

Return from the Wild  
Celine DeSaix

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Panel 1

In Alaska an old, rusting school bus sits on the side of a clearing in the woods near a dirt path. The bus is old but it is loved, idolized. People have signed their names on it, left books around it (Call of the Wild, The Death of Ivan Ilyich, and other favorites of McCandless). It's a summer afternoon as Megan and Brandon happen upon it. They are in their twenties. They are some of the many people who make the trek to visit the Magic Bus where Chris McCandless lived and died in Alaska. Chris, faint and ghostly and unseen by Megan and Brandon, rests atop the magic bus, basking in the sun.

Chris (Narrating from the afterlife): I'd like to think it's that call of the wild drawing people here.

Panel 2

Megan and Brandon add their names to the bus.

Chris (Narrating): The need to break free from civilization.

Panel 3

Megan pulls out a polaroid camera as Brandon poses besides the bus. Chris hops off the top of the bus.

Chris (Narrating): The hunger and thirst for adventure.

Panel 4

Megan holds the camera up to her eye.

Megan: Say "Supertramp"!

Chris (Narrating): But people rarely come here to liberate themselves.

Panel 5

The camera flashes as Chris poses, smiling with Brandon. They are all bright and cheery.

Brandon: Supertramp!

Chris (Narrating): But usually they're here for me. I guess that's nice too.

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### Panel 1

Flashback of Chris fording the knee high Teklanika. It's Spring 1992 and the river is calm as Chris trudges through it with a staff in his hand and backpack on.

Chris (Narrating): The river wasn't too bad when I first crossed it.

### Panel 2

Back into 2018 as Meg and Brandon cross the same river but on a Summer morning. The water is higher and the current is faster as they use a rope someone else has set up that had gone from bank to bank. They've tied themselves to it.

Brandon: Watch your footing!

Chris (Narrating): The currents are stronger in the summer. The water is higher.

### Panel 3

Chris finding the Magic Bus, the joy and relief in his eyes as he sees what will be his home for this journey. The bus is old and rusting here too but it doesn't have any of the marks of pilgrimages. It's just old and abandoned.

Chris (Narrating): Finding the bus was a good day.

### Panel 4

Megan and Brandon get on the bus, poking around and opening books. They're happy. Chris watches them, smiling a little but there's still a sense of loneliness about him.

### Panel 5

Summer 1992, Chris standing before the wild, rushing river. He looks skinny and totally unprepared. He knows he cannot cross it.

Chris: Oh no.

### Panel 6

Megan and Brandon are back at the river, ready to go back. The river looks more daunting than before.

Chris (Narrating): There is no going back the way you came.

Page Three

Panel 1

It's later in the afternoon as Megan and Brandon begin tying themselves to the rope again, preparing themselves to make the journey back.

Panel 2

They begin wading into the furious water, holding onto the rope tightly. They don't look as care-free.

Panel 3

Under the water we see Megan place her foot incorrectly, wedged between two rocks.

Panel 4

Megan trips and starts to slip under the water. She screams.

Panel 5

Since they are tied together her fall drags Brandon down with her. He's flailing and screaming as well.

Panel 6

Under the water Megan struggles with the rope. Her eyes are panicked as she's drowning. Brandon is also panicking and struggling but he's trying to hold his breath.

Panel 7

Brandon pulls out a knife from his pocket, clutching it tightly in his hand.

Panel 8

But it's not enough as the current rips it away from his hand.

Page Four

Panel 1

The sun is lower now as Chris sits on his empty bus. The warmth and happiness from the day is gone. He sits holding his knees to his chest. He's sad and looks like he knows that Megan and Brandon are dead.

Chris (narration): They left their photo here.

Panel 2

Chris phases through the top of the bus and into the interior.

Chris (narration): I don't know if they meant it as a gift, or just forgot.

### Panel 3

In the bus, Chris looks at cot he used to sleep on. The polaroid is resting on it.

### Panel 4

Close up on the polaroid and we can see that a light leak blocks out Brandon's face completely. Just a faint outline of him and Chris remains. The bus is dark and empty behind them due to the lighting.

Chris (narration): Or maybe they just didn't like how it developed.

### Panel 5

Chris sits on the bed as the sun sets. He looks and feels alone once again.