

Learning to Drive

FADE IN:

SUPERIMPOSE TITLE: 1978, outskirts of the West

INT. SHOSHONE HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

The classroom is empty except for a lean, sharp-featured, pretty, 15 year old girl slouching in her chair, LOUISE LOREY. She wears an over-sized worn "Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band" t-shirt, blue jeans, and no make-up. Her wary gaze makes her look older than she is.

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)
Tell me about your story.

LOUISE
What do you mean?

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)
Where did the idea come from?

LOUISE
I don't know.

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)
Your main character is a man, much older than you.

LOUISE
He's not a man, he's a cowboy.

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)
He's unexpected.

LOUISE
You think I stole it? You think it's not mine?

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)
No, Louise, I know you wrote it. I want you to write a two thousand word piece of fiction over the summer.

LOUISE
Why?!

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)
Because I take you seriously, and you don't. And you need to go to college.

LOUISE

What am I supposed to write about?

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)

Anything ... continue this story.
If you do the assignment and write
it as well as I know you can, I'll
get you a spot in honors English in
the fall.

No response.

MS. BROOKS (O.S.)

Okay. You can go.

Louise bolts out of the room.

INT. SHOSHONE HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Bob Seger's "Night Moves" plays.

Louise opens her locker. The inside is bare except for a few books and folders. She tosses the book she is carrying into her locker and slams the door.

She stares down the hallway, mapping her route, looking for an escape. End of the school day. KIDS are hanging out.

LOUISE'S POV

She walks the gauntlet toward the exit peering into a classroom where NERDY KIDS are playing musical instruments poorly. She passes another classroom of MISFIT KIDS dragging folding chairs into a circle.

A group of older TOUGH-LOOKING GIRLS wearing tons of blue eyeshadow and stick-straight hair a la Cher stare her down. A gaggle of ridiculously enthusiastic CHEERLEADERS don't notice her. She rushes out the double front doors.

EXT. SHOSHONE HIGH SCHOOL - ENTRANCE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Louise darts past KIDS getting on their bikes, and then turns, stops, and surveys the vast, flat sea of cars that is the student parking lot.

END POV

EXT. SHOSHONE HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Louise leisurely weaves through the parking lot running her fingers along the cherry Cameros, VW Bugs, Firebirds, etc.

EXT. STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

At the edge of the parking lot Louise dodges traffic crossing in the middle of a busy two lane street.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Louise pushes through a stand of trees into a never-ending graveyard. The grass is dry and sparse. She strolls in and out of the headstones.

There are groups of STONER KIDS smoking pot.

JOHNNY (O.C.)

Louise.

Louise turns around to find JOHNNY, a tough-looking, loner high school kid, practicing putting a golf ball over gravestones.

JOHNNY

Hey.

LOUISE

Hey.

JOHNNY

You're in my English class.

LOUISE

Yeah.

Louise takes off. He follows her.

JOHNNY

Hey, what are you doing when school lets out?

LOUISE

I don't know.

JOHNNY

I just got a job at Oak Hills.

LOUISE
You actually know how to play golf,
on a golf course?

JOHNNY
A little. Those guys make good
money hitting a ball with a club.

LOUISE
It takes a lot of practice.

JOHNNY
I got time.

LOUISE
You can get a job there if you are
fifteen?

JOHNNY
I'm sixteen.

LOUISE
Oh.

JOHNNY
When's your birthday?

LOUISE
End of the summer.

JOHNNY
Got your learner's permit?

LOUISE
I've got a car.

JOHNNY
What?

LOUISE
See ya.

Louise runs toward a thick border of trees at the edge of
the graveyard.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Louise pushes through the stand of trees at the edge of the
graveyard out into a typical middle class subdivision built
in the 1950's. The topography is relentlessly flat.

She walks down the street, turns a corner and eyes her car, a 1972 olive green two door Chevy Nova, parked outside her house. Her family's house is a dirty brown split-level ranch with a long cement driveway leading down to the street.

She puts her key inside the lock of her car door.

INT. LOUISE'S NOVA - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Louise sits in the car, slams the door, and locks it.

END MUSIC

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF LOUISE'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

LOUISE glares out the front windshield.

INT. LOUISE'S NOVA - DAY

Louise is staring into space as the sun is going down. Her ten year old brother, LUKE, gawky, insecure, but whip smart, knocks on the passenger side window.

LUKE

(shouting through the glass)

MOM SAYS IT'S TIME TO COME IN FOR
DINNER!

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF LOUISE'S HOUSE - DAY

Louise gets out of her car and slams the door hard.

