



JOANNE'S  
DUST DEVIL  
HANDS OFF

A SCREENPLAY

BY

RICHARD STANLEY

Keep  
2nd  
DRAFT

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## NOWHERE

Darkness first.

Then a glint of light.

A band of cold steel turning in the gloom.

Spinning. Flashing.

We push slowly back to reveal first that we are looking at the edge of a straight razor and then that the razor itself is reflected in the dark pupil of a staring eye.

The eye fills the screen, the razor swimming in its depths, turning, slashing at the darkness. We hear the distorted wail of a harmonica on the soundtrack, almost like the cry of an animal in pain.

The retina widens, pulsing.

There is a soft whoomp of igniting gasoline and suddenly the eye is filled by a wall of orange flame, wiping the razor from view.

We move forwards into the flame, back into the depths of the eye.

### **DISSOLVE TO:**

A close up of a cave painting, a closed spiral daubed in what looks like dried blood on a rock wall.

### **CUT TO:**

## **2. EXTERIOR. DAY. THE OVERHANG.**

We are in the shadows of what appears to be a jumble of volcanic rocks, looking out towards the clear sky and violent light of the desert outside.

A dark man is sitting in the shadows with us, watching the vultures outside circle slowly, riding the high thermals.

His gnarled hand sifts and pours the dust.

His name is JOE.

JOE NIEMAND.

He's a full blood bushman and according to most he's a little soft in the head.

Today, as usual, he's hard at work.

Drawing patterns in the dust.

The wind catches the dust as it slips through his fingers and we follow it out into the airless flatlands.

### **CUT TO:**

3. **EXTERIOR. DAWN. THE GREAT NAMIB.**

**JOE (VOICE OVER)**

Back in the first times, in the time of the red light, the wind, Soo-oop-wa, was a man like us until by mischance he grew wings and flew like a bird.

We are rising.

Flying.

Soaring out over the canyons where night still lingers, swooping, circling on the morning over an alien, breathless world of orange rock and trackless sand.

**JOE (VOICE OVER)**

He became a hunter and like a hawk flew to seek his prey. But having once been a man so does he still suffer the passions of a man, flying in rages sometimes and throwing himself down like a child to vent his wrath upon the earth.

A ribbon appears.

A crack across the landscape.

A river of asphalt.

We descend towards it.

**CUT TO:**

4. **EXTERIOR. DAY. THE ROAD.**

The air here is quicksilver.

A rippling curtain across the morning.

You see him first here, conjuring himself from nothing, a dancing ghost walking the white line, warping in and out of shape as if crossing over from one world to another, a solitary travelling man. A white man.

His name is HITCH.

There is a low tremor. A bass rumble like distant thunder.

HITCH hears the sound and even though he knows there is no chance of rain he scans the sky anyway. There's a military backpack riding on his shoulders and from his travel worn hat and coat and his regular, loping gait we can tell he's been walking for a long time.

Longer than he remembers now.

He checks his watch and then, bending, puts his ear to the white line, listening to the road.

There is a glimmer in the heat haze.

Something swimming into life in the far distance.

Sunlight flashing on metal.

**4. EXTERIOR. DAY. THE ROAD. CONTINUED.**

HITCH lowers his backpack, waiting.  
The car pulls closer, riding on air.  
HITCH takes a breath, stepping slowly out into the road.  
The sun glints on the windshield.  
He raises his hand.

It is an old car, a sun beat car.  
It rattles as it slows and pulls in to the soft shoulder.  
HITCH strolls after it.

The car's driver winds down her window. Her name is SAARTJIE HAARHOF. She's in her early forties. German South West African.  
Face like a hatchet. Eyes tired, initially hostile but then the look of curiosity below that and her attempts to hide the terrible longing, the loneliness that made her slow the car, the half shameful needing that HITCH is so familiar with.  
He smiles at her.  
As he bends to reach for the door handle his eyes catch the reflection of the sun for a moment in the rear view mirror.

**CUT TO:**

**5. EXTERIOR. DAY. THE OVERHANG.**

JOE clenches his hand.  
He glances back over his shoulder at the rock painting.

**CUT TO:**

**6. EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE HOUSE AT THE EDGE OF THE DESERT.**

It is evening already and they are on the verandah of her house, an old farmhouse building on a desiccated homestead.  
HITCH puts down the groceries he has carried from the boot of her car while SAARTJIE fumbles to find her keys.  
She seems distracted.  
She glances back at him.  
Sees the light dying over his shoulder.  
Sees the dust in his eyes.

**SAARTJIE**

Who are you?

HITCH smiles and raising a polaroid camera he snaps her photograph, freezing her uncertainty on film.

The key turns in the lock.

**CUT TO:**

**7.        EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE OVERHANG.**

JOE's hand touches the rock painting.  
His fingers retrace the spiral.  
The serpent of cosmic energy descending into manifestation.

**CUT TO:**

**8.        EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE DESERT.**

The wind rises now, gusting up across the dunes. It breathes life into the sheets on SAARTJIE's washing line and draws a howl from the empty milk bottles beside the kitchen door. It drives against the metal blades of the borehole's windvane, turning them, driving them faster, the gears of the windvane whimpering in protest.

**CUT TO:**

**9.        INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE BEDROOM.**

The bed rattles and on the nightstand a row of framed photographs and dusty mementoes tremble from the force.  
An unreachable husband.  
Lost children.  
The timbers of the house creak and settle around them as HITCH makes love to SAARTJIE. She has become putty in his hands.  
He takes her to the edge and holds her there.  
She becomes a little girl again.  
He smiles and kisses her gently on the forehead.  
He touches her so tenderly.  
She moans, a dry moan drawn from some place in her that was almost forgotten. Sanded in. His hands frame her face, cradle her and lift her, holding tighter now.  
The moans become a sigh of relief.  
The hands tighten.  
Twist.  
There is a sharp crack.

He lifts her, hugging her tight to himself, comforting her, riding out her death spasms.

Afterwards the pathologists will find that the cause of death was a dislocated neck, her spinal cord severed at the juncture of the atlas and axial vertebrae.

But the hunting knife is in HITCH's hand now.  
She is barely dead and already the blade is flashing as he works on her.

The blood dews his face and HITCH raises his head and howls.

**CUT TO:**

**10.        INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE CHARGE OFFICE.**

The telephone on the dusty wooden counter suddenly begins to ring.  
An old man answers.  
A tired man.  
A cop.

His name is BAREND ALBERTUS MUKUROB.  
He was bom in the Namib and plans on dying there.  
He was a soldier first and a father once but now he is just a cop.  
His friends call him BEN.

**BEN**

Bethany station. Charge office.  
Hallo?

There is no reply.

**BEN**

Hallo?

A rustle of static.  
BEN hangs up.  
A moment later the 'phone begins to ring again.  
This time he doesn't answer.  
He hears the wind whisper around the outside of the station.  
He glances around the office.  
He is alone.  
He feels uneasy without knowing why.

**CUT TO:**

**11.        EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE DESERT.**

The wind ripples across the flatlands.  
It murmurs in the marching telegraph pylons, caressing the wires, breathing static down the lines.

**CUT TO:**

**12.        INTERIOR. NIGHTO THE BEDROOM OF THE ROBINSON HOUSE.**

Six hundred kilometres south the 'phone rings on the bedside table of a small suburban home and WENDY ROBINSON stirs in her sleep beside her husband MARK, turns over and sits up, nibbing her eyes, trying to remember her dream. She lifts the receiver, worried, not knowing why the 'phone should ring so late.

12. **INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE BEDROOM OF THE ROBINSON HOUSE.**  
**CONTINUED.**

**WENDY**

Hullo. Robinson house. Hullo?  
Who is this?

No reply comes save for the static.

She lowers the receiver and slowly replaces it on the hook beside the wedding photograph.  
Her and MARK.

The white dress, the green lawn, MARK grinning like a teenager in his uniform, holding her by the arm, her eyes distant as if dazzled by the photographer's flash.

The telephone does not ring again but WENDY sits for a while anyway on the edge of the bed, not wanting to go back to sleep.

She glances at her watch.

It is almost 3am.

She closes her eyes.

**CUT TO:**

13. **INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE HAARHOF HOUSE.**

HITCH's hand sends the clock flying from the mantelpiece and it explodes on the floor amidst the falling photographs, becoming a mess of bouncing cogwheels and splintering glass.

HITCH laughs like a hyena.

Yelling.

Dancing through the house.

Nakedness streaked with blood.

Arms flailing, overturning furniture, sweeping pictures from the walls, no room spared his wrath.

He pauses, hovering, plucking from the debris the materials of his work.

The shards of the broken mirror.

The torn pages of the bible.

The springs of the clock and the scattered photographs.

The bedroom is ablaze with candles now.

SAARTJIE's body is laid out on the bed, an array of knives and razors glistening beside it.

He kneels beside the bed, positioning the bowl.

Then slowly, reverently, intimately, he begins his work.

**CUT TO:**

**14.       EXTERIOR. DAWN. THE DESERT.**

The wind murmurs to itself and dies.  
The blades of the windvane slow.  
The telegraph lines are silent.  
A red sun begins to rise over a breathless world.

**CUT TO:**

**15.       INTERIOR. DAWN. THE SHOWER.**

HITCH's eyes are closed.  
Face turned towards the showerhead.  
Blood washing off him.  
Rejoicing in the rain.

He doesn't see the sunrise.

**CUT TO:**

**16.       INTERIOR. DAWN. THE BEDROOM.**

A starling flutters into the room, perching for a while on the window sill.  
Then the alarm clock begins to ring and it takes flight.

The electric alarm sounds distorted, slightly off key, remarkable that it is still working considering the damage to its casing.

HITCH doesn't pay much attention to the alarm.  
He's dressed now and tidying up, preparing to leave.  
He lifts his pack over one shoulder and takes a last look back as he leaves the bedroom.

The blinds are still drawn but even in the half light you can see the dripping murals.  
The twisted, crimson sheets.

HITCH closes the door, letting the alarm clock ring.

**CUT TO:**

**17.       EXTERIOR. DAWN. THE VERANDA.**

HITCH places SAARTJIE's fingers safely in a yellow cooling bag and puts them on the passenger seat of the car.

He slings his pack into the back seat and then opens up the boot to fetch the spare tank of gasoline.



**17.       EXTERIOR. DAWN. THE VERANDAH. CONTINUED.**

He humps it up onto the verandah, pausing to polish the front doorknob, before disappearing back into the lounge. When he reappears he's holding an old radio under one arm. He plugs it in, placing it on the verandah table. Then he rolls a cigarette and lights it, watching the day grow brighter, sipping from a cup of coffee, the radio crackling into life. A morning service. A PREACHER's voice.

**PREACHER**

Lord, we pray to you for release from  
this drought. Send us the soft rains of  
your mercy. The Earth cries out to you.  
The cattle die in their fields. The crops  
wither in the springtime.

HITCH stubs out his cigarette and hefts the gasoline can.

**18.       INTERIOR. DAWN. THE HAARHOFF HOUSE.**

HITCH dances through the house, emptying the gas can, splashing its contents everywhere. Working his way backwards towards the front door.

**PREACHER**

Forgive us, Lord and send us the power  
to forgive. Send our leaders wisdom  
and send us peace in these troubled times.  
Send us the peace of your rain like a cooling  
hand against our brows.

When he reaches the verandah, HITCH throws away the can and lights a match, sending it fluttering back into the lounge, whooping as he hears the whoompf of igniting gasoline behind him, dancing to the car.

**PREACHER**

We will watch for evil and drive it  
from our hearts and from our lands.

The flames are already licking hungrily up the walls.

Orange tongues rising everywhere.

Ribbons of smoke laced with sparks push through the bedroom floorboards. The bloodstained sheets begin to smoulder.

Firelight flickers once more across the murals as the blood turns slowly black.

Great jagged shards of darkening colour everywhere.

Slashes like the imprint of tropical foliage, a shadow in blood of spreading leaves, wings and reaching hands.

**18. INTERIOR. DAWN. THE HAARHOFF HOUSE. CONTINUED.**

Beneath the leaves stands a figure already embraced by fire.  
The outline of a man, solarized, head ringed by auric energy, bis internal organs sketched in diagrammatically like choice cuts of meat.

**PREACHER**

Verily, my children, take heed of the  
shadow that comes in the morning,  
lift up your eyes to the evil that lurks  
therein, for even as the drought raises  
the harvest and the fire blasts the  
cornfield of the farmer so shall the evil  
of this shadow smite thee, even the innocent  
and the babe that smiles in the arms of  
his mother.

**CUT TO:**

**19. EXTERIOR. DAY. THE HAARHOFF HOUSE.**

HITCH stands beside the car, watching the flames take hold.  
When it begins to get too hot he gets in the car and drives away.

Behind him the house diminishes into a blur of black smoke and orange fare. A greasy black cloud in the morning sky, caught by the wind, we climb with it, letting ourselves be sucked away with the ashes, strewn out across the desert sky.

**PREACHER**

Look to the east, into the wasteland,  
for from thence cometh the evil. His shadow  
falleth across the ways of the righteous and  
maketh them as cold dust, the sun has gone  
out from their pastures and the shadow has  
blighted their being.

**CUT TO:**

**20. EXTERIOR. DAY. THE SUBURBS.**

We are looking down on a tract of South African suburbia from the air.  
A patchwork of identical rooftops, square green lawns and glistening blue swimming  
pools.

We are moving slowly downwards towards one of the houses.

20. **EXTERIOR. DAY. THE SUBURBS. CONTINUED.**

**PREACHER**

Therefore petition the Lord thy God. Let thy prayers rise like a fountain. Let thy eyes be filled with his memories for true repentance be thine, the evil that walks by day in the wasteland shall at eventide be consumed.

**CUT TO:**

21. **INTERIOR. DAY. THE ROBINSON HOUSE.**

A black cat is slinking across the polished tiles of the kitchen floor, it mounts the counter and we follow it, surveying the immaculately fitted room. The washing machine, the garbage disposal, a row of kitchen knives clinging to a magnetic strip, the microwave, the blender, the shopping list pinned to the freezer door.

**PREACHER**

Yeah verily by his own teeth shall he be torn, by his own snare may his back be broken and in a pit of his own digging may his bones be thrown.

We pan into a close up of WENDY's face.

Eyes flaring with anger.

An expression of contempt.

**WENDY**

STAY THE FUCK AWAY FROM ME!

MARK's hand strikes her through the face and she staggers backwards against the counter. MARK steps towards her, crying, reaching out.

**WENDY**

(Blood coming from her lip)  
Don't come any closer!

**MARK**

Wendy! It's me! Mark!

**WENDY**

Don't touch me! I hate you!

She grabs the cat from the counter and hurls it at MARK's head.

The cat shrieks and the air is full of claws and yelps and flying fur.

WENDY pushes past into the lounge, grabbing her handbag, shoving things into it. MARK appears in the doorway behind her. His shirt has come untucked from his shorts and his face is red and ugly, filled with tears. During business hours he runs a small sports shop downtown but right now he's a little distraught.

21. **INTERIOR. DAY. THE ROBINSON HOUSE. CONTINUED.**

**MARK**

What about your letters? I still have your letters. You told me you loved me while all the time....

**WENDY**

Yes! Say it! While all the time I'm fucking around. I fuck around with everybody every time you're gone, right.

**MARK**

(Raising his hand)  
Wendy, don't make me! So help me God!

**WENDY**

(Picking up her bag)  
You can't stop me.

She steps towards the door, reaching the handle and he grabs her. She struggles to get free and he throws her to the ground.

**MARK**

(Pausing, his hand raised)  
Do you know what this is for?

She grabs at him, trying to get up and he starts hitting her. She begins to scream.

**MARK**

Stop screaming! Don't scream like that!  
For fuck's sake! What will the neighbours think!

WENDY shuts up. Crying. Nursing her head.

**MARK**

You fucking bitch. You did sleep with him didn't you? You bitch. Don't you understand that I fucking love you?

He lowers his head and begins to cry.

WENDY gets the door open and slips out into the front yard.

**MARK**

Come back! Wendy! I want to talk to you!

**CUT TO:**

**22.        EXTERIOR. DAY. THE ROBINSON'S FRONT LAWN.**

WENDY makes a dash for the garage, wiping the running mascara from her eyes. A bunch of schoolkids run past her, laughing, kicking a football. They collide with MARK, slowing him down, WENDY grapples with the garage door and MARK shouts after her.

**MARK**

Wendy! Stop!

He kicks away the football and the children run after it.

**CUT TO:**

**23.        INTERIOR. DAY. THE GARAGE.**

WENDY climbs into her car, rummaging in her bag for her keys, cursing to herself. The car is a red Volkswagen with a "Save The Whales" sticker and a Phoenix decal on the back window.

The name of the car is HAMISH.

WENDY finds the key and jams it into the ignition. The engine chugs into life just as MARK ducks into the garage.

**MARK**

What's going to happen to us?

**WENDY**

It's up to you!

**MARK**

Talk to me!

**WENDY**

I have to go.

**MARK**

Wendy!

WENDY slams the car into reverse as MARK reaches out and he has to dive for cover, sprawling awkwardly onto the front lawn, foot caught in the flower bed.

**CUT TO:**

**24.        EXTERIOR. DAY. DRIVEWAY.**

**MARK**

Don't go! Please! Don't leave me!

WENDY roars away down the street in a haze of exhaust fumes.  
MARK staggers, limping awkwardly into the road behind her, shouting after her.

**MARK**

I'll follow you!

WENDY reaches out to turn on the car radio, drowning his cries with a burst of rock and roll.  
The kids run past him, kicking the ball away down the street.

**CUT TO:**

**25.        EXTERIOR. DAY. THE SUBURBS.**

We are looking down once more from the air.  
Watching WENDY's Volkswagen dwindle, a speck of red in the labyrinth of houses.

**CUT TO:**

**26.        EXTERIOR. DAY. THE GREAT NAMIB.**

We are circling.  
Following the freeway, circling the place where it touches the railway line, looking down on the small cluster of houses that marks this spot.  
Looking down on the dusty streets and sorry corrugated iron roofs of the town of Bethany.

The screech of cattle truck wheels rises towards us from the railway shunting yards where bony herds are being crammed into their berths for the long haul down to the abattoirs in Cape Town.

**27.        INTERIOR. DAY. BEN'S BEDROOM.**

The room literally trembles from the vibration of the passing trains.  
On the mantelpiece a framed photograph rattles uneasily. A Nama woman and child, somewhere in the past now, seated on a distant green lawn, a football in the child's hands.  
Her eyes distant but still beautiful.

BEN grunts in his sleep but does not wake. He has become used to the sound of the trains. He stirs and turning over he puts one arm around his dog, WATCHER, who has crept onto his bed during the night.

Then the telephone begins to ring.

WATCHER looks up, ears pricked, as BEN tries to cover his head with his pillow, moaning something unintelligible.

WATCHER takes it upon himself to get BEN up and starts to lick his face.

27. **INTERIOR. DAY. BEN'S BEDROOM. CONTINUED.**

When BEN opens his eyes the first thing he sees is the tongue of what seems to be a mongrel hybrid of Rottweiler, Rhodesian Ridgeback and possibly something even uglier coming at him.

**BEN**

Fuck off, Watcher.

He shoves the dog off the bed and sits up, rubbing his head, listening to the sound of squealing brakes coming from the shunting yard. After a while he picks up the 'phone.

