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THE COWGIRL AND THE PILOT (WORKING TITLE)

EXT: (EXTERIOR) - SOUTHERN MONTANA - DAY (WEDNESDAY MORNING)

During the opening credits, we see several shots of the wide open spaces of Montana, framed by mountains and cattle grazing in foreground. In the third shot, a white sports car drives toward the camera, which pans to follow it as the car heads toward a nearby city. Further shots show the car driving through the city, finally pulling up in front of a TV station, channel 27. STEVE MASON gets out of the car and heads inside. He is tall and lanky, mid-thirties, with a military-style haircut.

CUT TO:

INT: (INTERIOR) - TV STATION LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Steve Mason enters the lobby and approaches the receptionist, KAREN JOHNSON, a African-American woman in her mid-twenties.

KAREN

Good morning, Sir. May I help you?

STEVE

Hi, I'm Steve Mason and I'm here to meet my sister, Amy.

KAREN

She's in the studio right now, finishing up our morning talk show, but she left word for you to have a seat and she'll be out as soon as she's finished.

The phone rings.

KAREN

I need to take this. Nice to meet you, Steve.

Steve turns away and seats himself nearby, noticing a large flat screen TV at the other end of the room. The station's morning talk show is in progress and the SHOW HOST is talking to his guest, REBECCA CLARK, a pretty woman dressed in western garb, complete with a cowboy hat. With the sound turned off, Steve can only guess what they're talking about.

STEVE

(To the receptionist)

Excuse me. Who's the cute cowgirl?

KAREN

That's Rebecca Clark. She belongs to a local shooting club and she's here to talk about gun safety and to promote women in the shooting sports.

STEVE

Really? That's interesting. Could you turn up the sound?

Karen uses a remote to turn up the TV and Steve moves closer to hear what's being said. Just then, the Show Host and Rebecca get up from behind the desk and cross to another part of the set. Steve notices the revolver strapped to Rebecca's right side.

SHOW HOST

Now Rebecca's going to give us a demonstration of her fast-draw technique. Tell us what you're going to do.

REBECCA

In fast draw, it's all about how quickly you can pull your weapon, fire it and re-holster it. We shoot a low-powered wax bullet, just enough to break those balloons over them. First I'll do it slowly so you can see what happens.

Rebecca drops into her shooting stance, her right hand just above the gun, her left right in front of it. Then she pulls the weapon slowly.

REBECCA

I'm pulling the gun and bringing it forward, then I sweep the hammer with my left hand to cock the gun and then pull the trigger.

She completes the action, the gun fires and the balloon breaks.

REBECCA

Then I re-holster the weapon and I'm done.

She completes the maneuver and relaxes a bit glancing at the camera.

REBECCA

Now I'll do it at full speed. When we do this in real competition, we're timed, but since this is just a demonstration we won't worry about it this time. Okay, here we go.

Rebecca drops into her shooting stance again. She takes a deep breath, then her hands move with unbelievable speed, and before the sound of the gunshot is over, the gun is back in her holster. The balloon in front of her disintegrates as the wax bullet hits it.

STEVE

Oh, wow.

SHOW HOST

Amazing, Rebecca. You must have been doing this a long time.

REBECCA

(taking a deep breath and relaxing a bit.)

Three years. But, you know, I'm actually pretty slow compared the really champion shooters.

SHOW HOST

We have about half a minute left. How about one more demonstration?

REBECCA

Sure. This time I'll shoot two balloons about four feet apart. Pay close attention or you'll miss it.

Moving with the same lightning speed, she breaks both balloons, the gunshots coming so close together it almost sounds like one shot. The show host walks over to join her.

SHOW HOST

Incredible. So how can folks find out more about the sport?

A graphic appears on the screen with the club website and phone number.

REBECCA

Our club is called the Big Sky Desperados. We meet on the third Saturday of each month. Here's our contact information. We have a shoot scheduled for this Saturday afternoon and anyone interested is welcome to come out and see what we're doing.

SHOW HOST

Thanks, Rebecca. It's been a blast, if you'll forgive the pun.

(Turns to face the camera)

Join us tomorrow, when Janie from the Humane Society will be here with some adorable puppies that need a good home. We'll see you then.

Music plays as the program goes to commercial. Steve turns away from the TV and heads back to the reception desk.

KAREN

(Laughing)

From the look on your face, I can tell you were impressed.

STEVE

Impressed? Champion or not, she seemed plenty fast to me. I might just have to go to their meeting and check it out.

KAREN

Amy said you're in the air force, is that correct?

STEVE

Yes, for eight years. I'm a pilot.

The doors to the studio open and Steve's sister, AMY MASON emerges, followed by Rebecca. Amy is a dark-haired woman in her late twenties.

AMY

(laughing)

That was just amazing, Becca. You should have seen the guys on the crew. Their mouths were hanging open about a mile.

REBECCA

I get that a lot, especially from people who've never seen fast draw before.

Amy notices Steve.

AMY

Steve!

Amy runs over and gives her brother a big hug.

AMY

(Whispering in his ear)

I'm so glad you're home!

STEVE

Me, too, sis. It's been too long.

Steve pushes Amy back to arm's length to see her face.

STEVE

Well, now that I'm back we'll have plenty of time to catch up. Introduce me to your gunslinging friend.

Rebecca has been watching with an amused smile and she steps forward, offering her hand.

REBECCA

Hi, Steve. I'm Rebecca. Nice to meet you.

STEVE

Same here, Rebecca. That was quite a demonstration you put on. I've never seen a woman shoot like that.

Rebecca quickly withdraws her hand, a frown on her face.

REBECCA

You have a problem with a woman shooting a gun, mister? You think a woman should just stay in the kitchen and cook you dinner, is that it?

Steve is taken aback by her words, but recovers quickly.

STEVE

Cook me dinner? Sure, why not? Tonight? Say about seven?

AMY

(Laughing)

Careful there, Becca. I warned you about Steve. My brother is a master of the quick comeback, as he's just demonstrated.

STEVE

(Glancing at his sister)

Wait a minute. You told her all about me?

AMY

That's right, brother dear. I gave her your whole life story.

REBECCA

Actually, she said you were a pretty nice guy.

Amy slips her arm affectionately around Steve's waist, her head against his shoulder.

AMY

Oh, Becca, you shouldn't have said that, even if it is true. Now there'll be no living with him and his ego.

REBECCA

An ego? Him? I would never have guessed.

STEVE

(shrugs)  
Yeah, I just can't help it. I'm a  
pilot. It goes with the territory.

Everyone laughs, just as the receptionist's phone rings.

KAREN

Front desk, this is Karen... Yes, sir,  
she's here. Just a moment. Amy, the  
news director needs to speak with you.

Karen offers the phone to Amy.

AMY

This is Amy... Yes, sir... But my  
brother... Oh, okay, I understand.  
I'll take care of it.

Amy gives the phone back to Karen and turns to Steve and Rebecca.

AMY

Steve, I promised to take you to  
lunch, but something has come up and  
I have to take care of it.

Amy fishes in her purse for some money.

STEVE

That's okay, sis. We can do it another  
time.

AMY

Nonsense. You deserve a treat on your  
first day home.  
(hands Rebecca a \$20 bill)  
Becca, I need to you to do me a big  
favor. Since I can't go, please take  
Steve to lunch. Someplace cheap.

STEVE

Hey. Wait a minute here...

AMY

(laughing)  
No, no, I was just teasing. Make it  
someplace nice.

REBECCA

(Uncertainty on her face at  
going to lunch with a  
stranger)  
Gee, Amy. I don't know. I've got to get  
back to work soon.

STEVE

(Equally uncertain)

It can wait, Amy. Really it can.

Amy waves her hand to silence the protests.

AMY

Now listen, you two. I've wanted to get you together for a long time and this is a perfect opportunity. After all, it's just lunch, right? Consider me your matchmaker.

Everyone laughs at the mention of the well-known dating service.

REBECCA

(Glancing over at Steve)  
Are you okay with being taken to lunch by a substitute?

STEVE

Why not? After all, I want to hear about this shooting club of yours.

AMY

Perfect. It's settled. I've gotta go. Steve, you're coming home, aren't you?

STEVE

Absolutely.

AMY

Great. Mom said to tell you your old room's ready for you. Enjoy your lunch. Dinner's at six.

Amy hurries toward the elevator

STEVE

Rebecca, are okay with this? We don't have to go if it makes you uncomfortable.

REBECCA

It's fine, Steve. After all, I have to keep my roommate happy, don't I?

STEVE

Roommate? The two of your live together?

REBECCA

For almost two years. C'mon, let's go. I'm hungry.

