

Excerpt

(Lisa is Kirk's troublesome, rapacious girlfriend. Beverly is Kirk's widowed mother.)

Beverly swerved her Chevy onto the dirt shoulder, brushed the bushes and came to a stop. Lisa pulled up in Staub's pickup and waited with kitchen-gloved hands on the wheel. The drizzly rain tapped at the roof. It joined the whapping rhythm of the wipers and sent Lisa deep into thought.

Her concentration was broken by the click of the passenger door. Beverly climbed in, unzipped her yellow slicker and took off her gloves.

"Put those back on," Lisa told her. "Get fingerprints on anything, we're screwed."

Beverly obeyed. She pulled a handkerchief out and dabbed the drizzle from her face. "Darn," she said, gazing at the handkerchief, "my makeup..."

"That's an easy fix," Lisa said. "Be worse if we got our hair wet." She checked in the rearview to make sure the hood of her red slicker covered her hair. She then put the pickup in gear and started forward.

"Go slow," Beverly said. "Been a long time since I was here; creep, just creep."

Lisa slowed to a crawl and said, "I've come up with a plan."

"I don't want to hear it," Beverly whimpered.

Lisa glanced at her. "Are you crying?"

"This is where we had our picnic," Beverly choked. "Ray and I had such a good time. It was our wedding anniversary..."

Beverly thinking now that today is Ray's birthday. She had wanted to visit him at the cemetery.

Then with a sudden change of mood, Beverly went on the attack. "And Bob was with us at the picnic!" she spouted angrily. "Bob Staub, Lisa—Bob, who's dead in the back! And now you've got a plan that's going to get us into more trouble?!"

"Take it easy," Lisa said.

"Jesus H!" Beverly huffed as she turned to look out her window.

Lisa sniffed the air and said, "You've been drinking, haven't you?"

Beverly kept her attention on the hilly woods. "What do you care," she said.

"Damn it," Lisa grumbled. "You were drinking while driving—at a time like this! Where's the bottle?"

"Left it in the car." Desperate to change the subject, there was only one thing she could come up with: "What's your plan?" she asked roughly.

"Since you're drunk I want you to listen carefully."

"I'm not drunk," Beverly said, eyes searching for the bridle path as they crept along.

"Whatever," Lisa said. "The plan is, on our way back home we stop at Parson's. Huge Saturday sale. Get ourselves some new clothes and—"

"New clothes!" Beverly gushed with laughter. "That's some plan!"

"I wasn't finished yet," Lisa griped.

"Okay, okay," Beverly said.

"All right," Lisa sighed. "We need to buy the clothes so Frank won't be suspicious about us being gone so long."

"Gone where?"

"Stop butting in," Lisa complained. "After we buy the clothes, we go to their Sports and Travel Department."

Beverly burst into laughter again. "Sports and Travel Department!"

"Oh, sure," Lisa said to no one, "she's not drunk."

"I'm under a lot of pressure," Beverly squirmed, laughter slipping away. "I'm worried about my son; don't know where he is. He'd get us out of this trouble, you bet."

"We're not in trouble," Lisa said, "and there won't be any if we do this right." Lisa needed Beverly in on her plan. She played the sympathy card: "I miss Kirk, too... You know as well as I do that he can use a vacation. Must be having a good time with all the money Frank gave him."

"Stop!"

"I'm just trying to—"

"No," Beverly interrupted. "The bridle path."

Lisa hit the brakes, looked to her right and saw the opening at the edge of the woods. "Shit," she groaned, "it's raining harder now." Lisa shifted into low. "Don't want to get stuck; gotta get to the top of the hill before it gets all muddy." She turned onto the path.

Creeping upward Lisa said, "After we get the new clothes, we go to Sports and Travel and find a suitcase that matches Frank's. Shouldn't be a problem, new Samsonite."

"And what're you going to do with it?"

"Money, Bev," Lisa said. "Where do you think Frank's been getting it from?"

"His suitcase?"

"Jam-packed with money," Lisa smiled. "After we buy the suitcase we'll go to the used bookstore on Gaffey and fill it with paperbacks." She poked Beverly. "Know what I'm saying?"

Beverly looked out into the woods, lips pressed together, grasping what was in Lisa's money-bag mind. "I know what you're saying," she said turning back to her, "and it tells me you're crazy. Frank's not stupid, y'know."

"The only thing that makes him stupid is sex, and that's where you come in."

"What?!" Beverly yelped.

"Hold it," Lisa said as she rolled the pickup over the crest of the bridle path. On level ground now, she eyed the clearing, the rain battering the grass and bordering trees.

"What did you mean by that sex stuff," Beverly pressed her.

"Later," Lisa said, pointing toward a mound of dirt. "Too much to get done here." She pulled forward and stopped with the tailgate alongside the dug-out earth. "Is this perfect or what?"

"Looks like a grave," Beverly frowned with thoughts of her long gone husband.

Lisa hopped out and Beverly stayed put. "C'mon," Lisa said, "let's get moving."

Beverly zipped up her slicker, slid out and helped Lisa unsnap the tarp. The rug exposed, Beverly turned from it with a grimace. Lisa dropped the tailgate and climbed into the bed. Beverly followed, boosting herself up with a grunt.

They went to the cab end of the bed, dropped to their knees and pushed the rug. Lisa saying, "Slides easier when it's wet."

It slipped off the bed and landed upright against the tailgate. The two women stood and watched the rug as it edged its way to one side. Toppling over, it snagged on the tailgate and unraveled. Staub's body rolled out and landed face up on the wet grass, feet pointing toward the muddy hole.

Lisa and Beverly stepped to the tailgate and gazed down at the corpse, rain diluting the blood.

"Jesus H!" Beverly stomped. "Now we'll have to touch him," she said, wiping the rain from her face. "Let's just leave him where he is."

"Frank's right," Lisa told her. "Longer it takes to find the body, the better. We'll put him in the hole and lay the rug over him."

Lisa sat on the tailgate and pushed herself off. Beverly put her gloved hands out for assistance. Lisa helped her down and they set their eyes on the body.

Lisa pulled at her red slicker hood to make sure her hair was covered. "Okay," she said. "We each grab an ankle and drag him in."

Lisa bent and took hold of the left ankle with her powder-blue gloved hands. She looked at Beverly, just standing there. "C'mon, Bob's not going to bite you."

Beverly drew hesitantly closer. She tugged her yellow rain hat down and gathered her nerve. Bending, she closed her eyes and grabbed the other ankle. "Gawd," she sighed.

"We pull on three," Lisa said. "One... two... three!" Moving backward Lisa glanced behind her and placed her booted feet into the shallow grave.

Beverly slipped at the edge, let go of the ankle and screamed as she fell on top of the body, both slithering down into the muddy hole. A gurgling sound came from Staub's throat and his meaty hand clamped Beverly's arm.

"He's alive!" she hollered, thrashing around, trying to free herself.

In a panic Lisa packed mud over Staub's face and suffocated him, and the hand lost its grip. Beverly crawled weakly up onto the wet grass and fainted facedown.
