

PILLAR OF SALT

Written by

CJ Cylinder

EXT. TENNESSEE HIGHWAY — AFTERNOON

On the outskirts of the Tennessee Mountains, 45 minutes outside of Nashville, two friends who are undercover angels, ABBY (28) a serious no-nonsense go-getter, and ETHAN (35) even-keeled and optimistic, with light Southern drawls, drive along a slightly windy highway.

TIGHTER ON THE CAR COMING AROUND THE BEND

They come onto a sleepy drawn out town. Mom-and-Pop shops dot the landscape. A few blue-collar TOWNSPEOPLE stand on the side of the road eyeing their car.

Ethan looks out of the window with a wary eye. Light guitar picking plays in the background mixed with M83's Midnight City.

ABBY

I read in the paper this mornin'
bout the man who accosted his
neighbor's niece because he thought
she was trying to break into his
house when she got locked out.
She's only fourteen years old. It
was right around Sally's area.

They pass a sign "Sodomville Pop. 400 Locals Only"

ETHAN (O.S.)

I know, it's terrible. They sweep this kinda stuff under the rug all the time, hopin' it doesn't go public. There's a lot of territorial protection, a lot of pride.

(shakes his head)

She's not like that at all. I'm sure she's already stopped by to see how they're doin'.

ABBY

What made her buy the cabin up here anyway?

Abby pulls into a side street, looking at the numbers on the houses.

ETHAN

She has some relatives that live up here, and thought there was alotta potential. I think she's tryin' to make small changes. I'm sure it's frustratin'. She's only here part of the time... 17, 18, (pauses) number 19-- that's the one on the left with the green trim.

EXT. SALLY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Abby pulls into the narrow driveway and parks behind a car. The A-frame cabin, perfectly groomed, sits straight ahead.

Out of her peripheral Abby can feel a presence and slightly turns to see an ELDER in the distance, his silhouette blurred, staring back at her.

She nudges Ethan and looks intensely straight ahead at the house.

MEDIUM SHOT ON ABBY AND ETHAN

ABBY

Do you think we should tell 'er
right away?

ETHAN

Let's give her a minute. I haven't
seen her in a few years. I'd say it
may come as a bit of a shock.

The front door swings wide open. SALLY (30s), a jovial spirit with a deep accent, waves at them. She hurries out, and gives Ethan a giant hug.

SALLY

Ethan! Good to see you! I'm so glad
you guys were able to make it up
here.

Ethan holds Sally out in front of him, taking a good look at her as Abby starts to unload the trunk.

ETHAN

Sally Meyers you haven't changed a
bit! This here is my friend Abby.

Abby walks over and extends her hand to Sally. Sally goes in for a hug.

ABBY

Nice to meet you! Thank you so much
for havin' us— it's beautiful up
here.

SALLY

Pleasure is all mine. Come on, let
me show you guys in.

Abby looks in the direction of the elder. Ethan walks to the back of the car and picks up the bags.

ETHAN

Tensions seem high up here. Blame
it on the altitude?

SALLY
Well you know, this is one of those
old finicky towns. Not too
welcomin' of other folks on their
land.

Abby gives Ethan a warning look.

ABBY
(under her breath)
Tell her.

Sally smiles, unsure of what Abby said.

SALLY
I'm so glad y'all made it up.
Sometimes those 45 minutes out of
the city makes all the difference
in the world.

Ethan pauses for a moment.

ETHAN
We've been sent here Sal. Things
aren't good.

Sally's eyes widen, knowing exactly what he means.

SALLY
You've been sent here?

ABBY
To get you out.
(pauses)
These towns are destroying
themselves so they're going to be
destroyed.

ETHAN
Neighbors aren't respectin' each
other...They've ousted strangers...
They've been given chances. But
it's time. This can't go on, and it
won't.

Sally is speechless, in deep thought.

SALLY

But, um, I-- to get me out? You've been sent to only get me out? What about my family? What about everyone else?

ETHAN

Yes, specifically you Sally. Your father begged to have you saved when he got word of the news in Nashville. And you've shown compassion time and time again. We've been sent to save you.

SALLY

When? What about my house? And the people up here? What's going to happen to them? Ethan, there must be an alternative.

ETHAN

Don't panic. *You* will be okay. I promise that much. We'll get everythin' settled. Let's head in okay?