STEVE

I never go to lunch with a young lady unless she takes my arm.

(offers her his arm)

REBECCA  
(Rolls her eyes)  
Oh, please. Talk about ego. Give me a break.

STEVE  
But....

REBECCA  
(steps up to him and stabs him in the chest with her finger)  
Now listen, mister. One more crack like that and you'll be eating by yourself.

Steve steps back, lifting his hands in mock surrender.

STEVE  
Yes, ma'am. I'll be good. Just don't hurt me, okay?

A hint of a smile touches Rebecca's face. She shakes her head in frustration, then grabs Steve by the arm, spins him around and gives him a playful shove toward the front door.

REBECCA  
Oh, go on, get outta here.

They walk toward the front doors.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JACKSON'S CAFETERIA - DAY 12:15PM

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

The camera tracks across the dining room, finally settling on Steve and Rebecca at their table.

STEVE  
You know, Rebecca, I'm really glad you didn't beat me up back there at the TV station. I'd never be able to live it down, getting beat up by a girl.

REBECCA  
I'll do worse than that if you don't call me Becca, like your sister.

STEVE

You know, I'm really beginning to regret this lunch thing. Could we, maybe, call a truce?

REBECCA

(sighs)

I suppose I could manage that. Tell me something about yourself, while I try to decide if it's worth getting to know you.

STEVE

Ouch. That hurts.

REBECCA

You were saying...?

STEVE

Well, I've loved airplanes as long as I can remember. When I was a boy, I had model planes all over my room. But my father is owner of Mason Construction, here in town. He's always expected me to help him run it. He even persuaded me to get my degree in business even though it's not really what I wanted. Anyway, by the time I graduated, I was sick of the business thing and so I enrolled in Air Force pilot training. Dad was furious. It's been eight years and we haven't spoken much since then.

REBECCA

That's too bad.

STEVE

Yeah, it is, and when I think about it, I guess I acted like a jerk back then. But I'd had enough of being ordered around and I was ready to do something on my own. Turned out to be a great choice. Don't get me wrong, flight training was the hardest thing I've ever done, but I eventually got my wings. I just love to fly, like you and your cowgirl thing, I suppose. But it's tremendously exhilarating.

REBECCA

(More gently now)

I'm so glad you've found something you love doing, Steve. Our interests may be different, but I can certainly understand the concept of doing what you love. So, you're a fighter pilot, then, like Tom Cruise in Top Gun?

STEVE  
(chuckles)  
No, actually I'm a trash hauler.

REBECCA  
(Her eyes wide)  
A trash hauler? What's that?

STEVE  
That's the nickname the fighter jocks give those who fly cargo aircraft. We don't like it much, of course, but you learn to shrug it off. More important, the cargo guys have a vital role in moving large quantities of supplies and personnel to where they need go to. We also play a big role in disaster relief. We've been doing a lot of that lately.

REBECCA  
What kind of plane do you fly? Would I recognize it?

STEVE  
Probably not, it's a C-17. I even have a picture of it.

Steve pulls out his cell phone and thumbs through several pictures, then turns the phone to her.

STEVE  
Here you go.

CUT TO:

Picture of a C-17 aircraft, taken at an air show. The plane looks huge.

REBECCA (V.O.)  
Wow. That certainly is a big airplane.

STEVE  
That it is. Fully loaded, it weighs more than half a million pounds.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTUARANT - CONTINUOUS

Back to Steve and Rebecca at their table

REBECCA

What's it like to fly?

STEVE

In a word, awesome. Great performance, heavy payload, and mid-air refueling gives it global range. I love flying it. But enough about me. Tell me about yourself.

REBECCA

I was born in Texas, which automatically makes me a cowgirl. I've been riding horses since I was a little girl and I love to go camping and rock climbing. We even have a snow mobile we take up in the mountains in the winter time.

STEVE

Sounds like you're a pretty busy girl. How'd you get into shooting?

REBECCA

Actually, I've been shooting since I was ten. Amy and I belong to an old-west shooting club called, the Big Sky Desperados. We wear period costumes and shoot replicates of the guns they used back in the late 1880s.

STEVE

Nice. I'm looking forward to checking it out.

REBECCA

After I graduated from college, I worked at a couple different jobs, but none of them interested me much. And then...

Rebecca chokes up at an old memory.

REBECCA

And then... about five years ago, mom was killed in an auto accident with a drunk driver.

STEVE

Oh, Becca, that's awful.

REBECCA

(Sighs)

Yeah, it is. I just... well, time passes and you learn to deal with it. Daddy says we just have to keep putting one foot in front of the other; take life one day at a time.

STEVE

He sounds like a wise man.

REBECCA

(The corners of her mouth  
turn up as a fond smile  
comes to her face.)

He's the best. You'll have to meet him  
sometime.

STEVE

I'd like that. So how did you all end  
up in big sky country?

REBECCA

Dad was a senior partner at a big  
company, but after mom died, he said  
he lost interest. So he took an early  
retirement, found a man who wanted to  
sell his ranch, and here we are. Dad's  
a rancher now, and we raise and train  
horses.

STEVE

What about you?

REBECCA

After we got settled here, I was  
looking forward to being a full time  
cowgirl. But after a few months I  
found it wasn't enough. I needed to  
get out on my own. I discovered  
computers and now I have a two-year  
degree in marketing and web design.  
It's fun and a satisfying alternative  
to ranch life. Not that I don't get  
plenty of that anyway.

STEVE

And now you're rooming with my sister.  
I'm guessing your Dad isn't too  
thrilled about that.

REBECCA

You're right. He and mom were married  
nearly 40 years and they were close.  
I still see him from time to time, just  
sittin' on the front porch, staring  
out into the distance. But like you,  
I just had to get out on my own. I know  
he misses me, so I try to spend two or  
three nights a week at home. I cook  
dinner for him and we'll sit and talk  
or go for a ride; you know, Dad and  
daughter stuff. He does have a  
housekeeper now and a lady who comes  
in to cook for him when I'm not there.

Just then Rebecca's cell phone beeps.

REBECCA  
We better wrap this up. I have to get on to work. Did I hear you tell Amy you're going to have dinner with your folks tonight and maybe stay with them for a while?

STEVE  
Yeah, and boy have I got a surprise for them.

REBECCA  
What is it?

STEVE  
I can't tell you. It's a surprise. Especially since you and Amy appear to be best buds.

REBECCA  
We are. But can't you even give me a clue?

STEVE  
You promise not to tell?

REBECCA  
Well now, it's hard to say. It depends on the secret.

STEVE  
Well, as much as I love flying, the last few years have been pretty boring. All I've done is haul stuff back and forth across the ocean. We just climb to altitude, punch on the autopilot and there's not much do until you get ready to land. It's pretty routine. You've heard about the cutbacks in the military the last few years?

REBECCA  
Sure. It's been on the news a lot.

STEVE  
Because of those cutbacks, they came around asking if anyone wanted to get out early. After I thought about it, I decided to do just that. I'm still part of the active reserve, so I have a weekend once a month and a couple of weeks in the summer, but other than that, I'm a free man.

REBECCA

You know, this sounds like another watershed moment for you. Just like your decision to go in the air force to begin with. What are you going to do now?

STEVE

I honestly don't know. I'd love to do something related to flying, but I'm not sure what that looks like just yet. I'm going to take a little time off, and then we'll see.

REBECCA

Does your family know you're out?

STEVE

No, and you have to promise not to tell. I'm going to spring it on them at dinner tonight.

Rebecca leans back in her chair, an impish grin coming to her face.

REBECCA

Well, now, flyboy, that's a pretty big secret to keep all the way until dinner time, especially since I'll probably be talking to Amy later this afternoon.

STEVE

I'd threaten to kill you, but then I just remembered you're the one with the gun.

REBECCA

That's right, mister. Soooo, if you want me to keep your little secret, I've got a couple of conditions.

STEVE

Like what?

REBECCA

First, you have to agree to come for a visit to my shooting club on Saturday.

STEVE

That's easy. I was planning to do that anyway. And the second?

REBECCA

(A shy grin on her face)

You have to take me to dinner Saturday night. I'm mildly impressed with what I've heard so far, but I need more time to decide if you're worth knowing.

STEVE

Dinner Saturday? I'll have to check my schedule.

(He stares at the ceiling  
for a few seconds)

Looks like I'm free for dinner on Saturday, Miss Clark, but I have a condition of my own. After all, turnabout is fair play, right?

REBECCA

Am I going to like it?

STEVE

(Shrugs)

Probably not, but if you want me to spend money on you Saturday night, you have to leave the cowgirl at home.

