

Pieces

Screenplay by
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Based on a short story by
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Registered WGAw

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1 EXT. DESERT - NIGHT 1

EXTREME WIDE SHOT of a beat up 1982 Ford Station Wagon traveling along a paved road in the middle of a desert.

2 INT./EXT - CAR 2

The people drive in silence (shot in fragmented body parts) with the woman at the wheel. The woman turning on the radio (static) and the man turning it off.

CLOSE UP moving shot of the paved, lined road. Then suddenly it turns to dirt and there's a WHOOSH of a sound vacuum.

3 EXT. DARK RURAL ROAD/MEXICO - NIGHT 3

The car travels down a dirt road, its frame rattling with each jagged bump.

4 INT./EXT. CAR 4

ANN, 43, is at the wheel as her husband, GORDON, dozes off in the passenger seat. Ahead of her, the road is dark, lit only by the slivers of her headlights.

Suddenly, Ann slams on the brakes, pitching her husband forward into the dashboard.

POV

Up ahead in the middle of the road, a DOG is illuminated by the lights, its eyes eerily reflective. There appears to be a severed human head in its mouth. The dog stands in the middle of the road for a split second before bounding into the brush.

BACK TO SCENE

ANN
Did you see that?

GORDON
What?

ANN
The dog!

GORDON
Yeah, the thing almost got me
killed...

Gordon searches the floor below his seat for his flask.

ANN
That dog was holding a human head!

GORDON
That's crazy.

Gordon finds his flask and places it back in his lap.

ANN
You saw it, didn't you?

GORDON
I saw a dog with something in its
mouth. Could've been anything.

ANN
Like a head.

GORDON
Or roadkill. Or maybe a pumpkin...

ANN
Pumpkins don't grow in this area.

GORDON
They have trucks, though. It could
have fallen out of a truck.

ANN
Then where did it get that hair?

GORDON
Maybe it was a coconut.

ANN
With earrings?

GORDON
What about its eyes? Did it wink at
you?

Ann starts to speak but stops short.

ANN
You're making fun of me.

GORDON
Well listen to yourself!

ANN
We should try to find it. Make
sure...

GORDON
 You wanna get out of the car and
 follow it?

Ann looks out the window, fully aware of the ominous darkness
 outside pressing in.

GORDON
 They call this stretch the Devil's
 Mouth. We're miles away from any
 kind of civilization.

ANN
 Well obviously someone lives here.
 Or...did.

GORDON
 So let's just say that was a head.
 Then where you find one person,
 you're bound to find another, which
 is what I'm really afraid of.

ANN
 What do you mean?

GORDON
 The person who chopped off that
 head is probably lurking somewhere.

Ann's eyes go wide. She looks at Gordon who shrugs, his mouth
 creeping into a sadistic smirk. She slowly turns her head,
 looking out at the darkness of her driver's side window.
 Suddenly, a large bat slams into the windshield. Ann screams
 and scrambles to put the car into drive. The car jolts then
 stalls. Ann frantically starts the car and hits the gas.

5 EXT. DARK RURAL ROAD/MEXICO - CONTINUOUS 5

The station wagon speeds down the road.

6 INT./EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS 6

Gordon grips the door frame for dear life.

GORDON
 Slow down, Ann. ANN! Slow down!

ANN
 I thought you were in a hurry to
 get to the resort.

GORDON
 Slow this car down RIGHT NOW.

ANN

(wild-eyed)

A dog carries what looks like a human head across the road and we don't even do anything...

GORDON

You want to go back?

Ann doesn't respond.

GORDON

We'll never find that spot again. And that dog is long gone.

ANN

You're always rationalizing.

GORDON

Because it's necessary! Odds are, we go back, we're not gonna find it. But let's say we do...best case scenario, it's not a head and we wasted a lot of time. Worst case scenario...what are we really gonna do? Carry it all the way to the resort in a grocery bag? Check it in at the desk with the rest of our luggage? Think about it. I'm not gonna be the one who tells your lovely sister we missed another one of her shotgun weddings because we were busy prying a decapitated head out of a dog's mouth.

ANN

But still...

GORDON

We're in the middle of nowhere, Ann! Don't be stupid. How do you think things are settled around here? I'm thinking it's not with rationale. I'm thinking it's more like *machetes*. And if that's the case, do you really want to involve yourself?

Ann quietly thinks.

ANN

Maybe when we get to the hotel, we
can see if there've been any
reports of missing people.

GORDON

Or missing pumpkins.

Gordon takes the top off his flask and takes a swig. Ann
looks over at him in contempt. They drive on in silence.

