

PICK ME UP.

By

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(FIRST DRAFT)

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EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A deserted two lane stretch of road, burning under the sun like a hallucination. Heat shimmers the image, mirage like.

A scrap of road kill swelters in the warmth. If we looked at it closely, we could probably make out an eye. SPLAT! An old patrol wagon strikes it dead on, trailing a huge plume of dust. If we again looked closely, we probably wouldn't be able to find that eye.

SUPER: PICK ME UP.

Ahead is a pathetic oasis of humanity in the vast wasteland; low strung power lines, sketchy windmills and discarded oil drums, surrounded by sun bleached meadows and barbed fences. A mottled sign to the left reads: REDUCE SPEED.

A pair of bare feet amble slowly over the hot asphalt, never quite taking the owner into frame. But we'll get bored just looking at feet won't we? So, let's pull out to reveal:

A young man of eighteen years. Brown hair, highlights, clad in an open white button up, singlet and jeans. This is CALE.

He walks with a slight limp. Licks of blood cover clothes and skin alike. He is bruised, beaten, broken... and confused as to how he has gotten here in the first place.

The air is still and heavy. A white hot sun almost fills the frame; accompanied by a low, crackling noise. Dazed, disorientated, Cale stops walking... just stares at it for a moment.

He returns his gaze to the road ahead, which stretches far into the distance. A glance over his shoulder reveals that the scenery behind him is much the same. Yep, there's nothing like the great outdoors.

CALE

Help. Someone. Please.

His voice is soft and dismal, weakened by dehydration and probable internal injuries. He looks left and right. Fights back tears. And then drops to the ground, letting out a final, prodigious roar. Slaver trickles from his mouth.

He stays on the ground, teary now. He pants as he continues searching the area for help. Have we got the idea yet? He's not in a good way...

Weeping, and crawling now, it seems Cale is pretty much out of hope. But wait. A flicker of distant light catches his eye. A reflection of the sun.

(CONTINUED)

Slowly, almost in disbelief, he looks up. The frame is blurry for a moment, his eyes adjusting. However, when it clears up, the shot is quite clear. A distant but unmistakable form of a car travels in Cale's direction.

He clammers to his feet, smiling and laughing. Salvation, at long last. The adrenaline has fuelled him. His running now, following the weathered road lines.

The car is closer, a tidy little sedan, white in colour. Cale waves his arms frantically, cheering. But it may be too soon, as the sedan is showing no signs of stopping. In fact, Cale has to jump aside to avoid being hit. His smile sags.

He stares at the tail lights as it continues to drive. A slip of paper follows the exhaust fumes, stopping at his feet. He is lost for words.

CALE

No. No, come back here. Come back!

Verging on tears once more, Cale looks down at the piece of paper. He picks it up, begins to read. It is a warning notice, alerting travellers not to stop for hitch hikers. Cale reads bits of it aloud, taken aback.

As he reads, the world seems to almost imperceptibly vibrate around him like a tuning fork. His voice becomes distant as the words on the page quiver and pulsate.

Cale begins to writhe in agony. His eyes roll back, veins emerge. A guttural sound is uttered from deep within him and suddenly we...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. FORD GT - DAY

The same warning notice, lying amongst road maps and reading material in the lush back seat of a candy apple red FORD GT.

Cale is behind the wheel, now in much better condition. Sitting in the passenger seat is his girl friend PERRY. She is a pretty, jovial girl of eighteen years.

The whole conversation is quite adorable, with only few moments when the tweenies aren't smiling. Their in love.

CALE

Six years. Feel any different?

(CONTINUED)

PERRY

Nope. Exactly the same.

CALE

Think about it. We have our whole lives ahead of us.

PERRY

Its a bit scary really.

CALE

Don't worry. We'll do it together.

PERRY

Who says? You know I could be making you take me all this way just so I can break up with you.

Cale just laughs at this remark. For a moment the two remain silent, smiling. Perry springs forward, kisses him on the cheek and playfully slumps back in her seat.

CALE

That was cute. What was that for?

PERRY

We only graduate once.

CALE

Well that's true.

Another one of those cute couple silences. He turns his eyes from the road, meeting hers.

CALE

Think your friends are going to like me?

PERRY

Well. I like you.

Cale laughs, clearly smitten. Isn't she a keeper?

CALE

Thats. Reassuring. Thank you.

PERRY

Welcome.

CALE

How much?

Perry brings her thumb and forefinger together. They are barely touching.

(CONTINUED)

CALE

That much?

PERRY

That much.

Cale makes a larger gap between his own thumb and forefinger.

CALE

Not that much?

