

The Straight Story

written by Mary Sweeney and John Roach

Dorothy comes back out carrying the plate now filled with treats. Munching all the while she settles back into the chaise lounge and resumes sunbathing.

DISSOLVE TO:

5 **EXT.--DAY LATER--SMALL TOWN BAR IN LAURENS**

5

A small brick storefront bar. Two windows with neon beer signs are on either side of a red door with a window in the shape of a tilted martini glass. The door opens and BUD, a stocky 70ish man in jeans, a cotton shirt and construction boots emerges. He looks down the street. Not seeing anyone he turns and sticks his head back in the door of the bar and yells in...

BUD

I'm goin' over there.

He lets the door close and heads off down the street. Another man, SIG, late 60's, 6'0", 265 lbs., in bib overalls and a seed cap, comes out the bar door holding a long-neck beer bottle and watches Bud walk away.

SIG

We're waitin'.

CUT TO:

6 **EXT.--DAY LAURENS RESIDENTIAL STREET**

6

Bud is striding down the street past small and weatherbeaten houses. The yards are mowed and dotted with lawn chairs and picnic tables. He approaches the house we saw earlier. He turns up the walkway, reaches the front door and starts knocking somewhat angrily.

BUD

Alvin! Alvin Straight!

CUT TO:

7 **EXT.--DAY THE NEIGHBOR'S YARD**

7

Dorothy doesn't move a muscle when she hears the knocking. She yells across the yard to Bud.

DOROTHY

Rose left a couple of hours ago.

CUT TO:

8 **EXT.--DAY SMALL HOUSE**

8

Bud jumps. He hadn't seen Dorothy until she spoke.

BUD
Did you hear me hollerin' for
Rose? I'm not lookin' for Rose.

DOROTHY
I ain't seen Alvin today.

BUD
Did I ask....

Bud stops for a look at Dorothy who still has the eye protectors on. He shakes his head in exasperation. He resumes knocking on the door.

BUD
Straight.you're late!!

Not getting any response he heads around to the backyard and finds no one. He goes up to the back door and starts knocking.

BUD (cont'd)
Alvin?!

CUT TO:

9 **INT.--DAY KITCHEN**

9

From inside the darkened kitchen we see Bud through the door window, knocking.

BUD
What the hell Alvin!

At a break in his knocking on the door we hear an off-camera voice.

ALVIN
Come on in Bud.

Bud, startled, reaches down, opens the door and enters. He stands blinking and flustered, letting his eyes adjust to the darkened room.

BUD
Where the hell are you Alvin? I
can't see a damn thing.

ALVIN
I'm right here Bud...watch your
step.

Bud's eyes adjust and he follows the sound of Alvin's voice to the kitchen floor right at his feet. ALVIN STRAIGHT is stretched out on the floor. He is in his 70s, a lean man, weathered face, bald with a full, scruffy white beard. He is wearing a plaid cotton shirt, worn jeans and black cowboy boots. There is a wooden cane lying on the floor next to him.

BUD
What the hell's goin' on? What in
god-damn hell are you doin' on the
floor Alvin? What'r ye nuts?
You're supposed to be down at
Davmar's one hour ago.

At this point a shadow falls on them and Dorothy fills the door frame.

DOROTHY
What's going on....

She sees Alvin on the floor.

DOROTHY (cont'd)
(panicking)
Oh my god Alvin!

ALVIN
(with resignation)
Hey there Dorothy.

Dorothy makes a beeline for the phone, and picks it up.

BUD
What the hell are you doin'?

DOROTHY
(breathlessly)
What's the number for 911?

Bud rolls his eyes.

ALVIN
(with authority)
Dorothy, put that phone down.

She doesn't move. Her face flushed, bosom heaving, she looks back and forth between Alvin, Bud and the phone. Bud strides over to her and yanks the phone out of her hand.

BUD
I gotta call the bar and tell them
we're not comin'.

Dorothy grabs the phone back, wild-eyed.

DOROTHY
Bud Heimstra are you crazy? We
have a stricken man here.

Bud hesitates and looks over at Alvin, assessing his condition.

BUD
You stricken Alvin?

Dorothy starts dialing.

ALVIN
Dorothy, PUT THAT PHONE DOWN!

Dorothy hesitates. Bud tries to wrestle the phone from her. We hear the front door slam and Dorothy and Bud freeze. Rose enters the kitchen from the front of the house.

ROSE
Dad? What's all the.....yelling?

She stops short. She takes in the scene...Bud and Dorothy at the phone and her dad on the floor.

ROSE (cont'd)
What have you.....done to my
dad?

BUD
Oh for cry aye.

ROSE
Dad?.....are you.....?

Rose starts to cry.

ALVIN
(exasperated but forcefully)
I just need some help gettin' up.

CUT TO:

10

EXT.--DAY PARKING LOT

10

We see Rose helping Alvin get out of the passenger side of their car. Once standing, Alvin won't move. Rose is tugging on his arm. He is not budging and he's shaking his head.

ALVIN
I'm not goin'.

ROSE
Dad.....

ALVIN
I'm not goin'.

ROSE
Dad....you promised me.

After a pause Alvin nods.

ALVIN
Alright Rosie.

They slowly make their way across the hot parking lot to the Doctor's office.

CUT TO:

11 INT.--DAY EXAMINING ROOM

11

The nurse and Alvin enter the examining room. She turns to him and hands him a robe.

NURSE
O.K. Mr. Straight, you need to
take off all your clothes except
your underwear and put this robe
on.

ALVIN
(gruffly)
Just bring me the doctor.

CUT TO:

12 INT.--DAY DOCTOR'S RECEPTION, LATER

12

Rose is standing in front of a series of bird paintings.

ROSE
I see you like birds. I
build.....birdhouses.....for
bluebirds.

NURSE
Oh, that's nice.

ROSE

Yah.....Pete sells my
birdhouses.....at the.....Ace.

NURSE

Oh...I'll look for them next time
I'm in.

CUT TO:

13

INT.--DAY EXAMINING ROOM

13

Alvin leans against the examining table as he pulls his pants to a close and fastens his belt. He is shirtless. His skin hangs loosely off his rib cage. He has a serious farmer's tan: lily white chest and shoulders and arms with nut brown face, neck and hands. A middle-aged DOCTOR GIBBONS is standing looking over some notes.

DOCTOR GIBBONS

So you're not sure just how long
you were on the floor?

ALVIN

(shaking his head)

I remember my cane slippin'...and
losing my balance....

(he pauses, concentrating)

...next thing I knew Bud Heimstra
was banging on my kitchen door.

The doctor nods at this account and writes something in his notes. Alvin sits on the examining table and looks around. He takes in the foreign room: bright fluorescent lights, slick pastel Formica surfaces, matching pastel framed art, bio-hazard warnings and medical equipment. He looks back to the Doctor and catches the man watching him with a look of concern on his face.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Somethin' the matter Doc?

The Doctor switches to an attempt at a smile.

DOCTOR GIBBONS

Listen Alvin, sometimes it's my
job to tell people things they
don't want to hear. I'm concerned
about you. I think you need an
operation on those hips.

ALVIN

No operations.

DOCTOR

Well...this morning you fall and can't get off the floor...that's your hips Alvin. You'll have to use a walker to get around now.

ALVIN

(barks)

No walker.

DOCTOR

Fine...a second cane then. You say you're not seeing too well. That could be a diabetes-related problem. I would like to run some...

ALVIN

No!

The doctor looks back down at his notes and up at Alvin.

DOCTOR GIBBONS

I can see and hear that you smoke. I would guess you're in the early stages of emphysema. And Alvin you have circulation problems. I worry about your diet and unless you change some things quick, there will be some serious consequences.

Alvin doesn't say anything. He just stares at the Doctor.

CUT TO:

14

INT.--DAY KITCHEN

14

ALVIN sits at the kitchen table and takes a deep drag off of a Swisher Sweet. Two canes are propped up against the table. Rose looks on. She stands in the middle of the kitchen holding a birdhouse, fretfully watching Alvin. She holds the birdhouse out to him.

ROSE

It has a.....red roof.

Alvin looks at the birdhouse and smiles at Rose.

ALVIN

That's another pretty one Rose.

He continues smoking. Rose, pleased at his response, turns smiling to do a few dishes. She sets the birdhouse down.

ROSE
 I want to paint the.....next
 roof...
 (she blurts)
 ...blue.

Alvin smiles again.

ALVIN
 That's a good idea.

Rose turns to the window and thinks for a while with a smile on her face. As she reflects, her smile begins to fade.

ROSE
 What did the.....Doctor say?

Alvin puts out the Swisher Sweet.

ALVIN
 Said I'm goin' to live to be a
 hundred.

Rose smiles at this. Alvin stands, puts on a cream colored Stetson and heads to the back door.

ALVIN (cont'd)
 Time to cut the lawn.

ROSE
 I can.....cut it
 for.....you...Dad.

Alvin is navigating the door with his two canes in hand. Says gently back over his shoulder.

ALVIN
 I got it sweetheart.

Rose turns, clears the table and takes dishes over to the kitchen sink. Out the window over her shoulder we see Alvin cross the backyard and mount a Rehd's riding mower. She sets the dishes in the sink, then gets distracted by the birdhouse.

CUT TO:

15

EXT.--DAY ALVIN'S BACKYARD

15

Alvin tries to start the mower. No luck. He performs a slow, painful, laborious dismount. Then in a quick move he turns and bangs the mower with his cane.

ALVIN

Damn!

CUT TO:

16

INT.--DAY LAURENS ACE HARDWARE

16

A group of locals are in the store. SIG, BUD, PETE, mid-60s, 6'0", lean, gray and wearing slacks and a red Ace vest, and APPLE, early 60s, short, bald and talkative. He is wearing a short-sleeve shirt and a tie. He's concentrating on his right boot. He frowns as he works it up and down with his toes. His attention is split between working the shoe and watching the Weather Channel which is on the television over the counter.

APPLE

(all the while stomping his
foot)

Looks like another low comin' out
of the panhandle of Texas. That's
where they all come from. You know
in the winter that's where we get
all our big dumps.

PETE

Apple I doubt very much if we'll
be getting snow this week.

Sig giggles.

SIG

And here comes Alvin Straight.
He's not movin' too well.

PETE

Well he took that bad fall.

BUD

An hour late! I found the darn
fool on the kitchen floor.

SIG

He looks like he ain't gonna make
it to the door. If he was a horse
they'd shoot'im.

PETE

(scolding)

How old are you now Sig?

Apple has his shoe off and is digging inside of it with his
hand. He looks up at Pete's remark.

APPLE

He's 70 in September..."Oh the days dwindle down to a precious few..."

SIG

You can shut up any time Apple.

Alvin enters. They turn their heads, nod hello. Bud scowls.

PETE

Mornin' Alvin. What can I do for you?

Alvin approaches the counter and opens his mouth to speak but is interrupted by...

APPLE

Local forecast!

CUT TO:

17 **INT.--DAY HARDWARE STORE TELEVISION**

17

The Weather Channel. The local forecast runs with the accompanying music. Conversation stops abruptly and they all turn to watch the local forecast together. There is the potential for thunderstorms later in the day with a possible tornado watch.

PETE

And what can I do you for Alvin?

ALVIN

Plugs for the Rehds. Won't start.

CUT TO:

18 **EXT.--LATE DAY ALVIN'S BACKYARD**

18

Alvin is changing the plugs, smoking Swisher Sweets. Rose is sitting on aluminum lawn chair painting the roof of her birdhouse blue. A storm is moving in. Alvin looks up to the sky.

ALVIN

Storm comin'...not mowin' today.

CUT TO:

ROSE (cont'd)
I....don't know...what.....he'll
do.

Rose hangs up and looks back out at Alvin sitting on mower.

CUT TO:

25

INT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S LIVING ROOM

25

Rose is sitting in the dark looking out the window at the freshly mown lawn. She hears a noise and turns. There is Alvin, with two canes, silhouetted in the doorway to the kitchen.

ALVIN
Rose honey, why don't you come in here and join your dad for a cup of coffee.

Rose looks puzzled. This is not a common invitation from Alvin.

ROSE
Dad.....we're not going to move again are we? You always set me down for a coffee when you tell me we are going to move again.

Alvin laughs a little. Rose is clearly wary.

ALVIN
No honey...we're not breaking camp.

Rose sighs in relief and smiles. Alvin pauses, clearly uncomfortable.

ALVIN (cont'd)
Unless you make so many bluebird houses we run outa room.

ROSE
(taking her father seriously)
Dad..oh jeez..I can stop making them...

ALVIN
Easy honey. Your pa was just makin' a joke.

Rose is relieved. Alvin pauses and draws a breath.

ALVIN (cont'd)
Rose.

(MORE)

ALVIN (cont'd) (CONT'D)
I'm goin' to get back out on the
road. I'm goin' to go see Lyle.

ROSE
But Dad....how are you.....?

Alvin turns and starts to hobble toward the kitchen.

ALVIN
I haven't quite figured that out
yet.

He moves off into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

26

EXT.--DAY ALVIN'S BACKYARD

26

From around the side of the house comes Rose hauling a large piece of aged plywood. She talks as she wrestles with the large board. She is speaking to Alvin who is on the back stoop with a wrench and a ball joint. She is also reasoning aloud with herself.

ROSE
One...Your eyes are bad....That is
why you don't drive your car
because you cannot see the signs
anymore.

Rose turns and looks directly at Alvin. He is letting her vent.

ROSE (cont'd)
One...Your eyes are bad.

Rose walks back around the corner of the house and returns with another large piece of old plywood. As Rose enunciates her reasons she ticks them off on her fingers.

