

NORTH OF MONTANA

Episode 1: "Get Your Bearings Here"

Written by

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(A single camera, urban/mountain situation-comedy set mostly in L.A., about people finding their own, individual direction as they attempt to navigate the social misdirection around them, and try to earn a living in "the business" - told in 22-minute episodes with a scene/character list in the attached spreadsheet.)

SCENE 1-A - EXT. PANORAMA OF BEACH-SIDE, DAY

Opening titles and music begins - L.A., a warm February day. Opening helicopter overheads and street-level shots of a beach-side L.A. neighborhood.

SCENE 1-B - EXT. THE ICE HOUSE STREET, DAY

Opening titles and music continues. On a street near the beach, The Ice House is a small ice cream stand that sells cones from a take-out window. From across the street, WILL opens the driver's door of an older, rusty pickup. He gets out and crosses the street, walking toward the take-out window, wearing old running shoes, jeans, a t-shirt, jacket, a faded Red Sox baseball cap, and carrying a folded-over, marked-up newspaper employment want-ad section in his hand, tucking it underneath an arm as he crosses the street.

Behind the window HECTOR is sitting on a stool and reading a newspaper. On the wall behind him is a hand-painted menu. HECTOR looks up as WILL approaches.

SCENE 1-C - EXT. THE ICE HOUSE, DAY

WILL stops at the take-out window.

WILL
(nods to Hector)
Hector, without the "i-n-g."
(studying wall menu)

HECTOR
Will, without the metaphor.

WILL
So what's fresh today?

HECTOR
The tuna, in the Tuna Chocolate
Chip Mint, was caught just this
morning, by an older, retired
guy, surf casting in a pair of
Lady Judy Hip Boots.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILL

Nice boots. But I think I'll
stick with the ice cream ice
cream, today.
(studying menu)

HECTOR

That's cool. ... So, do you have
a color in mind?

WILL

Something in earth tones?

HECTOR

Sorry. You could try the
restrooms at the beach.

WILL

That's okay. How about something
Hawaiian?

HECTOR

What color is Hawaiian?

WILL

Laid back, I think, mostly.

HECTOR

Sounds nice.

WILL

Yeah. But it's a really long
drive. ... How about two scoops
of the Lady Judy Thong Buster.

HECTOR

Good choice.

HECTOR stands and turns to low cooler behind him, grabs a paper napkin and waffle cone, and loads cone with two large scoops. WILL lays newspaper on window counter, showing marked-up, help-wanted ads, grabs another paper napkin from holder, and pulls money from his jeans pocket. HECTOR turns back to window.

HECTOR

(hands him cone)
The usual - Coffee Almond Fudge.

WILL

Thanks.
(hands him 3 ones)
Keep the change.

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR speaks as he puts the money in the till, as WILL takes a bite of ice cream.

HECTOR
But aren't you missing the whole
point of change, if you think
that you can keep it?

WILL
Good point. Later, Hector.

SCENE 1-D - EXT. THE ICE HOUSE, DAY

As WILL turns and walks away, two ICE CREAM GUYS are walking up to window, talking about doing freelance, location scouting. WILL slows and stops nearby, eating his ice cream while eavesdropping.

ICE CREAM GUY 1
Yeah. It's a gamble, and I did
it for a year before I started
getting actual location scouting
job offers.

ICE CREAM GUY 2
And you found this stuff online?

ICE CREAM GUY 1
Yep.
(stops at window)
Two large, soft lemon custard
cones, please.

HECTOR
(turns to machine)

ICE CREAM GUY 1
Say a post on
"LocationScoutsRUs" says a movie
called "Hell's Babies in the
Wind" is going to be shot in a
small mining town in New Mexico.
You drive a hundred and twenty
miles up the coast to Santa
Lupardeedoo, a ghost town and
silver mine that was shut down
in the '30s. Then you do a
workup with photos, maps, and
spreadsheets, and FedEx the
package to the producer reps.

HECTOR
(hands them each a cone)

(CONTINUED)

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ICE CREAM GUY 1
(hands Hector a five)
There you go.

ICE CREAM GUY 2
And that actually worked?

ICE CREAM GUY 1
Yep.

ICE CREAM GUY 2
For what movie?