PERRY

(shaking her head)

Nope. Thats it.

The two break into soft laughter. Its such a pleasant scene, it really is. That is until...

PERRY

Watch out!

The static, unyielding profile of a man becomes visible through the windshield. Cale punches the brake, jerks the steering wheel hand over hand. Misses the man by inches.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Cale and Perry are thrown back in their seats. The GT fishtails like a wild bronco, travelling a good fifty metres before squealing to a complete stop, facing the man.

The man shifts only slightly, weaving his head menacingly over his shoulder, gawking at the two.

He is of average height, not burly but definitely fit, with close cropped hair and about a weeks worth of stubble. Danger to the core. We'll call him JACK.

INT. FORD GT - DAY

Perry is hunched forward in her seat, eating dashboard. Cale breathes hard, stretching his arms as Perry cocks her head.

CALE

Are you okay?

She unbuckles, lets out a doughy moan.

(CONTINUED)

PERRY
Yeah, just super.

Cale laughs. Pounds the roof above his head. They made it.

PERRY
What was he doing in the middle of
the road?

Cale's smile sags. He looks up at Jack, who now slowly makes his way over. His stagger is edged with threatening cadence.

CALE
What the hell is he doing now?

Apprehensive, the two watch his protracted approach.

PERRY
His coming over.

CALE
You think?

His closer now. Perry is shaky, barely containing herself.

PERRY
Jesus he looks like a fucking
psychopath. Start the car, lets go.

CALE
He might need help, I better talk
to him. Stay in the car I won't be
long.

He unbuckles, opens the door.

PERRY
No, Cale, wait...

The door closes, cutting her pleas short. She wilts in her seat.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Cale walks toward Jack, who comes to a halt. He is steadfast, immobile. Cale attempts to lighten the mood.

CALE
Hey chief. You gave us a scare back
there, are you okay?

Jack says nothing, just stares. His eyes are remarkably engaging. Pure black and bullet hard, brute force in them.

(CONTINUED)

CALE

You know you shouldn't stand in the middle of the road. Someone will clean you up if you keep it up.

No reply. Those black eyes remain fixed on Cale. There is something wrong here. Something very wrong. Cale is uneasy.

CALE

Are you okay man?

His bullet eyes are riveted on Cale, but Cale's attention has been diverted to Jack's hand. Promptly, and lighting quick, a metal rod plummets from his sleeve.

Cale has no time to react. Jack brings it forward. It meets his jaw in a bloody collision. He drops to the tarmac.

Perry screams in the background. Jack lets go of the rod. He steps over Cale's limp body, towards the GT. Cale tries to stop him, but he is far too concussed.

We watch from Cale's perspective as Jack violently grabs a screaming Perry by the scalp, repeatedly smashing her head against the dash. She slips into unconsciousness. He closes the door. Steps out of frame. All is still for a moment.

SUDDENLY Cale is grabbed by the shirt, and is brutally dragged to the car. He groggily mutters for remorse as the scene progressively reverberates. He lets out a final, potent cry for help and we...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Present day. Confusing, huh? Cale is where we left him, eyes wide in distress. New found memories. He sucks air, weeps.

CALE

No. No. Perry!

He lets go of the warning notice. It glides gracefully into the distance. He watches it for a moment with vacant eyes, sighs, and follows.

There's not much action to be seen for a short while. Just more of Cale moping down the highway under that damn sun. We really start to feel for him.

(CONTINUED)

We watch him waste what little energy he has. He picks up a small rock and throws it as far as he can. He repeats the action a few times, venting his frustration. Its all very therapeutic.

He cries, verges on hysteria. He heaves on the roots of his hair, adding up the situation in his head. Poor kid.

And then, the sound of an engine from behind. Extremely close. At last, another chance for help. Or not. The blue ford whizzes past, taking no notice of Cale.

CALE

No. Come back!

He frowns, runs after it. But makes only a few strides before crying aloud in pain:

CALE

Shit!

He has stepped on something. He grunts in pain, can no longer run. He watches the car disappear into the horizon before slumping to the ground.

He turns his foot for inspection. Its filthy and bloodied, with a large sheet of glass buried in it. And just as we think his day can't get any worse...

The scene begins to flicker and distort. More memories. Goody.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. FARM PROPERTY - DAY

Broken bottles mark the entrance to a decayed rural property. The GT pulls into the dirt drive way.

Oh yeah, that's right, the memory thing works through triggers. How exciting.

INT. FORD GT - DAY

Cale awakes in the back seat. He looks down at his wrists, which are discoloured, bound tightly with a zip tie.