ROSE (cont'd)
Two...Lyle is in Wisconsin which
is 317 miles away. You can't take
any bus straight to Mt. Zion.
You'd have to stay overnight in
Des Moines....and.....then there's
no bus to Zion.

Rose eyes Alvin again. She vanishes around the corner one more time. Alvin continues working on the ball joint, adding oil to loosen the bolt. Rose comes around the corner again.

ROSE
 Three....Your hips. You can't
 hardly stand for two minutes and
 when you do stand up after you are
 sitting down this is the sound you
 make when you
 stand..."aaaaaraaaaarrrrrhgggg."
 That is your arthritis sound.

Alvin chuckles at her impersonation of him. She is almost finished with her tasks. Her talking slows as she gets to the last of her rant.

ROSE (cont'd)
 Four....You are 73 years old. You
 were born when Calvin Coolidge was
 President of America.

Rose sits down next to Alvin on the stoop. She is hot, tired, worried and upset. Her voice almost breaks as she finishes her speech.

ROSE (cont'd)
 You are 73 years old.....And I
 can't drive you there.

ALVIN
 Rosie....darlin'....I'm not dead
 yet.

This subdues Rose. Alvin looks at her for a beat, turns and moves to a stool with the wrench and ball joint. He begins screwing the ball joint to a beam.

ROSE
 (tired and exasperated)
 What are we building?

CUT TO:

27

INT.--NEXT DAY GROCERY STORE

27

Rose is pushing a grocery cart down the aisle. She checks a list in her hand.

ROSE
 Coffee.

Rose places eight large cans of Folgers into the cart. She counts as she deposits them.

ROSE (cont'd)
 One...two...three...four...five...
 six...seven... eight.

She checks list again.

ROSE (cont'd)
 Wieners....

Rose places several large packs of wieners in the cart.

ROSE (cont'd)
 One...two...three....four...five..
 ...six.

She reaches back into the cold meat case.

ROSE (cont'd)
 Braunschweiger.

Rose makes faces in incremental disgust as she counts.

ROSE (cont'd)
 One.....two.....three.....fo
 ur....

She hates braunschweiger. She checks her list again. She moves down the aisle and into the next one. She pauses before a display.

ROSE (cont'd)
 Bug juice.

Rose throws insect repellent into the cart.

ROSE (cont'd)
 One.

She checks her list and nods in satisfaction, heading to the checkout counter.

CUT TO:

28

INT.--DAY GROCERY STORE CHECKOUT COUNTER

28

Rose is loading her purchases onto the counter. BRENDA the checkout girl looks on with a curious expression. Brenda is 20ish, cute, a little hefty. Very cheerful.

BRENDA
 (a statement)
 Havin' a party.

Rose looks at her blankly.

ROSE
Oh.....Jeez I love parties.

BRENDA
Yah, me too.

ROSE
So where's it at?

Brenda is confused.

BRENDA
Where's what at?

ROSE
Your party.

BRENDA
I'm not havin' a party. I thought
you're havin' a party.

ROSE
I am?

BRENDA
Well yah...look at all that
braunsweiger.

ROSE
Yah it's a lot of braunschweiger.

Brenda starts to ring up the braunschweiger.

ROSE
It's for my dad.....for
his.....trip. My dad.....He...is
going to.....Wisconsin.

BRENDA
Oh Wisconsin! A real party state.

Rose is keeping an eye on her items. She makes a
"yuk" face.

ROSE
I hate braunschweiger.

Brenda, still checking, nods in assent and makes a sour face.

CUT TO:

29 **EXT.--DAY ALVIN'S BACKYARD**

29

Rose comes walking out of the house with groceries. She sets them on the picnic table and heads back into the house. Alvin loads the groceries into the now finished trailer. The back door of the house opens and a big sheet of foam rubber flies out the door followed by Rose. She hauls it over to the trailer and sets it in. She fusses over its arrangement.

CUT TO:

30 **INT.--DAY ACE HARDWARE**

30

Pete, Sig, Apple, & Bud are in the store. They are watching the Weather Channel. Sig has a toothpick in his mouth. Apple is sitting on a stool. Alvin and Rose enter.

PETE

Morning Alvin. How are you today
Rose?

Alvin nods. Rose smiles.

ROSE

(blurts)

My.....dad....is going to
see.....his.....brother. I keep
askin' him how....he's goin' to
get there.....but he doesn't
say.....nothin'.

Alvin throws a look at Rose. She smiles.

PETE

Your bluebird houses are selling
well Rose. I'm gonna need some
more from you.

SIG

Taking a trip Alvin eh?

ALVIN

Yup.

Apple is sitting on a stool with one shoe off. His hand is inside the shoe.

APPLE

Well if you're traveling by car
you know my wife'll get those AAA
trip tix. Those babies'll tell you
where every piece of construction
is all along the "I" system.

PETE

I don't suspect Alvin'll be takin'
your wife along with him Apple.

ALVIN

Oh Lord.

BUD

You can take my wife.

Alvin chuckles and then sets one cane against the counter. With his other cane he makes his way down the store aisle to the gas cans. He grabs one 5-gallon container and heads back to the counter.

SIG

Where's your brother at Alvin?

Alvin sets the can on the counter. He turns to walk back down the aisle.

ROSE

Mt. Zion. Sixty-three miles east
of the Missi.....ssippi.

PETE

Sixty-three miles, eh Rose?

APPLE

Did you know that the
Mississippi..the old mighty
Mississippi..is the single most
profitable waterway in the world?
Did you know that the Japanese
harvest pearls outta the river
down to Prairie du
Chien....pearls!

SIG

And carp.

PETE

And walleye...need help there
Alvin?

ALVIN

No thanks, Pete.

Pete and Sig exchange a glance and look at Rose. She smiles. Alvin picks up another 5-gallon gas can.

SIG

What's doin' at your brother's
Alvin?

(MORE)

SIG (CONT'D)
The Straight family reunion?

Alvin gives Sig a look.

ALVIN
You could say that.

Alvin puts the other gas can on the counter.

SIG
(goads Alvin)
Alvin you got three 5-gallon cans.
Fifteen gallons of gas there. Just
what you gonna do with that much
gas?

Rose is getting nervous with Sig's prying ways. She knows that this is a sensitive area for Alvin. She looks to the TV.

ROSE
Local forecast!

The whole gang stops and watches as the Weather Channel gives the local forecast.

CUT TO:

31 INT.--DAY THE TV SCREEN

31

The local forecast runs and the radar is looking clear.

CUT TO:

As soon as it is over they look at each other to remember where they were in conversation.

SIG
Ahh....so what you need so much
gas for Alvin?

Alvin returns to the counter. This time he has two medium-sized Styrofoam coolers. Alvin stops and looks long at Sig.

ALVIN
Sig, you are one nosy sonofagun.

BUD
You got that right.

Sig clamps his jaw. Alvin turns back to Pete.

ALVIN
 Pete, I'd like to buy that from
 you.

Alvin points to a contraption used in hardware stores to grab things on high shelves. Pete sees what he's pointing to and gets a possessive jolt. He turns to Alvin.

PETE
 Jeez Alvin.

ALVIN
 Well?

Pete eyes the grabber. He looks down the aisle to the other end of the store where he's got another grabber hanging.

PETE
 I do have two of them...I guess I
 could
 sell you that one.

ALVIN
 Five bucks would seem about right.

PETE
 (puzzled)
 Those things are hard to come by
 Alvin. It would take me two months
 to get another one on order.
 That's a damn good grabber.
 Jeez...I can't let that grabber go
 for less than.....jeez.....\$10.00.

ALVIN
 (considering, not too happy)
 OK. Ring her up.

Pete pulls down the grabber and longingly works it a few times and sets it reluctantly down on the counter. Alvin smiles. Pete starts ringing up Alvin's items.

PETE
 Three 5-gallon gas cans at \$9.89.
 Two Styrofoam coolers...

The beautiful bells and clicks and hammers of the old cash register are the only sounds in the room.

PETE
 Two coolers, 99 cents and
 one....one...Alvin...

ALVIN
Ring it up Pete.

PETE
With tax that's \$44.25.

Alvin fishes out a large black wallet held to his belt by a chain. He pulls out two twenties and a five and hands them to Pete.

SIG
What you need that grabber for Alvin?

Alvin turns to him.

ALVIN
Grabbin'.

Apple has his arm up to his elbow digging in his boot. Suddenly he feels something.

APPLE
Hah! It's a nail!

CUT TO:

32 **EXT.--DAY ALVIN'S BACKYARD**

32

Alvin and Rose are in the backyard. Alvin takes a can of W-2 lubricant. He sprays the hitch holder on the trailer. Then he laboriously makes his way across then lawn to the riding mower. He sprays the hitch ball on the mower. Rose is confused. Alvin then mounts the lawn mower. He begins backing it up to the trailer. Awareness finally crosses Rose's face. Her jaw drops.

ROSE
Oh.....jeeez Dad. Oh
jeez.....Dad.

CUT TO:

33 **EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S BACKYARD**

33

Alvin is seated on a chaise lounge smoking a Swisher Sweet. He is looking at his mower/trailer rig. A mosquito coil burns beside him, casting a warm glow on the scene. Rose is lying on the ground on a blanket looking up at the stars. It is a beautiful autumn evening.

ROSE (cont'd)
 ...that trailer is too heavy for
 that...it's a lawnmower. You are
 going to....drive....a lawnmower
 to...another state.

ALVIN
 Now Rose you gotta cease with your
 worryin'. You get that from your
 mother.

ROSE
 But Dad....you....can't.

ALVIN
 Rose...."can't" doesn't live here.

Alvin takes a puff of cigar.

ALVIN
 It's gonna be fine Rose.

ROSE
 Dad....please. I will find someone
 to drive you to Wisconsin.
 Pete.....you like
 Pete....Pete...he is a good
 driver.

ALVIN
 Now, Rose, sweetheart.....

Rose is starting to tear up. She is so worried about what he is
 doing. He reaches down and takes her hand.

ALVIN (cont'd)
 I been on the road plenty. Didn't
 your mom and I haul you kids all
 around the country?

Rose nods, close to tears. She counts.

ROSE
 One, Wisconsin...Two,
 Minnesota...Three, Wyoming but not
 long...Four as Oregon. We had
 goats. Five.....New Mexico
 and.....six.....good old....Iowa.

ALVIN
 Remember when we traveled...you
 and your sister and brothers...

Rose nods and the reminiscence makes her happy.

ALVIN (cont'd)
 We sure saw a lot. We all liked
 travelin'.

ROSE
 Yeah.
 (smiling at first but then
 the worry returns)
 But this is different Dad.

ALVIN
 It is Rose...it's easier..I'm not
 luggin' seven kids in the back.

Rose nods. Her emotions are confused.

ROSE
 But Dad....you will be all alone.
 Won't you be lonely?

ALVIN
 Rosie...sometimes a man likes
 bein' a little lonely.

Rose ponders this notion. A new anxiety creeps in.

ROSE
 I will be alone.....here...

This stops Alvin. He realizes he hadn't really thought about that and it makes him feel both bad and a little worried. He hides his concern.

ALVIN
 And you're going to be just fine.
 Dorothy is next door and she can't
 keep her nose out of our business.
 She'll be over here seven times a
 day.

Rose laughs.

ROSE
 Wait 'til she hears
 about.....this Dad.

They both share a laugh.

ALVIN
 Rose I got to go see Lyle. I got
 to make this trip on my own. I
 know you understand that.

ROSE
I guess so....

ALVIN
Look at that sky Rose...full of
stars tonight.

CUT TO:

34 **EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S BACKYARD**

34

POV a sky full of stars.

CUT TO:

35 **INT.--DAY GROCERY STORE**

35

Dorothy is at the checkout counter. Brenda is checking her out.

BRENDA
One bag of potato chips, two boxes
of powdered donuts, one bag of
corn nuts, six pack of Coca-Cola,
two Snickers, three Hostess Sno-
Balls...

DOROTHY
Give me a couple packs of Salem
lights will ya hon?

Dorothy glances out the window of the store just in time to see
Alvin passing on his mower hauling the trailer.

DOROTHY
Well....I don't believe my eyes.

Brenda looks up and glances out the window. She sees Alvin
passing on the mower. She doesn't miss a beat in her checking.

BRENDA
Oh yah. He's goin' to visit his
brother in Wisconsin.

DOROTHY
On a lawnmower?!?!

BRENDA
Yah...

DOROTHY
Great party place, Wisconsin.

CUT TO:

36 INT.--DAY HARDWARE STORE

36

The Weather Channel is STILL on. Pete, Sig and Apple are watching. As they watch they hear a noisy engine approach out front. They turn to the storefront window. Alvin pulls into frame hauling the trailer behind his riding lawn mower.

SIG
(stunned)
Crimenetto.

All three exit the hardware store after Alvin.

CUT TO:

37 EXT.--DAY LAURENS MAIN STREET

37

The three hardware regulars trot alongside Alvin as he passes out of town.

Alvin just what are you settin' out to do here?

BUD
Oh for da cry eye Alvin.

APPLE
Alvin you are gonna get blown
right off the road is what I'm
afraid.

SIG
(running out of breath and
stopping, bending over,
hands on knees, wheezing)
Oh....
(puffing)
...jeez Alvin.

All three stop and watch as Alvin moves slowly out of town.

PETE
(to no one in particular)
He'll never make it past the
Grotto.

CUT TO:

38 EXT.--DAY IOWA COUNTY HIGHWAY 314

38

Tight shot of very, very slow yellow center line moving through frame to the tune of Steppenwolf's "Born to Be Wild" a la Easy Rider.

