

FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - MILLSTONE, TEXAS - NIGHT  
**SUPERIMPOSE TITLE CARD: JUNE, 1991**

A FIREBIRD races down a rural road. It's 205 horsepower cutting through the night like lightning.

It PASSES two cars over a DOUBLE YELLOW LINE... swerving in and out.

Barely making the hairpin turn up ahead. GIRLS LAUGHTER escapes the speeding car... LAUGHTER that soon turns to SCREAMS... as the car accelerates. A joyride just moments from going out of control.

INT. FIREBIRD - CONTINUOUS

THREE TEENS crammed in the back seat. ROLAND (18) in the middle. He cups a malt liquor bottle between his knees. Tammy (18) and Jillian (18) bookend him.

ROLAND

Slow down, man.

JILLIAN

Hey. Let us out. Pull over!

ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The Firebird hits a long, flat stretch of open road and speeds up. CLOCKING at least 90 mph.

It's back wheel hits the gravel shoulder... spitting up rocks... causing the car to spin and careen up an embankment...

SOARING and then FLIPPING in mid air... CRASHING DOWN on the road... the doors FLY OPEN... two BODIES are ejected from the car...

the Firebird ROLLS twice and is miraculously upright again... skidding now across the lanes as if on ice... SPARKS exploding against the guard rail... SOUNDS of METAL BEING TORN APART... the Firebird heads straight for...

A METAL GATE off the road. The kind used to pen in animals.

Driver spins the WHEEL in one last effort...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Firebird HITS the gate... SMACK... HEAD ON... the car SPLITTING in TWO. FINAL IMPACT. SOUNDS as parts fall off the mangled frame... fluids HISS... and STEAM fills the night air. Followed by an eerie SILENCE.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. ROAD - HILLSBORO, TEXAS (**PRESENT TIME**) - MORNING

**SUPERIMPOSE TITLE CARD: 25 YEARS LATER**

A pickup SPEEDS down a back paved road. Rakes, shovels, and lawn mowers BOUNCE in back.

INT. PICKUP - EARLY MORNING

BRANDON BRIGGS (45), once got by on his looks, now life and weather-worn from years of working outdoors, tattoos line both his forearms. He presses his work boot down on the pedal.

HIS POV - ROAD

Three Texas whitetail deer cross in his path.

BRANDON

Oh shit.

PICKUP

Brandon pumps the brakes... skids and swerves... around the deer. He checks his rearview, as the deer go on their way. He FLOORS the gas pedal again.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - SAME MORNING

LANDSCAPERS pruning trees, mowing lawns and manning leaf blowers on a commercial property.

Brandon's truck speeds up. Before the vehicle is fully stopped, he jumps out. Grabs his company T-shirt off the front seat and rushes toward his boss, WALTER, (50s), pot-bellied.

WALTER

I said seven-thirty, not eight  
forty-five.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRANDON

Had a flat. Where you need me,  
boss?

WALTER

Turn back around.

BRANDON

What?

WALTER

Somebody already took your spot.

Brandon looks over at the crew.

BRANDON

I'll work through my break. Make  
it up on the tail end.

Brandon grabs a rake off his pickup truck. Walter stops  
him.

WALTER

I said... go home.

BRANDON

Just for today? Then we're good?  
(Walt tosses the rake  
back on the truck)  
Well, you owe me pay.

WALTER

Come by the office. Rhonda will  
cut you a check. I'll take your  
shirt.

Walter gestures for Brandon's T-shirt in his hand.  
Brandon reluctantly tosses it to his boss.

WALTER

Give it to a man who appreciates  
work. Not some loser who shows up  
whenever he...

Brandon grabs Walter and slams him against his pickup.  
His eyes wide. Face flushed.

The work crew stop and gawk. Leaf blowers idle.

As fast as Brandon flared, he composes himself. He  
releases Walter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRANDON

I'm... sorry, man.

WALTER

Get out of my sight and you can  
forget that check.

Walter walks away. The leaf blowers slowly come back to life. Brandon leaves.

EXT. BRIGGS HOUSE - SAME MORNING

Ranch house. Garage filled with landscaping equipment and tools. Brandon's pickup is in the driveway.

A late-model minivan swings into the driveway. DEBBIE (late 20s), with all the protectiveness of a new mother, gets out and unbuckles her son, CHARLIE (2) from his car seat.

Debbie hears SHOUTS coming from inside the house. Glass BREAKS.