**BEN**

Ya, Mukurob.

**LNT BEYMAN**

Get your breeches on, Ben. We're going to need you. We've got something.

**BEN**

Better be a big show, Kornelius.  
I haven't had much sleep.

**LNT BEYMAN**

We've got an arson here, Ben, possibly even homicide. One of the farmsteads.

**BEN**

Ah fuck. It's too early in the morning for another suicide.

**LNT BEYMAN**

I said homicide. Peace keeping troops turned it up this morning. Now get to Sonneblom, that's the Haarhoff farm, turn off's about two hundred kilometres down the Keetmanshoop road. Now, Ben.

**BEN**

Ya Kornelius. I'm on my way, huh.

BEN puts down the 'phone and sits for a while rubbing his eyes.

**CUT TO:**

28. **EXTERIOR. DAY. DOWNTOWN BETHANY.**

A curtain of dust is migrating across the main road and BEN has to slow the landrover as his visibility diminishes. At this time of day the rest of the town seems almost deserted. The dust cloud seems golden in the morning light.

**28.        EXTERIOR. DAY. DOWNTOWN BETHANY. CONTINUED.**

Through the haze of dust we are able now to make out the gaudily painted buildings, the small, fenced gardens, the low prefabricated rooftops of the schoolhouse, the empty grain silos, the rusting water tanks crouched like spiders on the flatland, the sunlight already harsh on the white spire of the church.

**CUT TO:**

**29.        INTERIOR. DAY. BEN'S LANDROVER.**

The landrover is an olive coloured four wheeled drive complete with two way radio. There's just enough room in the front seat for three at a pinch, although today, like most days, WATCHER is BEN's only passenger.

BEN squints into the murk outside the windscreen.

The dust makes his eyes water. The dust cloud parts and he turns off the radio report, lifting his CB receiver.

**BEN**

Come in Foxtrot. This is Echo Bravo.  
Mukurob speaking. Come in Foxtrot.

**OCPL BOTES**

Ben. This is Johan. Where are you man?

**BEN**

On my way. Where's Lieutenant Beyman?

**OCPL BOTES**

He's in the house. They've found a body.  
I think it's the boys, man.

**BEN**

Bullshit, Johan. There are no more boys.  
This is a free country.

BEN hangs up the receiver, driving out of town now.

Just past the roadhouse bar on the edge of the freeway he drives into another dust cloud.

**BEN**

(Coughing)

Where does this dust come from, 'ey Watcher?

He takes a battered cassette from his breast pocket and inserts it in the tape deck. Whale song, distant and serene, filling the car.

**CUT TO:**



**30.        EXTERIOR. DAY. THE HAARHOFF HOUSE.**

The driveway is a tangle of heavy vehicles and flashing lights. By the time BEN gets there the fire brigade are already packing up even though the air is still thick with drifting smoke. BEN pulls up next to the patrol car where LIEUTENANT BEYMAN is standing trying to explain something to his radio.

**LNT BEYMAN**

No, sir. I'd say it's far too early to even consider it. We should simply proceed with the investigation as a local incident until we see what evidence arises. (He glances up as BEN climbs out of the landrover). OIn fact I have my best man on the scene now. Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir. I'll get back to you.

**BEN**

Hell of a way to start the day.

**LNT BEYMAN**

Fucking nightmare. The whole place has been gutted. House is full of body parts. Looks like it's been hit by a commando unit. Ben, I think we've got ourselves a bunch of terrorists.

**BEN**

The victim was white?

**LNT BEYMAN**

Probably. Hard to tell from what's left. The house was owned by the Haarhoff family. I don't know where the kids are. Grown up and gone away. Mr Haarhoff works as a site foreman for a copper mine in Namaqualand. We're trying to reach him there.

**BEN**

And Mrs Haarhoff?

**LNT BEYMAN**

My bet is that's her in the house. She lived alone out here. Worked mornings in the "Liewe Heksie" creche in town. I had a kid in her class. So far no-one's seen her this morning.

BEN pauses to light a cigarette and then heads towards the house.

**CUT TO:**

**31. INTERIOR. DAY. THE HAARHOFF HOUSE.**

The burned out bedroom is filled with cops and flashing police cameras.

BEN moves slowly through the thinning smoke, the sound of whale song still echoing in his head.

Most of the ceiling is missing causing fierce bars of sunlight to cut through the smoke and BEN has to go carefully.

In some places the floor has fallen away making passage difficult.

He approaches the skeletal remains of a table and the charred object that rests on it.

Thankfully the drifting smoke prevents us from getting a clear view.

Just past the table CORPORAL DUTOIT is busy trying to photograph a steaming rectangular mess of twisted springs.

Only the uprights of the bedposts remain identifiable.

Some of the corpse's charred remains are still recognisable too. But not many.

BEN sees the charred murals now, still visible in some places, the blood baked black, leant a finishing touch by the fire.

He reaches out, touching the outline of the man that has been scorched into the plaster, a shadow of unease crossing his face.

**CUT TO:**

**32. EXTERIOR. DAY. THE TELEPHONE BOOTH.**

WENDY stands in a 'phone booth at the edge of a trailer park, her Volkswagen parked nearby. Her eyes are closed again, her head nodding impatiently as the 'phone rings on the other end. Then someone answers.

**WENDY**

Hullo, Chas?

**ANSWERING MACHINE**

This is the Jenkins house. Chas, Jenny and Justina are away until Tuesday. Please leave your name and number after the tone. Thank you.

WENDY listens to the recording for a while without responding.

She hovers in the booth as if not sure what to do next, her eyes a little lost.

After a while she walks over to the car and eases herself back into the driving seat. She lights a cigarette, then opening the glove compartment she unfolds a tattered road map. Her finger traces the line of the N7 that runs all the way up to the Orange river and beyond that the B1 that plunges onwards across the desert to the sea.

A day's drive.

**32.        EXTERIOR. DAY. THE TELEPHONE BOOTH. CONTINUED.**

She folds the map, flicking the butt of the cigarette from the car window. She reaches back into the glove compartment, exchanging the map for a pair of dark glasses. She smiles at her reflection in the rear view mirror, taking note of how much better she looks now that her black eye is hidden from view.

She twists the mirror back into its correct position and turns the key in the ignition.

**CUT TO:**

**33.        EXTERIOR. DAY. THE GREAT NAMIB.**

SAARTJIE HAARHOFF's car lying upside down at the bottom of a gulley, a Country and Western ballad still playing on its radio, three local cops in light khaki summer uniforms scrambling down the slope towards it.

BEN is still standing up on the ridge next to his landrover, WATCHER waiting obediently beside him. He checks the car's license plate through his binoculars, then scans up and down the gully.

Nothing.

A river of shale and dry scrub.

**CPL BOTES**

(Calling up from the gulley)

Should I turn the radio off?

BEN nods and BOTES leans into the car through an open side window.

Silence falls abruptly over the scene.

**BEN**

How much battery life would that thing have if it was left playing?

**CPL BOTES**

Don't know for sure. I guess about twelve hours. Shall I have it checked?

BEN nods curtly, eyes scanning the horizon.

Still nothing.

He props a cigarette in his mouth, cradling his hands for a moment to get a light and looking down sees the butt of another cigarette lying at his feet.

He picks it up, holding it delicately, noticing that it has been rolled by hand.

He crushes the end of the butt between his fingertips.

The tobacco is not yet brittle.

He slips the butt into a polythene bag and files it in his breast pocket, glancing up, finding a faint trail of boot prints.

The prints lead over the crest into the open desert.

**33.        EXTERIOR. DAY. THE GREAT NAMIB. CONTINUED.**

This morning the sun would have been at the killer's back but it is already afternoon and the glare is angled directly into BEN's eyes.

A gust of wind comes up, lifting a fine curtain of dust around him and the prints begin to fade.

WATCHER begins to bark as the dunescape beyond the ridge suddenly comes to life. Ghosts of sand rising, running everywhere, dancing across the flatlands, mimicking life.

**CUT TO:**

**34.        EXTERIOR. DAY. THE RAILWAY LINE.**

The wind picks up the footprints, carries the dust across the dune sea and hurls it against the side of a troop train, pelting against the boxcar where HITCH is sitting sharing some of his good rolling tobacco with a couple of soldiers.

**SOLDIER 1**

The things I've seen, man! The things  
I've seen you wouldn't believe.

(He takes a drag)

You been in the war, man?

HITCH doesn't reply.

His eyes are distant, focused on the flatlands streaking past the boxcar.

**HITCH**

How far's this train going?

**SOLDIER 1**

All the way to the sea, man.

**SOLDIER 2**

White sand... blue water... all those chicks...

**HITCH**

What's the next stop?

**SOLDIER 1**

Bethany.

**HITCH**

Anyone ever get off there?

**SOLDIER 1**

No. Train tanks up for water.

No-one gets off.

**34. EXTERIOR. DAY. THE RAILWAY LINE. CONTINUED.**

**SOLDIER 2**

People get on in Bethany, man,  
but no-one gets off.  
(He laughs)

HITCH turns his attention to the flatlands streaking past outside the boxcar.

**HITCH**

Sounds good.

His eyes are on the distance now.  
The wind.  
The fleeting blue horizon.

**CUT TO:**

**35. EXTERIOR. DAY. THE FREEWAY.**

WENDY slows the car as the sandstorm gusts across the freeway, buffeting the side of the Volkswagen.

For the first time she feels the day's events beginning to take their toll.

She feels the need to stop and collect her thoughts. Maybe coming to the desert wasn't such a good idea. She glances up to see a passing roadsign marking out the turn-off to a small town. Some place called Bethany.

The signpost is riddled with bullet holes.

**CUT TO:**

**36. EXTERIOR. DAY. BETHANY RAILWAY STATION.**

The wind carries the sound of the train whistle into the station before the train arrives so that by the time it pulls into the platform the soldiers and cattle waiting for it are already impatient to board.

A black kid wearing a patched conductor's uniform is sitting on a chair propped against the ticket office wall, his shadow looking like it's been painted into place. His name is AARON. He sees HITCH pass and greets him.

**AARON**

'Middag, meneer...

**HITCH**

(Touching his hat)  
'Middag.

**36. EXTERIOR. DAY. BETHANY RAILWAY STATION. CONTINUED.**

HITCH steps off the platform and stares down the road towards the town

After going a few hundred yards he glances back to make sure AARON isn't watching him, then, satisfied, he hurries on.

**CUT TO:**

**37. EXTERIOR. DAY. THE ROADHOUSE.**

There's an old country dance number playing on the juke box when WENDY pulls into the roadhouse's parking lot.

She hears it first as she gets out of the car, rubbing her eyes after the long drive. The only other vehicles in the lot are a white camper, an olive station wagon with caravan in tow and an articulated cattletruck whose smell causes her to wrinkle her nose as she walks by.

The cattle are lowing miserably in the heat.

**CUT TO:**

**38. INTERIOR. DAY. THE ROADHOUSE.**

HENDRYK WAPENAAR, the proprietor, is behind the counter fixing a beer when WENDY drifts in.

**CUSTOMER**

(To HENDRYK)

...so I says fuck it we're going to see the canyons this year. Kids get an education and it's a damn sight cheaper than the Wild Coast.

HENDRYK isn't really listening.  
His attention is on WENDY.

**HENDRYK**

Can I help?

**WENDY**

Do you have a washroom?

**HENDRYK**

On the left. Second door. It's no great shakes or anything.

**WENDY**

(Nodding)

Thanks.

**38.        INTERIOR. DAY. THE ROADHOUSE. CONTINUED.**

HENDRYK watches her go.  
She's beautiful, not through with being young yet.  
He wonders if she has children.

**CUSTOMER**

(Playing with his new Zippo lighter)  
So tell me, do you guys still pick up  
diamonds around here?

**CUT TO:**

**39.        INTERIOR. DAY. THE WASHROOM.**

WENDY's black eye is looking better and the swelling in her lip has gone down.  
She splashes water on her face, trying to wash away the dust.  
A truck engine starts up outside and the mirror trembles.

**CUT TO:**

**40.        INTERIOR. DAY. THE ROADHOUSE.**

WENDY emerges from the washroom and crosses to the payphone, lifting the receiver to make a call.

**WENDY**

Hullo, operator? I'd like to make a  
collect call.

HITCH is crouched over the pinball machine behind her. He puts in his change, glances up at her before beginning his game.

**CUT TO:**

**41.        INTERIOR. DAY. THE ROBINSON HOUSE.**

The telephone answering machine whirrs into life amidst the wreckage of the devastated lounge.

**OPERATOR'S VOICE**

Hullo, will you accept the charges on  
a call from Bethany, South West Africa?

41. **INTERIOR. DAY. THE ROBINSON HOUSE. CONTINUED.**

**WENDY'S VOICE**

Wendy and Mark are out right now.  
If you want to leave a message  
please speak after the tone.

We track through the wreckage, past an empty bottle up onto MARK who is sprawled unconscious on the sofa.

The answering machine bleeps and starts to record.

**OPERATOR'S VOICE**

Hullo? Bethany operator. Hullo?  
I'm sorry, there's no-one answering.

**WENDY'S VOICE**

Thank you. It's alright.

The line goes dead.

**CUT TO:**

42. **INTERIOR. DAY. THE ROADHOUSE.**

WENDY hangs up, in a way relieved that there was no response.

In the background the pinball machine rattles noisily.

She glances up to see that HITCH has disappeared and a cat has taken his place, crouching on the glass of the pinball machine, trying to catch the ball.

WENDY lifts her handbag and walks over to the counter.

**WENDY**

Can I have a coffee?

**HENDRYK**

Coming up.

He starts to fix the coffee but can't resist satisfying his curiosity.

**HENDRYK**

Are you a tourist? I was wondering if  
you were from abroad.

WENDY isn't paying him attention though.

She's busy leafing through the postcards on the rack next to the counter.



**42. INTERIOR. DAY. THE ROADHOUSE. CONTINUED.**

WENDY selects a card and places it on the counter.

**WENDY**

How much for this one?

**HENDRYK**

Eighty-nine cents.

He bends over to take a look at the card.

**CUT TO:**

**43. DAY. INTERIOR. THE ROADHOUSE A LITTLE LATER.**

Two bored looking goldfish, turning underwater. We track off the aquarium onto WENDY sitting sipping her coffee at a table next to the roadhouse window. She contemplates the card for a moment and then begins to write.

We hear her voice on the soundtrack.

**WENDY'S VOICE.**

Dear Mark... I'm going away for a while  
to get my head straight.

HITCH walks past outside the window.

He's talking to a middle-aged woman as if trying to get a lift.

WENDY glances up at him for a moment before continuing writing.

**WENDY'S VOICE.**

I think it is best for both of us if we  
don't see each other again until we have  
thought this over.

Something distracts her and she glances up once more, this time to see the white camper pulling out of the parking lot.

HITCH seems to have disappeared.

WENDY sits for a while, finding it hard to think, the sight of the hitchhiker somehow making her feel lonelier.

**CUT TO:**

**44. EXTERIOR. DAY. THE PARKING LOT.**

WENDY walks back out to the car and clambers in.  
She sticks the unmailed postcard on the dashboard.

**WENDY'S VOICE.**

You are a good man and I do not want  
to hurt you anymore nor do I want to  
see you hurting yourself.

She turns the key in the ignition and drives away, heading back towards the freeway and the open desert.

**CUT TO:**

**45. EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE GREAT NAMIB.**

Just outside town WENDY pulls the Volkswagen into a lay-by at the top of a hill and gets out to admire the view.

The wind is still now and the whole world is filled with the glow of sunset.

She sits on the bonnet and finishes writing the postcard, watching the sun go down.

**WENDY'S VOICE.**

I just can't love you anymore or be the  
wife you want but it's not your fault.  
It's just the way things are. I hope you  
understand and don't blame yourself or  
do anything silly. Be kind to yourself - Wendy.

She pauses, thinking, and sees the rim of the sun touch the horizon, sees the vastness of sky and sand turned to fire.

She bends once more to add a final line.

**WENDY'S VOICE.**

PS - Sorry about the cat.

**CUT TO:**

**46. EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE OVERHANG.**

JOE sits on a rock, watching the light die.

His hands are busying themselves with peeling a large root.

His eyes are very serious.

The knife blade flashes in his hands, catching the last gleam of the sunset.

**CUT TO:**

**47.        INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE HAARHOFF HOUSE.**

The beam of JOE's flashlight lances through the dark, flickering across the murals.  
The abstract shapes are even more frightening in the half light.  
The bushman holds the smoking root aloft in one hand, leaving a streamer of acrid smoke in the air.  
There is something moving in the darkness here.  
Something alive.

JOE hears it and turns his torch beam, searching.  
There.  
Another movement.  
Some kind of bird sitting in a gap in the eaves.  
The flashlight beam catches the inscrutable yellow eyes of a hunting owl, glowing now like pools of molten gold.

JOE raises his hand to show that he has come in peace and for the first time we notice that he is missing the last joint of his little finger.  
He smiles.

**CUT TO:**

**48.        EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE ROAD.**

Twisters of sand coil across the freeway. In WENDY's headlights they seem alive and she swerves the car to avoid them.  
She is on the edge of exhaustion, already hallucinating, coming down with a bad case of highway hypnosis.

She rubs her eyes, trying to stay awake.  
Then, just around the next bend, she sees something moving in the road.  
This time it can't just be the sand.

She's sure she sees a man standing on the white line, coat fluttering all around him, but his eyes are like headlights now and his head seems long and snouted like a dog. She yells, waking up from the trance as the car skids off the road.  
She hits the brakes and the Volkswagen screeches to a halt against a barbed wire fence on the edge of an irrigation ditch.

She falls forward against the wheel and begins to cry, the dust settling around her.

**CUT TO:**

**49.        INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE HAARHOFF HOUSE.**

JOE dancing, weaving a web of smoke with the burning root.

**CUT TO:**

**50. INTERIOR. NIGHT. BEN'S BEDROOM.**

BEN moans aloud, turning in his sleep, the sheets twisted around him, hot and sticky with sweat, the room trembling with the vibration of shunting trains.

**CUT TO:**

**51. EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MARTIALING YARDS.**

Sparks fly in the night, dancing beneath the wheels of the cattletrucks.

**CUT TO:**

**52. EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE DESERT.**

We see the figure of a man outlined by drifting sparks that flow in tidal, volcanic bursts across a pitch black sky.

A dark man, drawing closer now, worn down bootheels tapping against the tarmac, something glistening in his hand.

**CUT TO:**

**53. INTERIOR. NIGHT. BEN'S BEDROOM.**

BEN struggling in his sleep, trying to wake.

**CUT TO:**

**54. EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE DESERT.**

The dark man holds out the knife, its blade glinting, flashing, outlined by the seething sparks. Somewhere, from far off, comes the screech of train wheels.

**CUT TO:**

**55. INTERIOR. NIGHT. BEN'S BEDROOM.**

BEN turns, relaxing now, sighing as the dream grips him.  
He whispers something in his sleep.  
A name.

**BEN**  
Katie...

The photograph of the Nama woman and her child trembles on the mantelpiece.

**56. EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE HAARHOFF HOUSE.**

The night wind stirs in the washing line.  
The sheets billowing, taking on the semblance of life.  
The sound of the wind is like a whisper, a promise in the dark.  
A lovers sigh.

