

INT. SARA'S CAR - NIGHT

Peter drives as snow whips about them and the SFX: WIND HOWLS, a full-fledged blizzard.

Beside him, Sara wakes with a start. She peers outside, but can't see anything.

She raises both hands to rub her face, then realizes she's untied.

PETER

Ever seen this before?

SARA

Kind of like hurricanes. But this is different. Eerie.

(rubs her wrists)

Thank you.

PETER

Least I could do.

The snow keeps falling. Out of nowhere Sara chuckles which gets a quizzical look from Peter.

SARA

I was thinking. About how nothing ever happens to me and now here it is, all at once. I guess boring isn't that bad. And about how I leapt on your case.

PETER

I deserved it.

SARA

No, you kept us alive.

PETER

At least one thing's gone right.

(tilts head)

The Cherokee around here have a saying -- don't judge a man until you've walked a mile away from him.

They both laugh, a good moment. She looks at him then, uncomfortable at letting his guard down, he peers outside.

PETER

Witch weather.

SARA

Huh?

PETER

Another bit of Cherokee.

(lost in thought)

April comes in like a prancing child; July like a shy girl.

October is a plump woman. All of these are good times. But the old witch of December -- she'll eat you if you sleep.

(back to now)

It's just a story.

SARA

You're more than just a gun-toting maniac, aren't you?

PETER

You tell me. How many gun-toting maniacs do you know?

SARA

Only one.

PETER

Is he normal?

SARA

No. And, these days, that's a blessing. He's kind of nice when you get him away from that military mentality.

PETER

(tenses)

Maybe it's not a mentality, but a lifestyle or a job.

SARA

Did you like it?

PETER

Someone has to do it.

SARA

(sarcastic)

You mean protect the innocent, punish the guilty. Fight in order to keep the peace.

PETER

Yes. Someone has to do it.

SARA

And you can.

PETER

I could.

(beat)

Sometimes.

Sara tries to get comfortable, but keeps her eyes open. Peter concentrates on the difficult driving.

The snow swirls about them as they move on through the night.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Heavy snow covers a large pasture, middle America wooden farmhouse, barn and garage.

Birches and evergreens mark the crooked path of a frozen stream. Sara's car pulls in the yard.

PETER

Welcome to beautiful Furley,
Kansas.

SARA

(wakes up)

All of it?

White empty pasture stretches to the horizon.

A hooded, short figure, made plumper by layers of coats, waddles out from the house.

PETER

Here goes nothing.

He gets out and hugs ETHEL, his mother.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - DAY

The frame house is decorated in Middle American, warm and scrubbed. As seen in the adjoining den, the wood furniture is draped in Christmas handicrafts.

A DOG thumps his tail happily on the floor. At the table, GUNTHER, Peter's auto mechanic and farmer father, uses his wheelchair like a throne.

Ethel, the mother, is thrilled to see Peter and Sara, piling heaps of breakfast onto their plates.

Everyone else's manners contrast with Gunther's lack of them.

PETER

More hominy, please, Mom?

GUNTHER

Good food, hon ...

Their mouths full, Peter and Sara nod. Ethel beams.

GUNTHER

... for a change. We don't normally go this all out for meals.

Peter and Ethel exchange a quick glance, but she still smiles. She knows who the real boss is.

PETER

Good to eat home cooking again.

SARA

And how. My cooking companions are Mr. Ragu and Mrs. Campbell.

ETHEL

You know, Peter, your sisters would love to see you while you're here. And the family would enjoy meeting you, too, Sara.

Sara looks at Ethel, who beams back at her.

On the sideboard behind Ethel are PHOTOS of an older daughter with her husband, another older daughter's wedding, and a shot of the bachelor Peter.

PETER

(to Sara)

Guess you're not safe here after all.

GUNTHER

What'd you say?

PETER

She can stay in my old room down the hall.

GUNTHER

Why not? It hasn't been used for
a long, long time.

PETER

That's because you --

ETHEL

(experienced referee)

I know you have a lot to tell us,
dear. We have a lot of questions
about this sudden visit, too,
even if it is so nice to see you
both. There's plenty of bacon
here.

SARA

Thank you. Where is Furley,
exactly?

ETHEL

Oh, we're about twenty miles
north and a little west of
Wichita, near Valley Center? We
haven't been to town very much
lately.

GUNTHER

(to Ethel)

I might be able to get the money
for that tractor repair today.
Then I might be ready to start
working on your transmission.

ETHEL

Wonderful! So you won't have to
stop I'll pack some sandwiches
for lunch. Where are you from,
Sara?

SARA

L. A. The other one.

(everyone stares)

Lower Alabama. Until the transfer
to New Orleans. This is such a
pretty home, Mrs. Tanner.

Gunther freezes. Peter tightens, knowing a fight is coming.

ETHEL

Thank you, dear.

GUNTHER
(faces Sara)
I see he didn't tell you, eh?

SARA
Tell me what?

GUNTHER
Our name is Tannenbaum, not
Tanner. It's got a lot of
history. A name to be proud of.

PETER
You know all about pride, don't
you?

GUNTHER
When you're out and away, your
name and your family's all you've
got.

ETHEL
More coffee, anyone?

SARA
I'd love some.

PETER
Where it counts, I'm still part
of the family, Dad.

GUNTHER
I can tell by all the phone
calls.
(wheels away, to Ethel)
I'll take a biscuit to the shop.

PETER
(gets up)
Thanks for breakfast. It was very
good, Mom. I need to walk it off.

*****End of Excerpt*****