DEBBIE

Really, before I even have my  
first cup of coffee?

The screen door flies open. Out bolts, KAREN (40s) dressed half her age in low cut jeans and skimpy top. Karen carries her belongings: Mr. Coffee Maker, leather skirts, a suede jacket and PayLess heels.

KAREN

(off Debbie's look)  
He's your problem now.

DEBBIE

Uh-oh. What he do this time?

KAREN

Got shit-canned off another job.

Karen gets into her car with the missing hub caps and drives off. Debbie removes the grocery bag from the minivan. She heads toward the house, holding Charlie.

DEBBIE

Don't ever date women like that  
when you grow up. I don't care how  
big their tits are.

INT. BRANDON'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Debbie enters the living room. TV tuned into a daytime courtroom show. Brandon sits on the sofa and drains a can of Papst Blue Ribbon.

DEBBIE

What's up with Karen?

BRANDON

She walked out.

DEBBIE

More like ran out from the looks of it. That one didn't last long.

BRANDON

Long enough.

(a beat)

Hey. Where's Charlie Man?

Debbie hands Charlie over to him. Brandon's face lights up. He smooches the toddler. Charlie reaches for his mother. Brandon hands him back.

BRANDON

Ornery little guy.

DEBBIE

Yeah, babies are funny like that. They hate the smell of beer first thing in the morning.

BRANDON

What's in the bag?

DEBBIE

Stopped at the market. Picked you up a lemon and herb rotisserie chicken, milk and bread. Oh, and some fancy new pita chips.

Debbie enters his kitchen, familiar with the place. She opens the fridge, it's empty except for a case of beer, butter and hot dogs.

BRANDON (O.S.)

How much I owe ya?

DEBBIE

Besides your life? Nothing. You planted those shrubs, remember? So, you're not working today?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEBBIE (CONT'D)  
Just gonna lounge around here all  
day, watching TV? Judge Judy  
paying your rent next month?

LIVING ROOM

Brandon shuts off the TV.

BRANDON  
Walt didn't need me.

DEBBIE (O.S.)  
Didn't need you or fired you?

BRANDON  
Both.

Charlie plays on the rug. Brandon joins him. SFX: DOG  
BARKS OUTSIDE. Debbie peeks in the yard.

DEBBIE  
You get a dog?

BRANDON  
Neighbor's. They leave her out  
there in that yard twenty-four  
seven, in all kinds of weather.

DEBBIE  
People like that shouldn't own  
animals.

BRANDON  
People like that should be chained  
to a fence, without any food or  
water, be forced to lay in their  
own piss and shit all day and see  
how they like it.

Debbie closes the fridge. Stands in the doorway.  
Something weighing on her.

DEBBIE  
I got a call this morning.

Charlie touches Brandon's stubbly chin.

BRANDON  
Yeah.

DEBBIE  
From your mother's lawyer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Off Brandon's reaction.

BRANDON

I didn't know she had one.

Debbie takes a moment to unload the rest.

DEBBIE

Your mother died.

This unexpected news lands hard. Brandon continues to play with Charlie for a long moment, then gets up.

BRANDON

When?

DEBBIE

Over the weekend.

Brandon walks into the kitchen.

DEBBIE

Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, B.

BRANDON

What other kind is there?

KITCHEN - FRIDGE

Brandon grabs another beer and some raw hot dogs.

BRANDON

Why call you?

DEBBIE

He had your old number. Well... my mom's old number. He left his in case you want to...

BRANDON

Thanks for coming by, Deb.

Brandon abruptly exits into the yard. Debbie places the slip of paper on the counter.

CLOSE ON NOTE

Attorney Benjamin Maxwell 914-678-9132

EXT. BRANDON'S YARD - CONTINUOUS

Brandon feeds the hot dogs to the chained BLACK LAB through a broken fence.

BRANDON

They're the good kind. Kosher.  
Means all the crap in 'em's been  
blessed.

MALE NEIGHBOR (30s), a pudgy guy in jeans and a faded Batman shirt, swings open his back door and steps out on the porch.

NEIGHBOR

Dude, don't be feeding her. She's  
on a special diet.

Brandon lifts his beer can in acknowledgment.

BRANDON

Got it.  
(to himself)  
What kind of special diet...  
starvation?

Neighbor goes back inside. Brandon finds a seat on the back steps of his own house. Sucks his beer. Debbie emerges with Charlie.

DEBBIE

B, we're taking off.