ICE CREAM GUY 1
"Hell's Babies in the Wind."

Both ICE CREAM GUYS walk away and down the street, as WILL turns to the building, slides a pen from his jeans pocket, holds the newspaper against the wall with his cone hand and writes "LocationScoutRUs" in a margin.

Then WILL walks up the street to his truck, as the camera shows the truck's New York license plate. He gets in and drives off.

SCENE 1-E - EXT. THE ICE HOUSE STREET, DAY

EMILY is parked further up the street, and gets out of her older, rusty Volvo station wagon after WILL drives by. She's wearing old running shoes, jeans, a polo shirt underneath a jacket, and a faded Yankees baseball cap. She closes the door and walks by the car, as the camera shows the Volvo's New York plate, before crossing the street and walking toward the take-out window. On the other sidewalk, her phone vibrates and she stops, pulls the cell from a jeans pocket and begins talking to a friend in a one-sided conversation. The friend is telling her about a last-minute audition for a movie that's being shot north of Montana.

EMILY
(speaks to phone)
Hey, Alice. ... Really? So just call Carol and ask to have my name put on the list? ... Okay. But the audition is going to be held where they're going to shoot - which is somewhere north of Montana? ... Yeah. But driving to Canada in February, on the off-chance of getting to audition for "something" is ... Oh, you're kidding. North of
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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EMILY (cont'd)

Montana is not Alberta, it's a neighborhood in Santa Monica, north of Montana Avenue? Wow, what stupid girl has been using my shoes? ... One sec.

(enters number on phone)

Ok. Got it. I'll let you know what happens. ... Thanks. Bye.

SCENE 1-F - EXT. THE ICE HOUSE, DAY

EMILY slides phone back in jeans as she walks up to the take-out window.

HECTOR

Emily. How's the world today?

EMILY

(studying wall menu)

Hey, Hector. Not sure. I can't feel it turning. Does that mean it stopped?

HECTOR

It's possible. Or you might just be turning at the same speed the world is, so then -

EMILY

- I wouldn't feel it. Right. That must be it.

(studying menu)

HECTOR

... So, any particular, ice cream neighborhood you're looking for a 2-bedroom cone in?

EMILY

(breath laugh)

Funny. I guess I'll try two scoops of Dr. Riley's No. 5 Biscuit Remover, please.

HECTOR

You can't go wrong with the Dr. (turns to cooler, filling cone)

EMILY

Hector, can I ask your honest opinion?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HECTOR
(over shoulder)
Sure. You can ask.

EMILY
Thanks. Do you think my head is
larger than my promise?

HECTOR
Larger than your what?

EMILY
Larger than my promise. Someone
told me yesterday that he
thought my head was larger than
my promise.

HECTOR
(turns back to window,
hands her cone)
The usual - Coffee Almond Fudge.

EMILY
Thanks.
(hands him 3 ones)
Keep the change. ... So?

HECTOR
And he made the comment because
he couldn't make your promise,
part of his promise?

EMILY
(takes a bite)
That's it.

HECTOR
What a fool. It's a nice head.
Completely functional on its
own. Outside, very handsome.
Inside, like the moon with
lighted tennis courts.

EMILY
(breath laugh)
Thanks, Hector. You're even
better than your ice cream.
Later.

EMILY turns and walks back toward her car.

SCENE 2-A - EXT. WILL'S APT. STREET, DAY

WILL has parked his truck near the two-story, former warehouse south of Downtown, with a loft he's now sharing with five other people. He gets out, grabs his knapsack with the laptop inside, locks the door, and walks toward the building.

SCENE 2-B - EXT. WILL'S APT. BUILDING, DAY

At the building door, WILL unlocks it and steps inside.

SCENE 2-C - INT. WILL'S APT., DAY

WILL walks upstairs to the apt., unlocks the apt. door, goes in and closes it. He looks around, no one is there, and walks down hallway and into his bedroom.

At the desk he drops the knapsack on floor, sits, pulls out his laptop, plugs in power and ethernet cords, and goes to "locationscoutsareus.com." There he quickly registers, paying the \$5.00 monthly fee by Paypal, then begins scanning posts and finds one for a movie to be shot "north of Montana," as he reads the notes aloud.