**CUT TO:**

**57. EXTERIOR. DAWN. THE DESERT.**

Night ebbs slowly away, taking its dreams with it, the first light of day falling slowly through the cracked glass of the Volkswagen's passenger window, finding WENDY asleep, awkwardly draped across the front seats.

She wakes now, stretching herself, feeling the stiffness in her legs.  
She unlocks the door and clammers from the car, not a little surprised by the barren landscape she emerges into.  
She walks down the embankment into the wasteland, savouring the clear light, the crisp early morning air.  
She's looking for a place to piss but there's no cover

In the end she gives up and just squats in the open, feeling suddenly very vulnerable crouching in this alien land with her knickers around her ankles.

There is a distant rumble. Like thunder but very far away.

She stands hurriedly, straightening her clothing and for the first time sees the Camper parked nearby, half hidden behind a thorn bush at the side of the road.  
The vehicle seems familiar to her and then she remembers it from the roadhouse and strolls over to it, hoping to get some help in getting HAMISH back on the road. The vehicle seems very quiet.  
She takes a step closer, a little nervous now.

**57.        EXTERIOR. DAWN. THE DESERT. CONTINUED.**

**WENDY**

Hullo? Is there anyone there?  
Is anyone awake?

She tries to peep through the camper's window but its curtains are drawn.  
Gathering her courage she knocks on the camper's door.  
Again there is no reply.

She puts her hand on the door handle and is about to open it when there is a sudden movement behind her.

A FARMHAND has appeared from nowhere and is trying to tell her something in an incomprehensible local dialect.

**WENDY**

God... You frightened me... is there anyone  
else awake? I need help... my car...

The FARMHAND responds once more in his own language, his tone insistent.

**WENDY**

No.... I'm sorry.... I don't understand you....

**CUT TO:**

**58.        INTERIOR. DAY. THE CAMPER.**

We see WENDY through one of the camper's windows as she starts to back away. A fly crawls on the glass, droning loudly.

**CUT TO:**

**59.        EXTERIOR. DAY. THE DESERT.**

She starts back towards the Volkswagen, the FARMHAND following her. When she reaches the car she glances back at him.

**WENDY**

Will you help me?

She motions as if pushing the car.

**WENDY**

You have to push so I can get back  
on the road. Do you understand?

**59.        EXTERIOR. DAY. THE DESERT. CONTINUED.**

He stares at her blankly.

She shrugs and clambers into the car.

When she turns the key in the ignition the engine chugs feebly, turns over and dies again.

She repeats the procedure and the car suddenly begins to move, starting with a lurch up the soft shoulder.

She glances back and sees that the FARMHAND has decided to push her after all. She gives him a thumbs-up but she's not sure if he sees it or understands it.

The car hits the freeway and the engine purrs into life.

The FARMHAND starts to stroll up to her window but before he gets there she flattens her foot on the accelerator and skids away.

The FARMHAND watches her go, then bends to touch the black streak of rubber she's left behind on the tarmac.

He shakes his head.

**CUT TO:**

**60.        INTERIOR. DAY. THE VOLKSWAGEN.**

WENDY slows down a little, easing into the road once more. She feels safer now but the sense of apprehension that has grown inside her still refuses to go away. She tries not to think about it, knowing it is a thread attached to a greater, blacker fear that she can't deal with at the moment. She feels more alone now than at any time since leaving MARK.

A shape appears in the distance distracting her from her thoughts.

A figure standing on the side of the road up ahead.

A white man wearing a grubby coat and hat.

She recognises him as the hitchhiker from the roadhouse the day before. He raises his hand and she slows the car, catching a glimpse of his smile as she coasts past him.

He bends to shoulder his pack and then hurries over, holding his hat on as if frightened it might blow away. WENDY winds down her window so she can get a good look at him, hoping he's not a serviceman.

**WENDY**

Where are you heading for?

**HITCH**

(Grinning)

Nowhere.

**WENDY**

Just came from there. Anyplace  
else I'm good for. Climb aboard.

HITCH bops around the front of the car and climbs into the passenger seat, heaving his pack into the back of the car.

**HITCH**

Don't know how to thank you. My boots were taking a beating out there.

**WENDY**

I saw you at the roadhouse yesterday. Figured we were on the same road and I could see you needed a ride.

**HITCH**

If only everyone thought that way. It's unreal. You only get but one car every couple of hours and usually "vroom" they just breeze by. No one cares.  
(He looks about himself at the Volkswagen)  
You've got a good car, ma'm. I like it.

**WENDY**

The name's Wendy.

**HITCH**

Pleased to meet you, ma'm.

**WENDY**

Are you a serviceman or something?

**HITCH**

I'm a tourist.

**WENDY**

Are you from the States? You've got a strange accent.

**HITCH**

I travel a lot. Grew up on the road. Only place I feel at home.

**WENDY**

Where was it you were heading to?

**HITCH**

I didn't say. I don't know. Never been here before. Thought I'd see the desert though. It's the oldest desert on Earth, the Namib, you know that?

**WENDY**

No. No, I didn't.



**HITCH**

The Sahara, the Gobi, Sinai, Atacama, all that, they all used to be rainforest one time but this place.... this has always been desert.... like God cursed it or something.

**WENDY**

That's neat. How'd you know that?

**HITCH**

They found fossils. I read it in a book.

**WENDY**

Just the way you said it.... I don't know.  
(She shrugs)  
Don't listen to me. I'm weird.  
Just yell when you want to get out.

**HITCH**

Why? How far are you going?

**WENDY**

Straight through. Ali the way to the sea.

**HITCH**

You running from something?

**WENDY**

What do you mean?

**HITCH**

Just looked like you were running from something is all. Like the cops were after you and you'd committed a murder or something.

**WENDY**

(Laughing)  
No. I wish.

**HITCH**

You want to talk about it?

**WENDY**

Not yet.

**HITCH**

It's okay. We've got nothing but time.

**60.        INTERIOR. DAY. THE VOLKSWAGEN. CONTINUED.**

There's something reassuring in his voice.

WENDY glances at him but the sun is on his side of the car now and the light dazzles her. She looks away, catching only a fleeting impression of his eyes as he raises a polaroid camera and snaps her picture.

**CUT TO:**

**61.        EXTERIOR. DAY. THE ROADSIDE.**

CORPORAL BOTES and DUTOIT pull open the back door of the camper, then reel backwards as a blast of flies and hot air greets them carrying with it the warm, slightly sweet smell of drying blood and gastric juices.

BOTES turns his back, staggering visibly, his hands clutching at his stomach. Beside him the FARMHAND who led them there turns away, not wanting to watch. DUTOIT takes a deep breath, hearing the faint sound of a digital watch chirruping somewhere inside the camper, drawing his eyes back slowly towards the woman's carcass.

Behind him he hears BOTES retch violently.

**DUTOIT**

Johan, go get the pathologist on the radio.  
Tell him we've got something here, man.

There is a curious expression in DUTOIT's blue eyes as he leans slowly forward into the camper and picks up the blood streaked wristwatch.

**CUT TO:**

**62.        INTERIOR. DAY. THE MORTUARY.**

The main doors open with a slam and DR LEIDZINGER, the pathologist, breezes down the mortuary aisle, his clipboard tucked under one arm, BEN following him at a measured pace, glancing at the rows of corpses on either side of him, trying to ignore the sound of the bone saw drifting in from the laboratory next door.

61. INTERIOR. DAY. THE MORTUARY. CONTINUED.

**LEIDZINGER**

Let's see now. Bullet wound. Bullet wound. Burning. Ah, here's our girl. We've got just about everything on her. Massive tissue loss, severing of limbs and major arteries, evisceration, partial cremation, sexual mutilation, possibly even cannibalism. You'll appreciate we've had difficulty pinpointing the exact time and cause of death. We found a clock wedged up her snatch for God's sake.

**BEN**

Was it still working?

**LEIDZINGER**

No. He had to take it apart to fit it all in.

LEIDZINGER sighs and BEN steps forward to get a better view of the catafalque. The body parts seem curiously inhuman, the harsh light lending their disarray a sense of horrid surrealism.

LEIDZINGER glances at BEN, the light glinting for a moment in his bifocals.

**LEIDZINGER**

He must have used a whole bunch of instruments to do this... the wounds suggest a carving knife and a razor at least.... then of course there's the mirror shards.... the bastard even used his teeth, though fortunately for her, most of the wounding only occurred after death.

**BEN**

What's your theory on actual cause?  
Off the record.

**LEIDZINGER**

She wasn't tied down.... it's hard to tell but there don't seem to be any ligature marks on the limbs.... I'd say she may have been strangled first.... her neck's dislocated and the spinal cord's severed between the Atlas and Axial vertebrae.... that almost certainly happened before he took her head off.... we know that much. God knows. Maybe she let him do it to her.

**BEN**

Did he fuck her?

**LEIDZINGER**

If he did he didn't come. No sperm traces.

62. **INTERIOR. DAY. THE MORTUARY. CONTINUED.**

**BEN**

He could have been wearing a  
contraceptive.

**LEIDZINGER**

Safe sex? It's a possibility.  
I don't know if there's any way  
I can check that.

**BEN**

You got any hairs, saliva,  
anything at all?

**LEIDZINGER**

Fire took care of all that. We'll probably  
be able to get you a cast of the suspect's  
dental pattern but that's about all we're  
going to be able to glean from the corpus  
delicti itself. The really interesting stuff's  
in the scrapings we took from the mural but  
we're going to need specialist help if we're  
going to get any further with them.

LEIDZINGER pulls off his rubber gloves so that he can spread a series of murky looking  
photographs on the autopsy bench.

BEN bends over them, realising that he is looking at enlarged detail shots of the mural.

**BEN**

Go ahead. What am I meant to be  
looking at?

**LEIDZINGER**

As you might expect, the majority of  
the stuff's painted with blood but he's  
used other materials to bring out some  
of those colours. We found traces of iron  
oxide and haematite. He achieved the  
whites and the lighter shades by mixing  
the victim's fat with kaolin and seagull guano.

**BEN**

The man's an artist alright.

**LEIDZINGER**

It's just a shame he doesn't enjoy finger painting.  
He didn't leave us a single print.

63. INTERIOR. DAY. THE MORTUARY. CONTINUED.

**BEN**

Can't we trace the pigments? Place them geographically so we can get an idea of his movements? The birdshit for instance... he must have gone to the beach.

**LEIDZINGER**

We can try but you might have a better chance trying to chase it's cultural roots. This stuff's all closely related to witchcraft.

**BEN**

Are you serious?

**LEIDZINGER**

Perfectly. Human body parts all have their uses in ritual magic. A sangoma could tell from the missing pieces what our man was after. That's obviously why he chose the new moon.

**BEN**

Do you believe in magic, Dr Leidzinger?

**LEIDZINGER**

It depends how you mean it. Certainly I believe in witchcraft.

**BEN**

Yeah, but do you believe in magic?

**LEIDZINGER**

You mean magic as in conjuring demons shapeshifting, raising the dead, all that? I don't think such things are possible, sergeant. Do you?

**BEN**

This is the 20th century, doctor. I don't believe in magic either and if you had I doubt I would have believed anything else you said.

Suddenly the swing door behind them slams open startling both of them. A young morgue ATTENDANT pokes his head into the room.

**61.        INTERIOR. DAY. THE MORTUARY. CONTINUED.**

**ATTENDANT**

Sergeant Mukurob? Bethany station's  
on the 'phone. They say it's urgent.

**BEN**

(To LEIDZINGER)  
Can you hold on a minute?

**LEIDZINGER**

No hurry.  
She's not going anywhere.

BEN offers LEIDZINGER a grim smile, then follows the attendant out through the swing doors.

LEIDZINGER stands in silence for a moment.  
Then he glances around at the row of corpses.

**LEIDZINGER**

How about you guys? Do any of you guys  
believe in magic? Come on! Clap your  
hands if you do!

He stands for a moment, listening to the silence, then the sound of the bonesaw starts up again in the next room.

**LEIDZINGER**

Bunch of cynics!

He strolls away down the aisle, shaking his head.  
Just before he reaches the door he does a curious little tap dance, laughing to himself.  
He exits and the door swings shut with a slam behind him.

**63.        EXTERIOR. DAY. THE GREAT NAMIB.**

WENDY and HITCH are strolling across a very flat landscape.

HITCH is swigging from a bottle, trying to provide a sympathetic ear to WENDY who is obviously in the middle of explaining something.

**HITCH**

Let me get this straight.  
You're saying all this is because  
he had dark hair and brown eyes?

**WENDY**

It wasn't just that. The magic was gone. There was nothing left between us. Every time he touched me I felt scared. I kept pulling back and Mark couldn't understand. He always thought it was him. That's the kind of ego he had. He thought I must have been in love with someone else... he kept asking all those questions and of course when he found out about Chas it flipped him right out.

**HITCH**

Chas had blue eyes, right?  
Blonde hair and blue eyes.

**WENDY**

Yeah. Just like you. Am I fucked up or what?

**HITCH**

Yeah. You're fucked up but then so's everyone else. Have a drink.

**WENDY**

Now I feel like a tramp.

**HITCH**

I'm a hitchhiker not a marriage counsellor.  
Go on. Have a drink.

**WENDY**

(Shaking her head)  
I've gotta drive.

**HITCH**

Then have an apple. Keeps you healthy.

HITCH makes a gesture with his hand, seemingly plucking an apple from thin air. He offers it to WENDY.

**WENDY**

How did you do that?

**HITCH**

Magic.  
(He laughs).  
It's nothing. Sleight of hand.  
Goes down a treat in the third world.  
I do card tricks too.

63. **EXTERIOR. DAY. THE GREAT NAMIB. CONTINUED.**

**WENDY**

Show me something.

**HITCH**

Later. We've got time.

WENDY takes the apple, biting into it a little apprehensively at first.

**WENDY**

It's good. Thanks.

**HITCH**

So you came out here to try and figure things out?

**WENDY**

Didn't people always go to deserts when they wanted to get in touch with themselves or whatever it is?

**HITCH**

It's true. Moses saw a pillar of fire. A pillar of fire and a pillar of dust. You sure you don't want a drink?

**WENDY**

I guess it can't hurt. Road's so straight you'd have to be crazy to fall off it.

**HITCH**

You're not crazy.

**WENDY**

Who was it who saw the burning bush?

**HITCH**

That was Moses too. He had dark hair and brown eyes.

**WENDY**

(Sighing)

It wasn't just the eyes. I told you. He hugged too tight. Always. Like he was frightened or something. Like he didn't have enough love when he was a child. I felt sorry for him but in the end he sucked all the love right out of me. In the end I started to... started to...

**HITCH**

You started to think he was the same as the rapist. Same hair. Same eyes.



**64.      EXTERIOR. DAY. THE GREAT NAMIB. CONTINUED.**

**WENDY**

How did you know?

**HITCH**

I can see the mark.  
You must have been very young for it  
to leave a mark like that.

**WENDY**

Thirteen... I was just a kid...

**HITCH**

Was it a friend?  
Someone you knew?

**WENDY**

Yeah. A friend.

**HITCH**

It's always worse when it's someone you know.

**WENDY**

I'm not hungry anymore.

WENDY tosses the apple away and turns back towards the car.

HITCH stands in silence for a moment, then he reaches into his breast pocket to produce a battered mouth organ, striking up a tune which is at first absurdly mournful and then increasingly lively and mischievous as he begins to follow WENDY back towards the road, the half empty bottle riding in his coat pocket.

**64.      INTERIOR. DAY. THE ROBINSON HOUSE.**

MARK sits crosslegged in the middle of the lounge consulting a map, wreckage strewn out all around him.

His shirt is unbuttoned and we can see the small handgun he keeps tucked in his belt.

The answering machine resting beside him is busy replaying its message once more.

**OPERATOR'S VOICE**

Hullo? Bethany operator. Hullo?  
I'm sorry, there's no-one answering.

**64.        INTERIOR. DAY. THE ROBINSON HOUSE. CONTINUED.**

**WENDY'S VOICE**

Thank you. It's alright.

Then there is only the sound of the distant pinball machine and the click of the 'phone being put down followed by a purr of white noise.

MARK automatically reaches out to rewind the tape, his eyes fixed at a name on the map. A town called Bethany.

**CUT TO:**

**65.        EXTERIOR. DAY. BETHANY STATION.**

The day is beginning to cool now and signs of life are returning to the sunbaked platforms. A goods train idles beside the water tower, filling its tanks for the long journey to the coast. The sounds are so familiar that AARON no longer notices them.

He leans back in his chair, his mind riding a boxcar a thousand miles away, eyes watching the rails through halfclosed lids.

A shadow slants across the platform and then the shape of a man steps between him and the sun. He tilts up the peak of his cap, squinting into the light.

**BEN**

I'm looking for Joe.

**AARON**

I don't know. What Joe? What do you mean?

**BEN**

Joe Niemand. Bushman Joe.  
Brown man, yay big.  
(he indicates with his hand).

**AARON**

Jammer, konstabel. I know who you mean now but he hasn't been around here... haven't seen him around since spring ... he's probably out on the desert ... Got some old doedie down in Namaqualand I bet...

65. **EXTERIOR. DAY. BETHANY STATION. CONTINUED.**

**BEN**

Take me to him, Aaron, else I'll just go through your pockets and bust your ass for everything you got. You want that?

**AARON**

(Shaking his head)  
Tssuuu. Station master wouldn't like it.

**BEN**

(Nodding towards the station entrance)  
The car's out front.

**CUT TO:**

66. **EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE DRIVE-IN.**

The Star of Bethany drive-in cinema has been closed now for a number of years. The screen is sun warped, sagging from neglect, boards peeling away to reveal patches of evening sky. Beneath the screen in the sea of asphalt waves and rusting speaker poles stands the figure of a man in a ragged coat, a stick in his hand, his eyes turned towards the sunset. JOE NIEMAND watching the sun go down.

A dog barks in the distance and JOE turns to see WATCHER loping towards him across the top of the mound, AARON and BEN MUKUROB following ala distance.

**AARON**

I had to bring him Joe... I'm sorry...  
I didn't have no options.

**JOE**

No harm done ... The sergeant had to come.

**BEN**

Your remember me then, Joe?

**JOE**

You were the one who never feared me.  
It's a shame you did not come sooner.

**BEN**

I've been busy.

**JOE**

You've missed some good shows.  
There's a big show out here every night.

**BEN**

I need your help, Joe. There's very little time.

**JOE**

You want to know about your future?  
I can't tell you about that.

**BEN**

No. I can guess the future.

**JOE**

Then it's the end of things you'll want to  
hear about. I've been talking to him, Ben,  
and he said the end was coming up real soon.  
He's going to end the world by fire this time.  
The Earths gonna dry up and crack.

**BEN**

I haven't come about fairytales, Joe.  
I've come for facts.  
(He hands Joe a sheath of photographs)  
We found her yesterday. The other one  
was found this morning. We're still trying  
to trace the vehicle.

**JOE**

(Nodding his head)  
Tsuui! I thought as much.  
This is real bad stuff, Togati.  
Death magic.

**BEN**

How much do you know about it?  
Can you tell by the signs who did this?

**JOE**

You can always tell a magician by his work.  
A heart for bravery and strength, a liver for  
health, money and healing, eyes for seeing through.

**BEN**

Tell me about the fingers. What do the  
missing fingers mean?

