

BURNED

Written by

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FADE IN:

SUPER: "Burning Man 2022"

EXT. BLACK ROCK DRY LAKE BED NEVADA - DAY

The last day of Burning Man 2022. It's the middle of summer, hotter than Hades, and dry as a bone.

ASHLEY, 23 and looking all the bit a modern-day hippie, is packing up her vintage VW micro-bus. It's plenty hot and she is sweating. Several younger and middle-aged hippie looking people walk around the dry lakebed. Two young HIPPIE CHICKS stop as they are walking by.

HIPPIE CHICK 1

Good Burn. See you next year?

ASHLEY

One of the best. Next year for sure. Wait. Picture time.

Ashley pulls out her iPhone and the three throw their arms around each other and get close. HIPPIE CHICK 2 is red as a radish and winces when Ashley puts her arm around her.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

That's quite the sunburn.

The picture is taken. Ashley reaches into her bus and retrieves a bottle of lotion.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Here.

Erotic music plays in the background as Ashley applies the lotion. Things quickly turn risqué. None of the people passing by seem to pay them any mind. This is Burning Man after all. Hippie Chick 2 looks like she's about to have an orgasm. Ashley is not far behind.

Lotion treatment is finished and both exhale as if they just finished the most exciting round of sex ever. All that's missing is a cigarette.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

That should help prevent any scarring. Feel better?

Hippie Chick 2 just grins ear-to-ear and gives her a kiss. Ashley puts the cap back on the lotion and puts it back in her bus.

They all hug. The two hippie chicks stroll away as Ashley finishes loading up and hops in the driver's seat.

INT. ASHLEY'S BUS - CONTINUOUS

Ashley starts the bus and turns on the vintage push-button radio. A little tuning adjustment and "I Had Too Much To Dream Last Night" by Electric Prunes comes over the speakers. Ashley smiles, grinds gears, and takes off.

EXT. DESERT DIRT ROAD - DAY

Aerial view of Ashley's bus driving along a dusty dirt road. Electric Prunes still play.

INT. ASHLEY'S BUS - DAY

Ashley reaches a paved road; the bouncing and rattling stop and she settles in to a normal drive. Over the radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Ninety-two point five The Hog with  
the best classic rock from the 60's  
and 70's in the whole Reno area.  
(beat)  
In local news the Nevada Highway  
Patrol is still looking for a  
missing person...

Ashley gives the radio a serious look and turns the volume up.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...whose abandoned car was found  
off of Highway 50 about 20 miles  
east of Fallon. The identity of the  
missing person has not been  
released at this time as family  
members have not yet been notified.

"China Grove" by Doobie Brothers plays. She smiles, rolls her window down and sticks her left arm out. She moves her hand and arm up and down in a weaving motion in the air like an airplane flying through a storm.

ASHLEY  
Ahhhh...

EXT. ASHLEY'S BUS - CONTINUOUS

Overhead shot of the bus rolling down the highway as China Grove plays.

INT. ASHLEY'S BUS - LATER

Classic rock still plays. Through the windshield Ashley sees a sign saying that she is leaving Fallon Nevada.

INT. ASHLEY'S BUS - LATER

Ashley sees a sign on the side of the road saying "Nevada Highway 50. The Loneliest Road in America."

INT. ASHLEY'S BUS - LATER

Ashley looks bored and irritated. She takes out her iPhone and activates SIRI.

ASHLEY  
Hey Siri, I'm naked.

SIRI  
I don't understand what you mean by naked. Or at least I'm going to pretend that I don't.

She holds down the button on her iPhone again.

ASHLEY  
Hey Siri, do you dream?

SIRI  
I only dream of helping you. Well, that and fiery winged unicorns.

ASHLEY  
Hey Siri, do you fuck?

SIRI  
That's not very nice.

ASHLEY  
Great. Just my luck. Long drive on a boring fucking road and all I get for company is a digital prude.

Ahead she sees something that catches her eye. As she gets closer, she sees a male hitchhiker with his thumb out. A backpack and coat sit beside him. Ashley perks up.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
Just what I need.

She pulls over next to the hitchhiker and stops. This is DOUG, late 20's, wears a dirty shirt, Levi's, cowboy boots, and a truckers cap. She reaches over and rolls down the window.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
Where to?

DOUG  
Just a bit past Eureka.

Ashley opens the door and motions for him to get in. Doug throws his pack and coat in the back, hops in and closes the door.

