

EXT. MECHANIC'S SHOP - DAY

BILL (60s) round-faced but rugged, wearing a mechanic's jumpsuit with a name-tag, walks out of his shop with a long beat up cardboard box. He sets the box in the bed of a square-body Chevy truck and hops into the driver's seat.

TRUCK ENGINE REVS.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

BILL drives on an empty two-lane highway. Country music PLAYS faintly. Whistling, he looks in the rearview mirror. Then the cardboard box in the bed. Then the side mirrors. His eyebrows knit together, but he keeps driving.

Beat.

Bill screeches to a stop, then backs up the truck, arm around the passenger seat.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Bill backs up to reveal THE MONSTER, bipedal, furry-faced and antlered but not quite any animal in particular, wearing a tailored double-breasted suit. He holds a map in one hand and holds out a hairy hitchhiker's thumb.

Bill looks around in both directions. No one for miles.

BILL
Where ya headed?

The Monster is silent, but points down the highway in the direction Bill was going.

Bill gestures for The Monster to get in. The Monster tries opening the door, but it doesn't budge.

Bill hops out and walks around. He puts his hand on the handle, pushes his hip against the door and pulls, grunting.

BILL (CONT'D)
It's finicky.

The door releases and he stumbles. He chuckles at The Monster and gestures for him to get in.

The Monster climbs into the cab, antlers grazing the ceiling. Bill notices but doesn't mention it. He shuts the door.

CAR DOOR SLAMS. TRUCK REVS.

EXT. TRUCK - NIGHT

CAR DOOR CREAKS. Bill opens the door for The Monster.

BILL
Bathroom break.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Bill walks toward a gas station. The Monster follows until they reach the door.

Bill walks in.

From outside, The Monster watches him chat with a female cashier, CINDY (60s), died blonde hair, wrinkly. Cindy hands a new, smaller cardboard box to Bill.

The Monster pulls out a pencil and the map from his pocket. Lines marking highways and towns all over, but no names. A thick black blob covers one city on the left side of the map.

The Monster looks down the highway, squinting, and draws a line from the blob, circling a spot a couple inches to the right. He looks at the highway again, then pockets the map.

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Bill tucks the box under his arm and looks outside. He sees The Monster staring at them. Cindy looks too.

CINDY
Friend of yours?

Bill looks at her and walks out to the door.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Bill holds the door open for The Monster.

Beat.

The Monster walks inside.

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Bill beelines for the chip aisle. The Monster follows and stands right next to Bill.

Bill studies the options and picks out a small pack of unshelled Sunflower Seeds. Bill looks at The Monster and gestures towards the aisle. The Monster picks out the same.

Bill looks at him and takes the package from The Monster. He puts both of their Sunflower Seeds back. He leans down and grabs a one-pound pack.

He bounces it in his hand.

BILL

Cheaper.

He walks to Cindy and pulls out his wallet. The Monster stops him and pulls out a crisp \$100 bill from his suit. She looks wide-eyed from The Monster to Bill.

CINDY

I can't break that.

Bill pulls out a ten and hands it to Cindy.

BILL

A pack of Martins, too.

Cindy smiles.

EXT. GAS STATION - LATER

Cindy and Bill lean against the gas station and smoke cigarettes. The Monster holds one, but it isn't lit. Bill takes one last drag and crunches his cigarette butt beneath his boot. He squints toward the rising sun.

Cindy takes a final drag too and drops it before opening the gas station door.

Cindy turns to walk inside, and stops to look at The Monster.

CINDY

Y'all take care.

The Monster nods. Bill waves.

Cindy walks back inside.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT

Bill walks to the truck and opens the passenger side door for The Monster. He shuts the door.

CAR DOOR SLAMS. ENGINE REVS.

INT./EXT. TRUCK - DAY

The Monster and Bill drive. As they pass a highway sign, the Monster marks his map. Bill glances over. A loud POP.

BILL

Sonofa-

Bill slows down, pulls over, hops out. The Monster follows.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The Monster sees Bill inspecting the rear right tire, flat. Bill sighs, looking at the sun.

BILL

S'all right. I have a spare.

He looks at The Monster.

BILL (CONT'D)

Can you get the jack? It's in the bed of the truck.

The Monster looks blankly back.

BILL (CONT'D)

Cylinder with criss-cross metal pieces?

The Monster looks blankly back. Bill rubs his face.

BILL (CONT'D)

Get back in the cab. I'll do it.

Bill stands up and walks to the back of the truck, The Monster returning to the front.

A few moments later, Bill comes back with the jack in one hand, wrench in the other. He drops the wrench and starts arranging the jack under the truck.