7 EXT. DARK RURAL ROAD - NIGHT 7

The station wagon continues along down the bumpy road.

8 INT./EXT CAR 8

Ann continues to drive. Gordon is looking at the gas gauge,
which is close to empty.

ANN

Gordon...

GORDON

(exasperated)

Ann...

ANN

I think I just saw a foot.

GORDON

A what?

ANN

A foot. Lying on the side of the
road.

GORDON

You've gotta be kidding me.

ANN

A FOOT, Gordon. Sticking out from
under a bush like a...like a
gnarled root.

GORDON

Maybe it WAS a gnarled root.

ANN

It was a FOOT.

GORDON

What's the point of arguing with you. Just turn the car around and we'll take a look.

ANN

(panicking)

Forget it. I just want to get OFF this road. I just want to get out of this nightmare.

GORDON

Then why'd you bring it up in the first place?

Ann slams on the brakes pitching Gordon forward again.

ANN

Fine. You want to take a look? Then get out and go!

GORDON

(calmly; patronizing)

What's this really about Ann?

ANN

(indignant, backpedaling)

What's this about? I'm--I'm *tired!* I'm *scared*. We've been driving for six hours, I don't know where the hell I am, and Christ, we may not even have enough GAS to get us to the resort...

GORDON

This is about *her*.

Ann looks like she got slapped in the face.

ANN

This isn't about *her*, you lying selfish prick--

GORDON

I said it was a mistake, a mistake most men my age make by the way, and I told you I ended it.

ANN

Then why'd you do it?!?

GORDON

I don't know!

ANN
(accusingly)
You do know.

GORDON
No I don't.

ANN
Yes you do. It's because she's younger, isn't it? She's younger and she's pretty and she drives that cute little Mercedes--

GORDON
Stop it, Ann. Just stop it.

ANN
What is it, Gordon? You think she's prettier than me? You think she's better than me? *Talk to me goddamit!* Why'd you need to do something so pathetic?

GORDON
(matter of fact)
I didn't *need* to do anything. I *wanted* to.

ANN
Fuck you, Gordon.

GORDON
(panicking and defensive)
I said that it was over!! *What more do you want from me?*

ANN
I want a divorce.

Gordon stares at her in disbelief.

GORDON
(outraged disbelief)
You want to divorce *me*? Are you kidding me? Darling, you were nothing before I took an interest in you and made you semi-presentable. Even at your age.

ANN
Get out Gordon.

GORDON
Don't be ridiculous, Ann.

ANN
GET OUT OF THE CAR!!!!

She reaches over and violently opens his door, the darkness instantly rushing in like thick, murky floodwater.

Ann pushes him towards the door.

Gordon looks SCARED OUT OF HIS MIND for the first time tonight. He quickly grabs the door and slams it shut, leaving the wind howling around them.

GORDON
Okay, I think we both need to take a step back and calm down. I'm sorry, okay? I was wrong and I shouldn't have said that. But let's look at our situation realistically. We're sitting in the middle of nowhere, we're almost out of gas, and there could be a *killer* out there. Are you understanding me? So how about we save this jaded lover business until we get to the hotel so we can talk like civilized people.

ANN
I'm done talking to you.

She puts the car into gear and they continue on the road.

They drive in silence, Ann glaring at the road, her knuckles white against the wheel, Gordon staring intently ahead.

In the middle of the road up ahead, unmistakably, is a severed human arm, it's curled lifeless fingers sporting slender fingernails painted red, covered with a thin veil of dust.

Ann swerves to miss it, then continues down the road like nothing happened.

GORDON
Stop the car, Ann.

He violently turns the key in the ignition, killing the engine. Ann pumps the gas frantically, but the car slows down, shuddering to a halt in the middle of the road.

GORDON
We have to go back.

She reaches for the keys to turn on the engine, but Gordon grabs her hand, holding it tightly.

GORDON
You saw it...that was definitely an arm.

Ann doesn't move.

ANN
You were right the first time. We shouldn't get involved.

GORDON
I was *wrong* the first time. We are involved. Those people back at the gas station...they know we came this way. This road leads straight to the resort. If someone comes along behind us and picks up that arm, the police will figure out that we were the last ones to drive through...they'll want to know why we didn't report that arm...and something tells me that in a shithole like this, being a suspect in a murder investigation is nothing pretty.

ANN
We could go back and hide it.

GORDON
Listen to yourself, Ann! You sound crazy. We can't hide evidence.

ANN
You've never had a problem hiding things before.

This is a low blow. Gordon tightens his lips, refusing to respond directly to that comment.

GORDON
I'm going back.