CUT TO:

44 **EXT.--DAY SAME HIGHWAY**

44

Alvin is approaching the outskirts of the town of West Bend. His reverie is interrupted by a distant, building sound. A huge truck approaches and flies by Alvin with a deafening roar. It completely rattles lawn mower, trailer, and Alvin. Alvin's hat is blown off. He has to stop the mower, get out his canes, do the slow dismount. He struggles down through a ditch into a field. He retrieves the hat, goes back down through the ditch. He climbs back up out of the ditch onto the road and mounts the mower. Real time. Just as he sits down, the tractor dies. Alvin hauls himself off the mower again and pops the hood. Shaking his head he gets back on the mower.

DISSOLVE TO:

45 **EXT.--DAY**

45

Alvin is sitting on the mower in the same spot. He reaches back into food locker, grabs a cold wiener. He sits and eats.

DISSOLVE TO:

46 **EXT.--DAY**

46

Alvin is sitting on the open back door of the trailer looking back down the road. He sees a bus approaching. He waves it down and the bus stops. The side of the bus has written large "SUN-RAY TOURS."

CUT TO:

47 **INT.--DAY INSIDE TOUR BUS**

47

The doors of the bus pop open to reveal Alvin standing there with his two canes, wearing his Stetson.

ALVIN

I'm having some engine trouble.

The busdriver cranes his neck to look beyond Alvin and spies the lawn mower and trailer.

BUSDRIVER

What the heck are you driving there.

ALVIN

A Rehds.

The busdriver is puzzled by this answer.

WENDELL

This was one fellow who had quite a bit of time on his hands.

ALVIN

A lot of work.

The tour guide in the background has made some comment which causes all the women to start giggling. Alvin and Wendell turn at this.

ALVIN (cont'd)

So how's it traveling with a hen house?

WENDELL

Well I'll tell you. My wife passed away in '87. After she was gone I spent a lot of time alone. Oh there were women who came out of the woodwork trying to cook and clean for me. I managed to keep myself unattached and they finally stopped coming around. Then things got pretty quiet. I got to missing things.

ALVIN

My wife passed in 1981.

Wendell nods and they sit quiet for a moment.

WENDELL

My daughter tricked me into one of these bus trips a couple of years ago. It was The House on the Rock if I'm not mistaken. A very interesting structure that. I was the only man on that bus. It was a singular experience.

ALVIN

I bet.

They share a chuckle.

WENDELL

I was pleasantly surprised at how much I enjoyed all that femininity. I discovered how much I missed it. Since then I make one of these bus trips every other month. I rather enjoy the attention.

ALVIN

I live with my daughter Rose. Of course, it's different from being with my wife, but it's a comfort to have a woman around.

WENDELL

There's not a man born who doesn't enjoy being fussed over.

ALVIN

You wouldn't a had your way with any of these fillies now wouldja?

Wendell pauses and chuckles.

WENDELL

It is a wonder how invigorating a tumble with a maiden can be.

ALVIN

If there's a maiden on that bus I'll dance a jig.

WENDELL

(chuckling again)

See those three over there? They're Dominican nuns.

Alvin begins laughing and Wendell joins in. Without rising from the bench Alvin moves his feet in a jig. The two fellas laugh again. They hear an outburst of giggles from the gaggle of gals and look their way. One of the women waves to Wendell. He waves back. The two men sit in silence for a while.

WENDELL (cont'd)

That's an interesting attachment to your lawn mower.

ALVIN

You mean my trailer.

WENDELL

Is that what that is? Why would you attach a trailer to a lawnmower?

ALVIN

I'm takin' a trip. That's where I bunk.

WENDELL

A trip on a lawnmower? That's an interesting means of conveyance.

(MORE)

WENDELL (CONT'D)
A bit hard on the hips isn't it?

ALVIN
No worse than a tumble with a
maiden.

The two laugh again.

ALVIN
It's not too bad. A little rough
on the dismount.

They laugh some more. It subsides.

WENDELL
And what's your destination?

ALVIN
Mt. Zion.

WENDELL
Wisconsin?

ALVIN
Yup.

WENDELL
I admire your gumption.

Two women have broken away from the crowd and approach the
bench.

FIRST WOMAN
Oh Wendell. The tour guide has so
much to say. We hate to see you
miss this.

Wendell turns to Alvin and winks. Woman number two reaches down
and flicks some lint off of Alvin's shoulder. Alvin smiles at
her.

ALVIN
Thank you.

The woman blushes. Wendell stands and turns to Alvin.

WENDELL
Bon voyage my friend.

ALVIN
Adios.

Wendell and the two women walk away.

CUT TO:

55 **EXT.--DAY HIGHWAY 314**

55

Alvin tight as he rolls along the highway at a surprisingly fast speed. He is holding on to his hat. Pull back slowly to reveal Alvin on the bed of a pickup sitting on his lawn mower as it rolls back into Laurens.

CUT TO:

56 **INT.--DAY LAURENS ACE HARDWARE**

56

The Weather Channel is on. The locals all turn their heads as Alvin passes through their view out of the window.

SIG

Told ya that mower wouldn't make
it mor'n a few miles. Alvin.
(shakes his head)
He's got more brass than brains.

PETE

(almost to himself)
Hardly out a full day.

APPLE

Least he's not hurt. Old timer
like that on the road. There's no
tellin'.

Pete, Apple and Sig stand looking as Alvin passes. Alvin looks straight ahead.

WEATHER PERSON

(off camera)
...and now for your local
forecast.

Contrary to their previous actions when the local forecast is announced, Pete, Sig and Apple do not take their eyes off of Alvin. They walk to the window as he passes out of frame. They peer down the street after him.

CUT TO:

57 **INT.--DAY ALVIN'S KITCHEN**

57

Rose is sitting at the kitchen table with Dorothy. Between them is a large bowl of potato chips and they are each drinking a large glass of milk. Dorothy's hair is now bright red.

ROSE

...so the man in a pick up...he brought my...my dad back.

DOROTHY

Oh...I must've been at the beauty parlor. What kinda pickup?

Alvin enters kitchen from inside the house, passes by them and on out the back door. He is carrying a pump action shotgun under his arm. He has a little trouble with the canes, the gun and the back door. The gals stop talking until he goes out the door.

ROSE

A Ford.

Dorothy's eyes are glued to Alvin as she watches him through the kitchen window crossing the lawn.

DOROTHY

What's your dad doin' with that gun?

ROSE

I.....don't know. My dad...he got medals in the war for sharpshootin'....But his eyes ain't so good now.

All through this we see Alvin out in the yard. He begins to put his canes down and prop himself up against a picnic table.

ROSE (cont'd)

Once he shot....a cougar....right out....of a tree....it was up above me and my.....brother Bobby.

Through the window we see Alvin pick up the shotgun and raise it to his shoulder. The two women unconsciously rise up out of their seats and move toward the window to see what is going on. Alvin pumps the shotgun and fires. The women can now see the target -- the Rehds lawnmower explodes. Alvin pumps once more and finishes it off.

DOROTHY

Jeez.

CUT TO:

58 INT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S LIVING ROOM

58

Alvin and Rose are watching the TV news. Alvin is gluing coins onto the hatband of his Stetson.

ROSE

What.....are those Dad?

ALVIN

My Mexican coins.

ROSE

Remember...I was born in New Mexico....June...20...1960. The Mexican coin is a.....pesoWhy are you gluing pesos on your hat?

ALVIN

Ballast.

ROSE

(repeating with some confusion)

Ballast.

CUT TO:

59 EXT.--DAY JOHN DEERE DEALER IN LAURENS IOWA

59

Pan across flat Iowa landscape to huge John Deere sign. The camera moves down to find a herd of the huge, green titans of farm machinery; the John Deere tractors. We first see the biggest farm tractors John Deere makes, some more than a story tall with air-conditioned cabs, CD players and onboard global positioning computers. As the camera moves the vehicles get smaller, until the shot comes to rest on the spanking new John Deere Riding Mower, sparkling in the summer sun. As the camera rests on the riding mower we see Alvin, leaning on his two canes, gazing longingly at the mower.

CUT TO:

60 INT.--DAY JOHN DEERE DEALERSHIP

60

Two salesmen stand sipping coffee from official John Deere mugs. The older man is Tom. He is late 50s, greying and stocky and short. A seasoned tractor salesman who has seen it all. He is wearing a John Deere sports shirt, yellow with green JD logo over his breast. With Tom is his young, energetic sales rookie, Andy. Andy is a big kid, just off the family farm, a little soft but full of sales gumption.

He works on straight commission. He too is wearing a John Deere shirt and hat, which is a bit small for his great melon of a head.

ANDY

That's the LD 155 right Mr. Hillenbrandt.

TOM

As I told ya'...Andy I'd rather ya didn't call me "Mister Hillenbrandt." Tom is fine. People hear you call me Mister and they'll think I've actually become a real businessman. Pretty soon they'll all be calling me Mr. Hillenbrandt and I'd have to sell my implement business and move to someplace where folks call me "Tom" again.

ANDY

Sorry...T...T...Tom...it's just that I've been calling you Mister Hillenbrandt all my life...

TOM

Well you're out of school and a workin' fool like the rest of us now Andy and you can start usin' first names. And one other thing...that's not the LD 155, that's the LT 155.

Alvin enters the showroom, where there are more riding mowers.

ANDY

(confidently)

Would you like to me to handle this one...Tom?

TOM

Sure. It's Alvin Straight. I'm sure you'll do just fine Andy.

Andy walks over to meet Alvin as he enters the door. As he leaves Tom ducks his head and leaves the showroom. He turns and looks at ALICE, the gray haired woman who is his bookkeeper. She crosses herself and raises her eyes to the heavens. Alvin is looking at another model of riding mower as Andy saunters over.

ANDY

Good morning. I'm Andy Laufenberg.

(MORE)

ANDY (CONT'D)
 Anything I can help you with today
 sir.

ALVIN
 Well Andy Laufenberg...I'm looking
 to get a riding mower. I want good
 power -- comfortable ride.

ANDY
 Well sir this is the one to look
 at. It's the John Deere LT 155....

Andy nervously reaches for a pamphlet.

ANDY (cont'd)
 It's got a 15 horsepower Kawasaki
 engine. Cast iron cylin...

ALVIN
 Japanese?

ANDY
 (flummoxed)
 No ah sir...no I'm not. I'm mostly
 Dutch.

ALVIN
 The engine. Kawasaki. A Japanese
 engine?

ANDY
 Yessir.

Alvin grunts.

ANDY (cont'd)
 They...the Japanese make a very
 fine engine. The LD 155...

ALVIN
 LT.

ANDY
 Beg your pardon?

ALVIN
 LT...LT 155...says here right on
 the side.

Andy is flustered and begins fumbling with the pamphlet.

ANDY

And you're right sir...similar models. By Gish that is the LT 155. Same engine looks like and ...it's...got...air cooling... electronic ignition...right here with that key....It's got a hydrostatic drive transmission.

ALVIN

And what would that be?

ANDY

Good question and I'm sure I can get that answer for you...

Andy looks over his shoulder to search for Tom. Tom and the bookkeeper wave and turn back to some papers.

CUT TO:

61 INT.--DAY JOHN DEERE DEALERSHIP / BOOKKEEPER'S OFFICE 61

ALICE

How's he doin'?

TOM

Young salesmen are a painful thing to witness. You add Alvin to the mix and we may have to call the paramedics.

Alice giggles. They continue to watch Andy and Alvin.

ALICE

Shouldn't you rescue him now?

CUT TO:

62 INT.--DAY JOHN DEERE DEALERSHIP 62

Andy is still struggling.

ANDY

It's also got disc breaks...Mr...ah...Mr...ah...sir.

ALVIN

Straight. Mr. Alvin Straight.

ANDY

Well Alvin.

(MORE)

ANDY (CONT'D)
Disc brakes on a lawnmower. Isn't that something?

ALVIN
You're young enough to be my grandson. Proper thing would be to call me Mr. Straight. If a buck private called me Alvin I made him shovel slop.

ANDY
Right Mr. Straight. I'm a bit new at this and....and...well--

Tom crosses the showroom to them. Alvin nods. Andy looks relieved.

ANDY
Just talking to Mr. Straight here, Mr. Hillenbrandt...ah...well... he's interested here in a LT 155.

TOM
Mornin' Alvin.

ALVIN
Tom.

TOM
Alvin the LT 155 runs about \$2500 dollars. What ya lookin' to spend today?

ALVIN
Not that much.

TOM
Follow me Alvin. Andy, Alice has some paperwork you need to fill out.

ANDY
(dejected)
OK Mr. Hillenbrandt.

TOM
You did fine Andy. Didn't he Alvin?

ALVIN
Pleasure doing business with you Mr. Laufenberg.

Andy walks away dazed and confused.

TOM
 Can you follow me around back
 Alvin? I got something that might
 fit your needs.

CUT TO:

63

EXT.--DAY REAR OF JOHN DEERE DEALERSHIP

63

The back lot of the dealership is an elephants' graveyard of tractors and implements and parts. If the front of the dealership is the color of John Deere green, the back is the color of rust. Tom and Alvin wind their way through the backlot talking as they go.

TOM
 I set you up with that old Rehds
 that we had the last time didn't
 I, Alvin?

ALVIN
 That you did.

TOM
 That ran about \$325. Same price
 range?

ALVIN
 Generally.

TOM
 You tradin' in the Rehds today?

ALVIN
 I don't think so Tom.

Tom nods. He decides not to ask more on the subject.