He looks to Perry, still unconscious in the passenger seat. And then to Jack in the drivers seat. He says nothing, looks out the window, still groggy.

(CONTINUED)

The sites are just wonderful: A series of stripped vehicles hidden in part by long blades of grass... there's even a school bus. The place is somewhat of a junk yard.

The car drives for quite a lengthy amount of time before pulling to a stop. Jack gets out and Cale is quick to work.

CALE

Perry. Wake up. Perry. Open your eyes.

He watches as Jack paces around the car.

CALE

Perry. Wake up.

The shrill noise of his car door opens. Jack stands in its way. He grasps Cale by the binding on his wrists and hurls him into the dirt.

EXT. FARM PROPERTY - DAY

Cale clambers to his feet. Jack lets him. The two stand opposite, as if in a playground fight.

CALE

What do you want with us?

Jack says nothing. Just glares like a deer in headlights. Smiles slightly.

CALE

Look, let us go. Please. We won't tell anyone, okay. You can have the car. You can have our money, our stuff. Just let us go.

Again, no reply. Cale swallows.

CALE

I can fight. I can. And I will... bust you up right now if you don't let us go.

Jack finds this amusing. Jack's smile stretches. Its menacing, deathly. Cale pants, tries to hold his game face.

Jack begins to laugh, a low menacing chuckle. A quick pan around reveals that there is a large buck knife tucked into the waist band of his pants. Cale doesn't have a chance.

He continues laughing. Cale seethes with rage, clenches his fists, and charges at Jack at full speed.

(CONTINUED)

SMASH CUT TO:

Cale is on the ground, bloodied and winded. Jack stomps on his chest repeatedly, kicks him in the ribs. He pulls him up by the collar. Breathes heavily, laughing in his face. He's enjoying this way to much.

He punches him in the jaw, hard, lets him hit the dirt. Jack smiles, inspects his knuckles and continues laughing. He stoops down, again picks him up by the collar.

We haven't seen Cale this helpless. The lights in his eyes are almost off. Jack head butts him. He falls into unconsciousness instantly.

The farm begins to flicker, the effect slightly stronger then before.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Present day. Cale writhes in agony, still holding his foot. Pain doesn't begin to explain what he is going through. Try giving birth with battery acid running through your veins.

After a moment he resumes staring at his foot. He is in distraught. He swallows, fights tears and pulls the glass out, flicking it aside.

He sits for a bit, deep in thought. Then pulls himself up. And fumes. Insanity is beginning to surface.

CALE

FUCK!

He repeats the word a few times, punches air. More venting for the kid. Its good for him, really.

The next few moments are physically daunting, seeming to go on for much longer then what they are... almost as if we're experiencing all of this with Cale.

A series of cars drive past during these moments, every single one ignoring his cries for help. He becomes infuriated, lashing out at cars that don't pull over.

CALE

PICK ME UP! PICK ME THE FUCK UP!
WHY WON'T ANYONE HELP ME?

The scene, more of a time lapse really, concludes with Cale falling to his back, crippled with exhaustion.

(CONTINUED)

Soft wind peels from a magnolia sky. The gaseous, menacing profile of the sun still looms overhead. Cale is limp, verging on death. After a moment he manages to roll over.

His tearing up again, his voice crisp with lack of breath.

CALE

I don't want to die. I don't want
to die...

The low rumble of a cars motor approaches, but Cale hasn't the energy to chase it. Instead he lets out a pathetic moan.

CALE

Help me! Help me, please!

He writhes onto his side as he pleads for help. Sure enough the red laser drives right on by.

CALE

Fuck!

A violent surge of frustration hits him. He begins to kick and punch, bangs his head against the road. And then, as he cries, something catches his eye. A single crow perched on the side of the road, as still as night.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. FARM PROPERTY, SHED - DAY

A murder of crows squall in a shallow ravine. They squabble and peck tentatively at a bloodied corpse. Cale watches, strung by the wrists to the rafters. He is dumb with fear.

A muffled scream catches his attention. He turns to see Jack, dragging Perry into the shed by the hair. She's gagged and bound, no longer the beauty she once was. Jack throws her to the ground, begins kicking her in the ribs.

CALE

Don't fucking touch her! Get away
from her you piece of shit. You
mother fucker!

He is swinging by the wrists, trying to break his binding. It would seem easy enough to do... if his feet weren't anchored to the ground.

After Cale's impressive display of language, Jack stops kicking. He strides up to the boy, lays in a vile series of punches. He ends the attack with a right hook across face, almost knocking his jaw from its hinges.

(CONTINUED)

He then draws into his waist band, removing an old revolver. He holds the barrel under Cale's chin, re obtaining his focus before then training it on Perry, who cries in fear.

