



STEINBECK'S POINT OF VIEW

by

Brandon Camp
and
Mike Thompson

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FADE IN:

EXT. SOMEWHERE - DAWN

Ancient claws scratch at the auburn sky. A massive old oak stands alone in an arid field. Dangling from its limbs, gently CREAKING in the wind, a tire swing. On the blue canvas beyond, a billowing jet stream inches across the horizon. Serene. Quiet.

~~contrast~~ contrast to --

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAWN

Downtown. Steel and concrete stretch into the morning sky.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Morning. A vacant lot "For Sale" sandwiched between a pair of office buildings.

In the distance, a MAN. Standing next to his car, surveying the property. Still. Focused.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - LATER

Mid-day. Outside the shell of a burned-down brownstone. Down away, the car.

Inside, the man. HIS EYES noting every detail of the site.

EXT. WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - LATER

Afternoon. The car at the curb of a dilapidated warehouse.

Four storeys up, atop his world, we find him again. TOM BAILEY. Pressed suit, deliberate eyes, rugged. Thirty-five years rugged.

Gazing upon the city, he's just found what he's looking for. HIS VOICE, from a different time and place, STIRS --

TOM (V.O.)

*I know an old lady who
swallowed a fly. I don't know
why she swallowed the fly...*

EXT. ROOFTOP - A DAY OR SO LATER

Tom with a pair of seasoned CORPORATE TYPES. Giving the location a once over.

TOM

...there isn't an appraiser in town that would recommend this investment. Dead neighborhood. No retail for blocks. Inaccessible.

CORPORATE

(keen)

Alright. Then why are we here?

TOM

Because you've got vision.

He produces a pair of binoculars. Offers them up and nods to the east. A freeway under construction a few miles down.

TOM

What do you think two hundred thousand buys at the planning commission?

They eye the hook, piqued.

TOM

An off-ramp.

The men glance at each other. We leave them to the details.

TOM (V.O.)

I know an old lady who swallowed a spider. That wiggled and jiggled and tickled inside her. She swallowed the spider to catch the fly...

EXT. WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - ANOTHER DAY

Across the street, Tom stands in front of a run-down storefront with a prospective BUYER --

TOM

...groundbreaking starts in three weeks. Twelve hundred units in four buildings. Young, mobile professionals. And they're all going to need one thing in the morning. Coffee. Your coffee.

Dollar signs in the prey's eyes. As --

TOM (V.O.)

I know an old lady who swallowed a bird. How absurd, to swallow a bird...

EXT. WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - ANOTHER DAY

Down the block, Tom with a team of CORPORATE REPS before another facade:

TOM

...three restaurants on that side there, grocery store down on the end, condo units there, there, and there. And right here? Of course. What better place for the nation's number one department store?

Of course. They're hooked, too.

TOM (V.O.)

I know an old lady who swallowed a cat. Can you believe that? She swallowed a cat...

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

A WOMAN. Glossy, manicured nails tapping on a table. In the b.g., Tom approaches. Arrives at her.

WOMAN

Late.

He takes her hand and they disappear into an elevator.

EXT. HOTEL - LATER

The pair emerge, hand off tickets to VALETS. Tom's tie undone.

WOMAN

Corporate retreat Thursday. Next week?

TOM

Sure.

And that's it. No kiss. No nothing. Climb in cars, speed off.

TOM

She swallowed the cat to catch the bird, she swallowed the bird to catch the spider...

INT. BANQUET HALL - EVENING

Black tie, lavish spread. Ice sculptures, goose pâté, and silicone. Tom stands at the podium, confidently addressing a couple hundred ATTENDEES --

TOM

(continuing)

She swallowed the spider to catch the fly. I don't know why she swallowed the fly.

Takes a breath. Phew.

TOM

But I do know that Mother Goose could've made a fortune in commercial real estate.

People laugh. But they're not sure why.

TOM

The single fly theory, might say? If ya can just get that one buyer to swallow, with a little luck you'll have spiders and birds knocking down your door. Or something like that. Fortunately, it seems to have been my door this year.