**JOE**

Fingers are power. Fingers are always power. Soul  
power catches in knots, in knuckles, in such. If you  
want to win a war you better get yourself a whole  
fist full of knuckles so you can make drum magic,  
conjure fire in the blood... know what I mean?  
So many things you can do with fingers.

**BEN**

What happened to your fingers, Joe?  
Did someone steal your power too?

**JOE**

(Holding up maimed hand)  
A good sharp rock did this.  
Once I was blind with pride but now it will be  
easier for me to get to Too'gah when it's my time.  
If I hadn't made obeysance Kaang would've been  
mad at me and I would've had to travel to Too'gah  
on my head and they would've given me only flies  
for food. It's a long way to Too'gah and my head  
would have got sore.

**BEN**

Not many people go to Too'gah at all these  
days, Joe. If you know the man who did this  
you must tell me.

**JOE**

This is not the work of my people. I'll have  
to ask around. Can I keep these?

**BEN**

If you think it'll help but be careful who you  
show them to or it'll cause trouble.

**JOE**

They will be safe with me.

**BEN**

Then you know where to find me.

**JOE**

You tread carefully now. There isn't  
anyone who's safe from this kind of stuff  
Not even a big man like you. That's why it's  
togati. You've always got to keep your eyes  
open when you deal with magic.

**BEN**

Yeah, I know. There's magic all around us, right?

**JOE**

(Smiling)  
You bet. All around us Ben.

**66.           EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE DRIVE-IN. CONTINUED.**

BEN turns away, walking back towards his car, WATCHER following at his heels. He glances back only once he's reached the gap in the drive-in fence and then he sees that JOE is still watching him, AARON hunched beside him, whispering something in his ear.

**CUT TO:**

**67.           EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE ROAD.**

The sky is like burnished bronze, just beginning to glow red at its rim. The sun is already dipping out of sight but WENDY tries to hold it on the skyline, driving relentlessly west as if to escape the night.

HITCH slouches in the passenger seat, the brim of his hat dipping a little as his head slumps slowly forward.

**RADIO**

...near the South African border after the discovery of two bodies and reports of arson from Bethany district in Namaland.

WENDY nudges HITCH and his head lolls slackly.

**WENDY**

(Muttering to herself)  
Fine company you are. How'd you like it if I fell asleep as well?

**RADIO**

The police named one of the victims as Saartjie Haarhoff, a teacher from the local nursery school.

She winces and turns the radio to another channel.  
She shakes HITCH again, beginning to feel a little worried.

**WENDY**

Hey! Hey, Hitch! Wake up!

**WENDY**

Hitch?

**RADIO PREACHER**

Destructive storms and evil winds are they.  
They are mighty children, heralds of the baneful storm, forerunners of pestilence.

**67.           EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE ROAD. CONTINUED.**

The PREACHER's voice sounds strangely slurred as if something is wrong with the transmission. WENDY doesn't want to listen to it but she's keeping HITCH propped up with one hand now and has to keep her other hand firmly on the wheel.

Something appears now on the roadside up ahead.

The figure of a man. A hitchhiker. He raises his thumb.

WENDY shakes HITCH again and he slumps against the far door.

**WENDY**

Hey! Wake up! Wake up! What is this?

She begins to slow the car, the figure of the hitchhiker gliding closer.

**PREACHER**

They are the flood which rusheth through the land.

Their joy is our sorrow. Their merriment our grief.

WENDY leans forward, narrowing her eyes against the setting sun. Silhouetted against the glare, the figure of the hitchhiker looks more and more like HITCH. He even seems to be wearing a very similar hat and coat. The figure's face seems to be obscured, possibly by some kind of scarf. The angle of the light makes it impossible to be sure. Suddenly HITCH starts forward beside her with a yell.

**HITCH**

Don't stop!

HITCH puts his foot down over hers, crushing the accelerator to the floor and the car shoots forward with a jolt.

**WENDY**

Hey! Let go! What's wrong with you?

**HITCH**

Nothing! Nothing. I'm sorry. I was half asleep.

There is a moment's silence. WENDY glances back but the figure of the hitchhiker is no longer in sight. She begins to relax and for the first time notices that the radio too seems to have changed stations, replacing the PREACHER's sermon with a saccharine country and western tune. She rubs her eyes.

**WENDY**

You really freaked me out back there.

**HITCH**

I'm sorry. I guess I just don't care for hitchhikers.

**WENDY**

Now that makes a hell of a lot of sense.

**67.           EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE ROAD. CONTINUED.**

She shakes her head, more than a little confused, and looking ahead catches sight of an approaching signpost marking the turn-off for a motel. She slows, flipping on the indicator.

**HITCH**

What are you doing?

**WENDY**

Unless we stop now next time you fall asleep  
you might just never wake up.

**CUT TO:**

**68.           EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE MOTEL.**

As the Volkswagen turns off the freeway and begins to rattle down the dirt track to the motel, a gust of wind comes up, drawing a glowing veil of dust across the circle of concrete cabins.

WENDY pulls up as close to the reception office as she can.

**WENDY**

(To HITCH)

Stay here. I'll see if I can find anyone.

A gust of wind strikes her as she steps from the car door.

She hurries up onto the concrete verandah, rubbing dust from her eyes and pushes open the door of the office.

**CUT TO:**

**69.           INTERIOR. DUSK. THE RECEPTION OF THE CANYON MOTEL.**

The room smells of disinfectant. A nightmare of yellowing wallpaper and tasteless watercolours.

WENDY has to ring the bell on the counter at least three times to raise the greying ghost of a CLERK.

**WENDY**

I'd like a room.

The CLERK peers at her myopically for a moment before fumbling in his pocket to find his glasses.

**WENDY**

I've got identification. Passport.

Driver's licence. Credit cards.

It'll just be for one night.

**CLERK**

You can slow down. I'll have to get  
the register.



69. **INTERIOR. DUSK. THE RECEPTION OF THE CANYON MOTEL.**  
**CONTINUED.**

**WENDY**

Sorry.

**CLERK**

(Dusting off a heavy book he removes  
from below the counter)  
We don't take credit cards.

**WENDY**

I'll pay cash.

**CLERK**

Sign there. And here...  
on the line...

WENDY concentrates on the register while the CLERK flips desultorily through her passport.

**CLERK**

Travelling alone?

**WENDY**

No. Oh no, I'm sorry. There's two of us.

**CLERK**

You'll be wanting a double room then.  
Best I can offer you are twin beds

WENDY glances up at him.

**CLERK**

It's okay. You can push 'em together. It's no sweat.

**CUT TO:**

70. **EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE MOTEL.**

The wind is still whistling furiously around the building as WENDY steps out of the office clutching the keys.

Almost at once she knows that something is wrong.  
She steps towards the Volkswagen, raising an arm to shield her eyes from the wind

**WENDY**

Hitch?

**70.           EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE MOTEL. CONTINUED.**

The Volkswagen is empty.

Both HITCH and his pack are gone.

She glances around, but there is only the wind surrounding her and the restless dust and the dying sun.

She begins to shiver, wrapping her arms about herself, trying to shut out a cold that is inside her.

**CUT TO:**

**71.           INTERIOR. DUSK. BETHANY STATION.**

BEN is striding through the station in an obviously bad temper closely followed by his white subordinate, KONSTABEL DUTOIT.

**DUTOIT**

She's a city girl, late twenties or early thirties.

**BEN**

What did you do to him, Wynand?

**DUTOIT**

She drives a red Volkswagen with city plates.  
Should be piss easy to pull in.

**BEN**

What did you do to him for God's sake?

**DUTOIT**

So me and Johann got heavy with him, so what?  
We've got something to go on now.

BEN slams open the door leading to the station's cells, trying not to look at DUTOIT.

**BEN**

He would have talked to me.

**DUTOIT**

So where were you all day?  
How come you didn't respond to your radio?  
We even sent someone around to your house.

BEN pauses in front of one of the cells.

The FARMHAND, crouched in the corner, glances nervously up at them.

71. **INTERIOR. DUSK. BETHANY STATION. CONTINUED.**

**BEN**

Release him.

**DUTOIT**

He's a material witness.

**BEN**

I don't care. Release him.

**LNT BEYMAN**

Let him go, Konstabel. Sergeant Mukurob is still your superior.

BEN looks around to see BEYMAN standing in the doorway, watching them. DUTOIT stiffens to attention.

**DUTOIT**

Yes, sir.

**LNT BEYMAN**

I want you and Botes in my office tomorrow morning with a full report. What you've done here has cost us this man's testimony. Do you understand that?

**DUTOIT**

Yes, sir.

**LNT BEYMAN**

Ben, I want a word.

BEYMAN's tone softens as he sees the look in BEN's eyes.

**LNT BEYMAN**

Come on. I'll get you a drink.

BEYMAN exits and BEN follows.

Just before ducking through the door he pauses to glance at the identikit picture.

**DUTOIT**

We did the right thing, didn't we?

BEN folds up the picture and puts it in his pocket without comment.

**CUT TO:**

**INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE ROADHOUSE.**

BEN and LNT BEYMAN sit at one end of the bar counter while HENDRYK serves them. The roadhouse is almost empty tonight but BEN still feels uneasy.

**BEN**

I shouldn't be here.

**LNT BEYMAN**

Nonsense. It's a free country.  
It's no problem, is it Hendryk?

**HENDRYK**

No problem so long as the old lady doesn't see...  
she's a little old fashioned

**BEN**

Do you know whales mate for life?

**LNT BEYMAN**

Never heard that, Ben.

**HENDRYK**

(Giving them their change)  
Yeah? I heard sharks never sleep though.  
If they stop moving they suffocate.

**BEN**

It's not true. They just sleep in strong currents.  
That way the water flows over their gills and they  
keep breathing. They got photographs of it.

**LNT BEYMAN**

You like the sea, Ben?

**BEN**

I grew up in this place. I've never seen a whale in my life.

**LNT BEYMAN**

I'm going to see them, Ben. There sending me home.

**BEN**

I heard.

**LNT BEYMAN**

They offered me two years pay.  
What else could I do?

**BEN**

You did the right thing.

72.

**INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE ROADHOUSE.**

The pinball machine rattles loudly behind them and BEN turns to see that two men in greasy overalls are busy unplugging it.

**BEN**

What's happening to the pinball machine?

**HENDRYK**

It's being moved. I'm letting the beer hall have it.

**LNT BEYMAN**

Why don't you get out, Ben? You're only a few years off retirement. You could use the time.

**BEN**

What would I do instead?

**LNT BEYMAN**

I don't know. It's your life. You have to make yourself a life. We were all sad about Jake but it's been years... and Katie, of course... did you ever hear from her?

BEN is trying not to listen, keeping his attention fixed on the girl's identikit, the pinball table jingling behind him as the men carry it out into the parking lot.

**BEN**

No. Not a word.

**LNT BEYMAN**

I'm sorry. I'd always hoped...

BEN studies the photograph and for a moment it is almost as if he is close to remembering something important.

**BEN**

Maybe I will go away.

**LNT BEYMAN**

Where will you go to?

**BEN**

Where everyone else is going.

**LNT BEYMAN**

You deserve the rest. You should look after yourself. If you go on the way you do without eating, you'll give yourself bad dreams.

**BEN**

What makes you think I don't have dreams already?

**INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE ROADHOUSE. CONTINUED.**

**LNT BEYMAN**

I just don't see you getting anywhere. Not here.  
Not with this case.  
(He puts a large paper envelope on the counter)  
Leidzinger turned in his report but it's snake-eyes.  
All the blood and tissue samples belonged to the victim.

**BEN**

We don't have the facts.

**LNT BEYMAN**

What facts?

**BEN**

I'd like to see all the files on similar unsolved  
murders in the past, not just from this area but  
from all over the country, from across the border,  
from South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe as well...  
he must have done this before... somewhere...  
he's experienced...

**LNT BEYMAN**

I can put in a request to Pretoria before I go but  
I'm not sure you'll get any joy... the best I can  
offer you is anything that's on file in the archives  
here... even that'll be like trying to find a needle  
in a haystack...

**BEN**

Or a diamond in the sand.

BEN sighs, his gaze returning once more to the identikit portrait of WENDY that rests on the counter before him.

**BEN**

We've lost him but he'll do it again. Trust me.

**LNT BEYMAN**

We're meant to stop him before he does, Ben.

**BEN**

We may not have to find him.  
He may find us.

BEN gazes into the strange woman's eyes and it is as if he sees something familiar there.

**CUT TO:**

**73.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE DESERT.**

The photographs of SAARTJIE and the other women are laid out in a triangle in the dust, WENDY's photograph at their apex, firelight glinting on the hunting knife that lies beside them. HITCH reaches out, pressing his knuckles to the ground beside the photograph. When he withdraws his hand, it leaves something very much like a pawprint in the dust.

**CUT TO:**

**74.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MOTEL ROOM.**

We are prowling through the dimly lit room, past the contents of WENDY's handbag scattered across the bed, past the postcard she wrote to MARK, following a trail of discarded clothes to the bathroom door.

The door is ajar, the sound of running water coming from inside.

WENDY is sitting in the bathtub, steam rising all around her, a razor in one hand. The blade trembles as it touches her wrist.

**CUT TO:**

**75.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MORGUE.**

The doors open with a slam but the fluorescents don't go on.

BEN stands staring in disbelief for a moment at the sea of flickering candles spread across the slabs.

LEIDZINGER steps up to him holding a clipboard.

**LEIDZINGER**

I'm sorry. There's been a powercut.

**BEN**

That's alright.

He steps forward into the room, seeing a small knot of figures dressed in their Sunday best, standing around a slab at its far end. The walls of the morgue have been redecorated now in one huge mural and BEN strains his eyes to take in details of it, knowing it is important to the case.

**LEIDZINGER**

This is embarrassing for everyone.  
We were trying to find you all day.

**BEN**

I'm sorry.

BEN walks slowly down the aisle towards the group of figures, recognizing them now as his parents and in-laws, KATIE standing amidst them, dressed in black.

She has been crying but now there is only anger in her face.

BEN reaches out to her.

**75.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MORGUE. CONTINUED.**

**BEN**

Katie...

**KATIE**

This is your fault. It's because of you and  
your stupid ideas that it's come to this.

BEN looks down at the slab and sees that he is standing over the body of his only son.  
JOE NIEMAND is leaning over the slab and as BEN watches, the bushman cuts off JAKE's fingers  
with a carving knife.

**CUT TO:**

**76.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. BEN'S BEDROOM.**

BEN comes awake gasping for breath, sitting up suddenly in bed in the middle of the night.  
He shakes his head, forcing the dream away from himself, eyes turned towards the window and the  
moonlight on the glass.  
Then from somewhere far out in the flatlands he hears a train blow its horn like some tremendous  
beast howling in the night.

**CUT TO:**

**77.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE DESERT.**

We are flying with the night wind, flying with the train as it hauls its chain of cattle tracks across  
the endless dark, hurtling towards the red band of light forming in the east and a dawn that scarcely  
promises to come.

**DISSOLVE THROUGH:**

The first rush of light.  
The yellow light.  
A band of golden cloud.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**78.           INTERIOR. DAWN. THE MOTEL ROOM.**

WENDY is already awake, watching the new light blazing in the curtains, the sheet hugged  
protectively against herself.  
The wind stirs the curtain, beckoning her into the new day.

**CUT TO:**



**79.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE MOTEL.**

The motel room door closes with a soft snick behind her and she heads for the car. She's feeling easier now, singing something under her breath. She reaches for the Volkswagen's door handle and then pauses, the song dying inside her. Through the window she can see someone curled like a corpse in the well of the car. HITCH, not moving, more like a mannequin than a man. She hesitates for a moment before suddenly snatching the door open and reaching down as if to shake him. But he is awake. He turns quickly and takes her hand by the wrist, drawing her into the car and pulling himself up into the passenger seat. When she's sitting comfortably behind the wheel he releases her.

**WENDY**

Well, good morning.

**HITCH**

I'm sorry. I'm a light sleeper.

**WENDY**

Why the hell did you sleep here? I could have paid for you at the motel if you'd told me.

**HITCH**

Force of habit. Did you sleep well?

**WENDY**

What happened to you last night?

**HITCH**

The call of nature. I had to dash. I'm sorry.

WENDY looks unconvinced.

**HITCH**

We should be going now. You don't want to waste time if you want to reach the sea.

**WENDY**

What makes you so sure I still want to give you a ride?

**HITCH**

It's your decision.

WENDY looks at him for a moment, not sure whether she should be angry or not. HITCH smiles at her.

**WENDY**

I'm going to regret this.

She turns the key in the ignition.

**CUT TO:**

**80.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE FREEWAY.**

The Volkswagen is batting along under full steam, the rock song on the radio turned up loud enough to make conversation unnecessary.

WENDY is bopping along with the music when she notices the dark cloud on the horizon. For a moment she thinks it might be a storm coming and then she sees that its darkness is too thick, too black.

She brakes rapidly, almost coming to a halt in the middle of the road.

**WENDY**

What the fuck is that?

She turns off the radio and for a moment they both sit staring at the road ahead in silence. The smoke is rising from the remains of what seems to be a burning car standing in the middle of the freeway. Several vehicles are parked further along and the road is blocked off by a cordon of policemen.

**HITCH**

Drive closer. It'll be alright.

WENDY eases the car closer to the wreck and one of the policemen steps forward, waving them onto a detour. They leave the freeway, running parallel for a moment with the scene of the car accident.

**HITCH**

Whoee! That's a real good one.

**WENDY**

I'm sure no-one got out of that.

**HITCH**

Yeah. Look at the colours in those flames!

WENDY speeds up realising that she's driving on a dirt trail that seems to be leading directly away from the freeway. Ahead the road disappears into a flat, seemingly limitless, landscape out of prehistory.

**WENDY**

What the hell is this?

**HITCH**

It's a detour.

The road is so indistinct here that it appears as if they are driving over open desert. The Volkswagen plunges valiantly on, trailing a column of dust that is soon the only way to mark it in the infinite flatness.

**CUT TO:**

**81.           EXTERIOR. DAY. A BACKSTREET IN BETHANY.**

There is a light wind gusting down the narrow road as BEN pulls his landrover to a halt opposite LNT BEYMAN's home. MRS BEYMAN and the kids are battling against the wind outside the house, trying to tie something to the roof of a station wagon.

BEN strolls across the road towards MRS BEYMAN who sees him coming.

**MRS BEYMAN**  
KORNELIUS! Your man is here.

LNT BEYMAN emerges from in front of the car's raised bonnet, oil stains on his hands.

**BEYMAN**  
Ben! Glad you made it. I'd almost given up on you.

**BEN**  
I was at the funeral.

**BEYMAN**  
Come on. We'd better go into the house.

**MRS BEYMAN**  
Kornelius! You said you were ready!

**BEYMAN**  
You wait in the car. This won't take a moment.

BEYMAN guides BEN towards the front door.

**CUT TO:**

**82.           INTERIOR. DAY. THE BEYMAN HOUSE.**

BEN crouches beside the commissioner in the middle of the empty lounge as BEYMAN produces a collection of dog-eared files from an incongruous looking carrier bag.

**BEYMAN**  
I brought everything I could find.

**BEN**  
I didn't expect so many.

BEYMAN rummages through the files, withdrawing the photograph of yet another lost woman.

