

Detour: a comparison between its book and its movie

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Classic motion pictures which began with silent films and black and white screens laid the groundwork of the contemporarily imaginative and highly technological movies made nowadays in colored monitors. There are films allotted with ample budget that would allow directors to shoot more screens effectively whereas some are given meager ones that are still able to pull it through due to superbly creative directors. Detour was one of those that are called film noir B-movies.

Prior to making movies, it is imperative to have a good script to be primarily written which may be adapted by screenwriters from novels or short stories written by ingenious authors. In the case of Detour, it is about a story written by Martin Goldsmith that began with a simple desire of the main character to be with his loved one, who along the way got into an inopportune mess and made some disastrous decisions that resulted to a huge misfortune.

Detour: The book

The book began with Alexander Roth who was on his way to California to see his girlfriend in Los Angeles, walking while trying to hitch a ride from cars that pass him by once in while. Then auspiciously, a car stopped by and the driver allowed Roth to hop in the car to hitch a ride, He could not believe his luck then and thought of Haskell as some kind of an angel sent to save him from doom. When the car owner struck a conversation, Roth felt very lucky when he found out that the car owner who was named Charles J. Haskell was also on his way to Los Angeles.

After a while, Roth noticed wicked scratches on Haskell's right wrist and seemed to find it interesting. Haskell later on explained that it was done by

"[...] the most dangerous animal in the world. A woman. " (Goldsmith) After driving for several miles, Haskell said they need to stop to eat and seemed gracious enough for offering to pay for the meal of Alexander, who was then out of money. While they were eating, Roth reminisced how he got into hitching rides, which began with the story of his relationship with Sue Harvey.

Roth then worked as a pianist of a band for a little club on West 57th Street where he met Sue who was very beautiful and also worked there as a singer. They later became involved and he asked her to marry him of which Sue always insisted on postponing. Suddenly, Sue said, " We'll get married when I come back, Alex, huh? Or when you come out. Say, that's an idea. Why don't you come out, too? " (Goldsmith) He could not come with her because he did not have any money left since he was fired by the club owner after punching a customer who tried to make a pass at Sue by patting her fanny.

Then he decided to follow Sue but by the time he arrived in Dallas he had no more money left and was caught stealing a fruit from a stand that got him imprisoned for thirty days. After he was released he continued going west. Then conversation brought him back to the present where he was eating steak with Haskell in a restaurant. Haskell was telling him about his family in California who lived in Bel-air and had some business there. There, Roth noticed that he and Haskell share some similarities with their physical build, eye color and their noses.

When they left the restaurant, Alexander noticed Haskell looked tired and offered to drive so that Haskell can get some rest. Haskell then smoked a

cigar and fell asleep after complaining of feeling sick. When it began to rain, Roth tried to wake Haskell who didn't budge so he pulled over to put up the top of the car. When he opened the card door on Haskell's side, he fell and cracked his skull on a running-board. When he saw that Haskell was dead he decided to hide his body under the ravines beside the road since he was afraid he'll get imprisoned again for murdering Haskell which he insisted he didn't..

He took Haskell's money and exchanged their clothes. He then left his suitcase with the body and started to pose as Haskell. The story then shifted to Sue Harvey, who was working as a waitress in Los Angeles waiting for her break as an actress. She got involved with a guy named Raoul whom she didn't even like. Raoul was also an actor trying his luck to find success in Hollywood. Sue was irritated with Raoul's indiscretion by eating at the place where she worked for after spending the night together in his apartment.

She later insulted Raoul when he gave her a ride home and felt so guilty of her infidelity to Roth. The story again goes back to Roth, who kept driving towards California speedily because he was so nervous he'll get caught by the authorities. When he entered the state of California, his head began to nod so he stopped at an inn along the way and after getting some sleep found out who Haskell really was by going through the letters and things in his valise. He found out Haskell was on his way to his father's home whom he left years ago when he was still a teenager and found out about the lies he wrote.

Roth went on his way again and stopped for gas at a station where he noticed a woman trying to hitch a ride along the road. He then offered the woman a ride to L. A. The woman said her name was Vera and slept for a few miles. When he started to ask her questions, she suddenly sat up straight and asked him where Roth dumped Haskell. Then he realized Vera was the woman who scratched Haskell's wrist and realized that he was now on Vera's hands and tried to look for ways to convince her not to tell the police about Haskell.