TOM
 Pete tells me that you tried usin'
 the rider in an interesting way.
 Still planning to do that?

ALVIN
 Still planning to Tom.

TOM
 I know better than to talk Alvin
 Straight out of anything he sets
 his mind to. But I have to tell
 you Alvin that you have always
 struck me as a smart man....

ALVIN
That's appreciated.

TOM
...Until now.

Alvin chuckles. They come around a large John Deere field tractor and there sitting amongst the heaps is an old John Deere riding mower. Strong, simple and still green with a golden-yellow, tractor-style seat. Alvin looks at it.

ALVIN
What year?

TOM
'66. Has the Kohler engine. We've used it for parts but I always order and replace them when they arrive. The guts are good.

ALVIN
How fast will it go?

TOM
'Bout five miles an hour...more downhill. It's got the old transmission. Nothing fancy.

ALVIN
What are you askin' Tom?

Tom pauses and sighs. Looks around the lot.

TOM
Alvin, we've done business before. I know you're an old horse trader from way back and I don't much feel like sparring with you today. Hard to find a price on a riding mower that's near 30 years old. Your guess is as good as mine....I guess I'd just like to ask you what you're willing to pay.

Alvin takes a look at the mower.

ALVIN
It's a good machine?

TOM
It's a good machine, Alvin.

ALVIN
I've got three hunnert and 25
dollars Tom. And there's no
fiction there.

TOM
That sounds fine with me Alvin.
Let's go and you can settle up
with Alice.

ALVIN
One last thing Tom. You can tell a
little something about a machine
this old by who's run it. Do you
know who owned it?

TOM
Sure do Alvin. Me.

CUT TO:

64 INT.--DAY JOHN DEERE SHOWROOM

64

Tom and Andy watch Alvin drive away on his mower.

TOM
Well congratulations, Andy.

ANDY
Thanks...Tom...but you sold it.

TOM
No sir...you spotted the customer
and brought him in...I just
cleaned up. You go on and see
Alice. Three percent on \$325
dollars outta be enough for a
pitcher of beer tonight...but
there'll be more where that came
from.

Andy walks away while Tom continues to watch Alvin drive away
down the road.

TOM (cont'd)
(to himself)
It's worth it to tell everyone you
sold it to Alvin Straight.

CUT TO:

65 **EXT.--DAY ALVIN'S BACKYARD**

65

Alvin and Rose are in the backyard repeating the good-bye. Alvin is perched on the John Deere mower and Rose is standing next to him arguing.

ROSE

But Dad I was.....right. You ran into trouble.....the first....day.

Alvin is determined but gentle.

ALVIN

The only mistake I made was my equipment. I'm going to be fine now Rose. Nothing runs like a.....

Alvin pats the mower...he looks expectantly to Rose...She is puzzled....she looks back at him...what is he talking about?

ALVIN

A Deere...Rose...Nothin' runs like a Deere.

Rose nods, still not quite sure what they're talking about. Alvin motions his head in the direction of Dorothy's house. Rose looks over.

CUT TO:

66 **EXT.--DAY DOROTHY'S HOUSE**

66

Dorothy ducks out of the window where she has been watching Alvin and Rose.

CUT TO:

67 **EXT.--DAY ALVIN'S BACKYARD**

67

ALVIN

I gotta go just to give her something to chew on.

Rose smiles.

ALVIN (cont'd)

You know I gotta do this Rose.

Rose tries to smile through her anxiety, and nods.

CUT TO:

77 **EXT.--MAGIC HOUR**

77

The sky is royal blue with a band of gold at the horizon. Higher up the sky is navy blue and there are a million stars as you can only see in a clear country sky. Alvin sits back and enjoys his smoke.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

78 **EXT.--DAY HIGHWAY 18**

78

Alvin going down the road. He sees a small figure up ahead. A car whizzes past Alvin. The figure ahead sticks out a thumb. The car passes by. Alvin approaches the figure, sees it's a young, tough-looking girl CRYSTAL. She has dark hair under a baseball cap. Somewhere between 13 and 17 years old. Heavy eye makeup, bad tattoo on her shoulder. She is wearing a tank top, cut-offs, high-top sneakers with tiger-striped laces, and a backpack. Alvin nods in acknowledgment as he passes her. She coldly returns his gaze.

CUT TO:

79 **EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S CAMPSITE**

79

Alvin is eating a raw hot dog. He has built a campfire.

CUT TO:

80 **EXT.--NIGHT SAME HIGHWAY WIDE SHOT**

80

Crystal is walking along.

CUT TO:

81 **EXT.--NIGHT SAME HIGHWAY CRYSTAL'S POV**

81

Crystal spies Alvin's campfire in the field along the road. The lawnmower and trailer are clearly visible and she remembers him from the road.

CUT TO:

82 **EXT.--NIGHT SAME HIGHWAY**

82

Crystal considers. Her face is unreadable...her intentions are unclear.

She cuts off the road into the field and heads toward the campsite.

CUT TO:

83 EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S CAMPSITE.

83

Alvin barely looks up as Crystal walks into range of campfire light. Neither of them say anything for some time.

CRYSTAL
I couldn't get a ride.

Alvin nods his head. Doesn't say anything for a bit.

ALVIN
Hungry?

CRYSTAL
Whatya got?

ALVIN
Wieners.

CRYSTAL
Wieners?

ALVIN
Grab a stick and cook one.

He points to the fire. She hesitates...looks at Alvin for a bit longer. Alvin just keeps looking at the fire. Finally she looks around, finds a stick and leans toward Alvin to take a hot dog. She hunkers down holding the stick with the hot dog over the fire. She casts occasional glances at Alvin. More silence. She looks over to the mower and trailer. Her expression darkens.

CRYSTAL
What a hunk of junk.

ALVIN
Eat your dinner missy.

Startled a bit at his abruptness she falls silent. She nibbles on her hot dog and then realizing how hungry she is she begins to eat faster. She polishes off the hot dog. Alvin notices this.

ALVIN (cont'd)
Get yourself another.

She's relieved at this offer and gets another hot dog, puts it on the stick and holds it over the fire. They sit, not speaking, listening to a chorus of crickets and peepers.

CRYSTAL
How long you been out on the road?

ALVIN
I've traveled just about all my
life.

CRYSTAL
I like being out on the road.

ALVIN
It's different for a girl alone.

CRYSTAL
(defensively)
It doesn't have to be different
for a girl.

Alvin just nods his head. Doesn't speak or look at her.

CRYSTAL (cont'd)
Where you from?

ALVIN
Laurens.

She nods, and sits quietly.

CRYSTAL
You got a wife back there?

ALVIN
Nope.

CRYSTAL
Kids?

ALVIN
My wife Frances brought fourteen
kids into the world. Only seven
made it.... My daughter Rose lives
with me.

No comment for a while.

ALVIN (cont'd)
Frances died in '81.

Quiet for a time.

ALVIN (cont'd)
Where's your family?

Now she's not talking.

ALVIN (cont'd)
You runnin' away?

She still doesn't answer. Alvin leans back and draws on his cigar. He looks at the girl.

ALVIN (cont'd)
How far along are you?

Crystal looks away from the fire into the darkness.

CRYSTAL
Five months.

Alvin nods. More quiet. Alvin gets up, walks out of firelight with his grabber and comes back with a log. He throws it on the fire and works the embers for a bit.

ALVIN
My daughter Rose that lives with me...she's what some people would call a little slow. But she's not. She's got a mind like a bear trap for facts and keeps everything organized around the house. She was a real good mom...had four kids.

He pauses looking into the fire. Crystal watches him expectantly.

ALVIN (cont'd)
One night.....someone else was watchin' the kids...

DISSOLVE TO:

84 INT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S KITCHEN

84

We see the shot of Rose sitting alone in the kitchen that we saw before. She is at the kitchen table smoking a cigarette and thinking.

ALVIN
(continuing in voice over)
There was a fire. Her second boy got burned real bad. Rose didn't have nothin' to do with it.

He pauses.

ALVIN (cont'd)
 (continuing in voice over)
 ...but...because of the way Rose
 is... the state said she wasn't
 comp'tant to care for the kids and
 took them all away.

DISSOLVE TO:

85

EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S CAMPSITE

85

ALVIN
 Not a day passes she doesn't pine
 for those kids.

Crystal looks away from him into the fire. He looks back to the
 fire, coughs.

ALVIN
 Well, I'm headin' to see my
 brother Lyle.

CRYSTAL
 Huh?

ALVIN
 I said I'm goin' to visit my
 brother Lyle in Mt. Zion.

CRYSTAL
 Where's that?

ALVIN
 In Wisconsin. Just over the state
 line.

CRYSTAL
 (nodding)
 Oh....Cheddar Heads.

Alvin laughs at this and Crystal smiles, too.

ALVIN
 Aren't those just about the
 dumbest things you ever saw a
 person put on their head?

She nods and laughs.

CRYSTAL
 I hear that's a real party place,
 Wisconsin. Guess I'll never get to
 find out.

They sit in silence. Alvin looks away from the fire.

ALVIN
I haven't seen my brother in ten
years.

Alvin picks up the hot dogs and takes one out of the pack. He proceeds to eat it raw.

CRYSTAL
You're eatin' a raw hot dog!

ALVIN
(smiling)
I like 'em straight up.

Crystal makes a face. Alvin munches slowly.

CRYSTAL
Ten years is a long time.

Crystal shivers with a chill. Alvin notices this.

ALVIN
There's a blanket in the trailer.

Crystal leaves firelight. She rustles about in the trailer.

CRYSTAL
(offscreen)
What the hell kind of boom box is
this?

ALVIN
Eight track stereo...watch your
goddamned language.

CRYSTAL
(offscreen)
Are these videotapes or what?

ALVIN
That's music girlie.

CRYSTAL
They're huge!.....I never seen
anything like this.

We hear some rattling and the sound of the tape going in. A sweet Patsy Cline ballad floats out of the trailer and into the night air. Smiling, Crystal comes back into the light with a blanket around her shoulders.

CRYSTAL (cont'd)
Figured it out.

ALVIN
Good girl.

They sit for a while and listen to the music.

CRYSTAL
Your brother.

ALVIN
Lyle and I had a falling out.

CRYSTAL
Over what?

ALVIN
I can't say as I recall.

CRYSTAL
Well that's pretty stupid. You
haven't seen him in 10 years
because of a fight and you can't
remember what the fight was about?

ALVIN
You got some rude habits girl.

Crystal is taken aback. She is quiet, thinking.

ALVIN (cont'd)
Maybe I do recall.

Quiet for a while.

ALVIN (cont'd)
People do lots of stupid things,
knowing they're stupid.

He looks at her. She looks up.

CRYSTAL
Sorry.

They both stare into the fire for a while.

CRYSTAL
So why are you going to see him
now?

ALVIN
He's sick.

Crystal is poking the fire with the stick. Alvin picks up another stick and he starts poking the fire.

CRYSTAL

My family hates me. They'll really hate me when they find out....

ALVIN

You didn't tell them?

CRYSTAL

No...no one knows...not even my boyfriend.

ALVIN

Well that doesn't strike me as fair treatment of your people.

CRYSTAL

I can take care of my own problems.

There is a pause as they watch the fire. Then Alvin speaks.

ALVIN

Don't let pride make you dumb. I should know.

She's listening.

ALVIN (cont'd)

They may not be happy. But not so much that they want to lose you...or your little problem.

CRYSTAL

I don't know about that.

ALVIN

Well a course neither do I but a warm bed and a roof sounds a mite better than this...eating hot dogs on a stick with an old geezer traveling on a lawn mower.

She giggles a bit and then falls silent. After a moment, Alvin stirs.

ALVIN (cont'd)

When my kids were young I played a game with them. I'd give each of them a stick. One for each of 'em, and I'd tell them to break it. They'd do that easy.

(MORE)

WEST UNION POLICEMAN
I'm going to have to ask you to
step out...uh...get off of the
lawn mower, sir.

Alvin goes into the slow dismount. Officer regards this and
reaches to assist. Alvin jerks his arm away from the officer.

WEST UNION POLICEMAN (cont'd)
Sir, would you just walk a
straight line for me?

Alvin looks at his canes, looks at the officer and proceeds to
walk a straight line.

WEST UNION POLICEMAN (cont'd)
Sir, can you do that without the
canes?

ALVIN
Nope, I'll tip over.

The Cop looks down.

WEST UNION POLICEMAN
OK Sir. I don't believe you have
been drinking but I'm gonna have
to ask you to stay here at
Computer Cosmos for another hour
or so...just 'til traffic dies
down. That would be best for you
and the other cars. Alright?

Alvin nods and hobbles back to the mower. He mounts and the cop
watches this. The cop then gets into his squad car and takes
off.

DISSOLVE TO:

99 **EXT.--DUSK THE COMPUTER COSMOS PARKING LOT**

99

Alvin sits and waits. Cars whizz by.

DISSOLVE TO:

100 **EXT.--DUSK RED ROAD ON HWY 18**

100

Alvin is once again on a country road. A car passes him. The
woman driving gawks at him as she passes. Moments later we hear
off camera a screech of brakes and a heavy thud. We see Alvin
react to the event up ahead.

CUT TO:

DEER WOMAN (cont'd)

I have hit 13 deer in seven weeks driving down this road mister and I have to drive this road every day 40 miles back and forth to work. I don't know what to do...I have to drive to work and I have to drive home...

She pauses. Takes a deep breath and looks out over the flat landscape. She turns and pats the deer carcass.

DEER WOMAN (cont'd)

He's dead.

She starts to cry.

DEER WOMAN (cont'd)

And I love deer.