He opens his door, slamming it behind him.

9 EXT. DARK RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

9

Gordon walks back towards the arm. Around him, the night is silent. Not even the usual rustle of critters or the chirping of insects. Nothing, except the wind.

He squats down examining the arm, then stands up with the arm in his hands.

Just then, two headlights come over the ridge, approaching. Gordon tucks the arm into his jacket then runs towards his car. A large PICKUP TRUCK slowly appears, its high beams blinding Gordon. The truck blocks the narrow road. There are several thuggish-looking HISPANIC MEN standing in the back of the truck.

Gordon goes to the driver side.

GORDON

Move over!

Ann slides into the passenger seat. Gordon throws the bundle onto the floor of the driver's seat and jumps in, starting the engine.

The DRIVER of the truck gets out, tossing a lit cigarette to the ground. He pulls out another one and leisurely lights it, then slowly approaches, silhouetted by the truck's headlights. From Gordon's POV, we can clearly see a large KNIFE tucked into the waistband of his dark-stained pants.

10 INT./EXT CAR -CONTINUOUS

10

Gordon and Ann are frightened, shielding their eyes from the blinding headlights.

GORDON

Don't say anything, Ann. Do you understand me?

The Driver is a huge, brutal-looking Hispanic man. He knocks on the door. Gordon quickly rolls it down. Meanwhile a HENCHMAN circles around the car, eyeing Ann, then stops next to her door and takes a piss.

GORDON

Hello.

The Driver speaks in rapid Spanish. Gordon shakes his head.

GORDON
 I don't understand. *Americano*.
 (points to himself)
 I'm American.

The Driver pauses, then his face lights up.

DRIVER
 Ah! *Americano!*

He lifts one finger, signaling for Gordon to wait, then hurries back to the truck. Someone in the back hands him a large, squarish object which he tucks under his arm as he trots back.

Standing next to the car, he holds the object up to the light. Ann screams, as from her POV, it looks like the grotesque, headless, lifeless torso of a naked woman.

GORDON
 It's a mannequin, Ann.

Ann leans over taking a closer look and indeed, it's the torso of a mannequin.

The Driver rattles on in Spanish, using his hands to pantomime that the pieces of the mannequin had fallen out of the back of the truck, grabbing Gordon's arm.

GORDON
 I...I don't understand.

The Driver whistles to one of his men who throws an arm. He pantomimes the arm breaking off the torso and falling.

DRIVER
 Ha visto alguna parte? La cabeza?
 (points to his head)
 Cabeza?

ANN
 He wants to know if we've seen the head.

GORDON
 (pointedly ignores Ann; to the Driver)
 A dog got it. What's the word.
 Perro. A perro got it.

The Driver looks confused. Gordon lets out a few barks and the Driver nods, grinning.

DRIVER

A si si si. Perro. Muchisimas
gracias!

The Driver runs back to the car and gets in. A moment later, the truck's engine comes to life, and the truck backs into the brush, allowing Gordon to maneuver his car by on the narrow road.

Gordon drives until the taillights of the truck and the silhouette of the men disappear from his rearview mirror.

Gordon hears a choking sound coming from Ann.

GORDON

Are you laughing or crying?

ANN

Both.

Ann starts laughing, quietly at first, spiralling into a giggle fit.

GORDON

(tense)

You think I was silly?

ANN

No. I think you were...brave. Even if this whole situation was silly. Can you imagine what would have happened if we had kept driving? These paranoid images of decapitated bodies and homicidal locals left in our trail? The rest of our lives haunted...by a mannequin!

She continues to laugh, finally tiring herself out and quieting down. Gordon doesn't say a word. For the first time, we notice that his knuckles gripping the wheel are white.

ANN

Hey...why didn't you give him the arm back? That mannequin's useless without it.

Gordon lets out a tense, ironic laugh.

GORDON

It's not that funny if you think
about it...it's actually
clever...using a dummy to cover up
a search for pieces of a corpse.

He looks over at Ann, who looks at him questioningly,
vulnerable.

GORDON

(bitterly)

That may have been a mannequin back
there,

(reaches for arm)

but trust me honey, somebody died
an unhappy death tonight.

Gordon drops the arm into Ann's lap, the red, jagged cut at
the elbow leaving no doubt that this, indeed, is a severed
human arm.

Ann's body recoils from the heavy hand rocking in her lap as
the car hits another bump in the road, causing the entire
car's frame to groan miserably.

The WHOOSH of a sound vacuum as we pull away from the front
of the car, where through the windshield is a living tableaux
of Ann screaming as Gordon laughs at her.

FADE OUT.