REBECCA

(shocked at such a notion)

WHAT? You've got to be kidding me.

STEVE

Nope. I've just met you, Becca, but I suspect that without the pigtails and cowboy hat you clean up pretty good. But if you want to go out with me, you'll have to prove it.

REBECCA

That's asking a lot, you know.

Steve gets up and pushes his chair under table.

STEVE

C'mon, we better get going. I don't want you be late for work.

REBECCA

(also rising)

But don't you want to know if I'm coming?

Steve heads for the cashier, but glances back over his shoulder.

STEVE

Nah, I already know that.

He takes a few more steps then turns and waits for her to catch up.

STEVE  
(quietly)  
Not only that, I know you'll probably  
spend hours making sure you look as  
beautiful as I already know you are.

Rebecca's eyes grow wide as she stares at him. A hint of tears  
form in her eyes and she steps in close to him.

REBECCA  
That's the nicest thing anyone's ever  
said to me, Steve. Thank you.

She kisses him lightly on the cheek, then steps back, her eyes  
shinning.

STEVE  
You're welcome, cowgirl. Shall we go?

He offers her his arm again, but Rebecca glances down at it and  
a grin comes to her face.

REBECCA  
Don't push your luck, flyboy.

Then she turns away and heads toward the cashier. Steve laughs  
and follows her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEN MASON'S HOME - DAY 6:00 PM

The Mason home is a large, upscale property with a long circular  
driveway. Steve's Camaro is parked in front with other vehicles  
including Amy's Mustang.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM, MASON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Steve, his father, BEN MASON, mother, DOROTHY, his younger  
brother, JOSH and his sister, Amy, are gathered around the dining  
room table in quiet conversation. Ben is a big man, late 50's,  
with steel gray hair. He's run his own company for more than 20  
years and is used to getting his own way. His wife is younger,  
but just as forceful and quite opinionated about everything.  
Josh, is a good-looking man, about 30, with curly black hair,  
but he resents being always second to his older brother.

Ben taps on his wine glass with his fork.

BEN  
Well, what a special occasion it is to  
have Steve home again. It seems like

years since we've seen you. Welcome home.

STEVE  
Thanks, Dad. It's good to be back.  
(he lifts his glass)  
A toast. To home and family.

EVERYONE  
Home and family.

BEN  
How long do you have off, Steve? Last time it seemed like you only got a few days.

STEVE  
That's right. It was supposed to be two weeks, but there was a hurricane and we got called back early to help with the relief effort.

DOROTHY  
(smiling)  
I hope you get a stay for a while this time.

STEVE  
Actually, the situation has changed. The air force offered me an early out and I decided to take it. So, except for some reserve duty from time to time, I'm a civilian now.

Amy is seated beside him and she reaches over to give him a hug.

AMY  
That's great news!

Just then the doorbell rings.

BEN  
Who in the world is that?

DOROTHY  
Our special guest. Steve would you show our guest in?

STEVE  
(getting to his feet)  
Sure, mom.

Steve turns toward the front hall.

CUT TO:

INT. FRONT HALLWAY OF THE MASON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Steve walks into the shot, then crosses to the door and pulls it open. Standing outside is ALLISON GRENFIELD, a slender, red-haired beauty who was Steve's steady girl friend during his high school and college days.

ALLY  
Steve!

STEVE  
Ally!

Ally rushes to him and throws her arms around him.

ALLY  
(in his ear)  
Oh, Steve, I'm so happy to see you!

STEVE  
Me, too, Ally. It's been a long time.

Ally steps back to arm's length, her hands still on his upper arms. She looks at him with a seductive smile.

ALLY  
And you know what? You're even more handsome than I remember.

STEVE  
(looking her up and down)  
And look at you, girl. You're just a beautiful as ever.

Ally has gone to a lot of effort to make herself attractive in anticipation of seeing him. She's wearing a short, low-cut red dress and heels. Her hair and makeup are perfect. She blushes at his words, looking up at him through her long eyelashes.

ALLY  
Thank you, kind sir. You really think so?

STEVE  
I do indeed. Come on in, we were just about to eat.

He starts to turn away, but she holds onto him.

ALLY  
In a minute, Steve, but first I need to say something.

Ally steps up to him, her lips just inches from his.

ALLY  
(whispers)

I REALLY missed you. I was afraid you might never come home.

STEVE  
(shrugs)  
Oh, Ally, I just...

ALLY  
I thought I'd never get to hold you again... I'd never get to...

She impulsively kisses him, pulling him to her as years of waiting are suddenly fulfilled. Her kiss quickly becomes quite passionate. Steve is startled by the kiss and its intensity and after ten seconds or so he pushes her gently away. She resists and he needs more force to separate them.

STEVE  
Easy, Ally. I'm glad to see you, too, but let's not rush things.

ALLY  
(practically in tears)  
But Steve, I missed you so much...

Steve slips his arm around her shoulders and turns her gently toward the dining room. Ally clings tightly to him, not wanting to let him go. She doesn't realize her lipstick has been smeared by the kiss.

STEVE  
We'll have lots of time, Ally. Now come on in, the family's waiting.

CUT TO:

INT. MASON DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Steve and Ally enter, with her still clinging to his arm. They are welcomed by everyone. Amy's greeting is friendly, but cool, evidence of a strained relationship with Steve's former girlfriend. Josh's expression is frankly admiring, wishing Ally were clinging to him instead of his brother. Dorothy, who has always liked Ally, gushes with excitement. Ben's only reaction is a raised eyebrow at her rather provocative outfit.

Steve seats Ally in the empty chair next to his and then sits down.

DOROTHY  
Oh, Ally, it's so wonderful to see you.

ALLY

Thanks for inviting me, Mrs. Mason.  
It's good to be back in your home  
again.

BEN  
Steve's just been telling us he's out  
of the air force and home for good.

Ally glances over at Steve in surprise, then anticipation as she  
realizes the implication of Ben's words.

ALLY  
Really? That's tremendous, Steve.

STEVE  
Yep. I'm a free man again.

BEN  
Well, let's dig in. The food's getting  
cold.

JOSH  
I'll second that.

Everyone agrees and they start passing the food around. After  
a moment, Amy glances over at Steve.

AMY  
So, how did lunch go?

STEVE  
(smiling broadly)  
Just fine. We had a good time. Becca's  
a handful. Sorry you couldn't come.

ALLY  
What are you two talking about?

AMY  
Steve met me at the TV station today.  
I was supposed to take him to lunch.

STEVE  
(with a grin)  
Yeah, but she stood me up.

AMY  
(indignant)  
I did not. My boss called me just as  
we were leaving and I had to work  
through lunch.

STEVE  
(his grin widening)  
Amounts to the same thing, sis.

AMY

(still indignant)  
 Maybe so, brother dear, but I fixed  
 you up pretty good, didn't I?

STEVE  
 You certainly did.

ALLY  
 (ever alert for possible  
 competition)  
 Fixed him up with who?

AMY  
 Rebecca Clark. She happened to be at  
 the station and I asked her to take  
 Steve to lunch since I couldn't go.

On hearing the name, a look of disgust appears on Ally's face.

ALLY  
 Oh, you mean that tomboy cowgirl from  
 way out in the country? Somebody  
 should tell her to grow up.

DOROTHY  
 Is that Nate Clark's daughter, from  
 the Circle-C ranch?

AMY  
 That's her.

DOROTHY  
 (exasperated)  
 I don't know what's the matter with  
 that girl. Ever since they moved here,  
 she's been acting like a kid instead  
 of a grown woman. She shows up in town  
 in those skinny jeans of hers and last  
 week I saw her and that cowboy she runs  
 with loading a truck at the feed  
 store. It was disgraceful.

ALLY  
 Well, some people are like that. They  
 just do what they want and don't care  
 what other people think.

Steve is listening to this exchange, his anger growing.

JOSH  
 And you know what? I happened to tune  
 by channel 27 this morning and there  
 she was, giving a shooting  
 demonstration. I thought she looked  
 cute in her pigtails.

DOROTHY

(aghast)  
 Cute? Her father needs to take her  
 over his knee and spank some sense  
 into her, that's what she needs.

The sound of Steve's hand slapping the table is like a  
 thunderclap and the force of the blow rattles the dishes. He gets  
 to his feet, an angry look on his face.

STEVE  
 Enough! I had the honor of going to  
 lunch with Rebecca. I found her to be  
 not only beautiful, but a most  
 charming person. I had a good time and  
 I will not sit here and listen to you  
 gossip about her.  
 (he turns toward Dorothy,  
 his voice softening)  
 Mother, thank you for fixing this nice  
 dinner, but I'm not hungry right now.  
 Please excuse me.

