

THE ROAD TO MELVILLE

Written by

14-DE17-W093

"A young professional sidesteps her greedy brothers and takes her
wealthy father on his final road trip."

FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

SUSAN ANDERSON, mid-twenties and power-dressed, sits at her meticulous desk. She's on a call, sipping coffee.

SUSAN

No, the fifth tab on the fourth spreadsheet has the forecasts. Bye.

She hangs up, starts typing and the phone rings again.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Randy, trust me the numbers are... excuse me? Yes, this is Susan.

INT. PRIVATE HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Susan is bedside, holding hands with her weary father, ROBERT ANDERSON. He's mid-sixties, well-built, wearing loud pyjamas.

ROBERT

I insisted I wear these. I also insisted I get much younger nurses.

SUSAN

I bet you did.

ROBERT

Isn't old age pathetic?

SUSAN

You still have your mind Dad. Before Mum went, we had to keep introducing ourselves every day.

Robert winces and squeezes Susan's hand. She hides her frown.

ROBERT

Susie, I have a request.

SUSAN

What do you need?

Robert looks around and leans in for a conspiring whisper.

ROBERT

A long drive.

EXT. FRONT OF SUSAN'S HOUSE - DAWN

Susan's dressed casually, fussing about in her car trunk. She moves to the driver's seat ticking off a list. Robert slouches in the passenger seat, still in his pyjamas.

SUSAN
Spare clothes, spare shoes...

ROBERT
Spare car.

SUSAN
...I think that's everything.

ROBERT
Are you sure you want to do this?

SUSAN
Not really.

ROBERT
Let's go then.

Susan pulls out a worn rural road map.

SUSAN
So we're driving to... Melville. Is it new? I've never heard of it.

ROBERT
Are you going to drive or what?

Susan glares at Robert and starts the car.

INT. CAR - DAY

Susan and Robert are driving on the open road.

ROBERT
I suppose your brothers told you I've got no money left.

SUSAN
It's yours to spend. You always did. The boys will be okay.

ROBERT
Hmm.

INT. CAFE - DAY

ANDREW is early thirties, sharply dressed and sits at a table thumbing through a menu. DAVID, a late twenties scruffy musician, sits opposite, strumming his guitar.

DAVID
(singing quietly)
I've got no clue what you're
saying, brother Andy--

Andrew slams down the menu.

ANDREW
David, put your toy down.

DAVID
It helps me listen.

ANDREW
Dad liquidated his assets to
undisclosed--

David strums, shaking his head that he doesn't understand.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
He did a garage sale of everything
and the cash is gone.

David stops.

DAVID
Gone where? Did you tell Susie?

ANDREW
I did, but she hung up. I went to
her place, but her car's gone and
now, her phone's out of range.

David strums again.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Do you mind?

DAVID
I need that money, Andy.

ANDREW
For your parties, friends and this
excuse for music?

DAVID

What do you care? You don't need money. Or does your home need a fourth storey?

ANDREW

At least with my share, I'd have an estate to show for it.

DAVID

Oooh, an estate.

(singing loudly)

I'd invite all my country club friends...

ANDREW

Don't push me.

DAVID

(singing more brashly)

We'll talk about Mercedes Benz...

Andrew fumes and takes off his jacket.

INT. CAR - DAY

Robert and Susan are highway driving. Susan rubs her tired eyes and Robert notices the bracelet on Susan's wrist.

ROBERT

Nice bracelet.

SUSAN

You gave it to me. I used to sleep with it on when you were away.

ROBERT

I was away a lot, wasn't I? So why do you wear it still? Susan?

SUSAN

Because it's the only jewelry you ever gave me.

Robert recoils as if struck, and does so again and again.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Because it reminds me of how proud you were, for getting it at a good price, rather than noticing how pretty it looked on me.

(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)

And because it shows me, that if I want the best in life, I must work day and night for it.

ROBERT

(softly)

I have taught you something.

