

(EXCERPT ONLY)

HIGHWAY SONG

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*If thy brother wrongs thee, remember
not so much his wrong-doing, but more
than ever that he is thy brother.*

-- Epictetus

EXT. BONFIRE - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Clint and Copper keep the music and party alive.

On another side, standing in front of the ten foot fire is THE SHAMAN, A *shirtless*, beautiful woman in her early forties.

She exudes a spiritual gravity; her intense beauty and healthy physique dramatically reduce her age to something youthful, timeless. She wears a headdress of feathers and an array of leather necklaces with mystic emblems: condor, jaguar, alpaca, chumpi and mother egg stones-- all dangling around her breasts or from her arms.

In front of her is a line of ten young bodies-- young men and women-- sitting up on their knees. Among them is Grace, and next to her is Oliver, his mouth gaping in awe of the spectacle before him.

The fire BLAZES behind the Shaman. She bends forward. As though summoning deep, earthen spirits, her hands stretch out as far as she can reach, each finger in a jagged, fixed place. She arches her back up and down in swift, fluid movements. She CROWS like a bird, hunches down to the ground on all fours. Then SCREAMS to the sky-- The DRUM BEAT-- getting louder and LOUDER. Her shoulders working in synchrony with the rhythm. She CROWS again. She rises. Dances. The DRUM BEAT POUNDING. The fire ROARS. She SCREAMS again... And, finally, settles. Standing now with a pronounced strength emanating from her figure. Following her ritual, she's ready to get this shit started.

Oliver takes a swig of whisky, Grace takes the bottle from him and throws it on the ground, out of reach. He looks at her "why?". She returns an assuring "everything-will-be-okay" smile.

The Shaman approaches the first person kneeling in line at the far end, opposite of Grace and Oliver. Like holy communion, she takes a CRUSTED MUSHROOM from a rugged cowboy hat. As she does, the individual addresses the Shaman by saying "*Thank you mother earth*", and with that, the Shaman puts the mushroom on the persons tongue. They swallow, and the Shaman moves on to the next young body.

After a few others, she approaches Grace.

GRACE

Thank you mother earth.

The Shaman smiles so very sweetly, and puts the mushroom in Grace's mouth. She swallows and the Shaman gently caresses the side of Grace's cheek. Her voice is angelic.

SHAMAN

Mother earth is so thankful for
you, beautiful Grace.

The Shaman slowly approaches Oliver, studying him patiently. He opens his mouth to receive a mushroom. The Shaman's hand gradually reaches in her hat then -

THE SHAMAN

No.

Oliver looks up.

OLIVER

(confused)
Huh?

THE SHAMAN

This is not for you.

OLIVER

(confused)
Why?

She bends down whispering in his ear.

THE SHAMAN

Don't brake your promise.

Oliver is taken back. Grace looks over, curious. A beat.

THE SHAMAN (CONT'D)

(gentle)
Please stand.

OLIVER

What's wrong?

THE SHAMAN

Nothing... and everything.
Please... stand with me.

Oliver stands. He's slightly taller than her. The reflection of the fire burns in his eyes.

The Shaman slowly approaches him and gently puts her arms around, hugging him. Methodically and slowly, she turns her head and presses her ear into his chest and as though all other sound ceases, we hear THUMP THUMP - THUMP THUMP the sound of his beating heart.

We see the drums and dancing in the background but can only hear Oliver's heart beat and the fire crackling.

After a moment she steps back and her face washes over with a glorious smile. Something in the Shaman's look is changing... As though channeling something far beyond.

THE SHAMAN (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I've waited so long to find you.

OLIVER

I've... never met you.

The Shaman puts her finger to his mouth. He goes quiet.

The Shaman never breaks eye contact as she slowly reaches inside Oliver's coat pocket. She pulls out - *the old photo of the WWII Soldier from the burned out barn.*

OLIVER (CONT'D)

(shocked)

Wait - how'd you?--

THE SHAMAN

(whispering)

--Shhhh. Come, my love.

Holding the photo, she gently takes his hand and together they walk to the edge of the fire.

Sensing their approach, flames spit out. The strange energy excites and frightens him. The flames growing and growing, waving in a wild frenzy.

They stop, their silhouettes small across the magnetic blue orange flames.

The Shaman looks back to Oliver and hands back the photo of the soldier.

He looks down at the strong military features. His piercing eyes.

THE SHAMAN (CONT'D)

Let him go. Free his spirit.

OLIVER

What do you mean?

THE SHAMAN

...Free him.

Still unsure, Oliver lifts the photo and reaches it into the flame - IMMEDIATELY.