Steve walks stiffly from the room and for a moment there is  
 silence. A few seconds later we the sound of the front door  
 slamming.

ALLY  
 Wow, what's with him? I didn't say  
 anything that isn't true. Rebecca  
 acts more like a junior high school  
 girl than a grown woman.

AMY  
 What's wrong with being a tomboy? The  
 truth is she's one of nicest people I  
 know and I'm proud to call her my  
 friend.

Dorothy catches Ally's attention and gestures to her to get up.

DOROTHY  
 Don't just sit there, Ally. If you  
 want to get back with him, this is the  
 time to do something. Go after him.

BEN  
 Dear, Steve's a man, and he's quite  
 able to decide what he wants.

ALLY  
 (getting to her feet)  
 Please excuse me, everyone.

Ally hurriedly leaves the room and a strained silence resumes.

CUT TO:

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE MASON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Steve gets into his car, slamming the door with more force than necessary. Starting the car, he backs up ten feet, then pulls out of the park space, almost hitting Ally, who is standing right in front of him.

STEVE  
(angrily)  
Ally! What are you doing? I almost  
ran over you!

Ally walks around to his side window.

ALLY  
Where are you going?

STEVE  
Anywhere but here.

ALLY  
Can I go with you?

For a moment, Steve is silent.

ALLY  
Please?

STEVE  
(sighs)  
Oh, all right. Get in.

Ally hurries around the car and slips into the passenger seat. She's pulling the seat belt around her when she sees Steve cover his mouth to hide a yawn.

STEVE  
(glances over at her)  
Sorry. I took the overnight flight  
from Los Angeles and I think it's  
starting to catch up with me.

ALLY  
Are you okay to drive? Need me to take  
it for you?

STEVE  
Nah. I'm fine.

They pull out and head down the driveway.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FRONT OF THE CIRCLE-C RANCH HOUSE - DAY 6:20 PM

The Circle-C Ranch is owned by Nate Clark, Rebecca's father. The main house is a moderate-size, single story building, and nearby are a large barn, several corrals and a bunk house for the ranch hands.

Two cars are parked out front of the main house, a pickup truck and Rebecca's Jeep Wrangler.

CUT TO:

INT. CIRCLE-C RANCH HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Rebecca is fixing dinner when her father comes in from outside.

REBECCA  
(walks over to give him a  
kiss on the cheek)  
Hi, Daddy.

NATE  
Hey, sweetheart.

REBECCA  
(returning to the counter)  
Your timing is perfect. Go wash up,  
'cause supper's ready.

NATE  
Great. Be right back.  
(10 seconds later we hear  
his voice from the other  
room)

NATE (O.C.)  
So, how did things go at channel 27  
this morning?

REBECCA  
I was really nervous about being on  
TV, but everything went fine. Amy told  
me later they got quite a few calls  
about the show.

NATE (O.C.)  
That's good news. Maybe you'll have a  
good turnout on Saturday.

Rebecca turns from the counter, a plate of food in each hand, and puts them on the table.

REBECCA  
Me, too. I also met Amy's brother,  
Steve. He's just returned home from  
the air force. We went to lunch and I  
had a great time with him.

NATE  
 (returning to the room)  
 Steve? I don't think I've ever met  
 him.

Rebecca brings more food to the table and they sit down.

NATE  
 Smells wonderful. I'm famished.

REBECCA  
 Chasing horses around all day will do  
 that for you. Everything go okay?

NATE  
 (with a grimace)  
 Fine except we discovered a bad  
 section of fence down south. I'll have  
 the crew replace it tomorrow.  
 (he bows his head for  
 prayer)  
 Lord, thanks for another day of health  
 and strength and for Your love. Thanks  
 for my wonderful daughter and the  
 delicious meal she's prepared for us.  
 In Jesus' name. Amen

REBECCA  
 Amen.

NATE  
 You were telling me about Steve?

REBECCA  
 He's been in the Air Force for a long  
 time. He's a pilot and apparently  
 they've given him something called an  
 early out, so he's home for good.

NATE  
 (spreading butter on a  
 roll)  
 What's he like?

REBECCA  
 He reminds me of Tom Cruise, in the  
 movie, "Top Gun". He's cocky and he's  
 very quick with his words.

NATE  
 (grinning)  
 Like Tex, then?

REBECCA  
 (thoughtfully)

You know, I think you may be right.  
They're both very handsome, that's  
for sure.

Just then there's a knock at the kitchen door.

TEX (O.C.)  
Anybody home?

REBECCA  
(with grin)  
Speaking of the devil...

NATE  
Come on in, Tex.

The door opens and TEX DAVIS steps in. He's a tall, well-built man in his early thirties and the ranch foreman. He and Rebecca have been good friends for years.

TEX  
Hey, folks.

NATE  
Hi, Tex.

REBECCA  
(smiling up at him)  
Hiya, cowboy. Are you hungry? I can  
rustle you up something if you like.

TEX  
No, thanks, Becca. We ate earlier. I  
just came by to see if anyone was up  
for a ride tonight.

NATE  
(with a wave of his hand)  
Not me. I've been sittin' a horse all  
day. How about you, honey?

REBECCA  
Love to. I've been staring at a  
computer all day. Tex, how about you  
saddle my horse for me? We'll finish  
eating and I'll be down once I clean  
up the kitchen.

TEX  
(sigh)  
Becca, a man could grow old waiting  
for you.

REBECCA  
(sternly, pointing at the  
door)  
Out, mister. I'll be down directly.

TEX  
(sighs, turns to leave, a  
hurt expression on his  
face)  
Oh, all right. Better late than never,  
I suppose.

Tex leaves and the door closes behind him. Rebecca gazes fondly after him and lifts her coffee cup and glances at her father.

REBECCA  
Definitely like Tom Cruise, no doubt  
about it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FRONT OF THE CIRCLE-C RANCH BARN - 30 MINUTES LATER

Tex emerges from the barn leading two horses which he ties to a nearby fence. He is joined by Rebecca, who has changed into jeans and some well-used cowboy boots.

REBECCA  
All set?

TEX  
You bet. Let's do it.

Rebecca walks over to her horse, a brown and white pinto named Scout, and gives the animal a hug.

REBECCA  
Hey, Scout. How's my girl? You been  
behaving?

TEX  
Of course not. You spoil her too much.

REBECCA  
I do not, do I Scout?

She gives the horse a pat on the neck and pulls a lump of sugar from her pocket. She offers it to the horse, who wastes no time taking it from her hand.

TEX  
Now you're really spoiling her.

Rebecca unties the horse from the fence and swings up into the saddle.

REBECCA  
Well, hurry up, mister. I thought you  
were anxious to get going.

Tex mounts his own animal, a look of exasperation on his face.

TEX

Yeah, yeah. And just who was it that took half an hour to get ready?

They ride out through the gate into the pasture.

REBECCA

We'll have to make it a short ride, Tex. I've got some homework to do back at the apartment.

TEX

Tell you what. I'll race you to the top of the hill. Whoever loses buys dinner Saturday night. Deal?

REBECCA

That old nag of yours couldn't possibly beat Scout and you know it, Tex. But as much as I would enjoy having you buy dinner, I'm busy Saturday night.

TEX

You and Amy going out?

REBECCA

Uh, no. I have other plans.

TEX

Really? Like what?

REBECCA

None of your business, mister.

And with those words she kicks Scout in the ribs.

REBECCA

C'mon, Scout! Let's go!

The horse springs ahead, glad to be out of barn. Tex laughs and follows her across the field.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DUSK

Steve's car comes down a deserted stretch of two-lane highway. The shadows are growing long and Steve's headlights are already on.

CUT TO:

INT. INSIDE THE CAR - CONTINUOUS

The camera is looking across Steve toward Ally, who is clearly unhappy. Both are staring straight ahead and neither says anything for a moment. Finally, Ally glances over at him.

ALLY

Steve?

STEVE

Yeah?

ALLY

Aren't you glad to see me?

STEVE

Of course I am.

ALLY

It doesn't seem like it. You haven't said a word in the last five minutes.

STEVE

I guess I don't have much to say right now, Ally. I've been flying for the last 24 hours and I'm pretty zonked.

ALLY

Well, then tell me about the tomboy you ate lunch with. She acts like a kid. What's so special about her?

Steve hits the brakes, the tires squeal, and he pulls off onto the shoulder.

STEVE

(Angry)

One more word about Rebecca and you can walk home.

ALLY

(not at all concerned)

I'm not doing any such thing, Steve Mason. I've waited a long time for you to come home. It's been five years and I'm not about to have you go running off with some little tomboy.