Gestures with the small plaque in his hands -- *Agency of the Year.*

TOM

Anyway, I'll let you get back to your Chicken Kiev. On behalf of my staff, I'd like to thank the Association for this award. Means a lot to us. Thanks. Thanks again.

APPLAUSE as he steps down from the podium.

INT. BANQUET HALL - LATER

Post-ceremony chatter. Tom works the room. Or rather, the room works him -- "Congratulations"; "Nice speech"; "Well done, Father Goose." And --

RICHARD

Now the way I remember the end of it, that old lady swallowed a horse and died. What then, Mr. Bailey?

Tom turns to discover a familiar face. Smiles.

TOM
Pray the check's cleared?

The two shake. Good friends. DR. RICHARD FORRESTER.
Fifties, stands tall, wealthy enough to wear a Timex and loafers.

TOM
The good doctor. Who let you in here?

RICHARD
Same boobs that gave you that plaque.

TOM
Been meaning to call you.
Spotted some prime space on the east side if you're looking to--

RICHARD
(a grin)
Nancy's well, thank you for asking.

Tom sighs easy, caught.

RICHARD
And Josh? Oh he's getting ready for camp again. Keeps wondering where his absentee tennis coach is however.

TOM
Guilty as charged.

RICHARD
I've been wondering as well.
(gentle)
How are you, Tom?

TOM
(quick)
Million bucks.

Not good enough. Richard moves in close. A look of concern. Just the two of them. More at play here than we understand --

RICHARD
Tom. How are you?

Catches the Broker of the Year off-guard. But he covers.

TOM

Doin' great. Really.

Their eyes hold. Richard knows better. But eventually lets him off the hook.

RICHARD

Go, your minglers await.

Tom nods. And escapes.

INT ATHLETIC CLUB - NIGHT

Upscale gym. Tom arrives, still in his tux. Tie undone, bag over his shoulder. Routine. Nods to the ATTENDANT at the desk.

ATTENDANT

Let's see, eleven o'clock, all dolled up...and at the gym? She musta had a tail?

TOM

Slapped me at the door, more likely.

INT. ATHLETIC CLUB - LATER

Half-a-dozen late night weight-lifters and stair-climbers. In the back, Tom pounds the rubber treadmill at a good clip. Step after step. Great shape.

INT. ATHLETIC CLUB - LATER

The inhabitants have dwindled to a rope jumper in the corner and a muscle poser in front of the mirror. And Tom. Still at it. Sweat. Resolve. Legs burn, lungs heave. But he refuses to submit.

Instead, jacks up the speed and angle.

INT. ATHLETIC CLUB - LATER

The place is empty. Not a sound but the incessant hum of the treadmill. Past his threshold, a manic force propels him. He cranks the elevation higher, his knees crunching with each stride.

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Perched atop a rolling hill. Its glassy austerity blends into the still night sky.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

The PATTERN of slippers echo in the house. The spartan house. Obvious he lives alone. He appears, showered, in his robe, and kneels to collect letters from the mail slot. Shuffles through them and heads into

THE KITCHEN

Opens the fridge, pours a glass of wheatgrass juice. Meanders to the cupboard, pulls down...a bottle of pills. Then another bottle. Then another. Another. Long, ugly pharmaceutical names side by side. He uncaps each one and pours out a dosage of a dozen capsules.

Finishes the letter he's reading and pounds the pile of pills like aspirin for a headache. Utter nonchalance. Downs the juice and exits, on to the next piece of junk mail.

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The bedroom light goes dark. A day in the life.

INT. THE BAILEY COMPANY - DAY

Contemporary glass and steel. A half-dozen STAFFERS in an open-air space. Tom strides off the elevator, meets and greets. Ends up at MRS. BROOKS, his key assistant. Older, proper, dresses in pastels.

MRS. BROOKS

Morning, Mr. Bailey. How did it go last night?

TOM

I was marvelous, Mrs. Brooks. You're a born speechwriter.

MRS. BROOKS

No, just a grandmother.

(then)

Doctor Forrester is waiting in your office. Said he was in the area.

TOM

(discomfort)

Oh.

They round the corner, enter the office. The good doctor.

