Yeah?

CHUCK

Yeah, so I was thinking maybe we could drive on. Maybe find another phone. Maybe another gas station. Or a...hotel.

Rose looks at him sideways and grins, seeing what he's getting at.

ROSE

Uh-huh. Nothing fancy, though.

CHUCK

Oh no. No, no...Holiday Inn, Best Western...

ROSE

With a pool.

CHUCK

Of course. But, you know, there's no guarantee the phone's gonna be working there.

ROSE

Yep, good old AT&T.

CHUCK

But there's not another phone for miles, so we...

Rose faces him, standing close.

ROSE

Get a room.

CHUCK

Exactly. Separate rooms, of course. But there's no ice bucket in mine, so can I use yours?

ROSE

Yes!

CHUCK

Good, because I'd like some rocks  
with the Captain Morgan's I pull  
from the honor bar.

ROSE

I'm hungry, but room service always  
sucks--

CHUCK

--So let's go out to dinner!

Rose stands very close to him. They're getting into this.

ROSE

And some wine?

CHUCK

A whole bottle! Now I feel like  
dancing!

ROSE

I love dancing.

CHUCK

Then back to the hotel.

ROSE

Back to the hotel.

She leans against Chuck, her face inches from his.

CHUCK

Uh-huh.

ROSE

And then?

Chuck leans closer.

CHUCK

Then...

Before he can move in, she holds up her candy bar and resumes  
eating.

ROSE

(matter of fact)  
Didn't you have to get to a  
funeral?

CHUCK

I'm sorry?

ROSE  
Your mother's funeral?

He shrugs.

CHUCK  
(Uncomfortable.)  
Yeah, well...you know, you have to look at the greater picture. The whole definition. I mean, what is death? What is life?

She knows she has him.

ROSE  
Uh-huh.

CHUCK  
I mean...I mean death is a very permanent end. A stopping point. A resting spot.

ROSE  
Go on...

CHUCK  
And life is about the now, the here. New beginnings. Growth. Experience. Passion...Uhhh...

ROSE  
You know something, Chuck. I like you. You're funny, smart, warm and very easy on the eyes.

She leans in and gives him a deep, passionate kiss. They break. She points her finger into his chest.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
But Charles is an asshole.

She pulls his bag from the car and throws it at him. He catches it. She points over to the payphone. The trucker is hanging up.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
You're up.

She gets in the car, starts it and turns to face him.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
See you soon, Chuck.

Chuck is stunned, barely able to think.

Rose smiles, puts the car in gear and makes a Y-turn.

CLOSE ON the license plate -- TLCOOL1 -- as the Corvair speeds off down the road.

Chuck regains his senses...he starts to run after her... yelling and waving his arms.

CHUCK  
Heeeeeyyyyy!

But the car slips into heat waves, like a mirage.

Chuck stops running and stares at the empty highway.

She's gone. Forever. All is quiet.

CHUCK (CONT'D)  
Jesus God!

Chuck suddenly throws the candy bar and kicks at the ground in a tantrum.

ANGLE ON:

The Zagnut Bar as it bounces onto the gas station pavement between a PLUMP BOY and a STRAY DOG. The Boy and Dog look at the candy bar, then at each other. The Dog GROWLS.

CUT TO:

WHITE TITLES ON BLACK:

Tulsa, Oklahoma.