STEVE

It's been eight years, Ally. Eight and a half years to be exact.

ALLY

(waves away his silly objection)

Five years, eight years, whatever. The important thing is you're home again. I let you get away once before, mister, but not this time.

STEVE

I'm not the same person I was back then, Ally. Neither are you.

Ally pauses, considers his words, and continues a bit more quietly.

ALLY

Maybe so, but what we had was very special and I hope we can get it back. Will you give me a chance? Please?  
(then she smiles)  
Don't you at least owe me that much?

STEVE

(A hint of a smile touches his mouth)  
Well, I suppose so, for old time's sake.

Steve puts the car in gear and pulls out onto the highway. For a moment, both are silent. Then a smile comes to Ally's face.

ALLY

You know, I was just thinking. Remember that summer night out at the lake? We went on a hayride with the other kids, then we drove around for hours, just the two of us. The moon was full and you had the top down on your convertible.

The corners of Steve's mouth curve upward at the memory of their shared experience long ago.

STEVE

I remember it. Just like it was yesterday.

Ally is encouraged by the crack in his stoic expression and presses her advantage.

ALLY

And what about that night we won the district football championship? You were the team captain and I was the head cheerleader. Everyone said we were quite the couple.

Steve's smiles widens.

STEVE

You're right, we were.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEN MASON'S HOME - NIGHT 8:00PM

It's nearly full dark and the yard lights on are. Amy's Mustang is still parked out front.

CUT TO:

INT. FRONT HALLWAY OF THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Amy is leaving the dining room when her cell phone rings. Pulling it from her back pocket, she glances at it and a smile lights her face.

AMY  
Hey, Girl.

INT. KITCHEN OF NATE CLARK'S HOME - CONTINUOUS  
Rebecca is sitting at the kitchen table.

REBECCA  
Hey, roomie. I was curious. How'd things go at dinner?

AMY  
It's a long story. Are you at the apartment?

CUT TO:

SPLIT SCREEN EFFECT WITH AMY ON THE LEFT AND REBECCA ON THE RIGHT.

REBECCA  
Not yet. Tex and I went for a ride, but I'm heading that way in a few minutes.

AMY  
I promised I'd help mom with a few things before I leave, so I'll be home later. The short version is we had a some fireworks at the table when disparaging words were said about a certain local tomboy.

REBECCA  
(with a sigh)  
Let me guess. Your mom. She and I got off to a bad start and things haven't improved over the years.

AMY  
Yeah, well, there is some good news. Steve came to your defense in a hurry.

REBECCA

He did?

AMY

Let's just say the words beautiful and charming were used on your behalf.

REBECCA

Really? Wow. Especially since I gave him a hard time at lunch.

AMY

Listen, I've gotta go. I'll be home around 10:30 and I'll give you the details.

REBECCA

Sounds good.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

It's full dark as Steve's car come down the road and we can see just a hint of sunset behind the mountains in the distance. The camera pans with the car as it passes, then continues to pan until we see a battered road sign. It's been shot full of holes by vandals in times past and is partially covered with road grime, enough so the sign's message is only partially visible: Warning. Sharp curve ahead. 25 MPH. As the car continues down the road, we begin to hear Ally's voice.

ALLY (V.O.)

... and we were coming back from the beach and had a flat tire. We didn't get home 'til nearly four in the morning. My dad was furious and I got grounded for a week.

CUT TO:

INT. INSIDE THE CAR - CONTINUOUS

With camera looking across Ally toward Steve, she continues her monologue, unaware that he is struggling to stay awake.

ALLY

(continues)

But the next night I snuck out while everyone was sleeping and you picked me up. We went to with Meagan and Johnnie to that little place out on route 42. It was a great...

She suddenly realizes the car is not going to make the sharp curve.

ALLY  
Steve! Look out!  
(she reaches over and grabs  
the steering wheel)

STEVE  
(groggy)  
Wha...

ALLY  
You fell asleep. Stop the car.

STEVE  
Stop the car? Oh, uh...  
(now awake, he slams on the  
brakes)

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The car skids to a stop. Ally jumps out and runs around to his side, pulling open the door. She reaches across him and unfastens his seat belt.

ALLY  
You fell asleep, Steve. Let's get you  
out. I'll drive us home.

Steve struggles out of the car and she helps him to get settled in the passenger seat.

CUT TO:

EXT. INSIDE THE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Ally slides into the driver's side and glances over at Steve, who is again fast asleep.

ALLY  
(in disgust)  
Great. Your first night back and all  
you can do is sleep. Wonderful.

Ally puts the car in gear and drives off.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. WIDE SHOT OF THE MASON HOME - NIGHT 9:00 PM

The front porch light comes on and Amy steps outside, a shawl around her shoulders.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Amy moves to the porch rail and inhales deeply, enjoying the cool night air. Then she notices Steve's car in the driveway and turns to go back inside, but sees the Steve and Ally in the porch swing. They are covered with blanket and both appear to be asleep. As she steps closer, Ally awakens and gives Amy a Cheshire-cat smile, placing her finger across her lips to signal silence.

AMY  
(whispering)  
What's going on? It's 9:00 PM.

Ally gently untangles herself from Steve, recovering him with the blanket as she gets to her feet.

ALLY  
(also whispering)  
We went for a drive and Steve fell asleep at the wheel. I drove him home, but he could barely walk up the steps.

AMY  
(skeptically)  
And let me guess, you all just stopped here to rest a minute and he fell asleep again. Is that the story?

ALLY  
(with a grin)  
Of course, but now that you're here, I'll leave him to you. I need my beauty sleep. G'night.

Amy watches as Ally heads to her car and turns to gaze at her brother.

AMY  
(shakes her head with a chuckle)  
All right, brother dear, what have you gotten yourself into this time?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AMY AND REBECCA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT 10:40 PM

CUT TO

INT. INSIDE AMY AND REBECCA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Rebecca is at the dining room table typing on her laptop. She's dressed for bed. After a few seconds she hears the front door open.

AMY (O.C.)  
Hi, Honey. I'm home.

REBECCA  
Hey, girl. You're late.

Amy enters the room.

AMY  
Better late than never, and before we get into what happened at dinner, tell me about your lunch with Steve.

Rebecca leans back and stretches, a smile on her face.

REBECCA  
Let's just say I had a good time.

AMY  
Oh, no, you don't. You're not getting off that easy. I want the whole play-by-play.

REBECCA  
(grinning)  
Your brother is quite a guy. He's funny and sweet and...

AMY  
(holding up her hand)  
Hold up there, cowgirl. Did I hear you say my brother and sweet in the same sentence?

REBECCA  
(Looking like a kid with her hand caught in the cookie jar)  
Oh, uh, well... He said the nicest things. I'm sure it must have been by accident, but he...

AMY  
(holds up her hand again)  
Just exactly what did he say?

REBECCA  
He told me that he's out of the air force, but not to tell you about it until he announced it to the whole family at dinner.

AMY  
That's right. It was a big surprise.  
But what else did he say?

REBECCA  
I told him that if he wanted me to keep  
his little secret, he'd have to take  
me out on Saturday night.

AMY  
(laughing)  
Great. I love it. And...

REBECCA  
Then, as we were leaving the  
restaurant, he said that I would  
probably spend hours making myself  
look as beautiful as he already knew  
I was.  
(Rebecca blushes at the  
memory)

AMY  
My big brother actually said that?  
Unbelievable. So what did you do?

REBECCA  
(still blushing)  
I kissed him. Uh, on the cheek that is,  
and I said thank you.

AMY  
(laughs out loud)  
I can hardly believe it. My brother,  
the romantic.

REBECCA  
(smiling)  
I like him a lot.

AMY  
He is lovable, I'll give you that, but  
there's something you need to know.

Amy pulls out a chair and sits down across from Rebecca.

AMY  
Back in Steve's high school and  
college days, he had a steady  
girlfriend, Allison Grenfeld. They  
broke up about the time Steve went  
into the air force, but Ally never  
married and I think she hopes they'll  
get back together. Not only that, but  
mom really likes her and she invited  
Ally to dinner tonight, no doubt as a  
potential wife for her son.

REBECCA  
What's she like?

AMY  
She was a cheerleader back in the day and she still looks great after all this time. She's a marketing manager for one of the department store chains. Ally's a good conversationalist, but a bit too stuck up to suit me.

REBECCA  
How did Steve react to seeing her again?

AMY  
Hard to tell. He was suffering from his red-eye flight last night. They went for a drive and later I found them all cuddled up on the front porch swing.

For a moment, Rebecca is silent as she considers Amy's report.