WILL

"The story of a boy and girl who almost never meet, until, by chance, a movie project pulls them together. ... Shooting is tentatively scheduled to start late winter, near Carlyle and Euclid, north of Montana."

WILL gets up and goes to the window overlooking an overgrown hillside behind the building, the afternoon sun, reflecting off years of dirt built up on the outside of the glass, creating a yellow glow.

WILL

(mutters to self)

Oh, why the fuck not. Even if it washes out, there's a story in the journey.

WILL goes back to the desk, unhooks laptop, takes charger and cell phone charger, puts them and laptop in knapsack; then stuffs some clean clothes, sweats, a parka, insulated boots, a wool cap with ear flaps, gloves and a muffler into a large duffle bag. He slings the knapsack on a shoulder, picks up the duffle bag by the handles,

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looks at the room, then turns and walks out the bedroom door to the hall.

SCENE 3-A - INT. EMILY'S CAR GAS STATION LOT, DAY

Stuck in traffic on her way back to the small rental house in the Valley she shares with two people, EMILY has pulled the Volvo into a gas station and parked by the side of the store. She pulls the cell from her jeans and dials Carol's number, talking to her in a one-sided conversation.

EMILY

... Hi, Carol. I'm Emily. I heard about your last-minute audition north of Montana, from a friend. ... Sure. A B.F.A. in theater from the University of Wisconsin Madison, several roles on the stage in school, and outside school in Madison and Milwaukee, then small parts in three films and one TV episode, here. ... Cool. Day after tomorrow at 11:00, on Carlyle across from the park. I'll be there. ... Bye.

EMILY hangs up and stares out the Volvo windshield, muttering to herself.

EMILY

North of Montana - why does it seem like something is actually going to happen here?

SCENE 3-B - EXT. WILL'S CAR GAS STATION LOT, DAY

Using city streets to try and skirt the daily afternoon traffic jam on I-5, WILL is in North Hollywood and has pulled his truck into a gas station, parking by the side of the store. He grabs a canvas bag from behind the seat, gets out and walks toward the front door, noticing the New York plates as he passes EMILY's Volvo.

SCENE 4-A - INT. GAS STATION STORE, DAY

Shopping inside the store, WILL turns down the cookies and chips aisle, grabs bags of both original and lemon Oreos and puts them in his canvas bag. Then at the chip end of the aisle he reaches out with his right hand for

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the last bag of Halley's Cheddar Cheese Tortilla Chips, and stops cold as EMILY's left hand touches the bag at the exact same moment. Coming to the bag from opposite ends of the aisle, they are standing just a quarter turn away from side-to-side, both focused on the chips and not seeing the other person, with hands now frozen on the bag just a few inches apart.

WILL

(looking at bag)

Oh, tell me this is not,
actually, happening.

EMILY

(looking at bag)

Yeah, totally. No freaking way,
Jose.

Hands still on the bag, they turn their heads and look at each other, both smiling.

WILL

And she already knows my name.
Spooky.

EMILY

Funny, WASP boy with a vaguely
familiar Northeast accent. If
you're Jose, I'm a gypsy wolf-
girl from the borderlands of
Romania.

EMILY glances at his Adirondack Mountain Club canvas shopping bag in his left hand, and holds up hers in her right hand, with a similar logo that's 40 years older.

EMILY

And the "no way" continues.

WILL

Apparently so. And you're in
really great shape, Granny
Clampitt, for your age.

EMILY

Funny, Bunny. I bet they called
you that in pre-school.

WILL

Actually, it was "Terminator."

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

Actually, not buying that one either. ... So, I'll flip you for the chips?

WILL

Unlikely. I remember this scene from "Lethal Weapon - 27." Bad guy takes his hand off the chips to grab his lucky quarter, bad guy with a badge grabs the bag, tears it open, and stuffs a handful in his mouth, yelling: "Flip this, sucker!"

EMILY

Actually, that might have improved the whole franchise. So you're a hungry writer?

WILL

Not momentarily. So you're a WASP girl with a vaguely familiar Northeast accent, who says she could be a gypsy from the borderlands. Oh, say it isn't so - not another hungry actor, Lost in Angeles?

EMILY

What makes you think I'm hungry?

WILL

Where's your hand, Lewis & Clark?