SALLY

But when?

ETHAN

(pauses)
I don't know.

As they walk to the front door, a few lingering NEIGHBORS eye them, following their walk. The music picks up.

INT. SALLY'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Sally shows Abby to her room where she places her bag

ABBY

Is there anywhere nearby to grab somethin' quick to eat?

SALLY

Yes, um, just down the street--there's a cute little Mexican place.

ABBY

That sounds great. I'll be ready in a few.

(pauses)

Hey, you're gonna be okay.

Sally nods and leaves the bedroom.

Sally puts her hand on a table to brace herself as she takes an inventory of everything around her.

EXT. SALLY'S CABIN BACKYARD- CONTINUOUS

Abby walks outside to the deck, looks up at the sky, and breathes in deeply.

She takes in the peacefulness of the surroundings and sees an innocent squirrel minding its own business.

She looks back up and gives the slightest nod.

Ethan comes out and places his hand on her shoulder. He looks up at the sky as Sally walks out onto the deck from the side door.

ON SALLY AS SHE WALKS TO THE NEIGHBORS

SALLY

Hey guys, I'm going to run next door to see if they have any salt for the stew. I musta ran out.

Before she can get to the front door, an OLDER COUPLE appears, a bit blurry in the distance, both clothed in many layers making it difficult to see their faces. The three of them seem to be in an argument, as the couple points to Ethan

and Abby. Sally shakes her head trying to reason with them.

FADE TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD — MOMENTS LATER

The three of them walk towards the Mexican restaurant down the block. Sally tries to play off the incident.

SALLY

I'll ask Edie to bring some salt.
'member her? My brother's
girlfriend?

ETHAN

Of course! She's a sweetheart.

SALLY

She's going to join us for dinner
tonight, if you guys don't mind,
that is.

ETHAN

Of course not. A reunion! Is Lou
comin' too?

SALLY

No, they split about a year ago
now. I'm sad for both of 'em, but
Lou just wasn't feeling it I guess.
To be honest, I don't think he was
ready to commit in his heart. He
just couldn't manage his
responsibility at home with his
freedom.

ETHAN

I'm sorry to hear that.

Ethan holds the door open for the ladies to enter.

INT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT — CONTINUOUS

EXTREME CLOSE UP OF A CHICKEN BREAST SIZZLING ON THE

The RESTAURANT OWNER, an older Mexican man (50s), takes his spatula and presses down on the chicken.

Abby eyes the owner as they scoot to the register with their cafeteria style trays. He gives Sally a glare as he takes her money. He pushes their plates of food across the counter.

They bring their trays to a booth-- Abby and Ethan sit next to each other with Sally across from them.

ABBY

So what's everyone do up here?

SALLY

Well, most people work at the factory in town. They process most of the country's meat, which mainly goes to the Midwest and south. I couldn't work a job like that, but thankful there's people that do. It is hard, tough work.

ABBY

A lot of long hours I'm sure.

SALLY

There were a lot of layoffs last year when the recession hit.

ETHAN

That's a shame. How's Lou doin' with his company? He's back home then?

SALLY

Yep, they're both still in Nashville, but Edie needed to get

away for a night or two. She has some family up here. We're still pretty close, but it's hard.

(Pauses)

Sometimes I think it would be easier for her if I distanced myself a bit.

ABBY

It's good she has you. We need support in life.

SALLY

Yep that's true, isn't it.

(To Ethan)

Anyway, Lou's work is good. They got a bit slow, everyone got slow, but real estate is pickin' up. He'll make it through.

ABBY

We do what we think is best at the time, so I'm sure you just being there for both of them means everything.

SALLY

I hope so. Her family works at the factory too. One of the guys there got arrested last night for attacking that girl a few days ago. It's really horrible. And just last week, they had a fire in the hazmat area.

Sally pauses after she realizes what she said corroborates with Ethan being there.

SALLY

(continues)

I told the rest of my family to stay downtown.

ETHAN

Fires spread fast up in these parts.

SALLY

I guess y'all are right about this town. Makes me sad to think about... So, let's not think about that right now. How's everything with you guys?

ETHAN

Well you know, I think I've got it all figured out, and then somethin' comes up, or changes. It happens. I just try to keep busy in between it all.

SALLY

(laughs)
With all your spare time?