REBECCA  
(finally)  
I don't know what to say.

AMY  
(laughing softly)  
What's that I hear? Is it the sound of crashing sand castles?

REBECCA  
But I thought...

AMY  
Listen, girl friend. Don't jump to conclusions. He hasn't seen her in a very long time. It's not like they're going to rush out and get married next week. Want a word of advice?

REBECCA  
(sighs)  
I guess so.

AMY  
From what you said earlier, he certainly took a fancy to you. He made that pretty clear at dinner. If you're interested in him, you better let him know, and soon.

REBECCA

You mean, like invite him a movie or something?

AMY

Oh, Becca, anybody can do stuff like that. You're a tomboy and he seems to like that. Take advantage of it. Invite him to a picnic, then go for a horseback ride or better yet, shooting. Guys like that sort of thing and since he's military, he's had previous experience with it.

(pause)

Girl, the game's already started and you're behind. Time to play catch up.

FADE OUT.

ACT II

FADE IN:

EXT. THE MASON HOME - DAY 9:30 AM

It's a bright, sunny Thursday morning.

INT. KITCHEN OF THE MASON HOME - DAY

Steve's mother, Dorothy, is working at her desk when Steve comes in, his hand over his mouth to cover a yawn. His hair is rumpled from sleep and he needs a shave.

DOROTHY

(looking up with a smile)

Good morning, sleepyhead. I thought you might spend the whole day in bed.

STEVE

(leaning against the counter)

I might do just that. After all, I'm a civilian now. No more of that flying eight thousand miles and then having to get up and do it again the next day.

DOROTHY

Do you want me to fix you a welcome home breakfast?

STEVE

Thanks, but not right now. I'll think I'll just grab a bowl of cereal while I wake up.

(He heads toward the  
refrigerator)  
Everything still in the same place?

DOROTHY  
Of course. Help yourself. Oh, by the way, your father is working at home today. He asked if you'd stop by and see him when you get a minute.

Steve turns from pouring the milk over his cereal.

STEVE  
Let me get myself cleaned up first then I will. By the way, Mom, I'm sorry about getting upset at dinner last night. You went to a lot of trouble to fix it and I hardly ate any of it.

DOROTHY  
I forgive you, but tonight you're getting leftovers. Serves you right.

STEVE  
Yes, ma'am. I'm sure it'll be delicious. Talk to you later.

Steve exits the room.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FRONT OF THE MASON HOUSE - DAY 10:15 AM

A yard-service tractor is mowing the grass out front.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN MASON'S DEN - CONTINUOUS

Ben is working at his desk when he hears a knock at the door.

BEN  
It's open.

Steve enters, looking much refreshed after a shave and some clean clothes.

STEVE  
Hi, Dad. Mom said you wanted to see me.

BEN  
I do. Shut the door, would you, and come on in. That was quite the news you sprung on us last night. You've been

away so long, I can hardly imagine you being back here full time.

STEVE  
(sitting down across from  
his father)  
It's going to be an adjustment for me,  
too.

BEN  
So now that you're more or less out of  
the air force, what are you going to  
do?

STEVE  
Not sure, but whatever it is, it  
probably won't be long distance  
flying for a living, like for an  
airline or something similar. It's  
been great, but now I'm ready for  
something different.

BEN  
(surprised, then a smile on  
his face)  
Really? You know that...

STEVE  
Dad, we've been over this before. I'm  
really not interested in becoming a  
businessman.

BEN  
(his smile beginning to  
fade)  
That's too bad. I was hoping you'd  
changed your mind and would come in  
and help me run the company.

STEVE  
What about Josh? I thought he was  
already working for you.

BEN  
(pained look on his face)  
Unfortunately, that hasn't worked out  
as well as I had hoped.

STEVE  
Really? How so?

BEN  
I can't put my finger on the problem.  
Some days he does great, especially  
when he's out with the crew. Other  
times it seems like his mind is out in  
left field. The last three jobs he bid

on were under quoted. I managed to catch two of them before the client saw them, but on the third, it cost us more than \$5,000.

STEVE

Ouch.

BEN

Yeah. It's gotten to the point I have to review everything he does or risk losing a lot of money.

STEVE

Have you talked to him about it?

BEN

(nods)

He apologizes and says he'll do better, but so far nothing has changed. I come in every day wondering what else can go wrong.

STEVE

Any change in his behavior lately? Drugs, perhaps, or alcohol? Is he hung up over a woman?

BEN

Not that I can tell. And now I have something else to worry about. The doc says I have a heart problem.

Steve's eyes widen in surprise and he leans forward.

STEVE

A heart problem? Is it serious?

BEN

Serious enough doc says I have to slow down or risk a heart attack. Serious enough that my days running the company are probably numbered.

STEVE

Have you gotten another opinion? Is there anything else you can...

BEN

I've already done that. Quietly, of course, so as not to alarm the rest of the family or our employees.

STEVE

So mom doesn't know about it?

BEN

Not yet, but I'll have to tell her and the rest of our extended family soon. But before I do that, I have some decisions to make about the company.

STEVE

Oh, I get it now. You need someone to run the place, but you don't think Josh can handle it, at least, not right now.

BEN

Correct. But there's more to it than that. Business has been pretty slow the last couple of years. If it continues, I'll have to lay off some people. Frankly, I've even considered selling, but our financials are not as good as they once were and potential buyers are offering much less than I think we're worth. I don't know what to do.

STEVE

When it rains, it pours, doesn't it? You know, I've said I'm not interested in running the company, but this changes things. What can I do to help?

BEN

(smiles)

I appreciate you saying that, but you just got home and...

STEVE

I want to help, Dad, really I do.

BEN

(takes a deep breath)

Thanks, son, that's kind of you. Tell you what. The doc ran some more tests the other day and we should have the results in ten days or so. After that, I'll know where I stand. In the meantime, how about we drive over to the office after lunch and let you have a look around. It's been a while since you've been there and a number of things have changed.

STEVE

Any of the old-timers still there, like Bill Gant and Jimmy Smith? Nancy Wallace in office?

BEN

Yep, and I'm sure they'd love to see you again.

Just then Steve's cell phone rings.

STEVE

Hello.

REBECCA

Hi, Steve. It's Becca.

STEVE

(a smile coming to his face)  
Hiya, cowgirl. Thanks for keeping my secret.

REBECCA

Just remember what you promised, mister.

STEVE

I remember. Listen, I'm talking to Dad right now. How about I call you back in a few minutes?

REBECCA

Sure. Talk to you then.

STEVE

(hangs up the phone and  
turns to his father)  
That was Becca.

BEN

So I gathered. I take it your lunch yesterday turned out to be more than you expected?

STEVE

Definitely. She's a spunky lady and despite what mother and Ally said last night, her being a tomboy doesn't bother me at all. She's a lot of fun.

BEN

And speaking of Ally, how did that go?

STEVE

Well, just between you and me, I didn't appreciate Mom inviting her without telling me first. Ally and I haven't spoken in a long time, even when I came home on leave, and it was really awkward at first. Having said that, she reminded me of all the fun we had and, yeah, the troubles we got ourselves into back then. We were great together.

BEN

And now?

STEVE  
(shrugs)  
I don't know. We'll see.

Steve gets to his feet.

STEVE  
I've got a phone call to make. Mom said  
lunch would be ready in an hour or so.

BEN  
Fair enough.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. REBECCA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY 11:00 AM

Rebecca's Jeep is parked out front.

INT. REBECCA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Rebecca is working on her laptop and gets up to refill her coffee cup. Just as she gets back to the table, her cell phone rings.

REBECCA  
Hello.

STEVE  
Hi, cowgirl. It's Steve.

REBECCA  
I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed  
our lunch together yesterday.

STEVE  
Me, too, Becca.

REBECCA  
And since I did such a good job keeping  
your secret, I'm expecting payment in  
full, if you know what I mean.

STEVE  
(with a sigh)  
Well, a promise is a promise, right  
enough. In fact, on the way into town  
yesterday, I noticed there's a new  
fast food place on 18th Street. That  
should be a perfect place. Yum, Yum.

Steve grins as he listens to the silence on the phone.

STEVE  
 (trying to keep from  
 laughing)  
 Hello? Becca? You still there?

REBECCA  
 (in a low, tightly  
 controlled voice)  
 Steve Mason, if you think I'm going to  
 spend hours making myself look as  
 beautiful as you say I am, just so you  
 can take me to a fast food place,  
 you've got another think coming.  
 (now grinning)  
 And maybe a bump on the head, too. Or  
 maybe a gunshot wound to the chest. I  
 dunno. I'll think of some way to cause  
 you pain. Maybe I'll just wear my  
 pigtails again. It'll serve you  
 right.