EMILY

Yeah, okay. So - how do we end the impasse scene?

WILL

There's always sex on the linoleum tile of the cookies and chips aisle. But I think John Wayne already did that in the first "True Grit."

EMILY

I could tell you were a John Wayne fan, by the way you saddled up the pony.

(CONTINUED)

WILL
(speechless)
Wha ... Who "are" you?

EMILY
(incredulous)
I'm showing you everything, and
"still" you need more
explication? How does playing
with your word-self, become such
a mother-bumping, grand
obsession?

WILL
No idea, but I'm pretty sure Mom
had nothing to do with it.

EMILY
So, then, just how do we back
the fuck off, here, Jesse James?

WILL
I'm sure the writer is heading
toward a way out, even as we
speak.

EMILY
Because he cares about his
characters? Is that what you
do - care about the story
people?

She says the last five words and the atmosphere in the cookies and chips aisle at the Mobil station on Poplar Avenue in North Hollywood, shifts - like a sudden gust of wind has moved through the narrow aisles and pushed the old air out, leaving space for new air to enter. WILL slides his hand off the chip bag, looking over the shelves and out the front windows. EMILY, still studying his face, slides her hand back, too.

EMILY
Wow. The magic words. And a
writer with his word-heart, on
his sleeve.

WILL breath laughs, shakes his head, then turns his head back, looking at her face.

WILL
How you'd get to be such a
clever girl?

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

No idea. I don't think it was
the Cherrios. How about you?

WILL

Same.

EMILY

So - suggestions for what comes
next?

WILL

We part store-aisle ways. You
buy the chips. I get the other
stuff I came for. Then I walk
out and, on the way back to my
truck, I see you sprawled out on
the hood of your car, in a
leopard-skin thong and halter
top, doing a snake dance to
something from Pearl Jam,
pumping from inside.

EMILY

Pumping from inside what?

WILL

(breath laugh)
Funny. From inside the car.

EMILY

Nice erectile dysfunction
fantasy. ... Or - on the way
back to your semi-truck loaded
with pork bellies headed for the
geezer towns of Arizona, you
stop at the older, rusty gray
Volvo wagon parked out the door
and around to the right, where
we sit for 30 minutes and pig
out on junk food.

WILL

An older, rusty gray Volvo wagon
with New York plates. I'm the
older, rusty green pickup with
New York plates, a few spaces
past it. What are the chances?

EMILY

(slower, reflective)
... Probably a lot bigger than
they seem at the moment.

(CONTINUED)

WILL

Right. ... Because, how could it
be a truthful story about fate -

EMILY

- when, in truth, the story's
fate is determined by
shepherding coincidence. I love
that line.

WILL

Yes. ... And we could try your
plan.

EMILY

Okay. See you outside, then,
Slim Jim. You're getting Slim
Jims, right?

WILL

Am now.

They turn in the aisle and go opposite directions. The
store is crowded, and they both make a point of not
looking for each other as they get their stuff.

SCENE 5-A - EXT. GAS STATION LOT, DAY

WILL walks out the front door of the store, turning to
the right.

As he turns the corner of the building, he sees that
EMILY's Volvo is gone, and the bag of chips is resting
against the base of his windshield, between the wipers.

WILL

(to self)

What the fuck?

WILL walks up to the driver's door of his truck, unlocks
and opens it, slides the canvas shopping bag across to
the passenger's seat, then grabs the bag of chips and
note EMILY left, on a folded over torn-out sheet of
notebook paper, underneath the wiper blade.

SCENE 5-B - INT. WILL'S TRUCK GAS STATION LOT, DAY

Sitting behind the wheel, WILL opens the bag of chips and
puts a bite-reduced one in his mouth, then unfolds the
note and begins reading as he chews.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

(voice over)

"New York pickup boy: Apologies for running off, but I realized I have someplace to be in 30 mins. and, with L.A. traffic, it could take an hour to get there. So write to me, because it's what you like to do, and it's probably best that the next scene is carried out in straight read-and-write, to give the oral store-version of that, a step-back breather. My email address is missedthedrunken sailorsin1492@gmail.com. My name is Emily.