**BEN**  
Christ! This is from 1952.

**INTERIOR. DAY. THE BEYMAN HOUSE. CONTINUED.****BEYMAN**

They go all the way back to the war. All women. I've even found one from 1928. Some hooker, who got stabbed to death at Klein Karib station. They found a pocket watch in her mouth.

**BEN**

But that couldn't have been him... that was before he was born...

**BEYMAN**

Did you ever wonder how many murderers are struck by lightning every year? How many die in car accidents or other acts of God?

BEN shakes his head.

**BEYMAN**

A great many, probably. It'd make an interesting statistic, wouldn't you think?

BEN doesn't reply, busying himself instead with trying to count the files. He hears the car hooting outside.

**BEYMAN**

That's Pam. I'd better not keep her waiting.

**BEN**

No. I suppose not.

BEYMAN produces a ring of keys from his pocket.

**BEYMAN**

Here. Be a good man and hand these back up to the office.  
(He puts the keys on the floor beside the files)  
One's the key to the house and the other's a key to the station gun locker.

BEYMAN winks at him.

BEN looks puzzled.

**BEN**

I don't understand

**BEYMAN**

That's all I can do. You have to look after yourself now, Ben.

**BEN**

I saw Mr Haarhoff's eyes at the funeral.  
He didn't love her. Nobody loved her.

82. INTERIOR. DAY. THE BEYMAN HOUSE. CONTINUED.

**BEYMAN**

Yes, Ben. You'll remember to lock up the house, won't you?

**BEN**

Yes, Sir.

BEYMAN steps out into the wind once more. He glances back one last time.

**BEYMAN**

Look after yourself, Ben. Try to eat a little better.

Then he is gone, the door closing behind him and BEN is left alone, crouched in an empty room holding the typed details of a great many dead people in his hands.

**CUT TO:**

83. EXTERIOR. DAY. THE DESERT.

We are flying once more with the wind, following the Volkswagen as it bounces across the flatland.

**WENDY**

I can't get a thing on the radio! Not a damn thing!

**HITCH**

It doesn't matter.

**WENDY**

What do you mean it doesn't matter? We've got less than half a tank left. We could be anywhere!

**HITCH**

But we're exactly where we're meant to be. Look!

**WENDY**

Oh my God!

Up ahead the flatlands come to an abrupt end, falling away into thin air at a point where the sky finally meets the land.

**HITCH**

You've done it, girl. You've made it all the way to the edge of the world.

WENDY pulls the car to an abrupt halt and a cloud of dust envelops them. She pulls open the door, shielding her face with one arm and runs towards the edge, still not believing it.

**WENDY**

Oh my God, this is amazing!

83.

**EXTERIOR. DAY. THE DESERT. CONTINUED.**

HITCH strolls slowly over to her, where she stands staring out into the heat hazed distance, the sun glinting on the silver coil of a river far below her in the midst of a landscape, as barren as the moons of Mars, a landscape hundreds of feet below them on the floor of a canyon that stretches as far as eyes can see like a great rift in the fabric of the world.

**HITCH**

This is the home of the great snake father, Kouteign Kouroo, lord of all waters. In the dawn of things, he made this place from the lashing of his coils.

**WENDY**

It's amazing. All this time... all this time I was coming here.

**HITCH**

You were brought here.

**WENDY**

The road's part of the snake too, isn't it?

**HITCH**

You're catching on.

**WENDY**

And you? Who the hell are you? I don't even know your proper name.

**HITCH**

And I don't know your surname.

**WENDY**

You're part of it, aren't you? Part of this.

HITCH's expression hardens, suddenly becoming too serious. He starts to say something but WENDY reaches out to him.

**WENDY**

Don't talk! Don't spoil it.

HITCH pulls away from her.

**WENDY**

No. Don't.

**HITCH**

You don't understand.

**WENDY**

Sssh.

She reaches out again, softly touching his face, touching his lips as if to seal them. Slowly, she takes him in her arms.

**83.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE DESERT. CONTINUED.**

**HITCH**

But...

**WENDY**

This was meant to be as well.

She draws him forward and kisses him on the lips and he opens to her now, his arms enfolding her. She is borne up by him, surrendering herself to his grasp and for a moment they are just like any other pair of lovers. Two people on the edge of infinity, holding on to each other for dear life.

**CUT TO:**

**84.           INTERIOR. DAY. BEN'S BEDROOM.**

BEN sits cross-legged in the middle of the room, whale song turned up loud on the tapedeck to try and drown out the sound of the trains, the photographs of the dead girls spread all around him and a half bottle of vodka at his side.

He has a shotgun cradled across his lap and is working rhythmically on its barrel with a hacksaw while WATCHER looks on eagerly as if knowing what is to come.

**CUT TO:**

**85.           EXTERIOR, DAY. THE ROAD BLOCK.**

A PATROLMAN stands at the roadside flipping through a South African passport belonging to a city registered car that's just been flagged down.

**PATROLMAN**

Where did you say you were heading for?

**MARK**

Bethany. I'm visiting an in-law.

Afterwards the PATROLMAN will recall the strange, almost frightened expression he sees in the driver's eyes as he waves him on.

**CUT TO:**

**86.           EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE DESERT.**

The sky is gold again.

The dust cloud behind the Volkswagen is like a column of fire.

**WENDY**

We're not going to get much further. We're running on empty.

86.

**EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE DESERT. CONTINUED.**

**HITCH**

It's not far. Look!

WENDY looks up and sees that the figure of the hitchhiker has appeared at the roadside up ahead, the sun at his back once more, almost at the same angle as it was the previous evening.

**WENDY**

How did he get all the way out here?

**HITCH**

Just drive past. We're closer to the freeway than you think.  
Don't look back.

**WENDY**

(Glancing at the hitchhiker as they pass him)  
He's got your hat and coat.

**HITCH**

I said don't look back.

**WENDY**

Why? What would happen if I did?

HITCH doesn't reply so WENDY glances into the rear view mirror. The hitchhiker is somewhere behind them now but she can't see him in the haze of dust. The Volkswagen's engine suddenly sputters and cuts out and they coast to a halt.

**WENDY**

Oh great! Couldn't I have been turned into a pillar of salt instead?

**HITCH**

It's alright. We're here.

WENDY opens her door and climbs slowly from the car, staring in disbelief.

**WENDY**

I'm dreaming. I must be dreaming.

The car has come to a halt just in front of the Canyon Motel, which they seem to have been approaching from another angle, as the freeway that they started on that morning now lies a few hundred yards in front of them on the other side of the motel buildings.

HITCH climbs out of the car and stands beside her, grinning.

**HITCH**

Or maybe someone is dreaming you.

**CUT TO:**



87.

**EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE MOTEL. VERANDA.**

WENDY and HITCH sit at a table watching the sun going down, listening to the radio playing in the reception office.

**RADIO**

The Namibian tourist board announced today that the finger of God has fallen. The landmark rock formation, one of the area's largest tourist attractions, collapsed last night during a high wind. Dated by geologists as being at least four million years old the formation was given its name by bushmen hunters who felt it resembled a massive finger pointing towards the earth.

The CLERK, apparently the only member of the motel's staff, appears, bringing them their drinks.

**CLERK**

I hope everything is alright with you folks.  
I'll change the channel if you want to dance.

**WENDY**

We'll be fine, thanks.

HITCH is preoccupied with counting his change. He glances up as the clerk shuffles back to the reception office.

**HITCH**

I'm not sure how much to tip him. Maybe I should leave him something foreign.

**WENDY**

Let's see.

**HITCH**

I've got all kinds. This one's from Morocco. That's from Ethiopia.

**WENDY**

What this little one? It looks old.

**HITCH**

It is. It came out of the earth at Baalbek in the Bekaa valley, not 400 metres from the enclosure where they kept the hostages. It's the old site of the temple of Baal... Hezbollah territory now... Strange they should hold an envoy of the church in such a place.

**WENDY**

I thought Westerners couldn't go there.

**HITCH**

It depends who you know. It's all friends and friends of friends.

**87.           EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE MOTEL. VERANDAH. CONTINUED.**

**WENDY**

Who are you?

**HITCH**

Just a travelling man. I try to keep moving.

There is a sudden burst of sparks in the night, somewhere far out over the flatlands.

The sound of a muffled explosion reaches them a moment later.

WENDY gets up, crossing to the edge of the verandah to get a better view.

**WENDY**

What the hell was that?

HITCH puts down his beer bottle and crosses to her side, eyes towards the night. There is another series of reports and what seems to be a swarm of red fireflies rise from the horizon to greet the stars.

**HITCH**

Looks like tracer fire... long way off... probably  
just some soldier getting bored... screwing around.

In the background the CLERK finally changes the radio channel, tuning over from the news programme to a Country and Western channel. HITCH grins, hands in his pockets.

**HITCH**

Do you want to dance?

He circles WENDY, moving to the music in a curious dance of his own.

WENDY starts to laugh but then he takes her hand, drawing her to him.

Unseen by either of them, HITCH's empty beer bottle shivers on the table behind them and then with a screech begins to slide across the tabletop.

There is another explosion in the distance but this time WENDY and HITCH pay no attention.

**CUT TO:**

**88.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE HAARHOFF HOUSE.**

Firelight floods once more across the charred murals.

BEN stands at the base of the stairs examining what appears to be a freshly painted sign.

He feels he is close to the heart of the mystery.

Then BOTES appears at the top of the stairway, his face pale in the half-light.

**CPL BOTES**

She's up here, Sir.

**88.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE HAARHOFF HOUSE. CONTINUED.**

BEN follows the line of candles that mark a safe path through the wreckage, letting the lights guide him upwards, the charred steps creaking dangerously beneath him.

**CPL BOTES**

She's been waiting for you, Sir.  
I'm afraid you'll have to explain to her.

He pushes open the bedroom door and BEN hears the sound of a woman sobbing. The woman is standing in the far corner of the room, her back towards him, her eyes turned to the diagrammatic figure in the mural. The sound of her sobbing is louder now and as BEN approaches her he sees she is wearing a black mourning dress.

He pauses behind her, suddenly afraid.  
He tries to speak but can only manage a dry whisper.

**BEN**

Saartjie?

She turns slowly and he sees her face and the tears that streak her cheeks pale as wax. Her eyes are so dark. Like the depths of space.

**BEN**

I'm so sorry... I did everything I could.

She reaches out to him and BEN feels the urge to step back but finds himself unable to. His boots seem glued to the floor. Her arms encircle him and it is as if BEN hears distant dance music now, coming from somewhere in the night.

Her face swims before him, and he sees now that her tears have become drops of blood, dark riverlets trickling from her eyes. BEN gasps, trying to draw air, drowning in the darkness, his throat thick with dust. Then her lips touch his and she sucks the breath right out of him.

**CUT TO:**

**89.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. BEN'S BEDROOM,**

BEN gasps, trying to breathe as AARON shakes him out of the trance. He rubs his eyes, breathing easier now, seeing that he is still sitting cross-legged amongst the scattered photographs on his bedroom floor.

AARON is crouching before him, absently petting WATCHER, his expression serious beyond his years.

**AARON**

You must keep your eyes open and come with me.  
You are in danger.

**CUT TO:**

**90.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE BEER HALL.**

MARK frowns, checking the address on the slip of paper as he follows the sound of the pinball machine across the threshold into the smoke filled chaos within.  
The BARHAND glances nervously at him as if already expecting trouble.

**MARK**

I'm looking for someone.

**BARHAND**

Sorry.

**MARK**

A woman who came in here. Her name's Wendy.  
Wendy Robinson.

MARK holds out a photograph and the BARHAND takes it from him, squinting at it in suspicion. It is the ROBINSON's wedding photograph, taken from the frame beside their bed, WENDY's face ringed now in red crayon.  
The BARHAND shakes his head.

**BARHAND**

Sorry. I don't know her.

Two farmhands come wandering over to take a look and Mark shows them the photograph as well.

**MARK**

Is this your telephone number?

He shows the BARHAND the number he has written down on the scrap of paper.

**BARHAND**

No. I don't know this number.  
No-one here has seen such a person.

MARK turns to see that the FARMHANDS are passing around the wedding photograph. One of the men glances up at MARK and we recognise him now as the man who helped push WENDY's car and who later ran foul of the police.

MARK walks slowly towards him, pushing his way through the crowd.

**MARK**

You! You've seen her, haven't you?

A MECHANIC wearing oil stained dungarees steps up behind him.  
He is the same man that HITCH saw working on the tractor two days before.

**MECHANIC**

No-one here has seen anything.  
There is nothing for you here.

90.

**INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE BEER HALL. CONTINUED.**

**MARK**

You know where she is, damn it!  
That's the same pinball machine that I heard  
on the telephone. I know it!

**FARMHAND**

Who are you?

**MARK**

My name is Mark Robinson  
I'm her husband.

**FARMHAND**

You are a policeman, I think.

**MARK**

No! I run a sports shop for God's sake.

**FARMHAND**

Then what for do you wear a uniform?

The FARMHAND holds up the wedding photograph, pointing at MARK's figure.

**MARK**

No! I was in the army then. I'm her husband, damn it!

The MECHANIC takes MARK's arm, bending it suddenly behind his back.

**FARMHAND**

You are no-one's husband now.

The first blow takes MARK in the small of his back.

**CUT TO:**

91.

**INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MOTEL ROOM.**

They are alone now, lost to the world, lost to themselves, mouths locked hungrily together, hands grasping at each other's flesh.

WENDY turns in his arms, pulling free from the kiss, HITCH's lips hot now against her neck, as she reaches to unbutton her blouse.

**HITCH**

Wendy.

**CUT TO:**

**92.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE OVERHANG.**

BEN turns off his flashlight, the firelight bright enough now for him to be able to make out the cave walls and the paintings that cover them without its aid.

He reaches out, gently touching the closed spiral of infinity.

The flames leap higher and a herd of painted eland rear up out of the mists of time, shivering in the firelight.

Everywhere here the walls are filled with ancient life.

Kudu and gazelle, water buffalo and leaping springbok flee the corning of spindly, spear wielding ipthyphallic man.

AARON beckons him on, leading him deeper into the leaning rocks, past the procession of animals and hunters and into the firelight where JOE is waiting for him.

JOE's expression is solemn.

He sits cross-legged beside the fire and when BEN sees the carved stick he holds in his hands he feels the fears of his dream return to him once more.

The old, nameless fears of childhood.

Behind JOE he sees a freshly painted design, a painted labyrinth winding in upon itself that resembles vety much the mural on the bedroom wall in the HAARHOFF house.

**BEN**  
My God...

**CUT TO:**

**93.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MOTEL ROOM.**

WENDY cries out, her voice high and strange like the cry of a wounded bird.

HITCH closes his eyes, his face contorted as if in pain.

**CUT TO:**

**94.           INTERIOR. NOWHERE.**

We glimpse the face of an antique clock as it is tom apart by an explosion, our field of vision engulfed in an eruption of springs and flying cogs.

**CUT TO:**

**95.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE BEER HALL.**

MARK lies face down on the bar room floor, the sound of sirens growing in the darkness. He tries painfully to lever himself up onto one elbow, his other hand creeping slowly around to the small of his back, grasping for the butt of the handgun that is still tucked in his belt.

**95.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE BEER HALL. CONTINUED.**

Then suddenly he finds his hand grabbed by the wrist and twisted once more.  
He yells, forced back to the floor, spitting blood.  
He feels the barrel of the gun shoved hard against his head and he closes his eyes.  
The gun metal is very cold against his throbbing skull.

**BOTES**

Any more moves and you're meat, Limey! Got that?

He twists MARK's arm around once more so that WYNAND can snap the cuffs onto him. Just before MARK loses consciousness he hears the sound of his car's tyres screeching on tarmac as the vehicle roars out of the parking lot.

**CUT TO:**

**96.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MOTEL ROOM.**

WENDY and HITCH lie intertwined in the wet sheets, their faces illuminated momentarily by the headlights of a passing truck.

HITCH is crying.

WENDY places her hand on his forehead, trying to comfort him.

**WENDY**

It's alright. I'm here. Don't worry.

**HITCH**

You don't understand.

**WENDY**

It's okay. Everything's okay.

**HITCH**

I'm so frightened... it's like I'm asleep and dreaming...

It's like a wind blowing through my head...

I feel so lonely. Like I've come to the edge of eternity  
and beyond is nothing but darkness.

WENDY runs her fingers gently down his body, tracing the lines of waxy scar tissue that criss-cross his torso.

**WENDY**

What happened to you? What did they do to you?

**HITCH**

Don't let go.

He gently grasps her wrist, returning her hand to his forehead.

96.

**INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MOTEL ROOM. CONTINUED.**

**HITCH**

Sometimes I get frightened that my head might fly apart to let it all out into the world. It sounds so crazy...

**WENDY**

Sshh! It's alright...

**HITCH**

I'm sorry, I want to love you but there's no time.

**WENDY**

Sssh...

She puts her hand gently over his eyes.

**CUT TO:**

97.

**EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE OVERHANG.**

BEN sits beside the campfire listening to JOE speak, the flames dancing in the old bushman's eyes. In his hands he holds the photographs of SAARTJIE's body.

**JOE**

This is the work of a Nagtloper.  
A black magician, a shapeshifter.

**BEN**

Shapeshifter?

**AARON**

The body's the physical projection of the soul, Ben.  
Change the mind. Change the body. It's all a fucking joke. This whole place, you understand.

**JOE**

These troubled times have drawn the Nagtloper out of the deep desert, Ben. He smelled Bethany dying and came for souls to build his power. He feeds off our pain.

**BEN**

No. He's flesh and blood like us... he must be...

**AARON**

You can't hunt him like an ordinary skellim, Ben. He is of the spirit.



**97.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE OVERHANG. CONTINUED.**

**JOE**

They have been here since the first times and  
they shall still walk the roads when we are dust.  
You cannot put an end to them any more than the  
priests before you. So long as we live in this  
world so will they walk in our shadows.

**CUT TO:**

**98.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE SHOWER.**

HITCH stands in the tiled cubicle, face turned towards the shower head, eyes closed, his features calm once more.

Slowly he turns, looking back now through the rising steam towards the bedroom door. His eyes are as expressionless as stone.

**JOE (Voice over)**

Their world is more complete than ours,  
their souls more pure, their purpose more absolute.

**CUT TO:**

**99.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MOTEL ROOM.**

WENDY turns restlessly in the bed, waiting for HITCH's return, listening to the sound of the shower coming through the bathroom door and the plumbing groaning and knocking in the wall.

**CUT TO:**

**100.          INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE SHOWER.**

HITCH steps slowly from the cubicle, steam curling around him.

He looks slowly towards the mirror, half-knowing what he must see.

There is a man watching him from the mirror.

Where his reflection should be, stands instead the reflection of the hitchhiker, caught up with him at last, still swathed in HITCH's scarf and travelling coat.

The hitchhiker's eyes are very ancient, set deep in shrivelled sockets.

Behind the figure there is only darkness and firelight flickering on distant cave walls. The bathroom is nowhere to be seen.

HITCH feels himself drawn like a marionette towards the mirror.

Now he sees the mural, its colours glowing in the darkness and he knows what he must do.

The figure raises its gloved hands towards the glass and he sees that it is holding out a clay bowl to him.

Its fingers, where they show through the ragged gloves are little more than bones.

**100.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE SHOWER.**

HITCH reaches slowly forward to take the bowl but his hand comes up short, pressed against the solid surface of the bathroom mirror.