She turns and climbs back in her car. She backs up and sprays gravel as she accelerates away. Her front fender falls off and she runs over it. Alvin watches her drive away, then looks down at the deer.

CUT TO:

104 **EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S CAMPFIRE** 104

Alvin is eating a large piece of meat. Behind Alvin we see a full set of antlers mounted on the front of the trailer.

CUT TO:

105 **EXT.--MIDDAY HWY 18 IOWA FLATLANDS** 105

Alvin is driving along a particularly desolate stretch of road. His eye scans the horizon. He is wary. He slows the mower and brings it to a stop, the engine idling. We see Alvin's face tight. He sees something.

CUT TO:

106 **EXT.--DAY HWY 18 IOWA FLATLANDS ALVIN'S POV** 106

The Iowa horizon is a large dark mass. An occasional burst of light races through the black clouds. A breeze blows dirt along the field. Alvin's gaze searches for shelter. There are no farms near. He cannot outrace the storm. He spots a small outbuilding alone in the field. It is an old granary, used by farmers to store corn.

CUT TO:

111 EXT.--DAY

Alvin turns off the highway onto a narrow rutted field road used only by the farmer to get to his crops. It is pot-holed and uneven. Alvin stops at the entry to the road. Moving as quickly as he can, Alvin secures everything that could blow away on the mower and the trailer. Then he mounts the mower and races for shelter. As he's heading to the granary the sky darkens dramatically and the winds hit. He puts his head down into the gust, holds onto his hat and lets out a holler, carrying all the speed a riding mower can. He bounces across the field and closes on the granary. Just as a large crack of lightning, rain and the full gust of wind sweep in, Alvin makes it into the sanctuary of the granary. A smile crosses his face as he revels in the race before the storm and the pleasure of watching the thunderstorm from beneath a strong roof. He shares the granary with a flock of pigeons who have taken shelter as well. Alvin sits looking out on the storm, relaxed and content on his perch aboard the mower.

DISSOLVE TO:

107

EXT.--DAY IOWA COUNTY HIGHWAY

107

A warm afternoon. Alvin is making his way down a lonely stretch of Iowa highway. The perforated, yellow center line passes slowly below him. Suddenly Alvin hears a strange, whirring sound. A moment later he is startled by a strangely helmeted, goggled, bicyclist speeding by him.

CYCLIST #1

On your left! Thank you.

ALVIN

What the.....?

Another whir and another cyclist passes.

CYCLIST #2

On your left. Thank you.

And then a trio of cyclists. Another rider approaches pedalling a recumbent bicycle.

CYCLIST #3

Comin' by on your left. Thank you!

ALVIN

What in the hell....?

Alvin pulls his rig over to the side of the road and watches as a large herd of cyclists, numbering more than a hundred riders, engulfs Alvin and his rig.

One rider slows to gawk at Alvin and nearly causes an accident. Other cyclists wave as they churn by...a few yell greetings.

CUT TO:

108 **EXT.--DAY AERIAL VIEW OF IOWA ROAD** 108

We see a swarm numbering hundreds of bike riders passing Alvin parked on the road.

DISSOLVE TO:

109 **EXT.--DUSK IOWA ROADSIDE PARK** 109

Alvin pulls over for the evening to make camp at a county park. Also at the wayside are many of the cyclists who passed Alvin earlier. Pup tents abound. Riders, dressed in skin-tight, brightly colored spandex cycle togs, are spread about the park eating, drinking out of squirt bottles, stretching, hydrating, swapping massages and just plain preening. Alvin pulls into the park. Heads turn as Alvin passes through the crowd. A few onlookers begin clapping. Alvin, a bit of a showman, doffs his Stetson to even more applause. He pulls over to an open patch of campground and brings the John Deere to a halt. He begins his arduous dismount. A cyclist looks on.

CYCLIST #1

That's the same sound we make when we dismount.

CUT TO:

110 **EXT.--NIGHT CAMPSITE** 110

Some cyclists, mostly younger, are gathered around Alvin's campfire and trailer. STEVE is in his early 30s, an earnest, likable fellow with a neatly trimmed beard.

STEVE

So you're averaging about twenty miles a day?

ALVIN

'Bout that. She'll go five miles an hour if I push 'er. I stop when my hips start barkin'.

The other talkative cyclist is RAT. He is early 20s, bleached cropped hair and he features a smattering of tattoos. He talks like a skateboarder.

RAT

Wow man, five miles an hour.

Rat looks up to see a ball flying in his direction. He snags it and tosses it back offscreen. He's not exactly paying close attention to Alvin.

STEVE

So you're thinking about five weeks to get to your brother's place in Wisconsin?

ALVIN

I haven't given it a schedule. That would sound about right.

RAT

Oh man.....I could not handle five weeks on a lawn mower.

ALVIN

And I couldn't handle sittin' on one of them seats for more'n an hour....if that. You all walk like you got a case of baboon butt. Seems my ride is a bit more comfortable.

The cyclists laugh. Rat catches the ball again.

RAT

So why the lawnmower?

Rat tosses the ball.

ALVIN

Can't drive. My eyes. Don't like other people drivin' me where I want to go.

RAT

I can totally dig that.

Alvin smiles and rises to get more firewood. Steve notices the difficulty he has walking and gets up to help.

STEVE

Can I ask how old you are Alvin?

ALVIN

Seventy-three.

RAT

Oh man. Seventy-three years old.

(MORE)

RAT (CONT'D)
Bad eyes, bad hips.

ALVIN
Eyes...hips...diabetes...circulation. Can't hardly believe it myself. I'm older than I ever thought I'd be.

Two young spandex-clad women walk by. Alvin follows them with his eyes.

ALVIN (cont'd)
You don't think about old age when you're young. Shouldn't.

STEVE
When d'ya know you're getting old?

Alvin stirs the fire.

ALVIN
The first time I felt old was when I saw a buddy die in the war. I got old that minute.

The group around the campfire is silent for a while.

STEVE
There must be something good about getting old.

Alvin ponders a moment, stirring the fire.

ALVIN
Hard to imagine anything good about goin' blind and lame at the same time. But still...at my age...you've seen most everything life has to dish out. You can separate the wheat from the chaff. You know to let the small stuff fall away.

RAT
Cool man.

Rat snags the ball one more time. Someone offscreen yells

BIKE RIDER
(offscreen)
Sally's in my tent.

Rat laughs and throws the ball back. Still smiling and looking off...

RAT

What's the worst thing about being
old Alvin?

Alvin stirs the fire. The embers rise on the flames. Alvin
watches the embers float up into the night sky and stars.

ALVIN

The worst thing about being old is
remembering when you were young.

Again the group around the fire falls silent. They listen to
the night sounds.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

- 111 **EXT.--DAY HWY 18** 111
- Alvin is moving out of the prairie and approaching the
Mississippi Valley terrain. Corn is being harvested in the
fields and the leaves have begun to turn colors. He begins to
climb gently rolling hills. As he does the mower begins to show
signs of strain. He pulls off the road half way up one of these
gentle hills to lash his shift lever into low gear.
- CUT TO:
- 112 **EXT.--DAY CLERMONT, IOWA HOUSE ON FIRE** 112
- Close shot of an inferno. A house is burning down.
- CUT TO:
- 113 **EXT.--DAY CLERMONT, DANNY RIORDAN'S FRONT PORCH** 113
- Five people are sitting in aluminum chairs sitting watching the
fire. They are drinking beer. They do not seem alarmed by the
house burning down across the street.
- CUT TO:
- 114 **EXT.--DAY CLERMONT IOWA** 114
- Wide shot reveals that volunteer firemen are burning down the
house as a firefighting exercise.
- CUT TO:

Everyone is clearly enjoying watching the house burn down and the firefighters scurry about. DANNY RIORDAN is the owner of the house on whose porch everyone is gathered. He is mid-50's shortish and stocky, and wears khaki bermuda shorts and a Hawaiian print shirt. His wife DARLA RIORDAN is of similar build and age and has a full head of blond, bouffant hair. She wears white capri pants and a bright yellow shirt. Their friends JOHNNY AND JANET JOHNSON and VERLYN HELLER have joined them for the festivities. Johnny and Janet are about the same age as Danny and Darla and have known each other since high school. They all have a strangely youthful air about them. Johnny and Janet are both very quiet, small and neat. Verlyn is quite a bit older and a farmer. He is very tan and rugged looking. At the same time he bears a certain air of refinement.

DARLA RIORDAN

Criminy sakes alive. You can feel the heat all the way over here.

JOHNNY JOHNSON

Makes you appreciate what a volunteer fireman has to do.

DANNY RIORDAN

That Rumelthanger place was an eyesore.

DARLA RIORDAN

Remember old man Rumelthanger? What a dirty old cur...never bathed. The smell that came off that man. I tell you, it was enough to make a girl faint.

DANNY RIORDAN

You always had an inclination to faint Darla.

Darla blushes at this.

JANET

You know. There really is something about watching a fire that causes you to sort of go off...like it's hypnotism.

VERLYN

Time was when all civilization did was stare at the fire.

They are happy. It's like the fourth of July and they are all feeling like kids watching a house burn down on a warm autumn afternoon. Shouts of volunteer firemen in the background.

CUT TO:

116 **EXT.--DAY BURNING HOUSE** 116

Shots of firemen battling the blaze. A small crowd has assembled next to the house to watch the show. The firemen turn and wave to the assembly. A wife is taking pictures. We hear a clattering sound intrude upon the scene. It is not coming from the fire.

CUT TO:

117 **EXT.--DAY RIORDAN'S FRONT PORCH** 117

Darla's attention is drawn from the fire by the rattling sound. She looks up the hill.

DARLA RIORDAN
What's that noise?

One after another they turn their heads to the direction of the hill.

VERLYN
Now what in the sam hill do you
suppose...

Down the hill, barely under control comes Alvin on the mower.

JOHNNY JOHNSON
What on earth....?

DARLA RIORDAN
(to Danny)
Honey bun...is that a lawnmower?

JANET
It's going too fast for a
lawnmower. Isn't it Danny?

DARLA RIORDAN
And what on earth is drivin' that
thing?!

CUT TO:

118 **EXT.--DAY CLERMONT HILL ALVIN ON MOWER** 118

Alvin is barreling down the hill, foot stamping on brake, no response. The steering becomes more difficult.

CUT TO:

DANNY RIORDAN
Mister are you O.K.?

Alvin is a little shaky. Nods in answer to Danny's question.

JOHNNY JOHNSON
Jeez Mister you're lucky she
didn't roll on you.

ALVIN
(a little short of breath)
I think the belt's shot.

DANNY RIORDAN
I wouldn't be surprised. You don't
have brakes on that trailer do
you?

Alvin shakes his head.

DANNY RIORDAN (cont'd)
Mister I worked for John Deere for
thirty years so I can tell ya you
shouldn't be hauling a rig like
that behind a riding mower. At
least not down a hill like that.

Alvin doesn't really respond. Danny softens a little. Considers
the situation.

DANNY RIORDAN (cont'd)
I'm Danny Riordan.

He extends his hand. Alvin reaches out.

ALVIN
Alvin Straight.

DANNY RIORDAN
Well Alvin...let's get you and
this rig off
the road and see what the damage
is.

Alvin goes through the slow dismount under the watchful eyes of
Darla and Janet. Danny and Verlyn start to push the mower and
trailer and are joined by a couple of the volunteer fireman.
Alvin brings up the rear, moving slowly.

CUT TO:

124 EXT.--DAY BEHIND RIORDAN'S HOUSE

124

Guys are pushing Alvin's rig into the backyard. They roll to a stop alongside a small separate garage.

DANNY RIORDAN

Well let's have a look at this
mower. This is what? '65 ...'66?

ALVIN

'66.

Danny is looking under the hood. He notices a small pool of oil forming under the mower.

DANNY RIORDAN

Well I can tell you right now
Alvin you won't be going anywhere
tonight. Aside from your drive
belt being busted, you've got
transmission problems. Where were
you hoping to get to?

ALVIN

Mount Zion.

DARLA RIORDAN

Mount Zion, Wisconsin? Past
Prairie du Chien?

JOHNNY JOHNSON

That's 60 more miles of hills.

DANNY RIORDAN

That's across the Mississippi.
What's in Mount Zion Alvin?

ALVIN

My brother lives there.

JANET

Why didn't you take your car?

ALVIN

Don't have a driver's license.

DARLA RIORDAN

Couldn't your brother come to
visit you?

ALVIN

He's had a bad stroke.

VERLYN
Where are you coming from?

ALVIN
Back a piece.

DANNY RIORDAN
West Union?

ALVIN
Nope.

JOHNNY JOHNSON
Hawkeye?

Alvin just shakes his head.

DARLA RIORDAN
Not New Hampton. You didn't come
that far?

Alvin gets a small smile.

ALVIN
Nope.

Janet jumps in thinking she's got it.

JANET
Mason City!

Alvin shakes his head again.

VERLYN
You've come a long way haven't
you?

Alvin looks at Verlyn and nods.

ALVIN
Yes I have. From Laurens, Iowa.

DARLA RIORDAN
Laurens?

VERLYN
That's west of the Grotto. How
long have you been on the road?

ALVIN
What's the date today?

JOHNNY JOHNSON
October 8th.

Alvin thinks for a minute. Counts on his fingers. Looks up.

ALVIN
5 weeks. I left Laurens on
September 5th.

DANNY RIORDAN
You been bunking in that?

Alvin points his thumb over his shoulder at the trailer.

ALVIN
That's my rolling home.

They all swing their heads and look again at the trailer. Darla and Janet look at each other. They share a "Holy Cow" look.