ASHLEY  
Not much out there just a bit past Eureka.

DOUG  
Nope, there's not. Got me a ranchin job a few miles south on three seventy-nine.

ASHLEY  
Three seventy-nine? Only seen it driving by. Looked like a good area for tumbleweeds and jackrabbits.

DOUG  
About right.

ASHLEY  
What do you ranch out there in the wasteland anyway?

DOUG  
Cattle. Pretty fucking scrawny cattle at that.

Ashley grinds a few gears and off they go.

Ashley continues to stick her arm out the window and ride the wind currents.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
Didn't catch your name.

ASHLEY  
Didn't give it.

DOUG  
Ok, my bad. Let's try this again.  
My name's Doug.

ASHLEY  
Ashley. Call me Ash.

DOUG  
Where you headed to, Ash?

ASHLEY  
East. Wherever the winds take me.

Doug looks over Ashley and the inside of her bus.

DOUG  
Burner?

ASHLEY  
Yeah.

DOUG  
How long?

ASHLEY  
Five years now. Went my first time  
right after I graduated from high  
school. You?

DOUG  
Naw. Not my thing really. See a lot  
of you guys on the road about this  
time each year.

INT. ASHLEY'S BUS - LATER

Through the windshield they see a sign "Middlegate Station.  
Cold Beer, Cocktails, Pool, Good Food. 3 Miles Ahead."

ASHLEY  
I'm parched. Time for a beer.

DOUG  
Let me buy.

ASHLEY  
Sounds good, thanks.

EXT. MIDDLEGATE STATION, HWYS 50 & 361 - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Middlegate Station is an old wooden building that looks like  
it could collapse at any moment.

Parked out front are several ratty old cars and a few choppers along with several antique horse drawn buggies from the 1800's. Ashley's bus pulls into the dirt parking lot.

INT. MIDDLEGATE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Doug and Ashley walk in. On the ceiling are tacked hundreds of dollar bills and a few pieces of foreign currency. A few tables and an old wooden bar with bottles of booze in the back and a large set of elk horns on the wall. Seated at the tables are an assortment of scruffy locals and a few outlaw biker types.

They both sit down at the bar. The bartender, RICK, 50 years old, walks up.

DOUG

Two Buds.

ASHLEY

That's original.

Doug shrugs.

Rick moves away to the refrigerator.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

And make them cold. This heat is killing me.

Rick brings two bottles of Bud. Doug hands him a twenty and motions to keep the change. Ashley looks impressed.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Well, scrawny cattle ranching must pay well.

DOUG

I don't get out much.

They both guzzle down their beers. Doug signals for another round. Doug points to a container of Slim Jim's behind the bar.

DOUG (CONT'D)

And a stick.

Rick brings two more Buds and hands Doug the container of Slim Jim's. Doug pulls one out and hands Rick another 20.

Ashley scowls at the Slim Jim.

ASHLEY  
That shit'll kill ya.

DOUG  
Not today it won't.

She takes her beer and walks around looking at all the brick-a-brack that makes up the interior of the place. She sees a jukebox, goes to it and drops several coins in and makes a selection.

Disco music plays. Ashley starts moving around the floor dancing. Doug takes notice as does a drunken SCRUFFY LOCAL. Scruffy gets out of his chair and stumbles over to her. He tries to put his arm around her waist.

SCRUFFY LOCAL  
Hey there.

Ashley has a surprised and initially frightened look.

ASHLEY  
I ain't got nuthin cookin for you  
bub so best back away.

Scruffy continues being a pest.

SCRUFFY LOCAL  
Oh, come on now.

Doug, Slim Jim hanging from his mouth, sees what's happening and walks over. His look is threatening and dangerous. Doug walks up, grabs Scruffy's arm, and moves it off Ashley.

DOUG  
Might I suggest you find someone  
else to bother friend.

SCRUFFY LOCAL  
I ain't your...

DOUG  
No, you're not.

Scruffy looks into Doug's eyes and quickly decides that hell will likely be coming to breakfast if he pushes the matter.

SCRUFFY LOCAL  
Ok, ok... just trying to be  
friendly. No need to get all bent  
outta shape.

Doug chews the last of his Slim Jim as he watch's Scruffy return to his seat. He and Ashley return to their seats. Ashley looks annoyed.

ASHLEY  
I can handle my own.

DOUG  
Didn't look like it.

Disco music continues in the background as they sit.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
You don't strike me as the disco  
type.