**CUT TO:**

**101.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MOTEL ROOM.**

WENDY sits up in her bed, touching her fingertips together.  
There is blood on her hand.

She clambers slowly from the bed to retrieve her handbag.  
She searches inside the bag, frowning as she withdraws at a postcard. She glances at it for a moment before realising that it is the card she wrote to MARK.

From the bathroom she hears the sound of HITCH turning off the shower.  
She drops the card, fumbling now for the box of tampons only to find it empty. She curses and glancing up notices HITCH's rucksack lying open beside her.

She looks back to the bathroom door once again before, unable to resist herself, she leans over to peek into the rucksack.

Her eyes light upon a small wooden box and she reaches for it, lifting it out from where it is partially hidden beneath a spare shirt.

She glances back one last time to make sure HITCH is still in the bathroom before undoing the clasp and lifting the box's lid.

Inside, arranged on black jeweller's felt, are a neat row of severed fingers, each one with its own wedding ring and painted nail.

**CUT TO:**

**102.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. BETHANY STATION.**

MARK throws himself at the cell door, his hands clutching at the bars, yelling at the top of his voice, his face a mask of blood.

**MARK**  
Wendy! Wendy's out there! For God's sake  
someone find her! Somebody!

**CUT TO:**

**103.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE OVERHANG.**

JOE lifts the carved stick so the firelight falls across the markings he has made in it. They seem to be a form of writing but in no language that BEN has ever seen before.

**JOE**

There is one way and one way only to stop a Nagtloper. The Nagtloper must always keep moving but if he can be tricked into stepping over this kierie, he will be rooted to the spot and unable to call upon his power. The stick will bind him and when you burn this root, it will drive away his shadow.

JOE presses the stick and a root rubbed in fat into BEN's hands. He takes them nervously.

**JOE**

You must go now.  
Death hunts you, just as you hunt the dust devil.

BEN rises and AARON stands too, taking BEN's hand and pressing something into his palm.

**AARON**

Take this as well. It is my gift to you.

BEN opens his hand to see that he holds an animal's claw tied to a leather thong.

**AARON**

It is a leopard's claw. It will bring you luck in the hunt.

Just then JOE begins to sing, the words rising from him in an ancient tongue as he places the photographs of SAARTJIE's body on the fire. The flames leap suddenly higher, sending shards of orange light glancing out across the rock face.

**CUT TO:**

**104.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MOTEL ROOM.**

SAARTJIE's face stares back at WENDY from the polaroid photograph. She looks forlorn. Somehow hopeless. Frozen forever on her windswept verandah. WENDY's face is here too, captured behind the Volkswagen's wheel, but she flips quickly past herself, leafing through a dozen other polaroids. All women.

She shivers and reaches to put the polaroids away but then her eyes light on an ominous looking bundle at the bottom of the bag. She is just reaching down to unwrap it when HITCH appears behind her in the doorway.

**HITCH**

DON'T TOUCH THAT!

104.

**INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MOTEL ROOM. CONTINUED.**

WENDY recoils, dropping the bundle which falls open, spilling an array of shining surgical instruments across the motel room carpet.

WENDY inches back, the polaroids slipping from her hands, between a groan and a whimper escaping from her lips.

Amongst the instruments she can see a straight razor and a series of paint brushes made from bones and human hair.

**WENDY**

Why? Why for God's sake?

**HITCH**

Why what?

**WENDY**

Why did you kill them? All those women.

**HITCH**

It was an accident. This whole damn thing.  
Swear to God, Wendy. I wasn't meant to be here.  
Like those fucking angels God cast into hell.  
They couldn't help becoming devils. They had  
no choice, see?

He advances slowly towards her and she backs away, realising that he is between her and the door.

**HITCH**

I was somewhere else before. Something else.  
Like a cloud or a dream... just drifting through creation...  
incarnate but surrounded by vacuum. It's all light.  
All of it. In dying, their light has become part of me  
so I can keep travelling.... keep going on up until  
I transcend this fucking world and become what  
I'm meant to be.

**WENDY**

Oh Jesus, Hitch ... you're out of your fucking mind.  
Can't you see that?

The side of the bed nudges against the back of her knees and she sits down, shaking her head, her eyes glazing over with fear and disbelief.

**HITCH**

No! You're the one who doesn't understand!  
They were dead already. I saved them. I gave  
them purpose by making them part of my purpose!

**WENDY**

Oh God... I feel sick...

**HITCH**

It's alright, Wendy. Don't you see? It's perfect in fact.  
Glowing. Fucking crystalline. The whole damn thing.  
It's so easy. Getting off a train someplace where no-one  
knows me... finding someone who needs me... using them ...  
then getting back on the road and no-one is any wiser...  
nobody knows me ... nobody cares...

HITCH picks up a cigarette, popping it in his mouth before realising that he is still naked and doesn't have a light. WENDY doesn't volunteer one.

**WENDY**

Why me? What about me for Gods sake?

**HITCH**

(Tucking the cigarette behind his ear)  
Because you're running on empty and only I can  
help you. I can set you free.

WENDY is no longer watching him. She inches back onto the bed, breathing deeply, her eyes squeezed shut. As if from a great distance she hears the slap of rubber against flesh as HITCH pulls on a pair of surgical gloves. She leans back against the pillow, shivering. Her eyelids flicker and she catches a glint of light as HITCH lifts a hunting knife from the floor.

**HITCH**

Death was always inside of us. I'm just a mid-wife.  
All I have to do is make a small incision to let it out.

He kneels beside her.  
Caressing her.  
The gleam of the blade crosses her eyes.  
Once.  
Twice.  
And again.  
Guiding her down the well of oblivion.  
HITCH's voice coming to her now in the darkness.  
Soft as a whisper.

**HITCH**

Death was once a mirror made of ice. It fell from the sky and flew  
into a thousand pieces and the pieces lay in the long grass until dogs  
came and rolled in the grass and the mirror stuck to their fur and  
when children played with the dogs it stuck to their fingers and when  
they ate it went inside them and went into our souls.

The blade touches her.  
Following the contours of her body until its tip is poised above her heart.  
She sighs and at the last she is at peace, the road unravelling behind her eyes.

104.

**INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MOTEL ROOM. CONTINUED.**

**HITCH**

I'm letting it out, Wendy. I'm going to let it all out. Help me.  
Breathe deep now. Breathe deep and we'll be together always.

He raises the knife, his arm coiling slowly back like a cobra preparing to strike.  
And the ghost of a smile touches WENDY's tired features.  
Like a blessing.

**HITCH**

I love you, Wendy.

He closes his eyes.  
And her hand snakes out and grasps the marble stand of the bedside light, swinging it with all her strength, screaming at the top of her lungs.

**WENDY**

GET THE FUCK AWAY FROM ME!

The square corner of the lightstand takes HITCH in the side of his head.  
The knife flies from his hand and he topples sideways, moaning, blood jetting in a geyser from his forehead. She pulls herself from under him, grabbing the lightstand with both hands now and bringing it down hard on the back of his head.

**WENDY**

YOU MURDERING FREAK!

She takes a step back, letting the lightstand fall from her hands. Its base is clotted with blood and bits of hair. She shakes her head, making a sound that is halfway between a whimper and a laugh. Her foot touches the fallen knife and she snatches it up, holding it protectively in front of her. A slight quiver runs through HITCH's body but otherwise he is silent.

There is blood everywhere. She slowly lowers the knife, wiping HITCH's blood from her lips.  
There is blood all over her. She wipes off as much of it as she can before pulling a new dress over her head and kicking on her shoes.

She picks up her handbag and car keys and then heads for the door. As she reaches the threshold she hears HITCH groan behind her. His voice thick and syrupy with blood.

**HITCH**

Wendy?

She turns to see HITCH stirring on the mattress, trying to rise. She fumbles with the key in the lock, her hands shaking so badly that it seems to take forever to get the door open. HITCH drags himself over to the edge of the bed, loses his balance and falls heavily to the floor, his head striking the carpet with a loud clump.

**WENDY**

DAMN YOU! LEAVE ME ALONE!

**104.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MOTEL ROOM. CONTINUED.**

She backs out onto the verandah, seeing the Volkswagen waiting in the parking lot behind her.

**HITCH**

You don't understand... I love you...

HITCH gets to his knees and as WENDY makes a dash for the verandah he lunges drunkenly after her legs. WENDY slams the door on his head and he groans, his hands clutching at her ankles.

**WENDY**

STAY DEAD! DAMN YOU!

She slams the door on him again and one of the hinges cracks.

**CUT TO:**

**105.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE CANYON MOTEL.**

A light comes on in the reception office and WENDY lets go of the door handle, staggering back against the verandah railing.

**CLERK**

Hey! What' going on out there?

**WENDY**

SUFFERING SHIT!

**HITCH**

Wendy?

**WENDY**

YOU PICKED THE WRONG GIRL, YOU FUCK!

She kicks HITCH in the side of the head before turning in a half-stumble, heading for the car, the motel CLERK shouting after her.

**CLERK**

Hey! Hey! What's happening?

She fumbles with the Volkswagen keys, getting the door open at last and flinging herself into the driver's seat. It is only when she already has the key turned in the ignition that she remembers that she is out of gas.

**WENDY**

Oh Christ! Sweet suffering Christ!

She turns the key again and the engine shudders, turns over once, then dies on her. There is a sudden slap and she looks up to see HITCH pressing his hands against her window, leaving bloodstains on the glass.

**105.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE CANYON MOTEL. CONTINUED.**

**HITCH**

Wendy! I'm sorry! Come back! We'll talk it over.

He reaches for the door but it is already locked.

**WENDY**

Stay the fuck away from me!

She tries the ignition again and this time the engine roars into life.

**HITCH**

WENDY!

She rams her foot down hard on the accelerator and the Volkswagen pulls away with a jolt. HITCH lashes out at the door as she pulls past him and she catches a brief glimpse of his twisted face, the blood covering him like a bizarre skin painting.

There is something subtly different about him now but there is not enough time for her to be able to make sure. His face seems snoutier, his eyes brighter, his ears pointier, his ears thicker and all raggedy like the fur of a dog.

**HITCH**

I LOVE YOU, WENDY!

She twists the wheel, guiding the car onto the dirt track leading to the freeway and HITCH runs after her, head down, panting like an animal. The engine sputters, threatening to give out on her at any moment and she grits her teeth. Gradually HITCH's running, naked figure falls behind her and she begins to feel something resembling relief.

HITCH comes slowly to a halt, standing in the middle of the dirt track, dust settling around him, breathing easily now. He touches the gash in his forehead and grins, his teeth filled with blood.

**CUT TO:**

**106.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE FREEWAY.**

WENDY gets as far as the freeway, feels the Volkswagen's wheels bounce off gravel onto tarmac, and glances around one last time, the engine whining ominously.

HITCH raises his hand as if to wave to her but instead he makes a curious gesture in the air. And the wheel twists suddenly in her hands as if yanked by an unforeseen force. She tugs frantically at it, trying to get the car back into its lane but the engine chooses this precise moment to die on her, the car coasting under its own momentum across the white line.

**WENDY**

Oh Jesus God ... No!



**106.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE FREEWAY. CONTINUED.**

A harsh light bathes her face and looks up to see the headlights of a cattle truck bearing down on her, its horn blaring.

**WENDY**  
NO!

She tugs at the frozen wheel but there is nothing she can do now. In the last few seconds before the impact her face seems deathly calm, her arm rising slowly in front of her eyes in a vain attempt to shield herself.

The Volkswagen strikes the articulated vehicle head on in a spray of sparks and flying glass, its chassis crumpling, borne along for a moment by the truck's momentum, threatening to be chewed under by its careering bulk.

WENDY is screaming but even she cannot hear her voice. The car shakes her like a dog shaking a rat. She is flung forward, her knees impacting against the dashboard and then an instant later she is snapped back into her seat, the safety belt cracking like a whip across her chest, a stinging rain of broken glass haloing around her.

The cattle truck jack-knives across the white line as its own momentum slows and the station wagon that has been stuck behind it for the last few miles plunges head on into its side with its own caravan still in tow. The night is suddenly filled with shrapnel as the tow bar sheers away and the caravan flips over, tearing itself apart as it rolls across the embankment.

This second impact hurls the Volkswagen clear onto the gravel verge where it rolls twice before coming to a rest against the crash barrier. The driver of the truck is not so fortunate. He is driven through the windscreen of his vehicle like a man fired from a circus cannon and is killed instantly when he strikes the same crash barrier head first.

Slowly the single, unified beast that the cattle truck and the station wagon have become, grinds to a halt as if experiencing a moment of post-coital bliss. Then the screams begin.

The Afrikaans family in the station wagon all begin to yell at once, the husband cursing inarticulately at the top of his lungs, his voice all but drowned out by the pitiful lowing of the maimed cattle.

In the steaming remains of the Volkswagen, WENDY dangles sideways in her seat, still held in by the safety belt, scarcely breathing now, blood dripping thickly from a gash in her scalp. The driver of the station wagon is the first to regain his feet, kicking open the car door and tumbling out onto his knees on the asphalt.

We recognise him now as the tourist who briefly crossed WENDY and HITCH's path in the road house. He glances up, hearing his children screaming in the back seat and his wife sobbing in the front, and sees the road ahead filling suddenly with frightened oxen, their sides streaming with blood, stampeding from the wrecked tailgate of the truck.

**TOURIST**  
FOR FUCK'S SAKE!

**106. EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE FREEWAY. CONTINUED.**

He staggers to his feet to avoid being trodden under and sees a man walking towards him along the white line. He reels towards him, shouting inarticulately, desperately needing to blame someone for what has happened. He looks quite ridiculous in his short pants with his bare legs streaked with blood.

**TOURIST**  
YOU'RE GOING TO PAY, MAN!  
YOU KNOW HOW MUCH THAT RIG COST ME?  
TWELVE HUNDRED BUCKS THAT FUCKING  
RIG COST ME!

The sound of his voice seems to cause his children to scream even louder.  
The approaching figure pauses, looking at him in amusement.  
Through his daze the TOURIST sees now that the newcomer is not the driver of the truck after all.

He stammers for a moment, falling silent as he notices that the figure is stark naked, his body given the illusion of clothing by patches of dried blood.

The man takes a crumpled cigarette from behind his ear, props it in his mouth and then slaps his hands against his hips as if searching for the pockets he doesn't have. He glances up at the tourist, grinning.

**HITCH**  
Do you have a light?

The tourist takes a step backwards, still stammering wordlessly.  
Behind him, his wife is pulling the kids out of the car.  
They too have fallen silent, their eyes rivetted on the naked man.

**TOURIST**  
I'm sorry...

He takes his Zippo from his pocket and holds it out to HITCH, his hand shaking. HITCH takes it from him, nodding his head.

**HITCH**  
Thanks.

The TOURIST continues to back away until he reaches his wife and children, the four of them drawing back a little way as a group before turning and breaking into a hobbling run, heading down the freeway towards nowhere in particular.

HITCH lights the cigarette, watching them run, watching the steam rising from the wreck and the puddle of gasoline creeping across the freeway. He can't seem to stop smiling.

WENDY comes awake inside the Volkswagen with a moan, lying still for a moment, unsure whether she's all there or not. She twists awkwardly around in her seat, broken glass falling from her hair, and manages to get one hand against the door, trying to push it open.

**106.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE FREEWAY. CONTINUED.**

HITCH spins the lighter's flint, eyeing the orange flame with satisfaction. He takes a deep breath.

WENDY tries the door again, searching for the handle, only to find that it has been shorn away in the crash. She puts her shoulder to the door and gives it a shove, but her position in the seat is too awkward for her to be able to apply any real force. The door remains unyielding.

HITCH takes a step backwards and tosses the lighter towards the wreck. The movement is almost casual. The lighter strikes the asphalt, sliding under the chassis of the truck.

A moment later there is a soft whoompf of igniting gasoline and a ring of orange fire fans out from beneath the wreckage.

WENDY bears the sound and starts to panic, scrabbling at the catch on her safety belt. The flames begin to take hold now, climbing higher through the wreckage and the oxen panic, stampeding down the freeway, HITCH encouraging them, slapping their sides as they pass.

**HITCH**  
Yeeh-Hah! Whee Doggy!

There is a sudden flash as the station wagon's gas tank explodes and a ball of flame climbs into the night. HITCH howls, dancing from foot to foot on the white line.

WENDY screams, grabbing at the buckled window frame as the safety belt comes undone, her legs kicking for a moment before finding purchase against the passenger seat. She pushes herself up and forward, scrambling through the window, glass crystals cutting into the palms of her hands and cascading back past her into the wreck.

Outside the night is already white hot, sucking the air out of her lungs. She heaves herself clear of the wreck as its chassis starts to burn, landing awkwardly on the gravel verge, wisps of flame raining all around her.

She drags herself to her feet, forcing herself to run, her bruised legs flaring with pain, her blouse already beginning to smoulder. She swings one leg over the crash barrier and is just about to haul herself over when the cattle truck explodes behind her.

This second blast is even larger than the first, sending a wave of fire washing out across the tarmac, engulfing both the Volkswagen and the remains of the caravan. The shock wave lifts WENDY up, bowling her over the railing and down the embankment in a rush of hot air.

She yells, rolling in the dirt, swatting at her hair to keep it from catching alight, coming to rest at last in a dry drainage ditch at the base of the freeway.

The road is a river of fire now but still we can see the shape of a single leaping man silhouetted against the inferno, his bare feet dancing on the white line, his eyes glowing as if they too are ablaze.

WENDY whimpers, crawling for a while on her hands and knees, trying to put some distance between herself and the blaze.

**106.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE FREEWAY. CONTINUED.**

When she is out of the immediate glare of the firelight, she pulls herself to her feet and begins to run, heading straight out into the open desert, keeping the freeway at her back.

HITCH pauses in his dance, sniffing the air. Then, turning on his heels, he howls like a dog and goes loping off down the gravel driveway towards the motel.

**CUT TO:**

**107.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE CANYON MOTEL.**

The motel CLERK sees him coming and crosses to the edge of the verandah to intercept him.

**CLERK**  
Hey! Where do you think you're going?

HITCH barely slows in his stride, grasping the clerk by the throat as he passes and lifting him up over the verandah railing. The CLERK has the eyes of a frightened rabbit.

HITCH snaps his neck with a flick of his wrist and hurls the body away into the parking lot. His face is expressionless.

**CUT TO:**

**108.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE DESERT.**

WENDY's pace has slowed now as she becomes more aware of her new surroundings. Her legs are throbbing, begging for rest, her shoes uniquely unsuited for the rough terrain she finds herself crossing.

The light of the burning vehicles spurs her on, denying her rest. She knows it will only be a matter of time before HITCH comes looking for her.

She knows as well that he has a better command of the terrain but she hopes that if she can put some distance between her and the freeway now she might stand a chance of finding a spot where she can lie low until dawn.

Already there is a reddish gleam growing along the horizon's rim and she heads doggedly towards it, gritting her teeth.

**CUT TO:**

**109.           INTERIOR. NIGHT. THE MOTEL ROOM.**

HITCH pulls on his boots, adjusting their leather straps before wrapping himself once more in his travelling coat.

He turns to the mirror, dusting off the coat and straightening his hair.

He even manages a smile.

