

"On the Road"

by

Cara Huskey

Name (of company, if applicable)

Address

Phone Number

FADE IN:

EXT. HIGHWAY — DAY

The scene opens with a man, ALEX, on the side of a highway, shoes and hands covered in dirt, forehead covered in sweat. He sits on an overstuffed suitcase and stares at the ground. He's in his late twenties with shaggy black hair and a black Metallica t-shirt on.

He tucks his hair behind his ear with one hand, leaving a smear of soil on his face. Desert stretches out behind him, scorching and arid. There are no cars on the road.

Suddenly, a truck rumbles in the distance. Alex stands up and flags down the car, which rolls to a stop.

The driver, WILL, rolls down the window. He has on a pair of round glasses. His hair is brown and curly, hanging down into his eyes.

WILL

Hey, kid, are you okay? It's way too hot outside to be sitting in it for long.

Alex walks up to the window and closes his eyes as he feels the air conditioning from inside the cab.

ALEX

You're telling me. I've been out here for hours.

Will winces sympathetically as he notes Alex's sweat-drenched shirt.

WILL

Your ride broke down all the way out here?

ALEX

(shaking his head)

It got me where I needed to go. I just didn't plan on it being this hard to catch a ride.

Will pauses for a moment, considering, before he unlocks the car doors and gestures for Alex to hop in.

ALEX

(embarrassed)

Oh, I appreciate it, man, but I don't have money to help with gas.

(pause)
 Or... y'know, money at all, really.
 Otherwise I'd've stopped at the
 bus station.

Will waves a hand through the air in dismissal.

WILL
 S'fine. Today you, tomorrow me,
 you know? It's the least I can do
 to help you out.

Alex's upper body is fully through the window now, his
 face directly in front of the A/C vent, which is blowing
 through his hair.

ALEX
 Yeah, uh, I'm trying to get to
 Greenville. It's in Utah? But you
 don't have to take me the whole
 way! I can catch a ride from
 wherever you're going...

Will looks up in surprise.

WILL
 That's where I'm headed! Really,
 what are the odds?

ALEX
 (smiling, surprised)
 Small world, I guess.

Alex returns to his suitcase and begins lugging it to the
 car. Will gets out and walks over to help him.

WILL
 Let me get that.

ALEX
 No, you're already driving—

WILL
 I insist. You've been out in the
 sun all day, and I haven't done
 anything but sit all day. I could
 use the exercise.

Alex smiles at him gratefully before climbing into the
 passenger seat. It's already cleaned off, all of the
 trash and luggage thrown haphazardly into the back.

Will opens the trunk of the car and shuffles things
 around to make room for the oversized suitcase.

The camera pans down, and it lingers on the scene as we see Will hastily throw a towel over a blood-stained cage in the back of his car, filled with knives and scalpels.

FADE IN:

INT. CAR – DAY

Cut to them both sitting in awkward silence. The interior of the car is cramped, slightly too small for either of them to sit comfortably.

A green tree-shaped air freshener hangs from the rearview mirror. Starbucks and Iced cups litter the floor of the backseat. On the seat itself sits a guitar case and two leather suitcases.

ALEX

We could turn on the radio? Or...

WILL

I usually just drive in silence.

Alex nods, pressing his lips together in that awkward smile people do at strangers.

ALEX

Right. Right. 'Course.

WILL

Not that I don't like music.

ALEX

Uh-huh. Yeah. No, I got it.

WILL

Because I do.

ALEX

Yep.

WILL

Like music, I mean.

ALEX

I figured.

Will nods. The awkward silence continues.

Will turns on his signal and merges to the left as one of the lanes ends.

Alex makes a popping noise with his mouth, eyes darting over the landscape outside.

Will clenches his jaw with each sharp noise, visibly annoyed.

WILL
(reluctant)
So, are you from around here, or...

ALEX
(speaking fast,
relieved to break
the silence)
No, not really. I'm from Nevada,
which is sort of far away from
here?

(awkward laugh)
But after I graduated college, I
thought I'd just go out and see
the world, y'know? Just do my own
thing. I got a degree in business,
and for a while that was the
dream, but I wasn't *feeling* it,
you know?

WILL
(filled with regret
that he asked)
Sure.

As Alex continues talking, Will's grip on the steering wheel tightens.

ALEX
And I even had a fiancée back
home, but it just didn't work out.
So I set out. Decided to add some
adventure to my life. I've been
picking up odd jobs here and
there, and it's exhilarating! Like
the last place I stayed in. It was
a farm a few miles back, or, I
guess probably more than a few
miles. We've been driving for a
while now, haven't we?
(turning in his seat
to face Will)
How long have we been driving?

Cut to a black card with a plain white font reading '...
FIVE MINUTES IN'.

WILL
(through grit teeth)
Um. I'm not quite sure.

ALEX

(shrugging)

Well, that's alright. We get there when we get there.