The flames EXPLODE, dancing around the picture. He lets go. The fire eating the emulsion away to ash. The fire grows even taller. The rumble and crackle even louder.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Rholand lying at the edge of the bed is SWOOSHED with a strange force. A gust of wind blows through the room. His hair wafting in the breeze.

Rholand gasps. Looks around. Something is there. But... he's completely alone in the room.

EXT. BONFIRE - SIMULTANEOUSLY

The Shaman takes a deep deep breath. She turns Oliver to face her.

THE SHAMAN
Shut your eyes.

Oliver shuts his eyes.

THE SHAMAN (CONT'D)
You freed the dying spirit of a
time we cannot forget. He lives
with you now. Let him guide you.

OLIVER
But -

THE SHAMAN
- Shhh... let him show you.

She presses her palm to his forehead. His eyes remain shut.

THE SHAMAN (CONT'D)
Do you feel him?

No response.

THE SHAMAN (CONT'D)
(very quietly)
Do you feel him?

Oliver's eyes shoot open.

SUDDENLY - The loud music and sounds of the party ROAR back to life.

OLIVER
(loud)
Yes.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Rholand stands in the middle of the room. We CONTINUE TO HEAR the roar of the fire and the music behind. RHOLAND gasps, answering the *same* question.

RHOLAND
Yes... Yes I feel him.

EXT. BONFIRE - SIMULTANEOUSLY

The Shaman kisses her fingers and places them to Oliver's heart. He is speechless. She then slowly pulls away, and turns, walking slowly and methodically stepping away into the crowd. Then through a few passing bodies and into the dark-- she disappears

Oliver looks back to Grace smiling back at him.

CUT TO:

EXT. BONFIRE - LATER

The party is raging forward. The flames are high. Spirits are higher as Clint and Copper jam hard. Oliver dances shirtless. Drunk. Deep inside his own mind, pulsing his body in a beautiful animalistic dance.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - SAME

With the sound of the fire, flames, and music surrounding him, Rholand is shirtless, dancing, using the standing lamp in the Motel room as though it were a torch.

CUT BETWEEN:

The two brothers dancing wildly between the Bonfire and Motel Room, their motions are one in the same, dancing with endless energy.

EXT. MOUNTAIN WOODS - NIGHT

Through the trees in the distance we see and hear the wild, beautiful party below.

SLOW FADE OUT:

SLOW FADE IN:

EXT. BONFIRE - EARLY MORNING

The fire is nothing but a few ashes and embers hanging on to their last breath of life. A few tents have been set up. Others sleep under the sky in blankets, nestled into one another for warmth. A few sit awake huddled under coats, smoking cigarettes taking in the sunrise.

The blue hue of the sky is like nothing else. Unique only to the Sierra Mountains at Five AM.

Oliver lies asleep under his jacket, Grace under hers. He slowly wakes as he hears footsteps nearby and sits up getting his bearings.

A few yards out on the main road, a pick-up truck RUMBLES. Clint and Copper toss their guitar cases and belongings in the back. Oliver pulls a cigarette and lights up.

OLIVER

Where you off too?

Clint looks back and see's that Oliver is awake. He walks over and bends down to him, putting a hand on his shoulder.

CLINT

We're back on the road, Amigo.

OLIVER

Where too?

CLINT

Not too sure... Just looking, like you.

Oliver smiles.

OLIVER

Maybe we'll see you around.

Clint returns a warm smile.

CLINT

Why not? Either way, I cannot tell you how much fun it's been, nor can I express how much I've appreciated you and your brother's friendship.

OLIVER

You too, man. Thank you.

CLINT

Don't pay any piece of mind to the hucksters and thieves from your life before this. You're a good man, Oliver. Do good things.

(winks, smiles)

If you manage to survive the, uh--

Oliver smiles... He waits for it until:

OLIVER/CLINT

The Reaper.

They both laugh.

CLINT

I have a feeling it's gonna' end better than you'd imagine. You take care of your brother.

OLIVER

Gonna' miss you guys.

CLINT

...and you'll be missed in return.

They exchange one last heartfelt nod before Clint heads back to the pick-up putting the finishing touches on their luggage.

Oliver stands and watches. At the truck, *now Copper* looks back at Oliver and walks over.

As he approaches, Copper wipes his hand with a bandana, tucks it in his back pocket, and extends his right hand for a shake. A beat.

The men look at other eye to eye before Oliver reciprocates and extends his hand.

They Shake hands when suddenly - Copper PULLS Oliver in for a BIG BEAR HUG, lifting him off the ground.

OLIVER
Whoa there!

Copper puts Oliver back down. Copper grabs both of Oliver's shoulders and moves in. He whispers in his ear.

COPPER
(quietly)
The name's Brian.