SUSAN

If you could call it that.

Robert tries to speak, but nothing comes out. He slumps.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I'm going to put some music on.

ROBERT

Anything but David's.

Robert offers Susan a weak smile.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Andrew wrestles the guitar from David, disrupting other patrons. David holds up Andrew's wallet, freshly lifted.

ANDREW

All right! I'll try to find Dad's money.

DAVID

Have you called Susie today?

ANDREW

Are you listening, or do you need new strings? She's out of range. Maybe she just needs some space. It is a tough time for her right now.

They swap their prized possessions.

INT. CAR - DAY

Susan and Robert hurtle down the road, singing to rock music.

SUSAN & ROBERT

Highway! Highway! Aaow!

Susan rocks to the guitar solo. Robert catches his breath.

ROBERT

It's a shame you haven't got a man.

SUSAN
Not now Dad, let's enjoy this.

ROBERT
You got your musical talents from
your mother. And your lead foot.

SUSAN
What?

She notices her speedometer as a siren wails behind them.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY ROADSIDE - DAY

Susan and Robert park, waiting for the COP to approach.

SUSAN
Just what I need.

ROBERT
Yes, he might be a bachelor.

SUSAN
Don't say anything.

Robert zips his lips as a handsome foreign mid-twenties cop
strides to Susan's window.

COP
License please.

SUSAN
I'm sorry, I wasn't watching.

She hands him her license.

COP'S RADIO (V.O.)
Hey Benny, we've got an armed
holdup getaway heading east out of
Franklin. Can you respond? Over.

BENNY (COP)
(into the radio)
Give me a sec.

Susan shows the map to Benny.

SUSAN
I'm taking Dad to Melville. Here.

ROBERT
(to Susan)
You do like him.

Benny sees the surname ANDERSON on Susan's license.

BENNY
What's your father's name?

SUSAN
Robert Anderson.

Benny studies the license, the map and the horizon.

ROBERT
(to Susan)
I think he likes you too.

SUSAN
Shush.

COP'S RADIO (V.O.)
Benny, we're desperate. Over.

BENNY
(into the radio)
Yeah, I'm coming now.

Benny hands back her things.

BENNY (CONT'D)
(to Susan)
Just slow down.

Benny jogs back to his patrol car and zooms off.

SUSAN
That was all a little too easy.
What just happened?

Robert gives her a knowing wink.

EXT. DESERT VILLAGE CENTRE- AFTERNOON

Susan's car pulls into a poor refugee village. People are building bungalows and transporting goods. Everyone's happy.

SUSAN
Okay. This is it.

ROBERT
I'll wait in the car.

SUSAN
What is this place?

Robert stares out the window.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
Don't sit there! Say something!

A WORKER comes to the driver's door and startles her.

WORKER
Are you okay lady?

SUSAN
Is this Melville?

WORKER
You want Doctor Melville?

SUSAN
Doctor?

INT. VILLAGE MEDICAL CLINIC - LATER

Susan stands inside the door and shudders at how busy it is. DR. TONY MELVILLE approaches Susan. Tony is an early fifties bright-eyed physician, dressed for the desert heat.

TONY
So, you're Robert's little Susan.
Tony Melville. Pleased to meet you.

SUSAN
Pleased to meet you too, I think.

TONY
Come outside. You've caught me on a
slow day. How's your father doing?

EXT. VILLAGE CENTRE - LATER

As Tony and Susan near the car, Susan notices it's empty.

SUSAN
Oh. He's gone.

TONY
Pardon me?

SUSAN
I was talking to him all the way
here.

TONY
Susan.

Susan painfully walks to the car.

TONY (CONT'D)
It's normal to see loved ones
afterwards.

Susan opens the passenger door. The seat belt secures a beautiful urn on the seat. She sinks to the dusty ground and sobs.