(snapping his fingers)

Oh, I was going to tell you about the farm I was staying at. They just had me doing odd jobs around the place. Not one for manual labor – not quite built for it, you know? But I'm handy with a shovel when I want to be!

The music rises as Will glances over to the car door. Alex's voice fades into the background, still going but words not distinguishable.

In the door cupholder sits a long hunting knife. The camera zooms in on Will's hand twitching against the wheel, as if he's going to grab it.

CUT TO:

A scene of Will, somewhere in the countryside, leaning into the open passenger door of his car as he scrubs at a blood stain caked into the canvas seat. A limp hand is visible from behind one of the wheels. He checks his watch before wiping sweat from his forehead and continuing to scrub.

WILL

(muttering angrily to himself)

Ugh. Reminder to self: blood will not wash out of the car seats without a fight.

BACK TO:

Will shakes his head at the memory. He takes a deep breath, composing himself, and gives Alex a reassuring smile. Alex, for his part, is still going.

ALEX

Did you hear me?

WILL

What? Sorry, no.

ALEX

I asked what you're headed to Utah for. I mean, it's quite the drive from here, and you said you'd already been driving for a while.

WILL

Oh! Right.

(a beat)

Uh, I'm something of an artist, I suppose?

Alex glances at the guitar case in the backseat and grins.

ALEX

So like a musician? Man, I bet you're secretly super famous. Is that it? Are you secretly a superstar? Is this a Hannah Montana situation?

Will lets out a brief snort of laughter.

WILL

If I were a superstar, I wouldn't be driving forty hours in *this* car, I can tell you that much.

(a beat)

What are you headed to, if you don't mind me asking?

ALEX

Oh, friend of a friend of a friend offered to let me stay there. Some guy named Charlie. His aunt runs a restaurant and always needs some extra help around the place.

(a beat)

So, you perform? Like, onstage?

Will nods.

ALEX

(shaking his head)

I couldn't imagine doing something like that, in front of all those *people*.

(a beat)

What's your favorite part of it?

WILL

Hmmm... I think... probably just seeing the look on people's faces.

Alex nods, encouraging.

WILL

I want to do something everyone will remember, you know? I want to be the kind of person that makes an impact on people's lives.

ALEX
 (laughing)
 Yeah, I get that. I've always
 thought it would be fun to have my
 own Wikipedia page or something.

Cut to a black card with a plain white font reading 'AN
 HOUR IN'.

ALEX
 I spy with *my* little eye...

WILL
 (flatly)
 Stop.

ALEX
 Something *red*.

WILL
 I'm not answering you.

Alex stays silent and stares at Will as he drives.

WILL
 Seriously. I mean it.

Cut to a black card with a plain white font reading
 'THREE HOURS IN'.

ALEX
 Something *blue*.

WILL
 (has clearly given
 up)
 Is it that sign?

ALEX
 No.

WILL
 Is it... my sunglasses?

ALEX
 Nope.

Cut to a black card with a plain white font reading
 'THREE (AND A HALF) HOURS IN'.

WILL
 It can't be the *sky*! That is *not*
 how the game works!

ALEX

The game *works* when I pick something and tell you the color of it!

WILL

You— The sky isn't an object! It doesn't count!

ALEX

Oh, are you really gonna play it like that? Because in that case, you could say that *all* colors are subjective—

Cut to a black card with a plain white font reading 'FIVE HOURS IN'.

A shot of the car from behind, parked at a gas station. Will is on the left side, pumping gas. Alex is slumped across the car, his feet in the driver's seat and his head near the ground, hanging out of his open door.

ALEX

I sure do wish I had some Twizzlers.

WILL

I bet you do.

A beat.

ALEX

Being out here in all this sun... it really makes a man think about how long it's been since he last had Twizzlers.

WILL

Knock it off. Seriously, I'm already letting you hitch a ride with me.

ALEX

Maybe if you just left me here, I could wait for someone to take pity on me... To buy me some of those delicious and tangy licorice ropes...

Will ignores his Twizzlers lament.

Alex lets out a long sigh.

Will continues pumping the gas and does not look at him.

Alex lets out an even longer, louder, and more melodramatic sigh.

Cut to a black card with a plain white font reading 'SIX HOURS IN'.

Alex, taking a bite of a Twizzler, reaches over and turns on the radio. The first station plays 'Kill Bill' by SZA: *I might kill my ex; not the best idea.*

He changes it. The second station plays the chorus of 'Another One Bites the Dust' by Queen.

He changes it. The third station plays 'Bohemian Rhapsody', also by Queen: *Mama, just killed a man.*

WILL

(tense)

I think silence might be fine,
actually.

An extended pause ensues.

ALEX

(staring pointedly
out the window)

...Ninety-nine bottles of pop on the
wall-

Cut to a black card with a plain white font reading 'SEVEN HOURS IN'.

ALEX

Take one down, pass it around,
seven bottles of pop on the wall!
Seven bottles-

Cut to a black card with a plain white font reading 'EIGHT HOURS IN'.