**CUT TO:**

**110.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE FREEWAY.**

HITCH skirts around the edge of the burning vehicles, his figure backlit by the flames momentarily becoming the apotheosis of all he stands for, his coat fluttering in the fire wind, his worn down bootheels crunching over broken glass.

The lurid glow of the flames no longer holds his interest now that the spirit of the hunt possesses him. He swings himself over the crash barrier, skipping down an embankment towards the dry drainage ditch.

The firelight helps him now, making it easy for him to pick up WENDY's tracks. She is going heavy on one foot as if slightly lame, heading due east into the dawn. HITCH grins, sniffing the air.

He knows the land enough to know there's nothing out there. Nothing save him and WENDY and a thousand miles of open desert.

The sun is just beginning to rise and HITCH walks towards it, whistling cheerfully as if looking forward to the day ahead.

**CUT TO:**

**111.           INTERIOR. DAWN. BETHANY STATION.**

The light comes suddenly on in the cell and MARK sits up with a groan, rubbing his head. There is a haggard looking policeman standing outside his cell, a bandolier stuffed with shotgun cartridges slung over one shoulder, his shirt unbuttoned to reveal a string of dog tags and a dangling panther's claw around his neck.

MARK rubs his eyes, not sure if he is dreaming this bizarre individual or not. The man holds out an identikit photograph in one hand, his eyes deadly serious.

**BEN**  
Is this your wife?

**CUT TO:**

**112.           EXTERIOR. DAWN. THE FREEWAY.**

It is almost full light now and although the fire has been extinguished, the air is still filled with drifting wisps of greasy ash. The body of the truck driver has been covered with a blood-soaked sheet, its extremities marked out by lines of white tape.

The wreckage-strewn tarmac is everywhere awash with blinking emergency lights and the air is thick with the crackle of radio static. The centrepiece of this spontaneous display of performance art is the still-steaming wreck itself, welded by the fire into a single unit of charred metal and fused ox skeletons. On the soundtrack we hear CORPORAL BOTES on the radio, sending out an unanswered call sign.

**CPL BOTES**

Echo Bravo, this is Foxtrot calling. Come in, Echo Bravo.  
Come in, Echo Bravo.

**CUT TO:**

**113.           INTERIOR. DAWN. THE MOTEL ROOM.**

BEN kicks the door open and goes into the room shotgun first, MARK a little behind him brandishing his own handgun, keeping the doorway covered. The room is, of course, empty.

BEN gives it a cursory once over, noting the fallen lightstand and the bloodstained sheets. He sees a postcard lying on the floor beside the open handbag and bends to pick it up, reading a couple of lines before glancing up at MARK.

**BEN**

It's for you.

He hands him the card, pushing out past him onto the verandah, not wanting to look at him in the eyes. He leans against the railing, watching flies gather on the motel clerk's corpse, hearing the postcard rustle behind him as MARK sinks slowly to his knees on the bloodstained carpet.

He hears MARK trying to suppress a sob and for an instant BEN feels a terrible urge to laugh.

**CUT TO:**

**114.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE FREEWAY.**

BEN and MARK stand beside the parked landrover on the soft shoulder just upwind from the scene of the wreck, WATCHER sniffing the air expectantly as BEN surveys the horizon with a pair of binoculars.

**BEN**

That's open desert out there all the way to the Fish River.  
Vulture city. Without water or shelter I don't rate anyone's  
chances in it. It'll be two hundred degrees or more by noon.

**114.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE FREEWAY. CONTINUED.**

**MARK**

She's out there... walking...

**BEN**

Then come on. Let's go get her.

He turns, climbing into the driver's seat while WATCHER hops in through the passenger door, settling himself between him and MARK.

He eases the landrover off the freeway, following a dirt track for a while before turning off onto the desert floor itself, an uninterrupted horizon of rock and orange dust soaring ahead of them beneath a terrifyingly empty sky.

**CUT TO:**

**115.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE DESERT.**

WENDY is somewhere far out in the shimmering immensity, scuffing her way across a seemingly infinite expanse of cracked mud, as lifeless as the floor of a dried up ocean. Her limp is more pronounced now, her feet red and throbbing, her shoes threatening to come apart at any moment, their seams already torn and chafing at her flesh. She stumbles to a halt, staring in a glazed, off-hand way at the seething sky.

**WENDY**

I wanted to go to the seaside, God, not to the fucking beach.

She starts to giggle and the giggle grows into a laugh. She sits down, rocking from side to side, leaning forward until her face is touching the dirt.

The laughter slowly dries up inside her and she rolls over, feeling the rocks hot against her skin. She turns her head and sees something moving in her field of vision. Slowly she focuses on it.

An albino scorpion scuttling from rock to rock in search of prey, white as a snowflake against the orange stone.

**CUT TO:**

**116.           EXTERIOR. DAY. A LOW HILLTOP TWO HUNDRED METRES NORTH.**

HITCH sits in the shade of the rocks, as motionless as a lizard, watching WENDY through the dusty lenses of a pair of old military issue binoculars.

He lowers the binoculars and lifts his harmonica, striking up a comically funereal tune, watching the vultures circling on the high thermals overhead.

**117.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE DESERT.**

When WENDY regains consciousness she finds that three of the huge, ragged-feathered birds have already landed nearby and are sitting watching her, shifting impatiently from one leg to another. WENDY struggles back onto her feet, cursing at them.

**WENDY**  
I'M NOT DEAD YET!

She kicks one of the birds out of her way and staggers on towards the shimmering skyline.

**WENDY**  
Motherfuckers.

**CUT TO:**

**118.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE DESERT. APPROXIMATELY EIGHTEEN  
KILOMETRES NORTH-NORTHWEST.**

The landrover burns like an arrow across the flatland, riding on a dust cloud, BEN's hand steady on the wheel, the horizon retreating endless before them.

The engine's purr fluctuates momentarily in tone and BEN frowns.

**BEN**  
The engine's overheating.  
We'll have to go easy for a while.

**MARK**  
Were never going to find her on our own.  
Why don't you get on your radio and call in  
air support or something?

BEN doesn't look at him and MARK begins to get irritable.

**MARK**  
God damn it! What kind of cop are you anyway?

**BEN**  
I'm a small town cop.

**MARK**  
You want him, don't you? The guy she's with.  
You don't care about Wendy. You're not even  
interested in her, are you?

**BEN**  
You're the one who lost her.  
I can't get her back for you.



**118. EXTERIOR. DAY. THE DESERT. APPROXIMATELY EIGHTEEN  
KILOMETRES NORTH-NORTHWEST. CONTINUED.**

**MARK**

I love her and she still loves me.

**BEN**

You must have done something to make her  
come all the way out here.

**MARK**

We had a fight. I hit her.

**BEN**

What the hell for? What the hell did  
you have to hit her for?

**MARK**

She was seeing another man.

**BEN**

I thought she was meant to love you and  
you were meant to love her. Didn't you say...?

**MARK**

It wasn't about love. I think it was about his  
eyes being blue and mine being brown...  
(He glances at the wedding ring on BEN's hand)  
You're married, sergeant. You must know how  
things happen sometimes.

**BEN**

I haven't seen my wife in fifteen years.

**MARK**

Shit. I'm sorry. I guess at least that's old history for you  
now, huh? You got kids? We always wanted kids. Me and Wendy.

**BEN**

We had a son. Jake. Some stupid truck accident happened  
to him up in the Caprivi. He wasn't even in combat. I guess  
losing Jake on the wrong side in the war was about as much  
as Katie could take. I haven't heard from her since.

MARK doesn't know what to say and for a moment there is an uneasy silence, then BEN slips a  
battered cassette from his breast pocket, holding it up for MARK to see.

**BEN**

She left me this tape... I think it was an accident...  
the song of the humpback whale ... you heard it?

**121. EXTERIOR. DAY. THE DESERT. APPROXIMATELY EIGHTEEN KILOMETRES NORTH-NORTHWEST. CONTINUED.**

**MARK**

No ... I haven't... I'm sorry...

**BEN**

Katie always loved the sea.

**MARK**

I'm sorry about your son... I didn't know...

**BEN**

It's okay. Just don't give me any more of your grief.

The whale song comes over the tapedeck now, melancholy and distant as the cry of an unborn child and BEN falls silent, his eyes fixed on the shimmering blue horizon.

**CUT TO:**

**119. EXTERIOR. LATE AFTERNOON. THE DESERT. TWENTY KILOMETRES SOUTHEAST.**

WENDY lies quite still beneath a makeshift shelter constructed with the aid of her dress and the branch of a dead thorn tree. She scarcely seems to be breathing, her glazed eyes turned towards the vault of the sky. The sky is a blinding white, the sun a molten blue rivet.

Everywhere the land is silent, all movement held in check as if immobilized by the sheer dead weight of hot air. WENDY lets her head loll to one side, staring out across the empty flatlands, feeling the dry dirt against her cheek and her bare skin.

She realises now that somehow she has reached the sea after all for the field of her vision seems filled by a shining expanse of water, an endless lagoon all silvery and mirror bright. She closes her eyes and the rush of blood in her ears becomes now the soft hiss of waves breaking over sand.

Faintly now she begins to hear another sound rising above the beat of her pulse. The distant whup-whup of helicopter rotors.

**CUT TO:**

**120. EXTERIOR. LATE AFTERNOON. THE DESERT. FOUR KILOMETRES DUE SOUTH.**

HITCH hears the helicopter coming from where he stands on the crest of a horseshoe dune and he hurriedly retreats from the skyline, keeping his head low.

**CUT TO:**

**121.           EXTERIOR. LATE AFTERNOON. THE DESERT. FIFTEEN  
KILOMETRES NORTHEAST.**

A military helicopter is skimming across the landscape like an olive green dragonfly, the wind from its rotors kicking up the dust. The insignia on the chopper's tail identifies it as belonging to the United Nations peacekeeping force.

On the soundtrack we hear the sound of the helicopter radio.

**PILOT**

Delta Zulu to Foxtrot.

Delta Zulu to Foxtrot.

We are at co-ordinates SS15-1842, approaching end of sweep.

**CUT TO:**

**122.           INTERIOR. LATE AFTERNOON. THE LANDROVER.**

BEN slows the vehicle, his ears pricked.

MARK glances uneasily at him.

**MARK**

What's wrong?

**BEN**

Sssh!

MARK falls silent and in a moment even he is able to hear the sound of the approaching helicopter over the insistent throb of the engine.

**MARK**

It's a chopper! A God damn chopper!

She's going to be alright.

BEN's expression seems troubled. He reaches suddenly out and lifts the receiver of the CB radio.

**BEN**

Mayday! This is Echo Bravo calling Delta Zulu!

We are in distress. Co-ordinates SE28 - U12.

**MARK**

What are you doing?

**BEN**

I told you to keep your mouth shut!

(He lifts the receiver once again)

Mayday! Echo Bravo calling Delta Zulu! Mayday!

**CUT TO:**

**123.           EXTERIOR. LATE AFTERNOON. THE DESERT.**

WENDY struggles up the side of a dune, her figure very small and pale against the skyline. She holds her dress above her head, waving it to try and attract the helicopter's attention, her hair fluttering around her in the rising wind, her tiny naked figure curiously surreal against the orange immensity.

She sees the helicopter now, the sunlight glinting on its cockpit windows.

**CUT TO:**

**124.           INTERIOR. LATE AFTERNOON. THE COCKPIT.**

The helicopter PILOT raises his receiver as he picks up BEN's distress signal on the radio.

**BEN'S VOICE**

Mayday! Echo Bravo calling Delta Zulu! Come in Delta Zulu.

**PILOT**

This is Zulu Delta. We are altering course to investigate.  
Co-ordinates SE28 - U12.

**CUT TO:**

**125.           INTERIOR. LATE AFTERNOON. THE LANDROVER.**

MARK grabs BEN's wrist, trying to tear him away from the radio. WATCHER turns on him with a snarl and the landrover lurches violently as BEN's hand falters on the wheel.

**MARK**

What the hell are you doing?  
Those are the wrong co-ordinates!

**CUT TO:**

**126.           EXTERIOR. LATE AFTERNOON, THE DESERT.**

WENDY watches helplessly as the helicopter banks and turns away, barely a kilometre before reaching her.

**WENDY**

No! Come back!

The helicopter climbs higher, the sound of its rotors growing fainter as it disappears slowly eastwards.

**CUT TO:**

**127.            INTERIOR. LATE AFTERNOON. THE LANDROVER.**

BEN has regained his grip on the wheel while WATCHER keeps an eye on MARK who is cowering against the far door.

**MARK**

You don't care if she lives or dies, do you?

BEN doesn't reply.

**MARK**

Do you, you son of a bitch? You don't want to arrest him. The guy she's with. You're not even thinking of arresting him.

**BEN**

I never said I was.

**MARK**

You're out of your mind.

**BEN**

If you don't like it you can get out here.  
You ride with me, you ride with my rules.

**MARK**

You crazy bastard. You're going to kill her.  
You're going to kill all of us.

**BEN**

I told you to keep your mouth shut.

WATCHER growls ominously at him and MARK falls silent.

**CUT TO:**

**128.            EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE DESERT.**

The helicopter is gone now.

The desert has fallen silent once more as the sky begins to shade into gold.

WENDY's naked figure stands forlornly on the dunecrest, the dress still held limply in her hands, her eyes turned towards the empty sky.

**CUT TO:**

**129.           EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE DESERT. FOUR-HUNDRED METRES WEST.**

HITCH watches as WENDY pulls her dress on and begins to walk once more, keeping the sun at her back. Her movements are painfully slow and increasingly aimless.

There is the beginning of a breeze at his coat tails and HITCH turns to the west and bows before beginning to make a weird series of movements like an orchestra conductor conducting silence. And gradually the wind rises.

The sand begins to lift in a fine haze across the crest of the dune and an orange column rises in the West like a dragon uncoiling itself from the earth. HITCH blows like a kite along the dune crest, dancing in the shadow of the dust devil.

**CUT TO:**

**130.           EXTERIOR. DUSK. THE DUNE SEA. FOUR-HUNDRED METRES EAST.**

WENDY feels the wind buffeting her first, then turns and sees the coming storm. Backlit by the setting sun, it appears to her as a great wave born of fire, its wispy tendrils coiling rapidly towards her through the cooling air.

**WENDY**  
Oh God...

She turns and tries to run but there is nowhere to run to and the storm is already upon her. She stumbles blindly on for a few hundred yards before falling to one knee, the dust devil embracing her.

She clings to the ground, her eyes squeezed shut against the stinging barrage, struggling to breathe as the ground itself is sucked out from between her fingers, the rushing sand threatening to flay her skin from her bones.

Slowly, the sand banks up against her shivering form, her shape becoming indistinct, her body blending with the dust. And the wind wails around her like the voices of a million tormented souls crying out in their sleep.

**CUT TO:**

**131.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE DESERT.**

The landrover is pushing on against the storm, the sand lashing at its windows, its headlights on full in the premature darkness. BEN is squinting into the storm, humming tunelessly beneath his breath, trying to remember what it was that JOE was singing.

The air inside the landrover is filled with whale song and the drifting, greasy smoke of the smouldering root that hangs on a leather thong from the rear view mirror. MARK sits coughing in the far corner, WATCHER taking up most of his seat.

**MARK**  
Christ ... I can't breathe... What the hell are you burning that thing for?

**131.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE DESERT.**

**BEN**

To keep it out.

For a moment MARK falls silent. His eyes are on WATCHER now.  
The dog is peering intently at the window, its ears pricked, a snarl rising in its throat.

**MARK**

What's out there?

**BEN**

The dust devil. I think.

MARK gazes upon the storm and for a moment he almost sees it.

A screaming, distorted mouth seems to open front of the landrover, tendrils of dust reaching towards the windscreen. WATCHER suddenly begins to bark and MARK yells in fright, throwing up his arm in front of his face as the vehicle shudders violently. The unexpected jolt throws MARK backwards in his seat and he cracks his head against the doorframe.

There is a screech of brakes and for a moment everything seems to be spinning around him. Then he blacks out.

When he comes around everything is strangely silent. There is a curious sensation of gliding or floating. MARK rubs his eyes, feeling a new pain in his chest. He looks out into the night, trying to catch a glimpse of the ground but still the illusion of flight persists.

All the headlights reveal is a billowing cloud of rising dust.

He shakes his head, still feeling dizzy, trying to understand what is happening to him. He wonders if he is dreaming. He reaches into his breast pocket and removes a battered cigarette, clenching it in his mouth.

It takes a a little longer to find his lighter and when he does, the lighter seems reluctant to produce a flame. Finally, he manages to get the cigarette lit, closing his eyes for a moment as he takes a drag, trying to get a grip on himself.

When he opens his eyes again, he notices that the smoke from the cigarette is floating downward as if it has suddenly grown inexplicably heavy. He coughs, his eyes widening as a thin trickle of blood dribbles up his face onto the ceiling.

He groans and starts to struggle in his seat as he realises that he is in fact hanging upside down in his safety belt, his knees jammed against the dashboard. He drops the cigarette and it bounces onto the roof as he struggles awkwardly to get the door open.

From somewhere out in the night, he hears the sound of WATCHER barking and distant gunfire rising above the wailing wind. He undoes his safety belt, tumbling in a painful half-somersault from the landrover which he now discovers is lying on its roof in the bottom of a dry gully, its wheels still spinning in the air, whale song playing on its tapedeck.

**131.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE DESERT. CONTINUED.**

BEN is stalking aimless around the wreck, clutching his shotgun and yelling incoherently at the storm, WATCHER scurrying around him, snarling and snapping at the wind. As MARK watches, BEN pumps another round into the breech and fires again, the flash of the gun momentarily freezing the particles of sand in midair.

Then the light is gone and the wind hurls the sand in their faces. MARK struggles to his feet and stumbles towards BEN, yelling above the shriek of the storm.

**MARK**  
ARE YOU CRAZY? PUT THAT THING DOWN!

BEN turns to MARK and his face is terrible, his eyes wide and dazed with fear. He seems completely mad.

**BEN**  
OUT OF THE WAY! GET OUT!

He pushes MARK to one side, stumbling past him as he takes aim and fires again. MARK falls to one knee, wincing at the sound of the blast, the wind stinging his face. MARK's hand moves to the small of his back to find the butt of the handgun still nestling against his bruised flesh. He draws the gun, levelling it at BEN's back.

**MARK**  
DROP THE GUN! NOW!

BEN turns slowly, the shotgun still in his hands, the wind buffeting him.

MARK rises slowly to his feet, keeping his own gun levelled at BEN's head.

BEN stares at him, his eyes as cold as stones.

**MARK**  
DON'T COME ANY CLOSER, YOU MAD BASTARD!

BEN takes a step closer, the shotgun wavering in his hands. WATCHER stands snarling beside him, tensing as if preparing to spring.

**MARK**  
YOU WANT TO DIE?

**BEN**  
Fifteen years...

**MARK**  
What?

**BEN**  
Fifteen years I've been waiting for this.



131.            **EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE DESERT. CONTINUED.**

**MARK**  
PUT IT DOWN OR I SWEAR TO GOD I'LL BLOW YOUR HEAD OFF!

BEN reaches slowly into his pocket, the smile fixed on his face as he withdraws his hand once more, clenched now into a fist.

MARK takes a step backwards as BEN reaches out, unclenching his fingers to show him a cluster of bullets nestling in the palm of his hand.