ETHAN

(laughs)
I'm calling it getting ready for the next chapter.

SALLY

How about you Abby?

ABBY

Been busy! Ethan and I work together-- that's how we met. I've been looking after at-risk people; makin' sure they're taken care of. Like yourself.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. EDIE'S CABIN - EARLY EVENING

The asphalt transitions into sea salt and then focuses onto a small glass jar of salt.

INT. EDIE'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Abby and Ethan help set the table as Sally finishes in the kitchen. There's a knock on the door.

Ethan goes to answer it, peeking through the curtain before opening the door. EDIE (32), deeply Southern and cheerful yet weighed down, holds a small bouquet of flowers and the jar of salt.

EDIE

Ethan!

ETHAN

Edie!

INT. EDIE'S CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

The four are in the midst of catching up on the past ten years while dishing out food, and pouring lemonade. Edie places a small spoon into the jar of salt and sprinkles it

EDIE

I know logically that he's doin' what he needs to do for himself, but I guess I can't wrap my head 'round that; that he's just done. Just like that. Like he flipped a switch. I was in it. *In it*. And I talk to myself in circles, like we couldn't have been *that* happy, or happy at all; at least he wasn't... and so it wasn't really a good relationship--

(tears up)

Sorry, I know I keep harpin' and going in circles.

SALLY

It's okay honey. It *is* hard. No need to apologize for that.

ETHAN

It takes two committed people in it for the long haul.

EDIE

I thought he was. Then I think, how could I've been so wrong? That scares me just as much; that I could've been such a bad judge a character.

ABBY

You're a sweet girl. You need to be with someone who's just as sweet, and kind.

SALLY

It was the timin'-- you've got to know that sweetie. No matter how good of a partner you were, it doesn't matter if the timing is off. And who knows what the future will bring!

EDIE

I've been praying a lot and I know thankful for this because all the times I complained or thought I had it bad, well, I will never complain again! I do blame myself a lot. I feel really guilty for how I was behavin'. I wouldn't have wanted to be with me either, so sometimes I don't blame him.

ABBY

We all go through ups and downs. Sometimes life gets hard. And it probably will again. That doesn't mean you say it's over. I'm sure you reacted to frustrations you were feelin' and now that you're more aware, that makes you a better person for the next time around.

SALLY

If I've learned one thing it's that you have to respect that person for who they are and treat them as a friend. Isn't it funny that we sometimes treat our partners in a way that we'd never treat our dearest friends? It's two people, livin' in their own worlds, and then their shared world. It's effort. Well that's my opinion at least. Ethan, what do you make of all of this?

THUNDER STRIKES

Everyone's startled. Sally sees Abby and Ethan give each other the *look*.

Sally gets up to look out of the window and squints trying to see what's happening. The music picks up.

SALLY
It doesn't look like it's rainin'.
The sky looks pretty clear.

Ethan walks to the window and looks out.

ETHAN
It looks like there's a building on
fire in the distance.

ABBY (O.S.)
Already? This isn't good.

WIDE SHOT

ETHAN
Something must've happened.

ABBY
(thinking)
The final straw...

EXTRA WIDE SHOT

Abby gets up from the table.

ABBY
(To Sally)
You need to pack a bag-- now.

ETHAN
I'll help you-- let's go.

Ethan and Sally rush up the stairs to her room.

ABBY
Edie, grab anything important you
need outta your car-- we need to
get going!

She knows the answer, but still asks.

EDIE
What's goin' on here?

ABBY
There's been a lot of treacherous
activity in this area that we've
been tracking for a while now. This
city and the neighboring towns
aren't safe anymore. It's dire...

Abby looks towards the window and then back to Edie.

ABBY
(continues)
Sodomville and Gomorahhfield are
going to be destroyed.

Edie understands it all. She pleads though she knows it's in vain.

EDIE
My sisters live a couple of blocks
down from here, on the street
behind Sally's.

ABBY
I'm sorry Edie but we need to go
now. There's no time.

Edie starts to get hysterical.

ABBY
We've been sent here on a mission
to save Sally. She's been spared
based on her selfless acts.

Sally and Ethan rush down the stairs, carrying two small bags.

ABBY
(continues)
Even welcoming us in when she knew
we'd be shunned.

SALLY
I don't think we need to head all
the way to Nashville though?
Especially if it rains. Maybe if
we're closer by, others can find
us?

