

1st 3 pages

Backwater

Pilot for an original series

by

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EXT. SWAMP. THE BACKWATER - NIGHT

A sliver of moon on the water's slick surface.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN (V.O.)
They say that character makes the man.
Or in this case, the girl...

EXT. THE WOODS. A COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Crickets blanket the night with sound.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN (V.O.)
What quality do you think is most
important in a person's character?

We follow a flatbed truck, moving slowly.

GIRL (V.O.)
I believe, of all the traits that makes
a person who she is, the most important
is trust. A person must be trustworthy.

Her voice has the sweetness of youth and a lilting twang.

EXT. HIGHWAY GAS STATION - NIGHT

A figure bolts away from it. A TEEN. Blonde. Barefoot. Wearing
only a camisole and underwear.

GIRL (V.O.)
It's the quality on which all
relationships are built.

She's disheveled. Terrified. The gas station is closed.

GIRL (V.O.)
And since the world is based on
relations, it's also based on trust.

A phone in a banged-up booth dangles from a metal cord.

GIRL (V.O.)
If you want people to trust you...

She darts across the highway onto a smaller road.

GIRL (V.O.)
... you can't gossip or talk trash.

Concrete gives way to corn fields. Up ahead is the woods.

EXT. THE WOODS. A ROAD - NIGHT

The flatbed truck moves slowly, as if the driver is scanning.

GIRL (V.O.)

And you can't be a phony. If you're not
real, people can always tell.

Around the bend, the Teen, exhausted, limps.

GIRL (V.O.)

Most important, people gotta know they
can count on you...

Up ahead, lights brighten the asphalt.

GIRL (V.O.)

That you'll do what you say you will...

She shields her eyes as the light bleaches her like an x-ray.

GIRL (V.O.)

Even if it's hard.

INT. A HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY

The Girl stands alone. In the background are empty bleachers.

GIRL

And that's how they know you're someone
they can trust.

She's pretty. Blonde. Her name is TRISHALEE LAMOTT. She could
be the girl on the road. She could be 16. But take away the
expertly done makeup and tight sequined top, maybe not.

At a folding table sits the MIDDLE AGED MAN, a MOTHERLY JUDGE
and a 30ish JUDGE who assesses Trishalee like she's livestock.
The Motherly Judge glances at a sheet of paper.

MOTHERLY JUDGE

Trishalee. Says here you're twelve?

TRISHALEE (GIRL)

Yes m'am.

MOTHERLY JUDGE

I see you won quite a few Little Miss
Pageants. And you were second runner up
for Little Miss Chesapeake.

TRISHALEE

It was an honor and a privilege.

30ISH JUDGE

Thank you. We'll let you know.

TRISHALEE

Thank you for the opportunity to compete.

The Middle-Aged Man picks up and glances at the sheet.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Do we have your measurements?

TRISHALEE

I wrote them on the back.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Trishalee strides down the hall. She swings open a door.

AROUND THE CORNER

A pair of Payless pumps pivots at the sound. A cigarette drops. A heel grinds it out. It belongs to DENISE LAMOTT, late 30s. She has a lived-in face and attention-getting shape.

DENISE

Well?

TRISHALEE

(beat)

I killed it.

EXT. STREET IN A PLANNED COMMUNITY. 16 YEARS LATER - DAY

A weary MAN pulls a tarp over boxes in a flatbed truck. He's JORDIE MILLER, 33, bi-racial, all-American handsome, but with eyes shadowed by regrets. Behind him: a modest house with a sign that says "Foreclosure." He looks at it one last time. A mailbox. A hedge. A trellis where roses once bloomed.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

TRISH LAMOTT MILLER, 29, stands at the window, watching Jordie pack up their lives. She passed sweet a long time ago.

INT. FLATBED TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

Jordie drives. A fast-food strip is a kaleidoscope of lights. He glances at Trish, asleep, then looks back to the road. Trish opens her eyes, her face reflected in the glass.