LUKE

Why do you sit in there so much?

LOUISE

Practicing - for the day I drive
out of here and never come back.

LUKE

He's pissed off.

LOUISE

He's always pissed off.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Louise and Luke sit around the dinner table with their mother, FRANCES, 40, pretty, and wearing a stiff mask of contentment. Their stepfather, PHILIP, 45, a mass of tension, hunches over his food, sweating in a suit that is too small.

PHILIP

It's going to be a perfect party, no screw ups. I want you to make those mini sausage sandwiches, Frances, with the good rolls. No frozen food. Nice music. Good paper napkins. Everything top shelf. Everyone from the office will come. They will see that we have a good home, a decent family, that I know real estate. A real change from my last place. And I'll be looked up to there.

INT. TEENAGE CLOTHING STORE IN THE MALL - DAY

Louise hurries into the store ahead of her mother and immediately grabs a cool, modern, jersey halter dress. Louise checks the size and beams at her mother.

LOUISE

This one!

FRANCES

Let's look around.

Frances goes slowly through the racks of clothes as Louise impatiently stands behind her holding the halter dress. Frances pulls out a shapeless daisy print dress.

LOUISE

No, Mom. Please let me get this one. I love it. I love it!

FRANCES

Louise, this party is very important to Philip, and we ALL need to make a good impression.

LOUISE

This dress makes a great impression.

Frances holds the cotton daisy print dress up to Louise.

FRANCES

This is the best dress for you.

Louise is crestfallen.

INT. LOUISE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Louise's furniture is left over from when she was a little girl, but she has decorated it with flower power, happy face and peace sign stickers. Her record player and a large stack of albums have a prominent place in her room.

The walls are covered with movie posters that feature men including Clint Eastwood's "The Outlaw Josey Wales," Robert Redford's "Jeremiah Johnson," Steve McQueen in "The Getaway," and Charles Bronson in "Death Wish."

She studies herself in the mirror, and plays with her hair and some makeup trying to make herself look older.

LOUISE

You could go to college.

She digs through her underwear drawer, pulls out a small bag, counts out some cash, and takes off.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Philip's party of WORK COLLEAGUES/REAL ESTATE AGENTS, is in full swing. Engelbert Humperdinck plays on the stereo.

PHILIP

If I could have everyone's attention for a minute. I'd like to thank you all for coming. I'd like to give a particular thank you to a great man, a great sales man, and a great leader, our boss, the one and only Mr. Steven Richards.

Everyone applauds. Philip gestures to STEVEN, a slick-looking, handsome 35 year old with long sideburns.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

He has taught me, he has taught all of us, many, many great lessons from The Great One, Mr. Norman Vincent Peale, but perhaps the greatest, simplest lesson of all, the most important words a salesman can hold in his mind, "Be

(MORE)

PHILIP (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 interesting, be enthusiastic ...
 but"

Louise suddenly appears at the top of the stairs that lead into the sunken living room. She is WEARING THE HALTER DRESS she wanted. Her hair is pulled up, she has on make-up and heels, and she looks stunning. All eyes turn toward her. She drinks in the attention, smiling with great satisfaction.

Steven stares up at Louise as he speaks.

STEVEN
 "Be interesting, be enthusiastic,
 but don't talk too much." Phil.

Everyone laughs loudly. Philip tries to laugh along.

Luke appears behind Louise dressed in a stiff suit and tie. He watches everyone laughing and staring at his sister, and then sees his shocked mother and Philip.

LUKE
 I told you they were going to be
 mad.

LOUISE
 I don't care.

Louise rushes down the stairs awkwardly.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Steven, Louise, Philip, and Frances stand around the bar.

STEVEN
 So you're a sophomore this year.
 High school is great fun.

LOUISE
 Right.

STEVEN
 Between you and me it's a lot more
 fun than being a real estate agent,
 isn't that right, Phil?

Philip laughs loud and nervously.

STEVEN
 Could I get you another drink?

LOUISE
 Sure.

STEVEN
 What are you having?

LOUISE
 A coke please.

Steven pours a coke, hands it to Louise, and she smiles.

STEVEN
 Here we are.

LOUISE
 Thanks.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A few couples dance to the Bee Gees "Stayin' Alive." Louise dances with Steven. He whispers in her ear and she laughs.

Frances and Philip, unnerved, watch them.

Luke sits on the stairway alone watching his sister.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Louise looks over her shoulder and then pours some rum into her coke. Frances walks in as Louise sets down the bottle.

FRANCES
 Where did you get the money for
 that dress?