EXT. VILLAGE BACK LOT - AFTERNOON

Susan cradles the urn in the shade of a building, away from the village noise. Tony finds her and offers bottled water.

SUSAN
Thank you. How long have you been a
doctor here?

TONY
Not long enough. This place should
have been built years ago.

SUSAN
Why was your name on Dad's map?

TONY
A year ago, your father was
surveying for mineral deposits,
over that way, when he had a
cardiac arrest. By the grace of
God, he collapsed by the one road
I use for supply runs.

Tony offers his hand to help her up. She takes it.

EXT. VILLAGE THOROUGHFARE - AFTERNOON

Tony and Susan walk by bungalows and construction. The men pack up, as children play and women cook. Chatter abounds.

TONY
I brought him back to the clinic to
recover. During his stay, he became
excited about what the village
could become.

Benny arrives in his patrol car. As he exits, a few kids jump in.

BENNY
Hey, don't order a SWAT team or
anything.

Susan covers her face when he walks up.

TONY

Susan, this is Ben. Ben, this--

BENNY

(smiling)

Yes, we met when she was driving one hundred and ten.

SUSAN

Did you catch the armed holdup guy?

BENNY

Eventually.

TONY

Ben was one of the first refugees I treated all those years ago. And now look at him. He says he comes by to help, but I think he just likes my cooking.

BENNY

Yes, we use it as glue.

Tony and Benny chuckle.

BENNY (CONT'D)

I'll take a look at that water pump while I'm here too. Nice seeing you again Susan and I'm very sorry.

SUSAN

Thank you.

TONY

Thanks Benny. Susan, there's something else I want to show you.

INT. VILLAGE CHAPEL - AFTERNOON

The altar table has a wooden cross, a bowl and a towel. Plastic chairs fill the space and a corner table has photos and candles. Susan inspects the room, as Tony watches her.

SUSAN

Dad detested church.

TONY

Well, near-death affects people differently. It was here that he promised us his entire wealth.

SUSAN

All of it?

TONY

It felt like it was a release for him. I refused initially. I was too proud, but Robert was stubborn and funded lots of projects. Amazing.

SUSAN

I had no idea. I'm not sure if I could give up everything.

Susan rubs her bracelet.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I thought when I got here today, I'd only be finding a spot for his ashes.

TONY

Lots of spots in this wilderness.

INT. VILLAGE BUNGALOW - EVENING

Susan puts her overnight bag on the floor and looks over the room. There's a single bunk bed, curtains on the windows and a small table with a Bible. Everything's faded, but the room is clean.

EXT. VILLAGE BUNGALOW - EVENING

Tony stands outside the bungalow as Ben passes by, carrying a sleeping child. Susan emerges from the doorway to join Tony. Ben looks up and smiles at her. Susan blushes. Tony notices.

SUSAN

Please pass on my thanks.

TONY

I will. He's a nice guy you know.

SUSAN

Oh, not you too.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTRE - EARLY MORNING

The village buzzes with activity. Susan packs her car as Tony approaches, towelling grease off his hands.

TONY
You can stay longer if you need to.

SUSAN
I should get back.

TONY
Travel safe. Come back any time.

SUSAN
Doctor, I have something for you.

Susan hands Tony a bag. Tony pulls out Robert's pyjamas.

TONY
You're right. They are hideous.

SUSAN
Thank you again. For everything.

TONY
You're welcome. Did you find a good place for your father to rest?

SUSAN
Just the right one.

Tony heads back to the clinic as Susan drives off.

INT. VILLAGE CHAPEL - EARLY MORNING

The memorial table has Robert's urn and Susan's bracelet.

INT. CAFE - NEXT DAY

An edgy Andrew and David sit across from a relaxed Susan.

ANDREW
And you've located Dad's funds?

SUSAN
All of them.

DAVID
So, where did he stash them?

Susan pulls out the map and slides it across the table. She puts her car keys on top and beams at their bewildered faces.

FADE OUT.