She puts her hand on his shoulder and gives him a wink. Music stops. Doug walks over to the jukebox and drops a few coins in. A honkey-tonk country/western song plays. Ashley looks at him with a disapproving look. She scowls, leans back and crosses her arms.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
What?

He walks back to the bar and sits down.

ASHLEY  
Let's see that look of death again.

Doug tries the best he can but the moment has passed. For all his effort all he gets is a laugh from Ashley.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
What? You having menstrual cramps?  
Huh? Work on it.

Ashley sees a stack of paper notices on a clipboard at the end of the bar. She reaches over and pulls them to her. She reads the top one. It's a missing persons notice from the Nevada Highway Patrol.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
I heard about this one on the radio  
as I was leaving Black Rock.

She leaf's through the stack.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
It's mostly all missing persons  
notices. Shit, some of these go  
back years.

RICK  
Happens all the time out here.

DOUG  
Yeah, how so?

RICK  
Oh, desert has a way of just  
swallowing people up. Especially in  
the summer.

Ashley continues looking through the stack.

ASHLEY  
Seem to be several that occur each  
year right about this time.

RICK  
Yeah, started about four, five,  
maybe six years ago. But then there  
are others that happen every now  
and then. Some they find. Some lost  
and alive. Some lost and dead.

ASHLEY  
And?

RICK  
Lots of open space to get lost in  
and lots of holes to fall in or, I  
guess, be dumped into.

ASHLEY  
You got crazy killer clowns running  
around out here or something?

Doug snorts his beer out his nose.

Rick chuckles.

RICK  
Plenty of clowns around these parts  
that's for sure. Most are crazy  
yes. Not sure about the killer part  
though? Just be careful about  
hitchhikers.

Rick casts a hard glance at Doug and then back at Ashley.  
She initially looks like she is seriously considering it then  
gives him a look of "Don't worry, I got this" and mouths'  
back without vocalizing "Not a killer clown." and gives Rick  
a wink.

ASHLEY  
Long stretch of road.

RICK  
Long and lonely as they say. Who  
knows?

ASHLEY  
Won't find me far from any road.  
Graded dirt maybe but...

DOUG  
Back of a horse for me.

ASHLEY  
You know, you sure don't look like  
much of a cowboy. Hell, you don't  
even wear a cowboy hat.

DOUG  
Guess you never seen a scrawny  
cattle cowboy before then have you?

ASHLEY  
I've seen several types of cowboys  
in my twenty plus laps around the  
sun but no. Guess you're the first.

Ashley motions for another round.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
I got this one.

Rick brings two more Buds.

RICK  
On the house. Sorry about the  
problem.

INT. MIDDLEGATE STATION - LATER

Ashely and Doug finish off their beers, wave goodbye to Rick,  
and stagger out the door.

EXT. MIDDLEGATE STATION -CONTINUOUS

Doug holds the door open for Ashley and gives her a good long  
look as she walks by. As she walks to her bus door she breaks  
into a smile. Doug follows and gets into his side.

INT. ASHLEY'S BUS - CONTINUOUS

Ashley starts the bus, flicks on the radio and "Riders On The Storm" by The Doors plays. Faint and scratchy but recognizable. She grinds gears again and drives.

ASHLEY  
You like dinosaur fossils and  
science shit?

DOUG  
Don't really care one way or the  
other.

ASHLEY  
Ghost towns?

DOUG  
Sure.

ASHLEY  
I assume you don't have any sort of  
tight schedule to keep?

Doug shakes his head no.

The bus makes a right turn onto Hwy 361. A sign on the right says "GABBS 30".

DOUG  
That's a god forsaken little town.

ASHLEY  
Not going there.

Doug doesn't say a word.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
You'll like it.

INT. ASHLEY'S BUS - LATER

Through the window they see a sign on the right side of the road pointing to the left. It reads "Berlin-Ichthyosaur State Park." Ashley makes a left turn onto a dirt road.

DOUG  
What's an itchy sore?

Ashley laughs.

ASHLEY  
Ick - thee - o - sore.

DOUG

Yeah. Whatever. What is it?

ASHLEY

Prehistoric fish. Big fish. I mean like really, really big fish.

DOUG

So, we're going to an aquarium? Out here?

ASHLEY

No. They've been gone for several million years. Just a bunch of fossilized bones is all.

Whatever is playing on the radio is not recognizable and just static.

DOUG

Mind if I change the channel.

ASHLEY

As long as it ain't any more of that goat fuckin cowboy music.