DANNY RIORDAN
Where've you been settin' up camp?

ALVIN
In the fields. I'd just pull off
the road every evening. I don't
travel at night.

DARLA RIORDAN
Weren't you scared staying out
there alone at night? There's a
lot of strange people everywhere
now.

ALVIN
Ma'am, I fought in the trenches in
World War II. Why should I be
scared in an Iowa cornfield?

DANNY RIORDAN
Well why don't you bivouac right
here in our yard tonight? We got a
bathroom out here in this garage
you can use.

ALVIN
I appreciate that. I believe this
machine is in agreement with you.

CUT TO:

125

EXT.--LATE AFTERNOON RIORDAN'S YARD

125

Alvin, Danny and Darla are rigging up a lean-to of plastic tarp and tree limbs. The lean-to extends out from the garage.

ALVIN
 Sure is nice of you folks to help
 me with this.

DANNY RIORDAN
 Well...there's a lot of rain in
 the forecast and you don't want to
 be stuck in your trailer.

Darla is on a stepladder attaching a red wooden fish to the top
 of the post.

DARLA RIORDAN
 I do a little woodwork art. I
 thought you might like some fish
 on your tent.

ALVIN
 My daughter Rose builds
 birdhouses.

DARLA AND DANNY
 (in unison)
 Oh that's nice.

CUT TO:

126 **EXT.--NIGHT RIORDAN'S BACKYARD** 126

Alvin is perched in the doorway of his trailer smoking a
 Swisher Sweet.

CUT TO:

127 **EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S POV: BURNT OUT HOUSE** 127

Alvin is gazing out into the night. He looks over at the
 smoldering house. A few orange embers in the ashes and one
 fireman on watch. The fireman lights a cigarette.

CUT TO:

128 **EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S POV: RIORDAN'S HOUSE** 128

Lights turn out one after another.

CUT TO:

129 **EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S POV: THE SKY**

129

The stars and the moon in a beautiful clear autumn (still dark blue) sky.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

130 **EXT.--DAY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD**

130

Four men are standing around looking at Alvin's mower: Danny, Alvin and two guys from the local John Deere dealer. HARALD AND THORVALD OLSEN (they are both tall and skinny with big adam's apples. They have bright blue eyes and very ruddy red cheeks. They are prematurely bald). They are twin brothers and bicker like an old married couple. Can't agree on anything.

HARALD

I tell you Thorvald it's a '65
John Deere 110.

THORVALD

It's a '66 Harald. I fixed one
just like it three years ago. That
was a drive belt too.

HARALD

'65.

THORVALD

'66!

DANNY RIORDAN

(to Alvin)

They're twins. Siamese, separated
at the opinion.

Alvin chuckles.

DANNY RIORDAN (cont'd)

It's a '66. Ask Mr. Straight.

They both look to Alvin. Each of them still sure they're right.

ALVIN

'66.

Harald kicks the ground. Thorvald smirks. Blows his nails and shines them on his shirt.

DANNY RIORDAN

So Olsens. How bad is it?

ALVIN

I can't be dawdlin' here. I gotta get back on the road.

The twins look at the lawn mower and then at each other. Thorvald turns back to Alvin who is waiting expectantly.

THORVALD

Well you know about the transmission. The belt is shot, you blew a head gasget, you're in bad need of oil, and your right side tires are bald.

Alvin takes this in.

ALVIN

Is that all?

HARALD

Well it wouldn't be a bad idea to remove the blade assembly...As best as I can tell ...you're not mowin' any lawns.

CUT TO:

131 INT.--DAY RIORDAN'S KITCHEN.

131

Darla is kneading bread. She is up to her elbows in dough. Danny walks in, grabs a beer from the fridge and sits down at the kitchen table. He lights a cigarette. There is a small TV on the kitchen counter. The Weather Channel is on.

DARLA RIORDAN

Storm rollin' in.

Danny sits lost in thought. He doesn't react to her.

DANNY RIORDAN

It's going to cost him a bundle to fix that mower. I don't think he's got that kinda money.

DARLA RIORDAN

Mmmm.

DANNY RIORDAN

I wouldn't drive that old thing to Excelsior. It's a lawn mower for god's sake.

DARLA RIORDAN

Mmm Hmmm.

DANNY RIORDAN

He was damn lucky he made it to the bottom of that hill. He could've been killed. Easily coulda' been killed.

DARLA RIORDAN

Yah. Ah huh.

DANNY RIORDAN

He's none too strong. Did you see how he can't walk without those canes?

DARLA RIORDAN

(still kneading)

Uh uh.

DANNY RIORDAN

The hills just get worse the closer you get to the Mississippi.

Darla stops kneading her bread and smiles. With dough up to her elbows she walks over to Danny and kisses him on the forehead.

DARLA RIORDAN

Go ahead and drive him honey. Mt. Zion can't be a half day. That's fine.

Darla goes back to her dough as Danny keeps thinking.

DARLA RIORDAN (cont'd)

....You're a good man Danny Riordan....That's why I married you despite what my mother said.

Danny smiles, gets up from the chair and stands behind Darla.

DARLA RIORDAN (cont'd)

Now shoo.

CUT TO:

132

EXT.--DAY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD

132

Alvin is sitting in the open door of his trailer. He looks around to make sure he is alone. He pulls out his wallet and looks inside.

CUT TO:

133 **EXT.--DAY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD** 133

Alvin's POV of inside of wallet. A couple of twenties and a ten and a few singles.

CUT TO:

134 **EXT.--AFTERNOON RIORDAN'S BACKYARD 138** 134

Alvin closes up wallet, puts it in his pocket. He lights up a Swisher Sweet and gets pensive.

CUT TO:

135 **EXT.--DAY BACK DOOR RIORDAN'S HOUSE** 135

Alvin knocks on door. Danny comes to the door.

ALVIN
I'm in need of a phone.

DANNY RIORDAN
Why sure...come on in.

ALVIN
I'd like to call my daughter and give her an account of my recent travels.

DANNY RIORDAN
Sure, sure. Come on in.

He opens the door wide to allow Alvin past.

ALVIN
If it's all the same to you I was wondering if you have one of those phones without a cord.

DANNY RIORDAN
The door's wide open...come on in.

ALVIN
I can talk from out here.

Danny smiles, goes back in and returns with a portable phone.

DANNY RIORDAN
Here you go. You're more than welcome to sit down at the kitchen table.

(MORE)

DANNY RIORDAN (CONT'D)
 Darla and I can leave the room if
 you're lookin' for a little
 privacy.

ALVIN
 Thank you. Out here's just fine.

Alvin turns and starts to hobble away. Danny is starting to
 shut the door. Alvin turns back to him.

ALVIN
 What area code am I in? I don't
 think this is 712 anymore.

DANNY RIORDAN
 No it isn't Alvin, that hill
 rolled you into 319. You'll need
 to dial a one and your area code
 to get her.

ALVIN
 I thank you.

CUT TO:

136 **EXT.--DAY ALVIN'S LAURENS HOME KITCHEN**

136

The phone is ringing. Rose enters kitchen carrying a birdhouse.
 She picks up the phone.

ROSE
 Dad? Oh dad...I'm...
 (she starts to tear up)
 ...so glad to hear you.

ROSE (cont'd)
 I been so worried. I know....you
 can....O.K. I won't.

ROSE (cont'd)
 Clermont? Is that.....in
 Iowa?....Oh.

ROSE (cont'd)
 Yah. Oh...your social security
 check...yah.....it's here.

ROSE (cont'd)
 O.K....the check.....I send it to
 you.....O.K.

ROSE (cont'd)
 Yes....I will....take it
 down....hold on.....Dad.

She puts the phone down, puts down the birdhouse which she has been holding through the conversation. She rummages through a drawer in the kitchen. No luck. She moves stuff around the countertops. No luck. She moves out of the kitchen and we hear her rummaging in the other room.

CUT TO:

137 **EXT.--DAY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD** 137

Alvin is patiently sitting at a picnic table. A little smile comes across his face.

CUT TO:

138 **INT.--DAY THE STRAIGHT KITCHEN** 138

Rose comes back into the kitchen with a big smile on her face holding a fat carpenter's pencil. She picks the phone back up.

ROSE (cont'd)
 O.K. Dad...I have apencil.
 It's one of those ones you use
 when you're building stuff.

She concentrates and writes for what seems a long time.

ROSE (cont'd)
 I'm going to read.....it back.

CUT TO:

139 **EXT.--DAY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD** 139

Alvin, phone to his ear, nods several times as Rose haltingly reads back the address.

ALVIN
 That's right. I know I can count
 on you sweetheart.....I'm
 fine. I'm hobbled here but as soon
 as I get that check I can head out
 to Lyle's.....Are you O.K.
 there alone?..... Good, we can't
 have too many bluebirds in the
 yard.

CUT TO:

ALVIN

You'd be a guest in your own yard.

Danny goes off, comes back with an aluminum folding chair and sets it up next to Alvin's chaise lounge.

DANNY RIORDAN

I talked to the Olsen twins and they estimate it will cost you around \$250.00 to get this mower running again.

ALVIN

That's twice what it oughta be. Must be because they're twins.

Danny smiles at this.

DANNY RIORDAN

You know I'd be happy to drive you the rest of the way to Mount Zion.

Alvin starts shaking his head.

DANNY RIORDAN (cont'd)

It'd be a nice Sunday drive for me and Darla. We enjoy crossing the river. Especially with the trees in color.

ALVIN

I appreciate the offer friend. I'd like to finish this my own way.

DANNY RIORDAN

Even if you fix your mower there are hills bigger than Clermont's between here and Zion. There's no guarantee that your machine won't break down again. In fact I'll guarantee it will. Alvin, this machine was meant to go across a lawn, not the state of Iowa.

ALVIN

You're a kind man talkin' to a stubborn man. This is a trip I'd like to finish.

Danny resigns to Alvin's decision. Lights up a cigarette.

DANNY RIORDAN

Well then let me give you a loan for the repairs.

ALVIN

Well that is generous. And if I
needed that help I'd take it. But
I phoned to have money sent to me.
I gave my daughter your address. I
hope that's O.K.

Danny knows better than to argue with the proud man about
money.

DANNY RIORDAN

Well then Alvin you'll stay right
here in our yard until you're
ready to go. We enjoy your
company.

ALVIN

I'm thankful for that.

Danny is satisfied with this arrangement and sits back to enjoy
the fine afternoon. They both sit and smoke contentedly
listening to the honking of a passing flock of Canadian geese.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

146

INT.--DAY THE RIORDAN'S YARD ALVIN'S TRAILER

146

Alvin is sitting in his trailer with the door open. Suddenly
Darla and Janet pop their heads into either side of the door
opening and quickly pull back.

DARLA RIORDAN (v.o.)

Oh excuse us Alvin. We were just
looking for you.

ALVIN

(smiling)

Well you found me. It's alright
ladies, I'm decent.

The two heads pop back into either side of the frame of the
door.

DARLA RIORDAN

Well we had some brownies we
thought you might enjoy.

Janet extends a plate of brownies.

DARLA RIORDAN (cont'd)
 Janet makes the best brownies in
 Fayette county. She wins a prize
 for them every year at the county
 fair.

Janet is very embarrassed by this.

JANET
 My mother's recipe.

DARLA RIORDAN
 She won't tell anyone what the
 secret ingredient is.

Janet shakes her head. No way.

147 **INT.--DAY ALVIN'S TRAILER**

147

Alvin graciously accepts the plate.

ALVIN
 Thank you Janet. Very much. I'll
 let 'em cool down a little...can't
 eat hot food. But I sure have a
 sweet tooth. I love brownies.
 Haven't had any since I went on
 the road. My daughter Rose makes a
 pretty good brownie.

148 **EXT.--DAY ALVIN'S TRAILER**

148

JANET
 Does she live in Laurens?

ALVIN
 Yes. She lives with me. Just the
 two of us.

JANET
 Oh.

Everyone is quiet for a bit. Alvin is holding the plate and the
 two women's heads are just hanging there. Darla shakes herself.

DARLA RIORDAN
 Well we'll be moving along. We
 just wanted to make sure you're
 doing O.K. Anything you need?

ALVIN
 No, thank you kindly.

VERLYN

The secret ingredient...no one's supposed to know.....chocolate chips.

Alvin takes a brownie too and the two men enjoy the delicious experience together. There is a brief, comfortable silence between them.

ALVIN

You've had enough rain this summer, have ya?

VERLYN

Put up third crop hay last week.

ALVIN

Dairy farm?

VERLYN

Beef. I got too old for milking and both my sons moved to Dubuque.

ALVIN

I worked cattle in Montana. Back when it was all by horse. Before the war.

VERLYN

Army?

ALVIN

(looks off)
Infantry. Third Corps.

VERLYN

Under Bradley. I was Second Corps.

Another silence. Alvin offers Verlyn a Swisher Sweet. Verlyn accepts.

VERLYN (cont'd)

I been out on errands and I'm headin' for a beer. I thought you might like to join me.

Alvin ponders the offer briefly.

ALVIN

I don't drink no more but I'm always up for a change of scenery. Thanks.

The two older men, both with troubled hips, head for Verlyn's truck.

ALVIN (CONT'D)

A preacher helped put some distance between me and the bottle. He helped me see that I was drinkin' because some of the sights I was still seein' from over there.

Verlyn nods. Takes a sip of beer. Looks straight ahead at the back bar.

VERLYN

Lot of men came back drinking hard. My brother Dewey did that. Spent most of his adult life drinking from noon on. He was an awful sweet drunk though.

Alvin takes this in. Nods quietly.

ALVIN

Everyone trying to forget. I can see it still in a man right away.