The story then went back to Sue Harvey who read the newspaper and found out that Raoul was in the hospital injured after he attempted suicide in the Hollywood mountain and realized that it happened right after he drove her home. She felt somehow guilty that he may have taken to heart what she said to him before he left her that morning. At work, Selma, her co-worker warned her of not hurting Raoul and was irked at her. Sue later lost her job when her employer found out she was drunk while working. When she got home, she decided to visit Raoul at the hospital and realized that Raoul really did love her.

When she was on her way home, she was so confused whom she really loved, was it Alex or Raoul? Then she realized she loved Raoul and he needed her more but when she arrived home, Ewy her housemate, was crying and told her Roth was dead. The story then returns to Roth, whom Vera threatened to tell the authorities if Roth would not follow her plan. When they arrived in L. A. , Vera decided they stay at an apartment where they registered as Mr. and Mrs. Charles J. Haskell. Vera then took the money

which Roth got from Haskell's wallet worth more than \$700 and plotted what they were going to do.

They decided to sell the car and they would split up the money but when they were at a car dealer's the next day, Vera got into a temper and became difficult when Roth was haggling for a better price. When Roth and the dealer got into an agreement, Vera decided against selling the car after seeing an article in the newspaper. The article in the newspaper told about the dying Charles J. Haskell Sr. who was worth seven million dollars. Vera told Roth to pose as Haskell Jr. so that he would inherit the money from the father after he dies.

Roth refused to participate in Vera's plans so Vera tried to call the police to report him and they later struggled which resulted to Roth strangling Vera to death with his own hands. When he realized what he did, he fled from the apartment. When Sue found out about the death of Roth she cried but didn't seem to be very affected by it. She then resolved to marry Raoul and go to New York with him but she found out that Raoul was still married to Selma and are only separated. Raoul promised to file for a divorce so that he'll be able to marry Sue.

Roth on the other hand, was on the run and read in the paper that Haskell was being sought by the police for the murder of his wife who turned out to be Vera. He couldn't go back to Sue knowing he will be ruining Sue's life. He chose to make the sacrifice of not seeing her again to spare her the trouble.

Detour: The movie The movie began with the scene where Al Roberts was able to hitch a ride while he was walking along the road past Reno. Then he

was sitting and eating his meal on a diner where he got into an altercation with another customer and the owner because of the music being played in the jukebox.

The song was "I Can't Believe You Fell in Love with Me", which was the song that Sue always sang at the club and to him. Roberts then had a flash back of the days when he was working with a band as a pianist in a small club called "Break-O-Dawn" and Sue was singing the song they were playing. That was where he met Sue and where they later decided to marry but weeks before their intended marriage, Sue decided to go to Los Angeles to try an acting career. Roberts got so angry with Sue but she still opted to leave. Sue assured Roberts that they will get married someday.

Several days after Sue left, he realized she missed Sue and called her on the phone. It showed the telephone operators connecting his call to Sue whom he told to wait for him in California. He hitched a ride from state to state and walked miles if no one gave him a ride then later got lucky to hitch a ride in Arizona with a man who was on his way straight to California. They began to chat and he noticed a scar on the hand of the driver whose name he learned as Charles Haskell. Haskell later paid for their dinner in a restaurant. When they were on the road again, Roberts offered to drive so that Haskell could rest.

He drove all night just thinking of Sue while Haskell slept on the passenger seat. When it began to rain, Roberts found out Haskell was dead since he fell from his seat when he opened the passenger door to fix the top of the car. He was confused with what to do about Haskell, afraid the police won't

believe him if he told them the truth so he then later decided to leave him on the side of the road hidden behind some shrubs. He drove the car up to California and had nightmares about what happened when he tried to rest in an inn. Roberts was posing as Haskell so he looked over his things in case someone asks him pertinent questions.

When he was on his way to California the next day, he stopped for gas and found a woman trying to wait for someone to give her a ride. Roberts took pity on her and gave her a ride to Los Angeles. Suddenly, after sleeping for a while on the passenger's seat, the girl who was named Vera, suddenly sat up and looked him straight in the eye and asked him " Well? Are you tongue-tied? Where did you dump him? "(Goldsmith). She then informed Roberts that she knew Haskell because he rode with him before she arrived in California. Vera's " Every line is acid and angry". (Ebert) Vera became in control of the situation and controlled Roberts as well.