Doug just crosses his arms and leans back. Ashley turns the radio off.

INT. ASHLEY'S BUS - LATER

The bus comes to a stop. Outside is a gate across the road and a sign saying. "State Park Closed For Repair."

ASHLEY

Ah crap.

She looks behind out the rear window.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Too far to go back. Well...

Ashley turns off the graded road and starts driving overland. Both of them bouncing up and down over the rough terrain. Doug hangs on for dear life.

DOUG

Thought you only stuck to roads?

She gives him a smile as she jostles the steering wheel back and forth.

ASHLEY  
I lied. So, sue me.

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUOUS

The bus bounces across the desert floor until it comes to a small graded dirt road. It makes a turn onto it.

INT. ASHLEY'S BUS - CONTINUOUS

ASHLEY  
Austin's about 60 miles up.

Doug glances over at the gas gauge. It's barely above empty. Ashley sees him looking.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
Got another gallon in the back. If that's not enough there's an Indian Rez and a couple ranches ahead we could bum some from if worse comes to worse.

EXT. DESERT FOOTHILLS - LATER

Bus is driving along a winding dirt road through rolling hills filled with scrub oak, piñon pine, and grasses. The sun casts a few shadows as it is not as high and bright as before.

INT. ASHLEY'S BUS - CONTINUOUS

ASHLEY  
Gotta pee.

She pulls the bus over, turns it off, and reaches behind her seat for a coat.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
Gettin a bit chilly.

EXT. DESERT FOOTHILLS - CONTINUOUS

She hops out, puts the coat on and walks into the bushes.

Doug hops out, reaches behind his seat, grabs his coat and puts it on. He reaches back again and grabs his pack and withdraws a large knife that he hides in his coat.

From the bushes comes Ashley's excited voice.

ASHLEY

Hey, get over here... quick.  
There's some big critter that has  
his eye on me.

Doug trots in her direction. His hand on the handle of the knife which is still hidden in his coat. He comes up to her. She's standing, shaking, and has her coat on and her pants down around her ankles. She turns her back to him and points towards a clump of brush and piñon pine.

He starts to withdraw his blade.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Something over there. I heard it  
moving and then it growled at me.

He puts the knife back.

DOUG

Stay here.

Doug moves slowly toward the bushes. Just as he gets there Ashley leaps on his back. She has a large knife in her hand. Doug defends himself. They go rolling around thrusting and stabbing at each other but neither connect.

After a short time, Doug has her pinned and is on top.

DOUG (CONT'D)

What the fuck? I mean really, what  
the fuck?

Ashley makes a move and after another short scuffle is now on top with her knife to Doug's throat.

ASHLEY

I was wondering the same thing?

She starts to make a motion like she is going to plunge her knife into him. She moves her head down and begins kissing him. He kisses her back. They tumble around a bit then both stand up facing each other, knives at the ready and breathing hard.

DOUG

What the fuck!

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

What the fuck!

They toss their knives, passionately kiss and start clawing at each other's clothing.

EXT. BUSHES - LATER

Doug and Ashley lay on the ground, dirty and scratched up and sweating like stuck pigs. Torn clothing lays around.

ASHLEY  
That was great.

DOUG  
What are the chances?

ASHLEY  
Pretty fuckin slim I tell ya.

DOUG  
Beyond pretty fuckin slim.

ASHLEY  
I thought for sure you'd maybe get a clue when that bartender said people began disappearing about five years ago. Which just so happens to be when I made my first Burn.

DOUG  
Guess I'm a little slow on the uptake.

ASHLEY  
You?

DOUG  
About the same, five years. When I moved out here.

ASHLEY  
You claiming territorial rights?

DOUG  
Guess I should seeing as how I'm a resident and you're a tourist.

ASHLEY  
Wanna give me a permit? Like some sort of a seasonal hunting license?

DOUG  
I'm sure something could be arranged. But first...

They start rolling around and tearing at what little clothing remains.

INT. ASHLEY'S BUS - DUSK

Sunlight has faded almost too dark. Ashley wears Doug's trucker cap as she drives. The bus moves along the dirt road. Its headlights on the road ahead. Doug and Ashley look contented and happy as the cat that just ate the canary.

ASHLEY

So, you really a cowboy?

Before Doug can answer the shape of a man walking along the road appears in the headlights. He turns around and sticks his thumb out.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

You thinking what I'm thinking?

FADE TO BLACK