Copper/Brian moves back and gives Oliver a final pat. The two men share the kindest of kind smiles, nodding good-bye again with a new-found understanding.

Copper walks back and jumps in the back of the truck bed as Clint sits up front in a passenger seat.

The truck kicks up dirt as it begins to pull away. With his guitar in hand, Copper waves good-bye. Oliver waves back.

Grace steps up to his side, watching.

The desert air blows a light breeze and eventually the pick-up disappears down the mountain road.

GRACE
Coffee?

OLIVER
(agreeing)
Coffee.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - EARLY MORNING

The sun begins to rise and Oliver and Grace walk side by side in silence. A lonely gas station and a few ram shackle houses come into view as they walk closer to town.

EXT. SMALL TOWN ROAD - MINUTES LATER

With cups of coffee in hand, Oliver and Grace walk across the small lonely town of Bishop. They approach the Best Western Motel.

INT./ EXT. BEST WESTERN MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Outside the door, Oliver pulls a key card from his pocket. With a deep breath, he slowly opens the door. He and Grace walk in.

Oliver looks around nervously. They see and hear the shower running.

Oliver dives onto one of the two twin beds.

OLIVER

You can get in there when he's done. I'm going to try and get some more Z's.

Oliver closes his eyes as he lies down. Grace stops and smiles.

Her hand caresses the messy bed that must have been Rholand's then - walks back towards the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

In the shower, a dull stream of water rolls down Rholand's naked body, passively washing himself. Wary. His head hung low.

SWISH - The shower curtain flies open.

RHOLAND

(shocked)

Jesus!

Off guard, he shudders futilely trying to cover his privates.

Standing there is Grace, *completely naked*. Her body is radiant. She looks at him with a bright smile.

RHOLAND (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

She says nothing, and steps into the shower. Her hair and body getting wet, she rubs Rholand's chest with her hand then looks in his eyes.

GRACE

I want you to take me to San Francisco with you.

RHOLAND

I'm...uh... I'm not so sure we're heading in that direction anymore. At least I'm not.

Grace looks at him. She takes her hand and combs it through his hair, making it stick straight up like a Mohawk. He looks silly. She laughs.

RHOLAND (CONT'D)

What are you...?

He slowly warms, shakes his head and the hair falls. She does it again, his hair straight up. She laughs. He does too.

Rholand takes his hand through her hair making it stand straight up the same way. They do this back and forth a few times, laughing.

RHOLAND (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I left you last night.

Finally - Grace dives into Rholand under the shower head. They kiss long, hard, and passionately. Their wet naked bodies pressed against each other, holding each other tight.

INT. DINER - MORNING

An authentic mid-seventies diner. Rholand and Grace sit sipping coffee, picking at their pancakes and grits across from Oliver.

OLIVER

Her name's Eve. Met her my first day there. They separated men and women for the most part, but every other Thursday was Karaoke night. They'd hook up a little piece of shit machine in the commons area. Had about three CD's total, one was American hits and the other two had this awful Rancho music, so... And the incentive was the winner got a Starbucks card for like, I dunno, ten fuckin' bucks or something. Redeemable after you got out... So, Thursdays. Karaoke. Fun for everyone. I, of course, dish out the typical repertoire. Johnny Cash, Shot a Man in Reno. And I'm killin' it. Give it a little soul, start stomping my feet to the beat, everyone's clappin' in rhythm-- 'cept for some of the hip-hoppers who're sittin' there starin' at me like I had three heads as if music didn't exist before Li'l Wayne and dub step.

(MORE)

OLIVER (cont'd)

Anyway, I finish to a standing-O and man, it was the first-time-in-years I wasn't thinkin' about chemically enhanced leisure, and... This girl...

(seeing the moment)

This amazing girl, lookin' Mila Kunis fine, but with this chip on her shoulder and a penchant for all things emo... She walks up to me after I sit back down, puts her hand out and just says, "You're on, dude"... She looked so good... Finally, I put my hand out and shake hers, like, 'I'm sorry, what? Is this a challenge? I love you?'. And she just smiles... Course she's singing next and she walks up to the front, and takes the mic.

(lost in thought)

And she... Took me away. She completely-- She does Joplin, 'Take Another Little Piece of My Heart' and from note one-- dude, from note one-- everybody-- me, the staff-- even the 'too cool for school' hip-hop fucksters... We all just let her take us. If Joplin'd heard that version, she'd a just started crying right then and become a dentist, cause, what's the point now?

(big swig of coffee)

I have never witnessed a finer musical performance before and I may never hear one better again. And I'm cool with that... Needless to say... She won the gift card.

Oliver finishes his coffee.