RICHARD

Now who says we don't make house calls?

TOM
 (to Mrs. Brooks)
 Please excuse us.

Abrupt. She didn't expect it.

RICHARD
 (saying)
 Actually, what say we run by
 that East Side space? S'why I
 stopped by.

TOM
 Sure, no problem. Perfect.

Lie.

INT. EAST SIDE SPACE - DAY

Tom and Richard on the second floor of a vacant office building. Tom gives the guided tour, on edge.

TOM
 ...take out those walls and
 there's your reception area.
 Patient rooms here, your office
 there. Lab on the second
 floor, rent out the third and
 fourth and cover the bank.

Richard wanders the floor. Arrives at a doorway. The bathroom. Cramped, mildewed, a mess. And yet --

RICHARD
 (fond)
This stays.
 (off Tom's look)
 Our last building. Had to
 renovate. Knock down walls,
 new floorplan, the whole thing.
 Got half-way through
 construction before we
 realized. So wrapped up in
 "would my office be better over
 here or over there" that we
 forgot the goddamn bathroom.
 Believe that? The bathroom.
 Looked at those plans a hundred
 times. Just had my head in the
 clouds.

(pointed)
 Then it was too late.

TOM
 I'd say you need a new
 architect.

RICHARD
Tom. What are we doing here?

TOM
How's that?

RICHARD
Where's your head these days?

No answer. Saw it coming.

RICHARD
Why are you still runnin'
around wheeling and dealing?
Pawning off all these
properties...
(careful)
...like it matters?

TOM
Richard, let it go.

RICHARD
Nobody knows, do they?

TOM
(averting)
The building was bolted last
year. There's galvanized
plumbing, copper wiring...

RICHARD
It'll sneak up on you. And
then you're going to wish you'd
spent this time differently --

Enough --

TOM
I'm spending my time exactly
right. Last year I was lucky
to close on a Fotomat; this
year I'm coming up on 100
properties. Last year I
couldn't walk a mile; now I run
ten a day. Ten a day. I'm
better. Okay?

Richard acknowledges. But doesn't waver --

RICHARD
Okay. But what about next year?

A sucker punch. Tom stares at the floor. Walks out.

RICHARD
You're sick, Tom. You need to
talk about it.

CUT TO:

TOM - TIGHT

Pale. Sweat on his forehead. Dazed.

DEALER (O.S.)
Interested in a purchase or
leasing?

THE LOCAL DEALERSHIP. Tom sits behind the wheel of a shiny
new Mercedes. Smarting. Doesn't answer.

DEALER
Purchase or a lease?

TOM
(sotto)
'Like it matters.'

DEALER
Huh?

TOM
(to self)
I wake up every morning. And I
go out. And accomplish
something.

DEALER
Sure, okay. In this car,
everybody'll know that.

TOM
Yeah.
(breath)
A lease.

DEALER
They run from one to four
years. Usually folks go with
one or two. Don't want to be
locked in past that.

A wince on Tom's face.

TOM
Four. I'll take four years.

INT./EXT. MERCEDES - TRAVELING

Tom, driving. Traffic. Eyes vacant, utterly indifferent

to the new purchase. No tinkering with knobs, no stroking the leather. Nothing. Suddenly --

A FLASH. Blinds him. He squints to make out the source -- sees it -- the sky -- off the horizon -- washing over him. Beautiful. He loses himself in it.

CYCLIST (O.S.)

Eyes on the road, dipshit!

A BIKE MESSENGER pounds on his hood. Tom comes to -- realizes he's in the middle of an intersection --

TOM

-- I -- did you see that?

The kid flips him the bird and pedals on. Tom cranes his neck -- just blue sky now.

Bizarre.

INT. ELEVATOR - LATER

Tom enters the office, oblivious to his staff around the T.V. He strides toward a bay window, opens the blinds and peers out at the horizon: ink black smoke, rising a mile in the sky. An ugly dark poison.

MRS. BROOKS

Mr. Bailey?

TOM

There was this light -- in the sky -- did you see it?

MRS. BROOKS

Terrible.

TOM

Wha?