ETHAN
No we don't need to go all the way
down the mountain. But we do need
to get out of the area--

Abby turns to them.

ABBY
We have to leave-- now! We can't
get caught in these crowds. We can
go about ten miles out. I've

already spoken to a woman that lives in Zoarville, she's in our network, who said we could stay with her.

ETHAN
Excellent.

ETHAN
Let's go!

Explosions continue, a crackling sound echos. Edie starts freaking out.

ETHAN
There's no time--
(looks up)
We need to go-- now!

Abby throws Edie her jacket.

ABBY
(to everyone)
Grab something warm-- we need to go!

EDIE
(pleading)
Should we see if they're leaving?
My sisters.

ETHAN
(to Abby)
Remember Lot's wife.

Abby looks at Ethan concerned.

ABBY
There's no time. Follow
Ethan.

Abby grabs a blanket as Ethan rushes them to the door.

Edie notices a framed photo of her ex sitting amongst other frames on a table near the front window and pauses for a moment.

Ethan helps the women get out and shuts the door behind him.
The music picks up.

EXT. SALLY'S HOUSE - SUNSET - CONTINUOUS

WIDE SHOT ON THE SUN BEGINNING TO SET, THE SKY FILLED WITH

MEDIUM WIDE SHOT ON GREY SMOKE BILLOWING IN THE

MEDIUM WIDE SHOT ON THE SHADOWS AND SILOUETTES OF THE

MEDIUM SHOT ON THE SILOUETTES OF THE NEIGHBORS

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

Ethan ushers the women toward
the main road. He looks back at the fire. The music

ABBY

The car is parked down there on the
right past that truck. I moved it
earlier so Sally could get out.

Sally holding her keys tries to open her car.

**MEDIUM CLOSE UP OF SATURATED SUN RAYS BOUNCING OVER THE
MOUNTAINS LIKE FLAMES**

The fire starts to spread.

MEDIUM CLOSE UP ON THE GLOW OF THE FIRE IN THE

ETHAN

There's no time for that. This city
is going to burn!
(looks around)

Hurry! Whatever you do, don't look back! Move ahead. Move forward. Stay focused. Do not look back. We've been given this order that must be obeyed.

He looks up for a moment and then back to the group.

(continues)

Do not look back. No regrets; no coulda, woulda, shoulda. We're only moving forward. Let's go, let's go, let's go!

WIDE SHOT

In utter chaos, they all scramble to hold onto all of their belongings.

Ethan is a few steps ahead leading the way.

MEDIUM SHOT OF THE BURNUNG SUNSET IN THE SKY

As the sun continues to set the red-orange light shines all around, bouncing like flames.

Abby and Sally follow behind Ethan. Abby squints and takes Sally by the arm.

Edie lags behind, holding back. She looks at the three of them ahead.

She turns back to the house eyeing the backyard through the trees, the glare of the sun burning.

EXTREME CLOSE UP ON EDIE

She may be looking for signs

She then gazes towards the front window sill-- her eyes slightly glassy trying to focus in on the frame of her ex.

Ethan and Sally are ahead of Abby running to her car.

Abby reaches behind her to

She turns around and her eyes

Her arm falls to her side as she looks around for Edie in a panic.

MEDIUM SHOT WHERE EDIE WAS STANDING

She's disappeared. The space is now empty.

The light is now dulled and the flames of the rays are lightly bouncing, calmer.

WIDE SHOT ON THE FOREGROUND OF THE MOUNTAINS

The dark trees linger in the yellow afterglow.

Abby looks around then focuses on the mountains, her eyes scanning the formations.

Various dark formations come into view: the trees, stumps, rocks and formations, all

EXTREME CLOSE UP ON

Abby stops on one particular formation. She's stunned, horrified, shocked.

A formation stands center. A figure of what may be a woman. Or is it rocks? Or Edie? Or has she become a pillar of salt?

End music.

FADES TO BLACK.

ROLL CREDITS

-House address 19 refers to Genesis 19

-Edie is named after Lot's wife sometimes referred to as Edith

-Lou is named after Lot

-The clock reads 12:31 after Mark 12:31 of Love your neighbor as yourself

-Escape to the city Zoar

-Takes place in Sodom

-Luke 17:32 Remember lot's wife!

-If you let your life go, you will save it