LOUISE
 I saved it.

Steven walks into the kitchen and makes himself a drink.

STEVEN
 Another for the beautiful Louise?

LOUISE
 No thanks, I'm fine.

Frances steps in front of Louise.

FRANCES
I'd like a drink, Steven.

STEVEN
Of course, what'll it be?

FRANCES
Gin and tonic, please.

STEVEN
Coming right up.

FRANCES
You're quite the dancer.

STEVEN
Thanks. I enjoy it. Here's your
cocktail. Louise, another dance?

LOUISE
Sure.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Philip is trying to impress RICHARD, a paunchy salesman.

PHILIP
I just listed two on Crestview and
I've got Cherry Knolls locked
up. I'm doing a newsletter over
there every month that should
deliver in a few more ...

RICHARD
Hey, looks like the boss is pretty
impressed with your daughter.

PHILIP
Stepdaughter.

Louise, now tipsy, is bumping and grinding with Steven.

Philip watches Louise move. Frances watches Philip. Philip
looks around the room to see who else is watching Louise --
everybody.

Philip pushes through the dancers and grabs Louise's arm.

PHILIP
You need some fresh air.

LOUISE
No, I don't.

PHILIP
Come outside now!

Louise looks back at Steven who shrugs his shoulders. Philip pulls Louise to the front door and takes her outside.

EXT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

PHILIP
Do not come back in the house.

Philip slams the front door as he goes back in.

Louise stands alone on the front porch staring at her Nova.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

As Philip enters, the slam of the door stops the party.

PHILIP
Everything is fine. Everything is great.

EXT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Louise and Steven stand close together in the driveway murmuring to each other. Philip and Frances watch from the front porch as they tensely say good-bye to their guests.

PHILIP
LOUISE! GET YOUR ASS UP HERE!

Louise runs up to the front porch. Steven waves good-bye.

STEVEN
Thanks, Phil, it was a great night.

He winks at Louise and gets in his car.

INT. LOUISE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Louise walks in the front door unsteady on her feet. Philip comes in behind her and HITS HER with an open hand on her ass as hard as he can sending her tumbling forward. Frances comes in behind him, silent. Louise scrambles to her feet.

Luke, terrified, watches from a distance.

PHILIP

YOU HAVE RUINED MY CAREER! How in the hell am I supposed to go into the office tomorrow and face those people. HUH?! You get drunk and put your hands on my boss?! Answer me? You come in here dressed like a whore!

FRANCES

That is not the dress we bought for this evening.

PHILIP

Go to your room. I DO NOT want to see that dress again. Take it off and give it to your mother.

Louise walks up a step toward her room.

PHILIP (CONT'D)

I said take it off and give it to your mother.

LOUISE

I will. I have to go up ...

PHILIP

TAKE IT OFF!

LOUISE

Now?

PHILIP

DO WHAT I TELL YOU!

Louise looks to her mother. Frances is steely eyed.

LOUISE

I can't. I don't ...

PHILIP

You don't what?!

LOUISE

I don't have a bra on.

PHILIP

You are disgusting.

Louise runs up the stairs.

INT. LOUISE'S ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Louise shuts the door to her room. Panicked, she grabs her desk chair and braces it against the bedroom door knob. She crouches down by her window, wraps herself into a ball, and stares down at her car.

EXT. LOUISE'S FRONT PORCH - DAY

Louise walks out the front door of her house and stops. She is wearing the daisy print dress, her hair in a pony tail and no make up.

She twirls the car keys around her fingers.

INT. LOUISE'S NOVA (MOVING) - DAY

Louise speeds down the street, alone in the car, windows down, with Jackson Browne's "Running on Empty" blasting on the radio.

EXT. PARKING LOT AT OAK HILLS COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

Louise drives into the parking lot of the Oak Hills Country Club. It is a recently built Tudor style building attempting to look exclusive and sophisticated, but coming off like a German beer hall.

Inside is a restaurant, The Cabriolet, and the golf pro shop. Outside is a driving range and 18 hole golf course suffering from being built on the dry western plains.

INT. THE CABRIOLET - BAR - DAY

Louise gingerly steps in the front door. She stands at the entryway not sure where to go.

The Cabriolet bar is decorated in heavy dark wood, overstuffed paisley print furniture, and cheap carpeting.

WAITERS wearing black pants, white shirts, and red polyester vests pass through the bar.

MICKEY, a good looking 30 year-old waiter passes by with a tray full of clean glasses, notices Louise, and stops.

MICKEY
Do you need something?

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