MRS. BROOKS

Well the -- you didn't hear?
Oh. 727 went down over Sonoma.
They're saying a hundred people were...

TOM

Jesus. Taking off from SFO?

MRS. BROOKS

No, coming in. Wind shear something or another they think.

(then)

I must say, Greyhound is
(more)

MRS. BROOKS (cont'd)
 looking more and more
 attractive.

Tom just stares out at the looming darkness. Can't take his eyes off.

MRS. BROOKS
 Are you alright?

TOM
 ...Yeah. Sure.

He sighs. Long day. Heads into his office.

MRS. BROOKS
 How'd it go with Dr. Forrester?

TOM
 He wasn't interested in the property.

Closes the door behind him. Mrs. Brooks piqued.

INT. ATHLETIC CLUB - NIGHT

Late. Empty gym. Tom, running. Even more intense. An overhead monitor blares details of the crash. Footage of firefighters, wreckage, burning hillside, A REPORTER broadcasting live: ...As the resulting fires rage on, NTSB agents begin the arduous task of extracting bodies. Again, no survivors. All 123 passengers and crew dead...

The whir of the treadmill slows. Stops... The Gym Attendant looks up -- Tom Bailey never stops.

Tom dismounts the belt. Suddenly magnetized to the image on the monitor. Stares into the pixels. Drawn in. Not by the twisted, smoking metal. Not by the blackened field of scattered luggage. Not by the anxious Reporter.

But, oddly, by the lone SPARED TREE behind her. It can't be...

CUT TO:

A LITTLE BOY

Tom. A PHOTOGRAPH of old. Nestled in a long-dusty album.

Tom's in a closet full of boxes. Momentarily paused, caught off guard by the memories. Shuffles through the photos, searching. Purposed.

And there it is. Exactly as we saw it on the T.V. Exactly as he remembered. Behind the youngster, a MASSIVE OAK TREE

complete with tire swing. Its hundred year old limbs clawing every which way.

Now a burial ground.

TOM (V.O.)

I'm going to get out of town for the day...

INT./EXT. MERCEDES - TRAVELING - DAWN

Tom, driving, the Golden Gate in the b.g. On the phone:

TOM

...There's a property in Napa I want to see. When you get this, check the status of the title clearance on the Rochester property. Also call First Federal and tell 'em they'll have the McCormick down payment by Tuesday. And one other thing -- need to switch my insurance over to the new car.

(realizes)

Right. I got a new car. Mercedes. I know, I know, my old one worked perfectly fine, but I...

Grits his teeth. Thinking.

TOM

There's something I've been meaning to tell you, Mrs.. Brooks. See. I...

Pauses. Can't do it. Hangs up. Accelerates.

INT./EXT. MERCEDES - TRAVELING - LATER

Winding through the countryside. Acres upon acres of flourishing grapevines. Wine country.

Tom's eyes flicker. Nostalgia.

EXT. PENNGROVE - DAY

Little town. A quaint main street. Bed and breakfast, feed store, wine and cheese shop. And satellite trucks parked on every street. The vultures have arrived.

Driving through, Tom takes it all in.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

A valley outside of town. Rows of cars and news vans stretch a mile long. Tom parks it on the grassy shoulder and gets out. Walks.

Crosses the property line. And there she is. Reaching for the sun. His great oak. Tire swing still intact.

He places his hand upon her bark. Breathes her in. Remembers.

Across the way, a farmhouse. A victim of years of neglect. Grown over, dilapidated, boarded windows.

This place died a long time ago.

Finally moves up the hill into the throng of ONLOOKERS. Hundreds of people standing in absolute quiet. Terrifying silence.

He crests the peak, his eyes ingesting the horror. Black earth carved deep. Pieces of fuselage strewn about like a child's broken toy. Uniformed OFFICIALS wading through the graveyard, bagging what's left of lives snatched away.

An empty dog kennel; giftwrapped birthday presents; a set of stray dentures...

A sickness wells.

His eyes dart to the countless people gathered here. He wades amongst them: A REPORTER; A FAMILY of locals gawking with a video camera; A MOTHER clutching a doll, her dry eyes searching the wreckage --

MOTHER

(to self)

Have to find her. The recital's in two days. She has to practice...