BRANDON

Yep. Bye, Charlie Man.

Debbie takes a seat right beside him. She stares hard at him. Brandon finally looks over at her and the boy -- the only two bright spots in his life.

BRANDON

What?

DEBBIE

Please don't become that guy.

BRANDON

What guy?

DEBBIE

The guy who misses his own  
mother's funeral. You've got  
enough regrets. Don't add another.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRANDON

I can't go to Millstone, Deb. Not for a million reasons.

Debbie holds Charlie out to him. Brandon kisses him.

DEBBIE

You only need one. And her funeral is tomorrow. We can go with you if you want company... or for moral support.

Brandon taps her leg and rises. He goes inside the house.

DEBBIE

(yells to him)

You know them balls God gave you? They're not for decoration.

Brandon shuts the door. Subject closed.

EXT. BRANDON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Blue glow of the TV on inside.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME NIGHT

Half-eaten rotisserie chicken is on the table, empty beer cans. Brandon's passed out on the sofa.

INT. BRANDON'S KITCHEN - NEXT DAY - SUNRISE

Brandon pushes a pile of dirty dishes aside. Runs the tap and splashes cold water on his face. Opens a cabinet. Removes shaving cream and a dollar-store razor. He shaves, looking at himself in the dull reflection of the refrigerator door. With each scratchy stroke, tears fill his eyes. Grief taking hold.

PHONE RINGS. From Brandon's reaction, the damn thing must never ring. An outdated machine PICKS up.

BEN MAXWELL (V.O.)

(voice on machine)

Good morning. This is Ben Maxwell for Mr. Brandon Briggs. Mr. Briggs, Deborah Rawson gave me your number. Please accept my condolences about your mother.

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CONTINUED:

Brandon leans on the sink. Shaving cream left on one side of his face. He listens to the caller.

BEN MAXWELL (V.O.)

Please call my office at 914-678-9132. I'd like to discuss your mother's will and property with you.

CLICK. DIAL TONE. Silence.

BRANDON

What will... and property?

Brandon's eyes land on a stack of overdue bills on the counter. Machine blinks RED. He stands in the kitchen -- facing a long day ahead without a job and rising sorrow.

He grabs Debbie's note left on the counter and reaches for the phone.

INT. BRANDON'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brandon tosses a clean T-shirt, socks and boxers into a gym bag. Grabs his only white button down shirt from the closet. Moves to his night stand. Opens it. Removes a .45 and drops it into his bag.

EXT. BRANDON'S YARD - CONTINUOUS

Brandon walks to the fence. The chained dog on the other side wags its tail in anticipation. Brandon tosses the dog some leftover chicken.

BRANDON

Lemon and herb. Go crazy.

Neighbor swings the door open. Today he wears a Superman shirt. Hands on both hips.

NEIGHBOR

Hey, asshole? Didn't I tell you not to feed her? You deaf?

Brandon scoffs and swiftly hops the fence.

NEIGHBOR

Fuck.

BRANDON

Repeat that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The neighbor runs inside the house. Locks the door.

NEIGHBOR  
(from inside)  
I'll call the cops!

Brandon KICKS the door hard. Rattles the pane of glass.

BRANDON  
Go ahead, man, but first ya better  
hide all this weed you're growin'!  
(KICKS the door again)  
Your dog is dyin' of thirst, you  
Super Hero Douche Bag.

INSIDE HOUSE

Neighbor cowers in a foyer that looks more like a Comic  
Con vendor booth.

PORCH

Brandon locates the dog's dirty bowl. Fills it with water  
from the garden hose. Dog laps the water up without end.  
Brandon hops the fence again.

INT. BRANDON'S PICKUP

Brandon flings his bag into the front seat. Slaps visor  
down. There, clipped to it, is a faded Polaroid photo of  
a young Brandon (18) with a pretty girl, HAYLEY (18).  
Both in swim suits. Standing together on a dock.  
Brandon slaps the visor back up and starts the engine.

EXT. INTERSTATE 45 - SAME DAY

Brandon driving north, toward Wichita Falls.

EXT. MILLSTONE, TEXAS - LATER THAT DAY

Brandon driving into Millstone near Wichita. Main Street  
is like all small towns, filled with local shops and  
lifetime residents.

EXT. MILLSTONE FUNERAL HOME - SAME

Brandon watching the MOURNERS come and go. He checks his  
watch. Sweating now under pressure.