**BEN**  
I unloaded it before I gave it back to you.

He opens his hand, letting the bullets fall into the dust.  
He raises the shotgun and MARK pulls the trigger on an empty chamber.  
He backs off, shaking, the gun falling from his hands.

**BEN**  
After fifteen years do you think I'd let some city boy like you mess it all up for me?

He levels the shotgun at MARK's head.

**MARK**  
No! Please! I've done nothing.

BEN shoves the barrel at MARK's face and MARK closes his eyes, whimpering.

**MARK**  
Please... God... Why are you doing this to me?

**BEN**  
Maybe it's because of the colour of your eyes...  
you know how things are.

BEN throws a pair of handcuffs at MARK's feet, nodding towards the overturned landrover.

**BEN**  
Put them on. One end around your wrist  
and the other around the fender.

MARK does as he's told, chaining himself to the bumper, the licence plate just above his head, the headlights lancing into the night on either side of him.

**MARK**  
You can't do this. You'll never get away with it.

**BEN**  
I've been here all my life. Do you think I don't  
know how things work out here?

**131.           EXTERIOR. NIGHT. THE DESERT. CONTINUED.**

**MARK**

But you're a cop

**BEN**

Not anymore. I haven't been a cop for some time now.

BEN's expression softens for a moment, almost into a look of regret. His anger is suddenly gone just as the wind itself begins to die away.

**MARK**

Please ... let me go... don't leave me here.

**BEN**

Do what she to you, City boy. Be kind to yourself and you'll stand a better chance. I think he only takes the hopeless.

The look in his eyes causes MARK to fall silent. Then BEN turns away, WATCHER following at his heels, the darkness swallowing him.

**CUT TO:**

**132.           EXTERIOR. DAWN. THE DESERT.**

The wind is still. The desert breathless as if in anticipation of the coming light.

WENDY lies curled in a foetal position in the dust, the sand banked in ripples against her. She does not stir as HITCH walks towards her. He stands over her for a moment and then slowly bends, kneeling beside her sleeping form.

At that moment the rim of the sun appears over the horizon and the sky slowly begins to turn from red to gold. HITCH watches the sunrise for a while before turning to look at WENDY, wanting to share this moment with her. He reaches down and touches her hair.

In the dawn light her face is like the countenance of some ancient statue, raised from the sand by the desert wind. He does not wake her but instead sits quietly at her side, watching the coming light.

**CUT TO:**

**133.           EXTERIOR. DAWN. THE DESERT. HALF A KILOMETRE WEST.**

BEN marches into the rising sun, his eyes shielded by the brim of his hat, the shotgun cradled in his arms, WATCHER following, snuffling at his heels. He scarcely sees the dawn.

**CUT TO:**

**134.           EXTERIOR. DAWN. THE DESERT. HALF A KILOMETRE EAST.**

HITCH turns slowly away from the rising sun, trying to etch the memory of its light into his memory, not knowing if he will have the chance to see such a sight again. He looks down at WENDY, something almost sad in his expression.

She is so beautiful.

He reaches out to gently caress her cheek with his grubby hand and she sighs, turning in her sleep, her movement disturbing the intricate ripples of the sand. He withdraws his hand.

WENDY moans softly and opens her eyes. The moment she wakes she feels HITCH's presence and she sits up suddenly in panic, glancing around herself. HITCH is nowhere to be seen.

She relaxes slowly and it is only a moment later as she rubs her eyes that she sees HITCH's tracks in the sand. The trail leads away from her up the side of a low dune and she rises uneasily to her feet, knowing she has no option but to follow it.

She clambers to the top of the dune, breaking into a run as she nears its crest, seeing on the other side the top of a line of telegraph poles and beyond that the corrugated iron rooftops of a small town.

Tears well up in her eyes blurring her vision and it is a moment before she realizes that the town is strangely silent.

**WENDY**  
Oh God! No!

Her eyes widen now as she gazes upon the streets.

The tops of the telegraph poles are barely waist high, each building buried up to its first floor in a drift of orange sand, the dunes reaching in through the shattered windows to fill their empty rooms. The whole town is deserted, long since dead and given up to the wasteland, its architecture frozen somewhere in the thirties.

She stumbles down the side of the dune, running parallel to the telegraph poles up what must have once been the town's main street.

**WENDY**  
NO! PLEASE... SOMEBODY... THERE  
MUST BE SOMEBODY HERE!

A low, animal snarl comes in response and she freezes in her tracks as a large, panting dog comes padding around the corner of the street, its lips pulled back to reveal a line of gleaming yellow teeth.

**WENDY**  
Hitch?

The dog raises its snout towards her and snarls.

She starts to take a step backwards when a man appears behind the dog.

**134. EXTERIOR. DAWN. THE DESERT. HALF A KILOMETRE EAST.**  
**CONTINUED.**

BEN's nerves are frayed to their limit. He levels the shotgun at the sound as he sees her movement, drawing a bead on her before he realises who she is.

WENDY dives for shelter just as he lowers the shotgun.

**BEN**  
Mrs Robinson! Wait!

WENDY gets to her hands and knees, doing a fast crawl through one of the open windows and disappearing into the gloom of a sanded-in building.

**BEN**  
No! Come back! Everything's alright!

Her movement is like a red rag to a bull for WATCHER who cannot restrain himself any longer, racing after her, barking furiously.

**BEN**  
WATCHER! NO! COME BACK HERE!

The dog disappears through the open window, paying him no attention.

**CUT TO:**

**135. INTERIOR. DAY. THE DERELICT BUILDING.**

WENDY scampers on all fours across the sanded in room, her head almost scraping the light fixture as she passes.

She reaches the doorway leading to the stairs but the aperture is very small and before she has time to squeeze herself through the dog is already upon her. She throws her back to the wall, lashing out with her feet, feeling the dog's teeth snapping at her legs.

**WENDY**  
NO! GET THE FUCK AWAY FROM ME!

A lucky kick finds the dog in the chest and it backs off for a moment, yelping. She edges towards the doorway as the dog lowers its muzzle once more, its eyes full of stupid hatred.

Then WATCHER pauses and turns, sniffing the air, his hackles rising as if sensing the presence of something WENDY cannot see or know. WATCHER looks towards the street and a terrible whine rises from its throat and WENDY takes the opportunity to scramble through the doorway into the interior of the building.

**CUT TO:**

**136.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE GHOST TOWN.**

BEN hears WATCHER whine and he steps slowly towards the building, the shotgun wavering in his hands.

**BEN**  
Watcher? Mrs Robinson?

He lowers the gun, clipping it onto safety and reaching into his pocket with one hand he slowly withdraws the magic kerie.

**BEN**  
Wendy?

BEN starts forward, plunging into the waiting darkness of the derelict building.

**CUT TO:**

**137.           INTERIOR. DAY. THE DERELICT BUILDING.**

BEN wanders deeper into the sanded in building, feeling like a ghost himself now. Everywhere here are piled sand drifts and thin shafts of pale sunlight cutting through the dusty air. Everywhere here are memories of a vanished people and a vanished era. Wasted, sanded-in lives. He sniffs the air, his eyes adjusting slowly to the gloom.

**BEN**  
Watcher? Mrs Robinson?

He squeezes through a sanded-in doorway and finds himself in a low corridor, taking another turning to emerge into a long, gloomy bowling alley, a line of skittles still standing at its far end, an old-fashioned ice box in one corner of the room, the light strewn like rushes across the floor. He pauses, sure that he can hear something.

**BEN**  
Wendy?

And it is if he hears the sound of distant music now.  
An antique piano.  
An echo of laughter, already fading.

He turns and for a moment he almost sees their outlines in the dusty sunlight. The hardy settlers of the Skeleton Coast, their shadows surrounding him, greeting him as if in a dream. The light behind them obscures their features but BEN imagines now that they are not the faces of the dead but the features of his own townsfolk.

HENDRYK, AARON, KORNELIUS, JOE, SAARTJIE, standing in the shadows, the dust covering their feet. He looks for KATIE but cannot see her. In her place he sees the outline of a young man much like himself and BEN steps towards him.

**137.           INTERIOR. DAY. THE DERELICT BUILDING. CONTINUED.**

**BEN**  
Jake?

But as he approaches him the figure seems to draw further away, disappearing at last into the gloom. He realises that he must be going mad.

He sees a light now at the far end of the bowling alley and he moves towards it, seeking relief from the silence and darkness of dried-out wood and crumbling stone.

The light solidifies into a doorway and he steps back out into the street of the deserted town.

**CUT TO:**

**138.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE GHOST TOWN.**

He almost bumps right into the man who is standing waiting for him. BEN glances bemusedly at him, seeing his blonde hair and blue eyes.

**BEN**  
Who are you?

The man smiles reassuringly at him.

Then something flashes in his hand and the blade of HITCH's knife plunges into BEN's diaphragm at the precise moment that BEN sees the dried blood on HITCH's face and realises his mistake.

The blade plunges upwards into his ribcage, the force of the blow driving him backwards, the kierre tumbling from his hand, blood already pulsing down his legs He gasps as HITCH twists the knife inside him, feeling it puncture his heart.

He staggers, pulling free of the blade, seeing his blood dewing HITCH's face. He tries to speak, his words thick with blood, his eyes still bemused.

**BEN**  
But...

He tries to say something else, maybe to ask something of his murderer, but a thick jet of blood gushes from his lips instead of words and a look of indescribable sorrow fills his eyes as if in this . moment he feels he has been betrayed by everything.

He wavers a second longer, blood fountaining from him and then he pitches forward, falling stiff as a felled tree to the waiting dust. HITCH stands over him, polishing his knife on the leg of his jeans, smiling understandingly.

BEN scarcely sees the dust now but seems instead to be looking across a bright green lawn towards the edge of the verandah where KATIE sits with JAKE on her lap, the football still cradled in his arms. And it is as if the football is the globe of the world and KATIE, smiling, is the virgin herself.

**138.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE GHOST TOWN. CONTINUED.**

He tries to speak her name and there comes instead a wordless voice like the cry of an unborn child or a whale dreaming in the cool green depths of the ocean.

**CUT TO:**

**139.           INTERIOR. DAY. BEN'S BEDROOM.**

The photograph on the mantelpiece rattles as a train passes on the railway line outside.

**CUT TO:**

**140.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE GHOST TOWN.**

A gust of wind comes up and the dust rises to drink BEN MUKUROB's blood. HITCH looks up from the corpse just as WATCHER bursts from the derelict building, barking frenziedly, smelling his master's blood.

HITCH smiles at the dog, the knife glistening in his hand.

**CUT TO:**

**141.           INTERIOR. DAY. THE DERELICT BUILDING.**

WENDY scampers towards the window, keeping to the shadows, watching as the dog circles HITCH. HITCH's eyes are rooted on WATCHER's and he turns slowly with the dog, unwittingly presenting his back to her.

She scrambles quickly towards BEN's corpse, her eyes fixed on the shotgun still clutched in his hands.

**CUT TO:**

**142.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE GHOST TOWN.**

A wordless communication seems to pass between HITCH and the dog, WATCHER's growls subsiding into whimpers as HITCH advances on him, the knife poised.

WENDY pushes at BEN's corpse, rolling his body off the shotgun and trying to extract his frozen fingers from the trigger guard.

WATCHER chooses this moment to turn tail and run, scampering away down the street in a series of frightened yelps.

HITCH grins broadly, turning back towards the derelict building.

142.

**EXTERIOR. DAY. THE GHOST TOWN. CONTINUED.**

**HITCH**

It's okay, Wendy! You can come out now! Everything's hunky-dory!

WENDY is already kneeling in the dust, the shotgun in her hands. Their eyes meet for a split second as she levels the gun at his head and pulls the trigger. Nothing happens. She pulls the trigger again. Still nothing.

**HITCH**

It's on safety.

**WENDY**

What?

**HITCH**

You've got the safety catch on.  
It's that little lever next to the breech.

WENDY looks slowly from HITCH to the gun, seeing at once that he's right. She glances up at him to make sure he's not trying anything on. He shrugs, raising his hands. She clips the gun off safety, taking aim once more.

**WENDY**

Back off! Hands in the air! I mean it!

**HITCH**

What are you going to do? Shoot me?

**WENDY**

Fuck yes!

**HITCH**

You got no right to shoot me.

**WENDY**

You tried to kill me! You killed those other women!

**HITCH**

That's because they wanted to die. That's because you wanted die the day before yesterday. People only come to me when they want to die.

**WENDY**

Well I want to live now, you crazy bastard! I changed my mind.

**HITCH**

Then what would I want to hurt you for?

**WENDY**

Drop the knife! Now!



142.

**EXTERIOR. DAY. THE GHOSTTOWN. CONTINUED.**

**HITCH**

Sure.

He lets the blade fall and for a moment all they can do is stand and stare at each other, not knowing what to do or say. The wind is still rising and now inexplicably the day begins to darken, the sky suddenly filled with clouds.

HITCH takes off his hat and looks towards the sky.

**HITCH**

It's going to rain. I think it's actually going to rain.  
First time in seven years.

He looks her in the eye once more and her grip on the shotgun wavers.

**HITCH**

Only love will make it rain. I do love you, Wendy.  
With all my soul. I always have. I always will.

Thunder rumbles in the distance and WENDY thinks she feels a drop of water on her face.

**WENDY**

Who the hell are you?

**HITCH**

You must believe, Wendy! What else can I do to convince you? I'd walk on water if we had any.

**WENDY**

You son of a bitch! I almost do believe you.

The shotgun shivers in her hands. HITCH takes a step closer.

**HITCH**

You can save me. There can be life in this place.  
And happiness. We should be happy because of death,  
because life is random, because it is so short yet so  
filled with beauty. There is no such thing as evil.  
No such thing as darkness. Only light.

WENDY looks up towards the clouds, seeing lightning flicker in the distance.  
HITCH takes another step towards her and she glances nervously back at him.

**WENDY**

Hitch?

**HITCH**

I love you, Wendy.

**142.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE GHOST TOWN. CONTINUED.**

He lashes suddenly out with his boot, kicking her in the wrist and sending the shotgun flying from her hands, his arm arcing back as he flicks a straight razor from his sleeve.

**WENDY**  
NO! I WANT TO LIVE!

And HITCH screams now like a hyena, brandishing the razor so that it is caught in a ray of desert sun that bursts suddenly through the clouds. The blade descends in a gleaming arc and she reels backwards as the side of her face is laid open in a welter of blood.

She stumbles away, screaming, trying to shield herself, HITCH dancing after her, the razor flashing in his hand. The back of her foot strikes BEN's body and she overbalances, falling heavily beside his corpse, clutching at her maimed face, blood dripping between her fingers.

HITCH steps lightly after her, raising the blade once more, his face frozen in a feral grin.

Then he freezes.

His smile dies as he glances down to see that he had stepped over the fallen kerie. He looks up at BEN's corpse, suddenly realising what has happened. He sees BEN's eyes, lifeless now yet somehow watchful and accusing.

He glances back at WENDY.

She has used his momentary distraction to grab up the shotgun and is levelling it at his head, her face a mask of blood.

**HITCH**  
Wendy?

There is a note of uncertainty in his voice. For the first time his eyes seem almost vulnerable. Almost human.

Then WENDY pulls the trigger and the expression vanishes from his eyes forever as his head disintegrates in a spray of blood and bone shards. The kick of the blast drives WENDY backwards as HITCH's body tumbles away from her, crumpling to the dirt in the middle of the main street.

She lies on her back for a while, moaning, HITCH still twitching a few feet away from her, his fingers clutching helplessly at the air. Gradually his movements cease and WENDY slowly struggles to her knees, sobbing as she tears a strip from her dress to hold against her wounded face.

HITCH, lying beside her, has no face left at all. She remains there, kneeling with him, rocking herself from side to side, until the bleeding stops, the wind lifting the dust around her in a stinging haze, slowly burying BEN and HITCH.

It refuses to rain.

**CUT TO:**

**143.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE DESERT.**

The clouds are parting and the first real heat of the day is just starting to reach MARK who is still hanging on as if crucified from the front of the landrover, the radio crackling unreachably behind him.

**RADIO**

This is Foxtrot calling Echo Bravo! Foxtrot calling Echo Bravo! Come in Echo Bravo!

MARK's head is bowed. His entire body aching with pain and exhaustion.

Through narrow, half-lidded eyes he sees a figure come striding towards him through the heathaze, a shotgun propped over its shoulders and a dog following at its heels. It is only when he hears WATCHER snarling that he opens his eyes.

**MARK**

Wendy?

There is no recognition in her eyes. Eyes that have become terribly distant, as if glazed forever by the sun, deep set in a pale, blood-streaked face.

WATCHER continues to snarl at him.

**MARK**

Wendy, it's alright! It's Mark!

She steps towards him, levelling the shotgun and he cringes.

**MARK**

Wendy... please...

Her expression remains implacable.

**MARK**

Please... I didn't mean to hit you...  
Wendy! For God's sake!

He closes his eyes, anticipating the gunshot.

**MARK**

I don't want to die.

For a moment there is silence. When Mark opens his eyes she is already walking away.

**MARK**

No! Come back! I love you! We can start again!  
I swear to God! Everything can be alright!  
It can be just like the old days! We can forget  
this ever happened.

**143.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE DESERT. CONTINUED.**

WENDY keeps walking.

MARK tugs at the end of his chain, the handcuff rubbing his wrist raw and bloody as he tries in vain to pull the landrover forward.

**MARK**

Wendy! Please! Don't leave me here!

But she does not look back.

**CUT TO:**

**144.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE DESERT.**

The sky is cloudless, the sun blistering WENDY's back as she walks. Her skin is dark and sunburned, her feet a deep purple colour now, almost black. Every step for her is like walking on knives yet somehow the pain comforts her.

In proving that she is still alive it gives her strength. She rides her pain all the way to the freeway, singing a wordless song very much like the song that JOE sang at the campfire, WATCHER limping at her heels.

**CUT TO:**

**145.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE FREEWAY.**

WENDY slowly climbs the gravel verge to the asphalt river.

The air here is quicksilver.

A rippling heat haze across the morning.

WENDY's figure warping in and out of shape as if crossing over from one world to another.

She seems scarcely human. A dancing ghost herself now, blistered feet walking the white line.

There is a low tremor.

A bass rumble like distant thunder.

She pauses and then, bending, puts her ear to the line and listens to the road.

There is a glimmer in the heat haze.

Something swimming into life in the far distance.

Sunlight flashing on metal.

An armoured car, the first vehicle of a military convoy appears, riding on air, the rumble of diesel engines growing louder.

WENDY props the shotgun over her shoulder, stepping slowly out into the road.

**145.           EXTERIOR. DAY. THE FREEWAY. CONTINUED.**

The sun glints on the approaching windshield.

She can see the faces of the soldiers now.

She raises her hand.

**DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:**

**146.           EXTERIOR. DUSK. NOWHERE.**

The figure of a traveller silhouetted momentarily against its glare, a battered hat riding on his head and a ragged coat fluttering behind him. The figure walks towards the light and it seems now that having reached the threshold of eternity all of God's creation lies spread before his bootheels.

**JOE (VOICE OVER)**

We must struggle to breathe the wind a while longer,  
to preserve the stories and the memories. To teach  
the children to read the stony secrets of the hills and  
listen for the distant singing of the stars. And to trace  
within the searing sun at noon the tragic, golden glory  
of creation.

Then there is only silence and the golden light.

Fade to black.

Roll end titles.