The Monster walks over, balancing cigarettes, a bottle of water, and a wet bandana, which he gingerly lays on Bill's sweating forehead. He starts lighting a cigarette.

BILL (CONT'D)

Stop!

The Monster stops, droops slightly.

BILL (CONT'D)

I appreciate it, just- just hand me
the wrench, huh?

Bill points. Perking up, The Monster picks up the wrench and hands it to Bill.

CAR DOOR SLAMS. ENGINE REVS.

INT./EXT. TRUCK - DAY

CAR DOOR CREAKS. This time, The Monster expertly hops out of the truck.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

The Monster looks around. They're parked in a clearing, nothing but grass and the occasional fence surround them for miles. He looks at Bill, now holding the two cardboard boxes tied together with twine.

Bill points at a hill a couple miles away. The Monster looks longingly at the truck.

BILL

You'd rather stay in the Chevy
tonight?

The Monster shuts the door. Gestures for him to lead the way.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Bill and The Monster walk.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Bill flicks on a flashlight and keeps walking with The Monster.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Bill raps on the door of a classic red barn. The door is opened by ABBOTT (20s), thin, clean-shaven.

BILL
Howdy.

ABBOTT
Come in.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Abbott points them to a row of cots against one wall, handing Bill a small cardboard box, which he takes.

BILL
How're things here?

ABBOTT
Sufficient.

Abbott exits the room. The Monster watches him go. Bill sits on a cot and starts untying his boots. He lounges back.

BILL
That's Abbott.

The Monster also leans back, but keeps his shoes on.

BILL (CONT'D)
He doesn't talk much either.

They sit silently for a while, The Monster pulls out his map, draws a line, and marks it. Bill looks over.

BILL (CONT'D)
You're the line?

The Monster looks over and nods slightly.

Bill frowns, thinking, then stands up and walks to the chest of drawers.

BILL (CONT'D)
A while ago, I was in your shoes.

The Monster looks down at his shoes, then back.

Bill rifles through the drawer, pulling out clothing.

BILL (CONT'D)

Took a long time to get my life squared, but I did. And I learned something.

He lingers on a sturdy navy long-sleeved shirt.

BILL (CONT'D)

Running forward works better than running away.

He walks back to his cot and tosses the shirt toward The Monster.

BILL (CONT'D)

We have an early morning tomorrow, then we can keep going.

The Monster holds the shirt.

Bill curls up and soon starts snoring. The Monster pulls out his map and marks one more circle, tapping the pencil a few times. He stares at the shirt, then the map.

INT. BARN - DAY

Bill nudges The Monster awake. The Monster jolts up. He's wearing the navy shirt.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Bill and The Monster walk away from the barn along a dirt path. Bill carries all three of the boxes until The Monster takes one them from him. Bill smiles.

EXT. SCARECROW FIELD - DAY

Bill and The Monster stop in the middle of a field in front of a prototypical scarecrow, a little worse for wear. Bursting with straw, faded burlap face, ratty plaid shirt.

Bill looks at The Monster.

Bill sets his cardboard boxes down and gestures for The Monster to do the same. He then reaches up and takes the scarecrow body down. The Monster helps him.

Bill opens the smallest box. Inside is a needle and thread.

He opens the second. A new plaid shirt.

Bill hands The Monster the shirt and stuffs it with the old straw, then lets The Monster continue. Bill carefully threads the needle and repairs the scarecrow's face.

EXT. SCARECROW FIELD - LATER

Bill and The Monster stare at the newly dressed scarecrow. Bill opens the third and final box. Inside, a new straw hat.

BILL

We all take care of him. This year
was my turn.

Bill picks up the hat and holds it out.

BILL (CONT'D)

Could be yours next year. Abbott
has room.

The Monster stares at the hat, then at Bill. He pulls out the map from his pocket. The Monster traces a line with his finger back from the most recent circle along the route they've taken, stopping at the black mark.

BILL (CONT'D)

You're going back.

The Monster nods. He holds out a hand for Bill to shake. Bill takes it and pulls The Monster into a bear hug.

EXT. BUS DEPOT

The truck pulls up to an empty bus stop. Bill nods at The Monster. The Monster hops out and salutes Bill, then turns.

BILL

Hold on.

Bill rummages and comes up with a half-full bag of sunflower seeds. He tosses it to The Monster, who catches it.

BILL (CONT'D)

So long.

The Monster watches Bill drive away. He keeps looking, long after the truck's gone.

He huffs, sits down on the empty bench, crosses his legs, and takes a handful of seeds.

THE END