Verlyn looks quickly at Alvin.

VERLYN

Yup.

ALVIN

It was one hard day after another hard day all strung together.

VERLYN

Yeah.

The bartender comes over. Verlyn orders another. The bartender looks to Alvin who is nursing his glass of milk.

ALVIN

No, I'm good thanks.

The bartender moves down the bar. Alvin and Verlyn sit in silence. Verlyn is peeling the label off of his long neck bottle. He is really concentrating on this process.

VERLYN

There was this one time...We were just...waiting on our first warm meal in ten days.

Verlyn looks up quickly at Alvin in the mirror on the back bar to see how he's reacting. Alvin just looks into his milk glass but doesn't stop him.

VERLYN (cont'd)
 ...We thought we'd seen the worst.
 They hadn't given us much trouble
 from the air.

Verlyn takes another drink of beer. He stops working on the label. He looks straight ahead at the back bar.

VERLYN (cont'd)
 I was on a rise with the
 quartermaster working on more
 coffee for me and my buddies. A
 stray Focke-Wolf comes over the
 treetops and drops an incendiary
 right on the mess tent...all my
 buddies...The Kraut banks right in
 front of me on that hill
 and.....I can
 (he pauses and the memory
 becomes the present)
 see the Iron Cross...
 (suddenly unable to
 speak...he tries in a choked
 voice)
right in front of me
 (composes himself, shaking his
 head)....

There is silence. Alvin gives Verlyn time to set himself.

VERLYN (cont'd)
 Then I look...I couldn't tell
 which of my buddies it was burnin'
 up down there.

Verlyn can barely finish his story. Alvin is very still and quiet. Verlyn has collected himself and looks quietly to the mirror of the back bar.

VERLYN (cont'd)
 "...Swept with confused alarms of
 struggle and flight, Where
 ignorant armies clash by night."

Verlyn looks down, slightly embarrassed at his speech. Alvin thinks about what he's heard. He starts with his own story.

ALVIN
 There is a thing I can't let
 loose..... All my buddies faces
 are still young... The spirit of
 the thing is that the more years I
 have... the more they lost.
 (MORE)

ALVIN (CONT'D)

And... it's not always a buddy's face I'm seein'. Sometimes it's a German face. By the end we were shooting moon-faced boys....

Alvin takes a sip of milk and draws a deep breath.

ALVIN (cont'd)

I was a sniper. The way I grew up...you learn how to shoot huntin' for food.

Alvin stops. He's not sure if he's going to continue.

ALVIN (cont'd)

They'd post me up front, damn near ahead of the line. I'd sit still forever. Amazin' thing what you can see just sittin'. I'd look for the officers...or their radio guy or artillery spotter... Sometimes I'd sight a gun nest by the smoke and fire into that. Sometimes it was just movement in the woods.

Alvin pauses.

ALVIN (cont'd)

We had a scout. Small guy. Name of Kotz. He was a Polish fella from Milwaukee. He would always take recon and he was good. We went by his word and he saved our skins more'n once. A short fella.

Alvin sets both hands palm down on the bar. He looks hard at his hands.

ALVIN (cont'd)

We had broken out of the hedgerows...made a run across the open when we come upon a woods an' started drawin' fire. I took my usual spot. I saw some movement real slow like. I waited for ten minutes and it moved again. I fired. The movement stopped. We found Kotz the next day. Head shot. He had been movin' back toward our lines. Everyone in the unit thought he was taken by a German sniper...everyone all these years. Everyone but me.

Alvin and Verlyn sit real quiet for a while. Verlyn shifts on his stool...shakes his head.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

155 **EXT.--NIGHT RIORDAN'S HOUSE** 155

Alvin is sitting in his chaise lounge having a smoke. It is night time and he is sitting without a fire in the dark.

CUT TO:

156 **EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S POV OF THE SKY** 156

A crisp, star-filled sky.

CUT TO:

157 **EXT.--NIGHT RIORDAN'S HOUSE** 157

Alvin looking up at the stars...pain in his face.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

158 **EXT.--DAY DANNY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD** 158

Danny and the two Olsen brothers are fixing the mower. Alvin looks on.

HARALD

You can work all day and you won't get that piece off with that wrench.

THORVALD

(from beneath the mower)
Danny, did you hear me ask Wisenheimer there for his advice on how to fix a riding mower?

HARALD

Fine. Then we'll all just stand here and wait for Mr. Wizard to finish...Anyone got a deck a cards?

THORVALD

(still beneath)

Very funny Harald. If it was you underneath here we could all go home and wait for winter. Then we could just put the snowplow on this rig.

DANNY RIORDAN

Jeez you two can bitch. I heard you about killed each other last week over horseshoes at the Dew Drop.

Harald gets a mad look on his face.

THORVALD

(up from beneath)

See Harald...brainiac...I got the mower assembly free with this little old wrench here you said wouldn't work...Well I'd say it worked pretty good, wouldn't you? Help me slide'er out here and we can settle up.

They slide out the mower assembly. Thorvald steps back, wiping the oil off his hands. Harald is pulling out the bill. He reads off of it.

HARALD

I got the labor and parts coming to \$247.80.

He hands the bill to Alvin. Alvin scans it. He looks up at them.

ALVIN

That's a little heavy for light work.

The Olsen brothers are a little taken aback by this. Alvin moves over to the mower and starts a slow circle around it.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Now I got old man's eyes...

He reaches down and runs his hand along the treads of the tires.

ALVIN (cont'd)

...but I was noticin' these new tires.....

Danny is starting to enjoy himself. He crosses his arms and smiles at the Olsens.

HARALD

Well, now we did take them off of
a resell, but the treads are good.

Alvin, still caressing the treads gives him a long look from under the brim of his Stetson.

ALVIN

Friend, are you chargin' me good
or are you chargin' me new?

HARALD

Uh, (turns to his brother)
Thorvald?

THORVALD

Well I guess we can make an
adjustment there.

Danny pulls up a lawn chair and lights a cigarette. Hunkers down for the entertainment.

ALVIN

I figure that adjustment to be
about \$30.00? Is that what your
pencil's sayin'?

DANNY RIORDAN

Sounds right to me.

The twins give Danny a dirty look.

ALVIN

Now about that labor. I'm
agreeable that you boys have put
some real time in on this job. But
a man's gotta ask when he workin
with twins, especially a bickerin'
pair, how much workin' was
fightin'.

DANNY RIORDAN

You got that right.

THORVALD AND HARALD

(in unison)

Shut up Danny.

ALVIN

If I were to judge from the joyous affair I've seen today I would calculate a 20% discount on the labor charge.

Thorvald and Harald exchange a look

THORVALD

Anything else mister.

ALVIN

Now I'm not from these parts exactly but where I come from this is a mighty rich charge on a can of Iowa oil.

Thorvald and Harald can not believe this old fart.

THORVALD

Take the oil. No charge.

ALVIN

Well that's a splendid offer that I very much appreciate. Now what's your tally?

Danny turns grinning to the twins. They are slightly befuddled.

HARALD

Uh...uh.

Looking at Thorvald who shrugs.

HARALD (cont'd)

...uh...\$180.00 even?

ALVIN

Done.

Sticks out his hand which each of the twins takes in confusion. Alvin brings out the money, and pays the twins. They see that he has 4 c-notes in his wallet.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Now it's thanks to you boys that I can get back on the road.

Alvin stuffs the change in his wallet and puts the wallet back in his pocket.

ALVIN (cont'd)

I drove this rig across Iowa.

(MORE)

ALVIN (cont'd) (CONT'D)
 I'm hopin' it'll hold into
 Wisconsin...

Alvin looks up at them.

ALVIN (cont'd)
 ...that's where my brother lives.
 Haven't seen him in ten years.

Alvin looks at the Olsen brothers. They squirm under his gaze.

ALVIN (cont'd)
 No man knows your life better than
 a brother near your age. He can
 know who, and what you are best
 than most anyone on the earth.

He stops for a moment. Looks hard at the Olsens.

ALVIN (cont'd)
 My brother and I said some
 unforgivable things last time we
 were together. I want to put those
 times behind us. This trip is just
 one hard swallow of pride. I'm
 only hopin' I'm not too late.

They make to gather their tools and leave.

ALVIN (cont'd)
 A brother's a brother.

Danny smiles at this. The Olsens move to get out of there as
 fast as they can.

CUT TO:

159

EXT.--NIGHT DANNY RIORDAN'S BACK YARD.

159

Alvin is cooking up a large jug of water for coffee. Danny is
 sitting in the chair watching Alvin and smoking a cigarette. He
 has come to enjoy his time out in the backyard with Alvin.

DANNY RIORDAN
 I've gotta tell you Alvin that I'm
 worried about you. About
 you...about your trip on that
 mower.

ALVIN
 Not to worry.
 (MORE)

ALVIN (CONT'D)
Me and my machine are in splendid
form after our stay here.

DANNY RIORDAN
You're sure are you Alvin?

Alvin just nods. A somewhat awkward silence settles on the
scene.

DANNY RIORDAN (cont'd)
Well.

Little more silence. Danny puts out his cigarette.

DANNY RIORDAN (cont'd)
I guess I'll be turning in. See
you in the morning then before you
go.

ALVIN
I'll be traveling plenty early.

Alvin takes off his hat and stands directly in front of Danny.

ALVIN (cont'd)
I want to thank you for your
kindness to a stranger.

Danny stands up from his chair and puts out his hand.

DANNY RIORDAN
It has been a genuine pleasure
having you here Alvin. Write to us
sometime.

Alvin takes his hand in a firm shake.

CUT TO:

160 **EXT.--EARLY MORNING DANNY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD** 160

Tight on door of trailer closing. Alvin comes around and gets
on the mower and starts her up.

CUT TO:

161 **EXT.--SUNRISE DANNY RIORDAN'S HOUSE** 161

Danny is standing at a window unseen by Alvin. He has been
watching Alvin's preparations from inside the house, sensing
Alvin's reluctance for goodbyes. Alvin pulls out onto the road.

CUT TO:

162 **EXT.--SUNRISE RIORDAN'S FRONT PORCH** 162

Danny steps out onto the porch, holding a coffee mug. He watches Alvin in the distance heading down the main drag of Clermont.

CUT TO:

163 **EXT.--SUNRISE MAIN DRAG CLERMONT** 163

Traveling shot of Alvin going through a sleeping Clermont. The only vehicle on the road is another John Deere tractor. Alvin and the farmer exchange the farmer wave.

CUT TO:

164 **EXT.--DAY A HILL JUST WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI** 164

Shot of empty road, top of the hill. The trees on either side of the road are in full fall color. Alvin and the mower rise into view. Then he stops and eyes the steep downhill grade. He sets his hat and starts down.

CUT TO:

165 **EXT.--DAY ANOTHER HILL JUST WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI** 165

Alvin again crests a hill. This one a bit bigger. Again he takes a deep breath. He lashes down the gear shift and heads down the hill.

CUT TO:

166 **EXT.--DAY THE LAST HILL LEADING DOWN TO THE
MISSISSIPPI** 166

Alvin pulls up to the top of a big hill and comes to a stop.

CUT TO:

167 **EXT.--DAY HILL TOP ABOVE THE MISSISSIPPI** 167

Close up of Alvin looking and taking off his hat.

CUT TO:

He is 3/4 of the way across the bridge and cars are backed up
1/2 way back.

175 **EXT.--DAY ALVIN'S POV** 175

Alvin scans the river but as his view moves past the "WELCOME
TO WISCONSIN" sign...

176 **EXT.--DAY ALVIN'S FACE TIGHT** 176

...his expression changes from blissful tourist to concerned
motorist.

177 **EXT.--DAY ALVIN POV** 177

Next to the welcome sign Alvin's sees a Prairie du Chien police
officer leaning against his squad, lights revolving.

178 **EXT.--DAY PRAIRIE DU CHIEN, WISCONSIN** 178

As Alvin approaches, the officer waves him to the side of the
road. Alvin slows to a stop along the shoulder. The police
officer begins to direct the cars pastaround Alvin, moving the
gawkers along. He begins to converse with Alvin over his
shoulder as he waves.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP

Sir, are you aware of the
congestion you caused on the
bridge just now?

ALVIN

I wasn't.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP

I am assuming sir that you have
the appropriate registration to
operate a Slow Moving Vehicle. Am
I correct?

ALVIN

Yes sir.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP

And where are you headed today?

ALVIN

Mt. Zion.

At this the police officer stops directing traffic and
walks over to Alvin with an incredulous look on his face.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
You are going to drive that to Mt.
Zion? The Mt. Zion by Boscobel?

ALVIN
Boscobel?

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
The Mt. Zion by Blue River? That
Mt. Zion?

ALVIN
That Mt. Zion ...yes.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
May I see some identification
please?

Alvin extracts his wallet and chain and hands over an ID.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP (cont'd)
It says here you're from Laurens.
That is...?

ALVIN
A bit west of the Grotto.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
And you've made it to Wisconsin
with this setup?

ALVIN
I have.

The cop stands back and takes in the whole rig:
lawnmower, plywood trailer, antlers.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
(amazed)
It says here Mr. Straight that you
are 73 years old. How long have
you been on the road from Laurens?

ALVIN
Goin' on six weeks.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
And what's your business in Mt.
Zion?

ALVIN
My brother is sick.

The cop considers this for a moment.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
Well Mr. Straight, we've got a problem here. All of this traffic that you've managed to stop runs right on through downtown Prairie du Chien. I'd like you to take the side streets.

ALVIN
Well I'd like to accommodate you but...I'm afraid I'm not familiar with the streets in this town.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
You stay right here Mr. Straight. Don't move.