She'll repeat this a hundred times today. She turns to Tom, her eyes pleading for help. But he's rendered cold. Useless.

It's more than he can take. He descends the hill, nauseous. Has to stop, hunch over. Gags.

KANSAS CITY (O.S.)

Rite of passage.

Tom looks up -- huh?

KANSAS CITY

Marked my territory over there.

Sitting in the dirt, a YOUNG MAN in a Kansas City Royals cap. Gangly, midwestern. Tired, bloodshot eyes. Been through the wringer. Tom nods an acknowledgement, uneasy.

KANSAS CITY

Lookey-loo, huh?

TOM

What?

KANSAS CITY

Figure if ya lost somebody,
ya'da been here earlier.

(then)

Sorry. None a my business.
Tired.

Exhausted more like it. Shit beat out of him. Anxious moment.

TOM

Forget it.

In his hands, the kid fingers a cluster of grapes. Tears off a vine and offers it to Tom --

KANSAS CITY

Want some?

Not really interested, Tom takes them anyway. Sympathy.

KANSAS CITY

They grow everywhere 'round
here.

He gazes upon the opposite horizon -- lush, thriving fruit. Then back at the crash site -- dry, gnarled vines. Dead.

KANSAS CITY

'Cept here. Looks like the
land's been dead for years.

(sotto)

Ironic, huh?

Tom shifts his weight, a self-conscious chill. The kid plucks a grape. Stares into it.

KANSAS CITY

Battle between a man and the
elements. For one a these guys
to turn out just right, I mean.
Break your back turnin' the
soil so's it can take the rain.
Rain that may or may not fall
when ya need it.

Poor kid's just rambling. In shock. Tom lets him.

KANSAS CITY

Prune just enough for a small, superior yield. But not so much that ya come up dry. Timing of your harvest, weather cycles, insects, vine rot. S'a real art.

(pointed)

Least that was Steinbeck's point of view.

Tom begins to edge away --

TOM

Yeah, Steinbeck...

KANSAS CITY

'Course you probably know all about grapes.

TOM

How's that?

KANSAS CITY

Aren't ya from around here?

TOM

No. Over from the city.

KANSAS CITY

Oh. Near the water?

TOM

Not really.

KANSAS CITY

She has a place on the wharf. S'where we were gonna live. Together.

Suddenly, the man's veneer cracks. His eyes go moist.

KANSAS CITY

If she. Said yes.

(difficult)

Had the ring and everything.

Oh god. This whole thing. Horror. What the hell do you say?

TOM

I'm -- I'm -- so --

KANSAS CITY
 (forcing a smile)
 No no. Didn't mean to drag you
 in. Just...haven't really had
 a chance to talk to anybody
 about it. Ya know?

Yes. Tom knows. More than he cares to admit.

KANSAS CITY
 Can I ask ya somethin'?

TOM
 Sure, yeah.

KANSAS CITY
 Why'd you come here?

He doesn't know. Wrestles with it.

TOM
 ...Used to own this property.
 Spent summers on it as a kid.

KANSAS CITY
 Huh. Nice memories?

Tom nods. Wishing he wasn't here.

KANSAS CITY
 Why'd ya sell?

Good question. Obvious discomfort in the answer. So --

TOM
 Just did. Business.

KANSAS CITY
 Oh.

The conversation comes to an end. Neither exactly sure of
 what to say. Inadequate, Tom makes a move for his car --

TOM
 Take care, now.

KANSAS CITY
 Uh-huh.

The kid lets him pass. Then --

KANSAS CITY
Passion.

His eyes peer into Tom. And hold.

KANSAS CITY
 Forgot that part. Takes
 passion, too.

He indicates the grapes. Then ambles back up the hill. Tom's gaze falls to the grapes in his hands. Rolls one around in his palm. Squeezes it between his fingers.

INT./EXT. MERCEDES - TRAVELING

Tom, headed back. A trance. Troubling.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Out of business, cleared out. Dirty floors and frozen escalators. A rushed Tom with a pair of SUITS --

TOM
 ...Sixty-three thousand square
 feet, two floor entrances,
 escalators direct to
 underground parking.