CALE

Alright, alright. I'm sorry. I'm sorry, really. Please, please... just don't hurt her.

We see Jack's brain tick over. He is momentarily silent as his finger tightens around the trigger.

CALE

No. Common, please. Don't do this. You don't want to do this.

Jack holds the gun for quite some time - you know, dramatic effect, before finally firing. Cale yells aloud, Perry weeps. But there is no noise. The gun isn't loaded. Jack smiles. Begins walking back over to Perry.

CALE

Alright man, you made your point. Please. No come back here. Leave her alone, please.

Jack gives no reply. Does not even acknowledge Cale's pleas.

CALE

Let me talk to her!

Jack stops. He slowly turns to face Cale, intrigued. Cale sobs as he recites the following:

CALE

Let me talk to her. Let me tell her everything will be okay. Please. Let me say goodbye.

Jack begins to again walk threateningly towards Cale, removing the buck knife seen earlier from his side. But, instead of the expected stabbing, he severs the weight from his ankles and the binding from his wrists.

Cale slumps to the concrete floor, a cut string puppet. Jack leans down, eye to eye. Pats his face. And leaves him be. Cale immediately scrambles to his feet, leaping towards Perry. They embrace as he rips the gag from her mouth.

CALE

Your going to get out of this okay. You just need to stay strong.

Perry weeps. As they talk he removes her binding.

PERRY

I wasn't making you take me all
that way so I could break up with
you.

Cale laughs. Well, as close as a laugh possible, considering
the circumstances.

CALE

How much do you love me?

Perry brings her thumb and forefinger together. They are
barely touching. She is shakier then before, crying.

CALE

That much?

PERRY

Thats it.

The two kiss for a moment before again breaking apart.

CALE

We're going to get out of here
okay.

They kiss again, more passionately this time. After a short
while, Perry opens her eyes, her face etched with what looks
like disgust.

The couple pull away from each other, and Perry spits a
mouthful of blood. She looks up to see Cale stricken with
pain. A bloodied knife emerges from his heart. Jack is
behind him, hilt in hand.

PERRY

NO!

With surprising ease, Jack hurls Cale's limp body from the
blade. He flies across the room, into a work bench. Tools
scatter as a trail of cold blood runs from the wound. Perry
runs.

EXT. FARM PROPERTY - DAY

She bursts from the shed and stumbles upon a trail. Gravel
crunches under her feet. Long grass whips about her ankles.
Jack is running after her. This guy is a machine.

She reaches a car laying in the sedge, a corroded shell of
its former self. She dives behind it, presses her back to
the door and sucks air.

(CONTINUED)

After a moment she cocks her head up, quickly scanning the other side of the car. There is no sign of Jack. That's a good thing right?

She turns back around, sure enough meeting Jack's cold blank face. The revolver rests in his grasp, no doubt loaded this time.

PERRY

Just do it you fucking freak.

A moment of silence. And he pulls the trigger. She dies instantly, remains propped against the car. And then, the surroundings begin to flicker and die out, our flashback sequence finishing once again.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Cale is where we left him. He is convulsing violently, blood streaming from his nose. He yells and cries in agony.

While he trembles, he manages to look down at his heart, where something remarkable happens. Fresh blood begins to sink through the shirt.

CALE

No... no...

The only comprehensible murmurs he makes. Do we understand what's happening? Well how about one more flash back, triggered this time by the blood seeping through the wound.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. FARM PROPERTY - DAY

Cale lays in a shallow grave, eyes open, dead. Perry is just beneath him. Jack stands at the foot of it, shovel in hand. He piles a fresh mound of dirt upon Cale's chest.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A mixed sequence, this time of stuff we've already seen. You know, that cliché end flash back to make the audience realise what's going on.

(CONTINUED)

The sequence in which the series of cars drive past. The sequence in which Cale throws rocks. The sequence in which Cale lashes out at the cars. All of this is nice and quick for screen time limitations of course.

A closer look at these mirrors reveals that there is no reflection of Cale - just the vast, yellow wasteland. Its almost as if... could it be?

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Present time. Close on Cale's face. He is no longer convulsing, now at a realisation.

CALE

I'm dead.

Oh wow we have a twist ending, did anyone see that coming? Cale is scared. He clambers to his feet, weeps to himself as he scans the highway. Looks like he'll be there for a while yet.

CALE

No. Perry? No. No. Perry!

We become lost in the darkness of his mouth.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Jack stands in the middle of the road his head cocked menacingly over his shoulder, watching. Unlike poor Cale, his still alive and well. What a happy ending we came to.

END CREDITS.