Alvin nods. The officer walks back to his squad and begins talking in the radio. Alvin sits and watches the river and the traffic. A car goes by and a dog barks at him from a window. Little children stare at him as they pass. The officer returns. He notices again the deer antlers mounted on the trailer.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP (cont'd)
Do you have a hunting license?

Alvin turns and sees he's looking at the antlers.

ALVIN
That was a road kill.

Another Prairie du Chien squad car pulls up lights flashing.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
Mr. Straight, I'd like you to follow me.

ALVIN
Are you arresting me?

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
No sir....we're escorting you.

The two squads bracket Alvin and move out into traffic. The caravan drives through the side streets of town. The squad cars have their red lights flashing. A state patrol car joins the procession. Locals look on in confusion and amusement. They wave and Alvin, a regular parade marshall, waves back.

CUT TO:

179 **EXT.--DAY EASTERN EDGE OF PRAIRIE DU CHIEN** 179

The lead police car stops. The other cars wave and peel away.
The officer from the bridge walks over to Alvin on the mower.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
You take this up as far as 61,
head north and it'll take you
straight into Mt. Zion. Have a
safe journey, Mr. Straight.

ALVIN
Thank you for the grand parade.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
Our privilege sir.

He turns to walk away, then looks back.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP (cont'd)
Must've been one slow buck.

Alvin sits grinning on his rig, his head framed by the buck's
antlers.

CUT TO:

180 **EXT.--SUNSET** 180

Alvin traveling along the Wisconsin country road.

181 **EXT.--SUNSET** 181

Alvin pulls off the road to set up camp alongside a small
country church and cemetery.

182 **EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S CAMPSITE** 182

Alvin sits in his chaise by the campfire. A train whistle
sounds in the distance. Alvin looks up, and looks into the sky.

183 **EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S POV** 183

Stars in the cool autumn sky with a crescent moon. The train
whistle blows again.

184 **EXT.--NIGHT** 184

Alvin looks off in the direction of the sound.

His trip is nearing an end. He looks around at his surroundings.

185

EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S POV

185

He is camped alongside a small country church and cemetery. A simple iron archway guards the cemetery. The back door of the church opens and a swath of light cuts into the cemetery. A PRIEST in layman's clothes comes out carrying a plate and approaches Alvin.

PRIEST

I noticed your campfire. I brought you some dinner...meat loaf and potatoes.

He holds the plate out to Alvin. Alvin hesitates and then reaches out and takes the plate.

ALVIN

I thank you kindly. Hope you don't mind my trespassin'.

PRIEST

Not at all. You've made a fine choice. You're camped next to one of the oldest cemeteries in the midwest. French Catholic trappers.

ALVIN

Marquette's party?

PRIEST

(nodding)
Two of his men.

Alvin reflects on this. He motions for the priest to sit down by the fire. The priest does so.

PRIEST (cont'd)

(hesitantly)
I couldn't help but notice your rather unusual mode of transport.

ALVIN

(shakes his head and smiles)
Well you wouldn't be the first person to say so Padre.

The priest doesn't say anything...he waits on Alvin. Finally...

ALVIN (cont'd)
(he's ready to stop
explaining himself to
people)

I can't see good enough to drive a
car, I don't like someone else
drivin' my bus and I got to get to
my brother's place.

PRIEST
Fair enough. How far have you
traveled?

ALVIN
Well now this vehicle doesn't
sport an odometer so I couldn't
exactly say...but I been on the
road since September 5th.

PRIEST
But we're October 15th. Where in
heaven's name did you start out?

ALVIN
Back in north central Iowa.
Laurens, Iowa.

PRIEST
That must be over 300 miles from
here!

ALVIN
I reckon that's not a bad guess.

The priest gets up and walks over to Alvin's mower and trailer.
He walks around it real slow...one full circle. He comes back
and sits down by the fire. He looks at Alvin for a bit.

PRIEST
Well I would guess that you are on
a mission.

This sets Alvin to thinking. He nods to himself.

ALVIN
You know I wouldna ever thought of
it that way but I guess you could
say that's exactly what I'm doin'.

PRIEST
You say you've got to see your
brother. Where is he?

ALVIN
So close I can practically feel
him... Mt. Zion.

PRIEST
What's his name?

ALVIN
Lyle Straight.

PRIEST
That the fellow had a stroke some
weeks ago?

ALVIN
That's right. You know him?

PRIEST
Well I do some work over at the
hospital in Boscobel and I
remember him coming in. He caught
my attention because he lives in
my parish.

ALVIN
He's Baptist.

PRIEST
I believe he told me that. He told
me a few things as a matter of
fact. Didn't mention having a
brother though.

Alvin looks up to the sky.

ALVIN
Don't think we've either of us had
a brother for some time now. I'm
hopin' to fix that...

Alvin pauses for a moment.

ALVIN (cont'd)
So you saw him? ...He's O.K. then?

PRIEST
I only saw him that once...never
heard anything more.

There is a pause in the talk. Alvin takes in the scene.

CUT TO:

Alvin's POV of the crescent moon, the stars and down to the church and the cemetery. The priest waits for him to go on. Night sounds, train whistles.

ALVIN

Lyle and I grew up close as brothers could be. We were raised on a farm up in Moorhead, Minnesota. Worked so hard...my ma and pa pretty much killed themselves trying to make that farm work.

Alvin shakes his head at the sorrow of this memory. He takes out a cigar and lights it. The priest patiently waits on him to continue.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Me and Lyle...we made games out of our chores. A day's work'd go quicker when it was just the two of us. We'd make up different races and wagers just to get our mind off the cold...Christ it was cold....

He looks quickly to the priest.

ALVIN (cont'd)

'Scuse me Padre.

The priest nods tolerantly. He waits for Alvin to continue.

ALVIN (cont'd)

He and I used to sleep out in the yard every summer night it wasn't pouring. After nine months of winter we couldn't get enough of summer. We'd bunk down as soon as the sun went down and lie there talkin' ourselves to sleep. Talk about the stars...and other planets, whether there might be other people like us out there, 'bout all the places we wanted to go...made our trials seem smaller. We pretty much talked each other through growin' up.

Alvin looks up to the sky.

CUT TO:

187 **EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S POV OF THE NIGHT**

187

ALVIN (cont'd)
 (voice over)
 Funny but lookin' up at these
 stars tonight and feelin' him so
 close...makes me feel I'm right
 back there again. All those years
 ago.

They are both quiet for a bit...we stay on the night sky.

PRIEST
 (voice over)
 What happened between you two?

CUT TO:

188 **EXT.--NIGHT CAMPSITE**

188

Alvin looks back down to the fire.

ALVIN
 Well that's a story old as the
 bible...Cain and Abel.
 Anger...vanity...mix those things
 up with liquor and you get two
 brothers not talkin' for ten
 years....

Alvin shakes his head.

ALVIN (cont'd)
 It doesn't really matter anymore.

He's quiet for a while.

ALVIN (cont'd)
 I've lived on this earth for 73
 years. I'm a humble man in the
 world but my life is so full that
 from where I sit now I'll be
 damned if I know how I did it
 all...growin' up on a hardscrabble
 farm...then went to war...
 (he shakes his head at these
 painful memories)
 ...God help us.
 (he pauses and takes a
 breath)
 I had seven children. We lived in
 every part of this beautiful
 country...
 (MORE)

ALVIN (cont'd) (CONT'D)
I loved a woman for 40 years...and
then she died.

He has to stop for a while.

The priest is looking into the fire. He gives Alvin all the
time he needs.

ALVIN (cont'd)
(he takes a breath)
I've got two daughters...one we
lost track of back in '74...don't
even know if she's alive. Got in
with a mean fella.
(another painful pause.)
So...whatever it was made me and
Lyle so mad doesn't matter to me
now...I want to make peace...I
want to sit with him again and
look up at all the stars.

The priest looks over at Alvin. Alvin looks up and becomes
embarrassed.

PRIEST
Well sir, I say amen to that.

CUT TO:

189 **EXT.--NIGHT ALVIN'S CAMPSITE** 189

The hilltop wide under the stars. The fire glows small in the
frame. The firelight's flickering illumination of Alvin, the
priest, the Church and the cemetery.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

190 **EXT.--DAY WESTERN WISCONSIN** 190

Alvin is driving through rolling Wisconsin farmland dotted with
dairy farms and red barns. He sees a sign: "Mt. Zion.
Unincorporated"

CUT TO:

191 **INT.--DAY MT. ZION BAR / GAS STATION** 191

The bartender sits behind the bar watching the Weather Channel.

CUT TO:

192 **INT.--TV SCREEN** 192

The weather person is giving the national five day forecast.

WEATHER PERSON

First frost of the season is
expected for the midwest and great
lakes region...

CUT TO:

193 **INT.--DAY MT. ZION BAR** 193

Something out the window catches the bartender's eye. He glances out and his expression changes to one of disbelief.

MT. ZION BARTENDER

What the....

He gets up off his stool and walks over to the window for a closer look.

MT. ZION BARTENDER (cont'd)

...hell?

194 **INT.--DAY MT. ZION BAR/GAS STATION** 194

Through the window we see Alvin hauling up the hill approaching the bar.

195 **EXT.--DAY MT. ZION BAR GAS PUMP** 195

Alvin arrives at the top of the hill and stops at the gas pumps. Alvin executes his usual laborious dismount and enters the bar.

CUT TO:

196 **INT.--DAY THE MT. ZION BAR** 196

Alvin crosses the bar and perches atop a bar stool. He sets his canes against the bar rail and addresses the bartender.

ALVIN

I haven't had a drink in years but
I believe I'll have a cold beer
right now.

MT. ZION BARTENDER

What flavor?

ALVIN

What does a Miller Lite taste like?

The bartender places a bottle in front of Alvin.

MT. ZION BARTENDER

Interesting rig you got out there.
Make it up the hill OK?

ALVIN

That one and about 200 others.

MT. ZION BARTENDER

How far'd you come?

ALVIN

Iowa. Headin' to Lyle Straight's place.

MT. ZION BARTENDER

Iowa?...by God you must be thirsty.

ALVIN

One'll do thank you. Can you point me to Lyle's place? I don't quite recall the way...it's been an awful long time since I seen him.

Alvin starts drinking the beer in short order.

MT. ZION BARTENDER

Cross 61 there on W. Take W to Weed Road and then take Weed on down to Remington. Remington drops down onto S...that's the county trunk by Frankie Schwartz's farm. On your right would be Lyle's place...if he's even there. I heard he's had a bad stroke...if you see him, tell him Micky O'Connor tells him to get better quick.

Alvin finishes off the beer, gets up and heads out of bar. MARTHA, the bartender's wife arrives after Alvin's exit. She peers out the window. Then turns to the bartender.

MARTHA

I believe that would be a '66.

CUT TO:

197 **EXT.--DAY MT. ZION BAR** 197

Alvin exits and does his departure ritual. Proceeds down the road.

198 **EXT.--DAY EXTERIOR VALLEY HWY W** 198

Alvin drives through a beautiful valley.

CUT TO:

199 **EXT.--DAY WEED ROAD ALVIN TIGHT** 199

Alvin knows that he is near the end of his journey. Then a look crosses his face. We hear the engine cough. Then with a puff of black smoke, the mower dies. Alvin sits alone on the dirt road.

DISSOLVE TO:

200 **EXT.--DAY WEED ROAD LATER THAT DAY** 200

Alvin is still sitting alone on the dirt road.

DISSOLVE TO:

201 **EXT.--DAY WEED ROAD EVEN LATER THAT SAME DAY** 201

Alvin still sitting. We hear the off camera sound of a tractor. Around the bend of the dirt road comes a big John Deere farm tractor.

CUT TO:

202 **EXT.--DAY DIRT ROAD WIDE** 202

The farmer stops and converses with Alvin. He is offering to haul Alvin. Alvin tries the mower again and to his surprise it starts. The farmer climbs on his tractor and proceeds down the road in front of Alvin. They continue like this approaching Lyle's place. Alvin turns off into Lyle's yard and the tractor keeps moving off. Alvin cuts his engine and the sound of the tractor fades off.

CUT TO:

203 **EXT.--MAGIC HOUR LYLE'S FRONT YARD** 203

Alvin dismounts and slowly walks toward the front door of the house. He stops in the yard and calls out.

ALVIN

Lyle.

CUT TO:

204 **EXT.--MAGIC HOUR LYLE'S HOUSE** 204

Close on the screen door. A pause...then we hear Lyle's voice from inside.

LYLE

Is that you Alvin?

We hear a rhythmic bumping noise from inside.

CUT TO:

205 **EXT.--MAGIC HOUR LYLE'S YARD** 205

Alvin starts moving toward the front porch. Lyle comes out the front door using a walker. It makes the bumping noise. As Alvin climbs the few steps he and Lyle stand very close and take a good look at each other...at the old men they have become.

LYLE

Sit yourself down Alvin.

They move slowly to the two chairs set up on the porch. They are situated about five feet apart on either side of the screen door. Lyle is on the right and Alvin on the left.

CUT TO:

Lyle looking out at the lawnmower and trailer in the yard.

LYLE (cont'd)

Did you ride that thing all the way here to see me?

CUT TO:

Alvin nodding his head.

ALVIN

I did Lyle.

We stay on Alvin's face for a while.

CUT TO:

113.

Close shot of Lyle. He is crying.

CUT TO:

Alvin...tears are running down his cheeks. He turns with a
crying smile to Lyle.

PAN UP TO:

206

EXT.--NIGHT SKY

206

A sky full of stars. Music plays.

The End