"Named after the Belle of Amherst, I chose the email address at 16, imagining what else might have passed through the Dickinson daughter's head, there, shut inside in her upstairs bedroom, dreaming of a future she had no idea would one day include streaming music and videos of naked boys swimming in sparkling, far-off seas.

"ASIDE: God, how the fuck did people write without delete keys? - (closing with a question as a writing prompt for you, Tinkerbell, because I'm just that sort of girl) - E"

WILL puts the note on the dashboard, eats another chip, puts the canvas bag in the extended cab behind the front seats, grabs his laptop from the knapsack on the floor, swings around sideways with his back against the passenger's door and legs across the seats, opens the laptop, enters his passphrase, and begins an email, typing for five beats then reading the full text.

WILL

(voice-over)

"New York Volvo girl: Leaving the chips was so generous, as sitting here, in the lot in Doris (named from her first license plate with me - DOR-839S), I'm typing with my mouth completely full. My first

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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WILL (cont'd)

thought, on rounding the corner of the store was: 'What the fuck - the girl is "gone"?' My second thought: 'Oh, someone left a baby on my hood.' I've never tasted baby, but I'm pretty sure Halley's chips - "the junk food with a comet on the bag" - are better.

"In answer to the writing prompt, I have no idea how people ever wrote without computers. I can't do it. And I'm pretty sure if Descartes had used a laptop, there, sitting by the fire and contemplating the honey-comb, or whatever it was, after washing his hands he'd have written: 'I rewrite, therefore, I am.'

"I'm going to send this from the Burger King across the street from the Mobil station, just in case the pork bellies and I end up in a ditch. And actually, I'm on my way out of town now, driving north to Canada to shovel for white gold, before its gone.

"Q: What's faster - a naked real estate developer running from the truth, or Jingles, the clown, trying to get his costume zipper down after Eloise, the bareback horse rider girl, finally says 'Oh, okay, why not.'?"

"And I'm Will, without the metaphor. - W"

SCENE 6-A - EXT. AUDITION BLDG., DAY

EMILY pulls into the lot, parks, gets out with a knapsack slung over one shoulder, and hurries to the door of the one-story strip building with an empty storefront, with blinds closed and a "North of Montana" sign written in felt-tip marker on three sheets of printer paper, and taped to the inside of the window.

SCENE 6-B - INT. AUDITION BLDG., DAY

EMILY enters, closes the door and turns. GRACE is sitting at a small folding table in the entry room, with ear buds plugged into a laptop beside some papers and her cell phone. Except for several folding chairs along the windows, the room is empty.

EMILY

Hi. I'm Emily.

GRACE

Hi. I'm Grace. Thanks for coming. Have a seat and I'll let Carol know you're here.

GRACE gets up and walks through and closes the door behind her desk. EMILY sits in the chair closest to the door, dropping her knapsack on the floor and pulling out a folder and the two-page monologue she brought, then closing her eyes as she bends forward and moves her head and neck around in slow circles. She sits up again and takes a long slow breath, then sits back and looks at the wall across from her, closing her eyes again and imagining she's a golden eagle, soaring high along the updrafts above a canyon in the Hollywood Hills.

GRACE opens the door again, stepping thru the doorway.

GRACE

She's ready for you, now.

EMILY

Thanks, Grace.

EMILY gets up and walks past GRACE, thru the doorway and into the small audition room, as GRACE closes the door behind her.

SCENE 6-C - INT. AUDITION ROOM, DAY

There's one folding chair in the middle of the floor, and a folding table against the far wall, with CAROL sitting behind it. A video camera on a tripod and pointed at the mid-room chair, is just past her left shoulder.

CAROL

Hi, Emily. I'm Carol. Thanks for coming.

EMILY speaks as she walks to the chair, drops her knapsack on it, steps to the table and hands CAROL the

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folder with her c.v. and head shot, then steps back and stands beside the chair.

EMILY

Sure. Thanks for letting me audition. ... I brought a short, 2-minute monologue I can do, if you'd like. Or do something you have for me. Or sing something from "The Pirates of Penn's Aunts."

CAROL

(looking at c.v.,
laughs)

Gilbert & Sullivan meets Sean Penn. I think I'd pay to see that movie.

(looks up)

Maybe you could do the monologue?