He told him that it would be stupid to abandon the car since it would prompt the police to investigate who the owner was. They checked into an apartment and posed as husband and wife where they got drunk. The next morning Vera and Roberts went out of the apartment to sell the car but Vera suddenly changed her mind when she saw a newspaper clipping saying that Haskell's father was dying and was trying to locate for his son. Vera threatened Roberts that she will tell the authorities about what he did to Haskell if he will not agree to go to the house of Haskell Sr. and pose as his son when the father dies.

Vera then got so drunk and attempted to call the police of which Roberts said will be fine with him but when Vera entered the bedroom with the telephone and locked it, Roberts begged her not to do it. " Of course Al could simply escape from her. Sure, she has the key to the room, but any woman who kills a bottle of booze in a night can be dodged fairly easily. Al stays because he wants to stay. He wallows in mistreatment. " (Ebert) Outside the locked door, Roberts kept pulling the telephone wires several times, then later found Vera strangled to death by the telephone wires he'd been pulling outside the bedroom door.

The last scene of the movie was Roberts walking along a road then a patrol car suddenly stopped. A policeman got out and allowed him inside the patrol car. Comparison between the movie and the book Usually, when a book is made into a movie, the story is not told from chapter to chapter of the book but the gist of the story is still there. Sometimes a movie could not justify the story that is told of the book especially if the movie production is financially constrained but some movies with sufficient budget likewise are not able to get their message across as artistically as it would have been expected.

It is naturally advantageous if the movie is done by a creative, resourceful and talented director who can still be successful even if the movie has a low budget. The movie showed only the events that took place in the life of Al Roberts whose character is named Alexander Roth in the book and several points were not included in the story especially where Sue Harvey was concerned. Sue Harvey was not given much significance and was almost totally eliminated from the movie except for the scenes where she told

Roth/Roberts she was going to California and where she answered Roth/Roberts calls of which she did not have many lines to say.

There were probably just four or five scenes where you'll see Sue in the picture with not a lot of scripts to say in the movie. The movie had the scene where Roth/ Roberts was in a restaurant remembering the events that took place in his life then the flashback of the scenes of the tragic incidents in his life started. On the other hand, the book is predominantly focused on the stories of the two main characters, Alexander Roth and Sue Harvey and the things that happened in their lives as well as the decisions they have made.

The book explained how Roth/Roberts lost his job and how his relationship with Sue started in a club in New York. The book told about a scene where Roth/Roberts was supposed to have been imprisoned since he was stealing some banana out of a fruit stand because he was starving and had no money to buy himself some food. This was supposed to have happened before he was able to catch a ride from Haskell. It also told about Haskell smoking marijuana before dying and Roth/Roberts who took one without permission from the glove compartment and started smoking it.

It left him feeling dizzy requiring him to stop the car on the side of the road and vomiting. This happened before he found out that Haskell was already dead. The letters found in Haskell's valise revealed what he planned to do and why he was on his way to California. He addressed a letter to his father saying that he was a minister doing his work for the people and that he had regretted the wrong things he has done before he left home when he was still a young lad which were huge lies because he was not a minister.

In the book, it was Roth/Roberts who thought not to abandon the car so as not to alert the authorities and start investigating who the owner was and find out that the real Haskell was really dead. In the movie, it was Vera who called him stupid for even thinking of abandoning the car. When they were in the car dealer's, Sue got very angry when they were trying to haggle for a profitable deal for the car and triggered her to suddenly cough severely. Roth/Roberts then accompanied her inside the dealer's office to drink some water to ease her coughing and when he left her inside, that's where Vera found the article about the dying Haskell Sr. and got the idea of Roth/Roberts to pose as Haskell and claim the seven million dollar inheritance when the old man dies.

The movie otherwise showed Vera rummaging through the glove compartment where she found the newspaper clipping while Roth/Roberts was negotiating with the car dealer inside his office. The book also narrated that Vera chained the door of the apartment and kept the keys including the car key and Roth's/Robert's clothes so that he will not be able to escape whereas in the movie just she just kept the keys to the apartment and the car.

Roth/Roberts strangled Vera with his own hands but in the movie it showed that Vera was strangled with the telephone wire which Roth/Roberts was pulling from outside the locked bedroom door. The movie also ended where Roth/Roberts was walking along the side of the road at night and a patrol car stopped alongside him which left the audience to presume he was caught by the police for the crimes he has committed but the book never mentioned of

him getting caught by the authorities leaving the reader to wonder if he was really able to escape imprisonment.