STEVE  
 You know what I like best about you,  
 Becca?

REBECCA  
 (still pretending to be  
 deeply offended)  
 What?

STEVE  
 You know how to have fun. You can take  
 everything I throw at you and sling it  
 right back. I love it. And if you want  
 to wear pigtails to our date, that  
 works just fine, too. Your choice.

REBECCA  
 Well, then, Mister Mason, since  
 you've given me a choice, I'll think  
 I'll dress up this time. That way  
 you'll have to spend real money on me.  
 What do think of that?

STEVE  
 (with an exaggerated sigh)  
 Oh, I suppose I can live with that. At  
 any rate, was there a reason you  
 called or was it just to hassle me?

REBECCA  
 Actually, I called to offer YOU a free  
 meal. When I got back to work  
 yesterday afternoon, the boss  
 announced they are painting the  
 office tomorrow and over the weekend.  
 So I have the day off and I was  
 wondering if you'd be interested in

going on a picnic. I'll fix us a nice lunch and we'll have a chance to exchange some more insults.

STEVE

That sounds like a grand idea, but I have a condition.

REBECCA

A condition? Like what?

STEVE

I get to pick where we have the picnic. You bring the food and I'll select where we eat it. Is that a fair division of labor?

REBECCA

I think I can live with that, good sir.

STEVE

Great. Oh, just one more thing.

REBECCA

(exasperated)

Now what?

STEVE

Do you have hiking boots?

REBECCA

Sure, but why? Are we going mountain climbing?

STEVE

Not exactly, but the ground is, shall we say, uneven. So wear your hiking boots and bring sunscreen and your sunglasses.

REBECCA

Where are we going, the Grand Canyon?

STEVE

(laughing)

No, but it's almost as good. Now here's the drill. I have some business to take of tomorrow morning at the municipal airport. Meet me there at 11:30 and we'll head out to my picnic spot. Do you know where the airport is?

REBECCA

You mean the small airport south of town, where all the private planes are?

STEVE  
That's the one. See you at 11:30.

REBECCA  
You're not going to tell me anything  
else? You're terrible.

STEVE  
(laughs)  
Yeah, I am. And I just love surprises.  
Ain't it great?

REBECCA  
Maybe I should just let you enjoy this  
little adventure by yourself. What do  
you think of that?

STEVE  
That's spirit, cowgirl. It's more fun  
when you fight back. And just so you  
know, I'm not worried. Wild horses  
couldn't keep you from coming.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE MASON CONSTRUCTION COMPANY - DAY 2:30 PM

Music begins and we see Mason Construction, a complex of several buildings, including administration, workshop and garage. Several pieces of construction equipment are visible as well as trucks with the Mason Construction logo on the side. The camera zooms into the administration building; Steve's car is parked out front.

Music continues and a sequence of shots show Steve and Ben taking a tour of the facility. During the tour, Steve greets several old friends and his father points out different pieces of equipment. They also run into Josh, who smiles and shakes hands, but when Steve and Ben leave, his smile turns to a scowl.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEN'S OFFICE AT MASON CONSTRUCTION - DAY

Music ends as Ben and Steve walk into the office.

BEN  
Well, that's the tour. Want some  
coffee?

STEVE  
Yeah, that sounds great.

BEN

(walks to the door and calls  
to his secretary)  
Nancy, could we get some coffee?  
Thanks.

(crosses to the conference  
table and pulls out a  
chair)  
Well, what did you think?

STEVE  
(sits across from Ben)  
Except for some new faces and  
equipment, most everything is just as  
I remember it.

BEN  
Is that good or bad? Especially  
considering business has not been all  
that profitable lately.

STEVE  
Remember, Dad, I'm not the  
businessman here. But it seems to me  
if the way you've always done things  
is no longer working for you, maybe  
it's time to do something different.  
If your primary construction business  
is commercial, perhaps you need to  
diversify, expand into other areas?

BEN  
Such as?

STEVE  
I'd have to think about it, but I  
wonder, have you ever discussed it  
with Josh?

BEN  
Josh? Why?

STEVE  
Well, he's really a lot closer to the  
business than I am. He might have some  
ideas of his own.

BEN  
(skeptically)  
I don't know...

STEVE  
Have you ever asked him?

BEN  
Well, no, not really.

STEVE

Maybe it's time. Let's get him in here and see what he has to say.

BEN

Fair enough. Nancy! Could you come in, please.

NANCY WALLACE, Ben's administrative assistance, sticks her head in the door. She's competent-looking woman in her mid-forties.

NANCY

Yes, sir? Coffee should be ready shortly.

BEN

Could you locate Josh and ask him to join us? Bring a cup for him, too. Thanks.

NANCY

Sure.

Nancy leaves and Ben turns back to Steve.

BEN

What are you thinking?

STEVE

Josh may feel his opinion doesn't matter. If so, maybe we need to help him understand that he has an important role to play here. That's certainly the case, given you may have to give up the reins sooner than you've planned. Said another way, keeping the company in the family may well depend on his willingness to step up to the responsibility.

Ben leans back in his chair, a look of concern on the face as he considers Steve's words.

BEN

Wow. I never thought of it that way.

STEVE

Maybe it's time.

Just then Josh enters, followed by Nancy carrying a tray with a pitcher of coffee and three oversized mugs.

JOSH

You wanted to see me?

BEN

Yes. C'mon in. Grab yourself a chair.

Josh sits next to his father. Nancy sets the tray on the table and pours three cups, giving one to each man.

BEN  
Thanks, Nancy. Appreciate it.

NANCY  
Yes, sir.

BEN  
Close the door on the way out, would you please? Thanks.

The door closes behind her and Josh turns to his father.

JOSH  
What's up? Is Steve finally going take over the company?

BEN  
(surprised)  
Where in the world did you get that idea?

JOSH  
(some of his bitterness beginning to show)  
That's always been the plan, hasn't it? I've just been a placeholder while he's been gone.

Ben again leans back in his chair, staring at his younger son like he's never seen him before.

BEN  
What makes you say that?

JOSH  
Oh, I don't know. It just seems like he's always been your favorite and I've been, well, kind of an afterthought.  
(he glances at his brother)  
No offense, Steve.

STEVE  
None taken, Josh. Tell Dad the rest of it.

JOSH  
The rest of it?

STEVE  
Sure. I'm guessing you've been wanting to say this for quite a while. Now's the time.

JOSH

(stares at his brother a few  
seconds before turning to  
his father)

It just seems like, whatever I do,  
it's never enough. When you asked me  
to work for you five years ago, it was  
really Steve you wanted and not me.  
I've worked hard, but I always knew  
when Steve came back, I'd be out of a  
job. It's discouraging.

STEVE

(looking over at Ben)

Can you understand what he's saying?

BEN

Well, let's just say I'm thinking  
about it. I can see why you might feel  
that way. But let's suppose, for the  
sake of argument, that Steve will not  
be taking over the company.

JOSH

(glances sharply at Steve)

Seriously?

STEVE

That's right. Never wanted to,  
anyway.

BEN

And let's also suppose that I have a  
health problem that will shortly  
force me to step down. That leaves me  
with two choices: either sell the  
company or find someone I can trust to  
run it.

JOSH

(his eyes wide)

Sell the company? You can't be  
serious.

BEN

I am. I'm as serious as I can be.

JOSH

But...

BEN

It's all true, Josh. Doc says I have  
a heart condition and will have to  
slow down. Steve has volunteered to  
help, but he has no long-term interest  
in being a businessman. That leaves  
you.

JOSH  
(startled)  
Me? To run the company?

BEN  
Either that I may have to sell it.

STEVE  
I just found out about this myself, Josh. The only other option is for Dad to bring in a stranger and I gather he really doesn't want to do that.

BEN  
Correct. So how about it, Josh? Think you can do it? Your brother and I will help you get started, but you'll have the reins.

JOSH  
When?

BEN  
Soon. Perhaps in the next couple of weeks.

JOSH  
I'll need to think about it.

BEN  
All right, you do that. Today is Thursday. I need your answer on Monday.

JOSH  
Wow.

BEN  
And there's more.

JOSH  
More?

BEN  
Yep. If you're going to take over, we'd like to know what we need to change to be successful.

STEVE  
Such as, do we need more advertising? Maybe diversify into other kinds of construction or into new territories? How about a web presence or maybe social media, something like that. Becca told me she does marketing and web design. I bet she'd be willing to help if we asked her.

JOSH  
 That's great idea. The new media is  
 where it's at these days.  
 (glances at his father)  
 We've got a lot to do.

