

(EXCERPT ONLY)

HIGHWAY SONG

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*If thy brother wrongs thee, remember
not so much his wrong-doing, but more
than ever that he is thy brother.*

-- Epictetus

INT. BURNT OUT BARN - CONTINUOUS

Oliver stops, looking around the empty building. It is hollow. The wooden-plank walls are crusted with a layer of old soot, moss, and dust-- a building long forgotten.

OLIVER
Holy smokes.

A shabby WOODEN LADDER leads to a second story balcony overlooking the interior. He walks over and shakes it, testing it's sturdiness. Its good to go, and he climbs up.

Oliver studies the balcony. More ash and dust and then-- he notices an old wooden shoe crate nudged into the corner wall.

Rholand rushes in after. He looks up at his brother.

RHOLAND
What're you doing?

OLIVER
Come check this out!

Rholand climbs up.

Oliver walks across the planks. They creek as though they may give way.

OLIVER (CONT'D) (cont'd)
(laughing)
Whoa!

RHOLAND
Be careful.

Oliver pulls out the crate. He sits on the ledge of the balcony, hanging his feet over and begins rummaging through. Rholand meets up and sits next to him.

RHOLAND (CONT'D) (cont'd)
What is that?

Inside is a collection of World War II artifacts, including a WWII army helmet. Oliver puts it on as he goes through the rest. He hands a few of the items to his brother.

An old watch. Some tattered clothes. Some too old and burnt to make out. Then, A small tin sign with a hand drawn WWII soldier on it wounded in bandages. The sign reads: **CARE IS COSTLY - BUY WAR BONDS AND STAMPS.**

OLIVER
 (pondering)
 Huh...

He tosses it to the side. At the very bottom is a framed photo. The glass is old and scratched, cracked on the upper right.

The yellowish black and white photo is faded. It's a young Army Officer circa 1940. He sits stoic, looking directly into the camera, wearing a formal uniform and cap. The American flag behind him. Perhaps just out of boot camp.

He shows it to Rholand.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
 Who do you think this is?

RHOLAND
 Don't know. Maybe the guy who had this barn?

OLIVER
 Maybe...

Oliver takes another long hard look at the man. Deep into his eyes when suddenly -

- A GUST OF WIND rushes through an upper window. The men look over as though a strange presence has entered the room. The shutters flap.

RHOLAND
 Whoa now...

The climate settles. Oliver looks back to the picture. The soldier's eyes are penetrating. Almost mythical.

OLIVER
 He's coming with.

Oliver SMASHES the frame in the box. The glass SHATTERS and the frame falls to pieces. He takes just the picture, folding it and *puts it in the inside pocket of his jacket*.

Clint and Copper walk in.

CLINT
 What's going on fellas?

OLIVER
 Sorry man. Thought this was a farm...

CLINT
Surely stumbled across something.

Copper plucks at the guitar as he and Clint walk around the barn exploring, eventually making it to a patch of dirt. In the background they practice some harmonies.

Oliver pulls out a cigarette and begins smoking. The brothers at ease.

RHOLAND
You know I kinda' envy you? Maybe not envy... but I'm impressed.

OLIVER
Oh yeah?

RHOLAND
You don't even seem scared... with this whole Reaper thing. Man if, I had anybody coming after me. Especially a killjoy named the fucking Reaper?...

OLIVER
I'd be lying if I said this was the first time.

RHOLAND
You never learn.

OLIVER
You know...

RHOLAND
Jesus man... like you're still chasing Mickey.

OLIVER
Oh, Christ...
(grinning)
You're stupid...

Rholand's laughing.

RHOLAND
Am I? Your obsession with that mouse is like a metaphor for your entire life.

OLIVER
I was fucking five.

RHOLAND

Oh man... I will not forget that day though...

(laughing)

...finally make it through the line on Mr. Toad's Wild Ride... we made it to the front of every line that day. Know why?... Because you cried your ass off, and you were so loud, people turned us into a charity case and they ushered us through. It was pretty awesome actually. Your whining had its occasional benefits.

OLIVER

I wasn't that bad.

RHOLAND

Dude, your wailing sounded like a herd of baby elephants getting chainsawed to death from the ass up... It curdled the blood.

OLIVER

Well, if you wanna know the truth of things, I was crying because Mom kept pinching me so I would cry, so we didn't have to wait.

RHOLAND

Mom didn't pinch you.

OLIVER

Half of going after Mickey was just to get away from the fucking titty twisters.

RHOLAND

Okay, I can't speak to those, but I know for sure that when you saw life-size Mickey, you bolted after him. Bolted.

OLIVER

I *did* love me some Mickey back then.

RHOLAND

I know. But Mom wasn't caring in that moment. She tried to chase through the crowd, totally lost you. Damn she was out of her mind.

(MORE)

RHOLAND (cont'd)

I had to keep reminding her you're a little fanboy who loved this fucking mouse because I knew when we eventually did find you, you were getting a haymaker to the back of the head.

OLIVER

I found him though! He let me hold his hand, and I was really happy... Then I remember seeing he had popcorn and dirty chunks all over his legs and booties, and it made me sorta sad thinking about Mickey being dirty.

RHOLAND

Well...finally, we found you by *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. You'd covered some serious ground.

Oliver is laughing.

RHOLAND (CONT'D)

God, Mom was freaking out and...

(laughing)

We found you crying, just tugging and tugging on his red shorts.

OLIVER

Dude was ignoring me! I was so pissed he kept taking pictures with other kids. Just wanted him all to myself... and SHIT remember?...

Oliver snaps his fingers pointing, divulging a BIG revelation.

RHOLAND

Yep.

OLIVER

Even then... "Hey Mickey, we'll find a farm and be together forever right? *We'll find a farm!*... Just you and me!"

RHOLAND

God, that poor dickhead in the costume... He sure got a fistful.

(Mimicking a big voice)

"Ma'm, if you don't get your little shit of a son away from me, I'll call security".

OLIVER

But what killed me, was when he took his Mickey head off. I see some bloated, bearded biff-show where Mickey's face shoulda been, and--

RHOLAND

You shit yourself. You screamed for about thirty seconds straight.

OLIVER

Just about...

A beat. Strange, sad thoughts lacing through an old memory. Until:

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Ahh, but when that mask came off, and that motherfucker swore at me, and Mom punched him!

Rholand laughs hard.

RHOLAND

She broke fake-Mickey's nose. Then we all got kicked out!

OLIVER

Damn she had some fight in her.

RHOLAND

Yes she did.

OLIVER

I seriously thought in my five-year-old brain Mickey and I would find a farm and it'd just be me and him forever... Eeh-I-eeh-I-oh.

RHOLAND

Why a farm, anyway? Where'd the farm fixation come from?

OLIVER

Old books with pictures. Pictures of farms. I thought... had thought... That farms were where people should be. Farms held humans in harmony with the world... Doing what nature intended. It's pure, clean, self-sufficient... Life. I crystallized it.

(MORE)

OLIVER (cont'd)
Made it perfect-- To me, being on a
farm was the perfect life.

Rholand looks at his brother with new eyes. Oliver's lost in
sweet, innocent reverie.

RHOLAND
(not a question)
Still looking for farms, aren't
you.

OLIVER
... I have my vices.

RHOLAND
Yeah you do.