Reservation in their eyes --

SUIT
 Our concern is the demographics
 in the area.

CUT TO:

Intensified. Standing before a reluctant SWEATER-VEST TYPE.

TOM
 (impatient)
 I'm tellin' ya, this is exactly
 what you're looking for. At a
 price that should be against
 the law.

SWEATER
 I don't know. I just don't
 know.

CUT TO:

Sweating it. Losing his edge. Now addressing a pair of
 BUSINESSWOMEN.

TOM
 Can't tell ya how much heat
 I've got on this place. Not
 sure how much longer I'm gonna
 be able to hold onto it.

BUSINESS

How'd it fare last inspection?

TOM

(erupting)

Gimme a break -- do you know who I am?! Anything I rep's got my stamp of approval. If you're not interested, then let's quit wasting each other's time.

Shocked, sour faces.

CUT TO:

Alone. In a chair, tapping. Ready to explode. Finally does -- kicks it over. Wits end.

INT. THE BAILEY COMPANY - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Tom and his staff at the conference table. An ASSOCIATE drones on about the business of the day. But Tom hears none of it, staring out the window. Bags under his eyes.

He's elsewhere:

TOM (V.O.)

Like I told ya, I'm feeling better than ever. I am. But how can I screw ya on a real estate deal if you're always coddling me?

CUT TO:

A SWIRLING COLLAGE

Colors. Orange, yellow, red, black. Light seeping from behind as WE WIDEN...

TOM (V.O.)

Just wanted to come in, prove ya wrong, get ya off my back.

MRI film on a light screen. A sea of yellow tissue stained with intrusions of black. Small, but ominous. FURTHER WIDEN -- a second film. Identical. Except the black has swallowed up the yellow. Devouring the tissue whole.

Forrester stands before Tom. Words are useless. Grave, solemn lines carve both faces.

EXT. HOSPITAL - ER - LATER

A chaos of lights and sirens -- ER CREWS and PARAMEDICS race a CRITICAL inside --

Exiting, Tom doesn't even glance up. Catatonic.

INT. ATHLETIC CLUB - DAY

On the treadmill. His intensity waning with each stride. Until finally he just quits. Steps off the belt and exits.

Mentally submitting.

INT. NATURAL FOODS MARKET - NIGHT

Tom at the check-out counter. The CASHIER runs his items across --

CASHIER

...wheatgrass, tofu, soy powder, ginseng extract...

Tom gazes down at the pseudo-food.

And without a word, walks off, right out of the store. The cashier stares dumbfounded.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Empty hole in the wall. Tom, at the counter, hunched over a burger and fries dripping with grease. Looks up to the Hispanic FRYCOOK --

TOM

Got any Worsteshire?

COOK

Qué?

TOM

Worsteshire sauce?

COOK

No sé. Ketchup?

No habla Ingles. Forget it. Tom reaches into his pocket, retrieves a bag of his pills. Swigs them down one after another after another with his milkshake.

To the curiosity of the cook.

Tom's knee-jerk is to hide them. But he refrains. Starts to speak. Stops. Then, finally does it --

TOM

I have...

(tedious)

I have a tumor. In my liver.
They say it's gonna kill me.
Not too long. But...I've been
holdin' up. Me and my bag of
pills.

The cook just blinks at him. A beat of silence in the empty restaurant. Until a CUSTOMER enters. The cook moves on.

Left alone, Tom reins it in.

TOM

There. I talked about it.

INT. STAN'S DRUG STORE - DAY

Five and dime. Tom enters. Unshaven, flannel shirt, flip flops. STAN, the old gent at the pharmacy counter sees him, grabs his order.

STAN

How do, Tom.

Tom musters a nod, hands over his cash. Stan gives him a once-over, notes the disheveled ensemble. Concern.

STAN

Playin' hooky today?

Doesn't answer. Eyes focused on the magazine rack. *Newsweek, Time, People: Terror in the Sky, Freefall of Flight 300...*

STAN

Mm. All those folks. Just like that.