Ben gets to his feet; Josh and Steve follow his lead.

BEN  
 Then you better get started. Get out  
 of here and go hole up someplace while  
 you craft your master plan.  
 (He offers Josh his hand)  
 I'll see you Monday, 9:00 AM sharp.

JOSH  
 (taking his hand)  
 Thanks, Dad. I'll see you then.

Josh shakes hands with Steve and then leaves.

BEN  
 (turning to Steve)  
 Well, what do you think?

STEVE  
 I think he's in. He just needed a push  
 and you sure gave him a good one.

BEN  
 (chuckles)  
 Yep. It'll be very interesting to see  
 what he comes up with.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. RED BLUFF MUNICIPAL AIRPORT - DAY 10:30 AM FRIDAY

Steve's car turns off the highway and passes a sign saying "Red Bluff Municipal Airport." He drives up to the Cessna Pilot Center, where he gets out.

CUT TO:

INT. PILOT CENTER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

GEORGE CLEMENT, the airport manager, is working behind the counter. George is a tall, grey-haired man in his early sixties. He glances up when the bell over the door announces a visitor and his face lights up as Steve enters the room.

GEORGE

Well, bless my stars, if it ain't  
Cap'n Steve Mason, the air force's  
most famous trash hauler!

STEVE

(grinning as he comes  
toward the counter)

It's Major Steve Mason now and I can  
see the airport is being run by the  
same crotchety old manager. It's a  
wonder the place is still in business.

GEORGE

(Extending his hand)

Give the crotchety old manager your  
hand, son. Man, it's good to see you.

STEVE

(Shaking hands with his old  
friend)

Me too, Pop. It's been way too long.

GEORGE

So you finally made Major. Congrats,  
Steve. That's just great.

STEVE

Actually, there's more. They offered  
me an early out and I took it. Except  
for some reserve stuff, I'm a free  
man. So you can expect to see more of  
me from now on.

GEORGE

You know, it was a real surprise to get  
your phone call yesterday. And guess  
what? I've got your old bird reserved  
for you. It's gassed up and ready to  
go.

STEVE

The Cessna? 77 Alpha Zulu? It must be  
nearly fifteen years old by now.

GEORGE

That's right, but it's still purrin'  
like a kitten. In fact, I had someone  
rent it yesterday afternoon and he  
said everything was four point zero.  
Where you headed?

STEVE

Actually, I'm going to take a young  
lady up to Eagle's Nest for a picnic.  
She doesn't know it yet; it's a  
surprise.

GEORGE

(laughs)

Now THAT sounds like the Steve Mason I know. Always trying to impress the girl. Who's the lucky lady? Do I know her?

STEVE

Rebecca Clark

GEORGE

(laughs and slaps his hand  
on the counter)

Becca? Oh, boy, you better watch your step there, young fella. That girl's a spitfire. She'd just as soon shoot you as look at you.

STEVE

Yeah, but you know, that's what I like about her.

GEORGE

That bad, eh?

STEVE

(shrugs)

Too soon to tell, Pop. I've just met her, but I sure do like what I've seen so far.

GEORGE

(his face more serious)

We've known each other for a long time, Steve, so if you don't mind I'll give you a little piece of advice. Becca's a real nice young lady. Beneath all the cowboy stuff and gruff exterior, she's solid gold. Have a good time, but don't hurt her. Don't go making promises you don't intend to keep.

STEVE

But...

GEORGE

(holds up his hand)

I'm not saying you would. Just be careful. Don't go getting her hopes up and then walk away, like some guys do. Take things nice and slow, okay?

STEVE

Well, you're certainly right about being careful. Otherwise, first thing

I know she'll have me roped and hog-tied.

GEORGE  
(laughs)  
How right you are. Did you want to pre-flight the bird before she gets here?

STEVE  
Absolutely. Be right back.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONCRETE RAMP BEHIND THE PILOT CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Steve comes out of the building and the camera follows him over to a Cessna 172, a single engine, four seat aircraft, with a tail number ending in 77-AZ.

STEVE  
(with a grin)  
Hello, sweetheart. Nice to see you again.

Sliding his hand affectionately along the wing, Steve approaches the plane and pulls open the left side door, climbing up into the front seat.

CUT TO:

INT. COCKPIT OF THE CESSNA - CONTINUOUS

Pulling the door closed, Steve adjusts the seat backward, then, after looking around a moment, he pats the instrument panel.

STEVE  
Yep, definitely great to see you again, sweetheart. Listen, I'm bringing someone special with me today. Help keep us safe, would you? I'd sure appreciate it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PILOT CENTER OFFICE - DAY 11:25 AM

George unpacking a box of parts at the counter when Steve comes back inside.

GEORGE  
Everything okay?

STEVE

Great. The bird looks brand new, Pop.  
You guys have done a great job taking  
care of her over the years.

GEORGE

Thanks. And it looks like your timing  
is perfect; there's Becca's Jeep  
pulling into the parking lot.

CUT TO:

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE PILOT CENTER - DAY

Becca's car pulls in right next to Steve's, just as he comes out  
to greet her.

STEVE

Hey, cowgirl. Thanks for coming.

REBECCA

(getting out)

Hey there, flyboy. Fancy meeting you  
at an airport. Nice wheels you got  
there.

STEVE

It's just a rental, but I like it so  
much I may buy it. I see you took my  
advice about the hiking boots.

Rebecca is wearing suede hiking boots, blue jean shorts and a  
pretty blue top, her hair in a long braid sticking out the back  
of her baseball cap.

REBECCA

I'm certainly glad you approve, sir.  
Any other requirements to go on this  
boondoggle of yours?

STEVE

Sunglasses? Sun blocker? Picnic  
basket?

REBECCA

(reaches into the back of  
the jeep and pulls out the  
basket.)

All set. Where are we going?

STEVE

Follow me. You'll see.

They head inside, Steve holding the door for her.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERIOR OF THE PILOT CENTER - CONTINUOUS

George is waiting behind the counter, a big smile on his face as Steve and Rebecca come in.

GEORGE  
Becca! Get yourself over here, girl,  
and give an old man a hug.

REBECCA  
(giving him the requested  
hug)  
Hi, Pop. Good to see you.

GEORGE  
(releasing her)  
So you and Steve are off to a picnic?

REBECCA  
(a frown comes to her face  
as she glances over at  
Steve)  
Yeah, but flyboy here won't tell me  
where we're going.

GEORGE  
Trust me, you'll like it. In fact,  
you're the first young lady Steve has  
ever taken up there. Consider  
yourself special.

REBECCA  
Wait a minute here. You KNOW where  
we're going? And you won't tell me?

GEORGE  
(hooking a thumb at Steve)  
Nope, it's his surprise. I'm just a  
spectator.

REBECCA  
(turning to Steve)  
Well, when are you planning to tell  
me?

STEVE  
(shrugs)  
Oh, I dunno. Maybe 30 seconds or so.

REBECCA  
(raising her fist)  
Oh, you! I could just...

GEORGE  
Becca, you didn't bring a gun, did  
you?

REBECCA  
 (turning to him in  
 puzzlement)  
 A gun? What do you mean?

GEORGE  
 Just that. Did you bring a gun, in case  
 Steve gets out of hand?

REBECCA  
 (her face reddening a bit)  
 Uh, no, actually. It never occurred to  
 me.

STEVE  
 (laughing)  
 Come on, George. I think it's time to  
 let her off the hook, before she  
 thinks of something else to kill me  
 with. What say you?

GEORGE  
 Agreed. You two have a great time.

REBECCA  
 But WHERE are we going?

STEVE  
 A placed called Eagle's Nest.

REBECCA  
 Eagle's Nest? What's that?

STEVE  
 Come with me and you'll find out.

Steve heads for the back door, Rebecca on his heels.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAMP BEHIND THE PILOT CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Steve and Rebecca emerge from the building and move toward the  
 waiting Cessna. Rebecca is almost to the aircraft when she  
 realizes the significance of the plane. That stops her dead in  
 her tracks.

REBECCA  
 (stunned)  
 Wait a minute. We're going to fly?

Steve turns back to her, a big grin on his face.

STEVE  
 Yes, ma'am, we are. I'm a pilot,  
 remember?

*This screenplay was written as a Hallmark-type TV movie. Since this work has potential commercial value, this is all I can display publically. If you're interested in reading the rest, email me at [Chuck\\_b@comporium.net](mailto:Chuck_b@comporium.net) and paste the following into the subject line: \*\*\*\*\* Cowgirl/Pilot Screenplay*

*If you want to read it, you'll have to formally identify yourself.*