EMILY

Sure. It's one person doing two characters. A mother finds her daughter out behind the bike shed, gazing at the moon.

EMILY looks down at the floor for a beat, then looks up, holding the two-page script by her side.

EMILY AS GIRL

(looking at sky, turns
head right, happy)

Hey, Mom! Guess what? You know Tommy?

EMILY AS MOM

(turns head left, grim)

You had sex.

EMILY AS GIRL

(looks right)

Wha'? How?

EMILY AS MOM

(looks left, forward)

You're glowing. Like a freaking roman candle on the Fourth.

(imitating daughter)

And then Tommy puts the two-incher in my mailbox. And then I help him light the fuse. And then it's 'oh, oh, yes, yes.'

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EMILY AS MOM (cont'd)

And before I have the chance to
make another sound, it goes off.
KaBoom! Boom! Pop. Pop. Fizzle.

EMILY AS GIRL

(looks right, forward,
shaking head)

You are un-be-liev-able. ... And
it was a "lot" bigger than two
inches.

EMILY AS MOM

(looks left)

They always feel like that.

(looks forward)

But believe me, in the morning,
when he's sitting on the crapper
and farting like yesterday was
bean burrito night at Taco Bell,
it'll look a lot more like two
inches.

EMILY AS GIRL

(looks right, forward,
shaking head)

I can't believe that you're my
mother.

EMILY AS MOM

(looks left, smiling)

So, did you kiss it?

EMILY AS GIRL

(looks right)

What? Kiss it!?

EMILY AS MOM

(looks left, forward)

Yeah. To help him light the
fuse, did you let him strike the
match upon your chapped, and
eager lips?

EMILY AS GIRL

(looks right, forward,
step left, aside)

This is why my mother and I
can't really talk. And is it my
fault? When you try to share
something beautiful that's
happened in your life, with your
mother, is this the reaction a
daughter should expect?

(CONTINUED)

EMILY AS MOM
(looks left, forward,
step right, aside)
The girl is just like her
father, but with clean
underwear. At least, it used to
be clean. And is it a mother's
job to be on panty watch, for
her daughter's entire, freaking
life? I don't think so.

EMILY AS GIRL
(looks right, forward,
aside)
The gap between us, is just
"unbridgeable."

EMILY AS MOM
(looks left, forward,
aside)
"Unbridgeable"? What bridge? I
thought we were talking about
traffic in the tunnel?

EMILY
... and scene.

CAROL
(polite claps)
Wow. That was really good. Did
you write it?

EMILY
Yes.

CAROL
Have you written other stuff?

EMILY
I've been writing stuff since I
was twelve.

CAROL
Well, that "is" interesting.
(looking at c.v.)
So a B.F.A. in Madison. But you
grew up in the east?

EMILY
Yes, mostly in Vermont.
Middlebury. My dad taught at the
college. Then the marriage split
up, he moved to Seattle, my mom
and I stayed in Vermont, then
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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EMILY (cont'd)

she remarried, moved to Florida
and I ended up in Madison living
with my dad's Mom, Granny Lin,
when I was 17. So, just a
processed cheesehead.

CAROL

(looks at c.v. again)
And your contact information is
up-to-date?

EMILY

Yep.

CAROL

Great.
(looks up)
We'll be making initial
decisions in the next couple of
weeks, and let your agent know
if we'd like to see you for a
call-back, or not. Okay?

EMILY

Sure.
(grabs knapsack)
And thanks again for giving me a
shot.

CAROL

Thank you, Emily.

Emily turns and walks toward the door.

SCENE 7-A - INT. WILL'S TRUCK MOUNTAINS, DAY

Closing credits and music begins. WILL, sitting in his truck, parked beside a snow bank on a highway in the Canadian Rockies [shot in the San Gabriels or Sierras?], is waiting for the plows to re-clear the road. He has both arms resting on the steering wheel, peering through the windshield at the snow. Shot from the passenger's seat, the camera moves to a view through the windshield.

WILL

... Well, Doris - I'm pretty
sure we're north of Montana,
now.

SCENE 7-B - EXT. PANORAMA OF MOUNTAINS, TREES AND SNOW

Closing credits and music continues. From a hillside above the truck, the camera pans up and back for a larger view of mountains, trees, and snow.

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