Tom blinks. Drawn to one cover in particular. A collage of photographs. Dozens of faces. Victims. Young, old, men, women, children...

And...

Kansas City. The young man from the vineyard. Big smile, same cap?!

What the hell? Can't be. He rips open the magazine, scours the pages, photos -- shredded fuselage, mourners, charred suitcases. And the K.C. Royals cap. Singed, astray in the dirt.

TOM
 (speechless)
 ...how...

The bag of pills fall from his grip.

STAN
 Tom?

SMASH TO:

AN ANSWERING MACHINE

Phone RINGS, it picks up --

MRS. BROOKS (ON MACHINE)
 Mr. Bailey? Um. Starting to
 become slightly worried. Where
 are you? I took care of your
 schedule, canceled the
 McCormick closing. But --
 well, just wondering if you're
 okay?

The living room floor. Blanketed with magazines,
 newspapers by the dozens. Coverage of the crash. Victims.
 More shots of Kansas City: Kevin Miller, 28, from Topeka.

But no Tom.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Tom speeds up the familiar path. Yellow tape, bulldozers,
 cranes. He parks, gets out --

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

Striding up the hill, he peers down. The site virtually
 cleared. Lingered MOURNERS. He weaves amongst them,
 studying every face --

Yonder, a MAN with his back turned -- baseball cap -- Tom
 edges up to him... Oh, too old. Moves on --

He searches. Waiting. Hoping to validate his sanity.

BLUE (O.S.)
 You're wastin' your time.

Tom turns, off-guard. Stocky BLUE COLLAR GUY with a
 moustache. Wild eyes drill a hole in him.

TOM
 Excuse me?

BLUE
You're lookin' aren't ya?

TOM
Uh...

BLUE
Don't bother. You'll never see
'em again.

TOM
You -- saw...?

BLUE
Watermelon off a rooftop.

TOM
...What?

BLUE
(bitter)
Tha's how they explained it.
How my wife's remains are
'unaccounted for.' How ya like
that?

Bodies. The man's talking about bodies. Not ghosts.

BLUE
Ya don't got your ziplock bag
yet, ya shit outta luck.

TOM
...Okay.

Jesus. Tom struggles for words. But the man doesn't
wait, heads on.

EXT. VINEYARD - DUSK

The numbers dwindle with the sun's resignation. Night
crews toil under floodlights.

Tom's left standing there. Self-conscious. Doubting his
own recollection.

EXT. VINEYARD - NIGHT

Pacing in the darkness. Where Kansas City stood.
Replaying. Waiting.

EXT. VINEYARD - NIGHT

Beneath the great oak, eyes scanning the land. Checking

the Newsweek in his pocket. Again. And again.

DISSOLVE TO:

BLACK

A low RUMBLING builds, LOUD, overtakes us -- we are the earth, soil ripping apart. A bulldozer greeting the day.

EXT. VINEYARD - DAWN

Tom wakes with the noise. Slumped against the tree, must have fallen asleep. Stands up, caked in dirt. Gathers himself.

Enough of this. He starts out, heads for the car. But is blinded suddenly -- A SPARKLE --

From the vineyard. Hypnotizing.

He curiously heads down the hill -- across the yellow tape -- but sees nothing, lost it. Eyes playing tricks?

He turns -- the farmhouse. So familiar, yet so foreign. His CHILDHOOD LAUGHS but whispers in the wind. He steps onto the porch -- to the door -- but can't do it. Quickly heads back up the hill when, again --

A GLIMMER OF LIGHT reflected from the sun. He edges closer, closer...and...

There...in the lifeless soil...a struggling seedling pushing forth? In all this death?

He kneels to it. Unmistakable. The desperate beginnings of a grapevine. An array of colors in its leaves. Burgeoning with strength. Astounding. Tom's awe surpassed only by the SHIMMERING object tangled in its tiny limbs...

AN ENGAGEMENT RING. Gold. Single diamond.

His face goes white. Mouth agape. Heart pounding.

NTSB (O.S.)

Excuse me --

NTSB AGENT approaching --

NTSB

Restricted area sir, if I could ask ya to step behind the yellow tape. Safety and all.