It's now dark outside, and the lights from the car dash illuminate their faces with a green tint. Alex sits with his feet propped up on the dash and his eyes closed. Will continues to drive.

WILL

I think we should pull over soon.
Dunno if there's going to be
anywhere to get dinner, though.
We're kind of in the middle of
nowhere.

ALEX
 (eyes still closed,
 sounding sleepy)
 Yelp said there was a place off
 the next exit. A diner or
 something.

Will takes the exit. Sure enough, a small retro diner is lit up on the side of the road, surrounded by trees and not much else. The sign on the door declares it *Open!* It's late, and the whole place is deserted as they pull into the parking lot. A neon sign over the door reads: *Mama G's: World Famous Pie!*

Cut to the two of them entering, the door over the bell jingling merrily. The place is 50s themed, with checkerboard tile, red stools at the counter, a jukebox in the corner playing a tinny version of Elvis' greatest hits.

There's an elderly woman behind the counter, MAMA G herself, wearing a pink and blue apron that matches the decor, embroidered with the diner's name.

MAMA G
 What can I get for you boys?

Cut to the two of them sitting across from each other in a booth. Will sips a mug of black coffee. Alex is working his way through a burger, fries, a cup of coffee (pale with creamer), and a slice of the aforementioned "world-famous" pie.

WILL
 ...It's crazy that places like this
 can feel so isolated.

ALEX
 Yeah, I know what you mean.

There is a long moment as Will observes the man in front of him. Tense music rises in the background as the camera zooms in on Will's eyes.

MAMA G
 (suddenly right next
 to their booth)
 More coffee?

Both men jump at her sudden appearance before composing themselves.

Alex flashes her an award-winning smile.

ALEX
 I'd love some.

MAMA G
 (to Will, reaching
 for Alex's cup)
 For you, dear?

WILL
 (with an edge of
 frustration)
 Sure. Thanks.

She fills Alex's cup with the rest of the pitcher in her hand, goes to the counter, and refills Will with the beginnings of a fresh pot.

An awkward moment passes while she refills their coffee before they continue their conversation.

WILL
 So. I guess we should go back to
 the car, then. Find a place to
 stay for the night.

Cut to a black card with a plain white font reading 'NINE HOURS IN'.

Alex crawls into the passenger side of the car in the deserted parking lot, lit up by a single streetlight and the diner lights. He yawns, putting a hand over his mouth, before his eyes go wide and his whole body freezes, tensing up with fear.

The camera slowly rotates to show Will, standing behind him, a knife pressed against his back.

ALEX
 Will? What— I don't understand.

WILL
 (scoffing)
 Really? How stupid can you get?
 (a beat)
 I lied, kid. I'm not an artist —
 at least, not the kind you were
 thinking of. I'm not going to
 Utah. And now, neither are you.
 (laughing)
 I mean, what were you expecting?
 Taking rides from total strangers
 — it was only a matter of time
 before...

His voice trails off, almost as if he's lost his train of thought.

WILL
 Before—

Will's hands go to his throat. His eyes pop out as he chokes on air, making strangled noises before finally falling to the ground.

Alex nudges Will with the toe of his boot, rolling him onto his back and squinting at the man's still-open eyes.

Satisfied with what he sees, he turns around to face Mama G, standing in the doorway of the diner.

ALEX

Took a little long to kick in this time, don't you think?

MAMA G

There are only so many places one can get reputable poisons, dear.

ALEX

You— for crying out loud, Ma, the *poison* we use doesn't need to be "*reputable*".

Cut to a shot of the outside of the diner, the sign flipped over to *Closed*.

FADE IN:

INT. DINER — DAY

The diner is crowded with people trying to get breakfast. Mama G hums along with Nat King Cole playing through the jukebox as she pulls two steaming pies out of the oven. She slides them into the display case next to the counter.

A man in a suit and tie, ANDY, comes in, rubbing his eyes. She slides him an already prepared mug of coffee, and he takes it gratefully.

MAMA G

The regular for you, Andy?

ANDY

Of course.

She gives him a massive piece of the freshly baked pie, the crust soft and flaky, the sugar-coated cherry filling covering the plate, and he begins to eat it, savoring each bite.

MAMA G

How's everything tasting?

ANDY

(shaking his head)

You already know what I'm going to tell you.

(a beat)

Are you ever going to give up the recipe, Miss G? Or is your plan just to make me come in each day to have more of the world's best pie?

She swats at his arm with a dish towel.

MAMA G

Oh, now you already know what I'm going to tell you, Andy.

Andy laughs.

ANDY

Right, right. Same as always.
'Over my dead body.'

The camera pans out for one final shot of the diner. Behind the counter, Alex is smiling and talking indistinctly with customers, wearing the same apron as Mama G and scribbling down orders into a notepad.

As it pans out, the shot lingers on Will's car, still parked out front.

FADE OUT.