Tom can barely speak. Can barely move. Pries the ring free, pockets it, walks.

INT. MERCEDES - MOMENT LATER

Hands trembling. Inspecting the ring. An engraving in its spine -- *Dearest Amy, Love Kevin.*

Impossible.

TOM (V.O.)

My god. I thought. I thought
he was there to -- to grieve.
That he'd lost somebody...

EXT. PENNGROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Town Square brick building.

INT. PENNGROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Tom, at a computer. Been at it a while, search engines
smoking.

TOM (V.O.)

He was so upset, what else
would I think, would anyone
think? But then I saw his
face, Newsweek, sittin' right
in front of me. 'Bout had a
heart attack...

Topeka Sentinel. 1988. Sports page photo of Topeka High
Trojans. A handful of basketball players, cheerleaders
ecstatic over a victory. Among them, Kevin Miller and a
fresh-faced brunette, Amy Calhoun.

Dearest Amy, the ring says.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

Back in the city. Driving along the water, searching. A
page torn from the phone book in his hands.

TOM (V.O.)

Look. I don't call Dionne
Warwick, don't even read my
horoscope...

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Tom speaks with an elderly WOMAN on the stoop...

TOM (V.O.)

But I saw what I saw. I mean.
At least I think I did...

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - RECEPTION - DAY

Suits and briefcases traffic the lobby. Among them, the fresh-faced brunette, AMY CALHOUN. Corporate greys, pulled back hair, attitude to match. An awkward Tom fidgeting before her --

TOM

And he mentioned you. Living on the wharf. He was on that plane to see you. I mean I guess you know that. 'Course you know that.

He stops, flustered. Dares to get to the point --

TOM

Have you -- well, seen him? Since?

She straightens up. Been through hell. And now this man standing here with this story?

AMY

Yes. I have.

TOM

When??

AMY

Five days ago. At the funeral.

Oh. He avoids the icy glare.

AMY

Who exactly are you? How'd you find me?

TOM

I've intruded. I'm sorry. I...

Ill-equipped. He fumbles for the ring in his pocket. Offers it.

AMY

What...?

TOM

The -- inscription.

She reluctantly looks it over. Lips part. Instant shock.

AMY

I -- I'm supposed to... Believe he gave you this?

TOM

No. I found it. Up there.
Hanging from a vine. He did
mention it.

Shell-shocked --

AMY

No. No, this can't be...

Punched in the gut. Can't breathe. She turns and walks
off on him, vanishes around a corner. Left hanging, he
goes after her -- searches the rows of cubicles and halls --
finally finds her in her office. Slumped at her desk. He
dares to step inside.

AMY

I didn't even know he was on
that damned plane. His parents
told me. He was -- going to
surprise me.

(trembling)

He did.

She stands up. Only to sit back down. Uncomfortable in
her own skin.

AMY

He'd packed up everything.
Moving here. To be with me.

She puts the ring down. Burns to hold it.

AMY

This. I had no idea.

Eyes water. She fights it. Angry..

AMY

Why were you there anyway?

TOM

Just a lookey-loo I guess.
That's what he called me.

AMY

Well then why you? Why the
hell do you get to see him?

Exactly the question eating him. Treads carefully --

TOM

I don't know. Did you go...?

She dodges. No. Guilt.

TOM

He knew about wine?

AMY

Wine?

TOM

Seemed like an expert. About growing grapes, the whole thing.

AMY

(skeptical)

He drank Budweiser.

TOM

My grandfather made wine there.

She laughs to herself. Moves for the door. This is absurd.

AMY

And so you think -- there's some kind of...connection?

TOM

I really don't know.

And she doesn't either. This whole thing. Too much.

AMY

I can't help you.

Subtext, get the hell out.

Dead end, he turns to leave. But pauses. Eyes suddenly drawn in.

TOM

Steinbeck...

On her desk, a coffee mug. Insignia says Steinbeck's. Coffee shop.

TOM

He said that.

Recognition grabs ahold of her. And won't let go.

AMY

Wha...?

She stops, incredulous. Tom waits her out.

TOM

Why would he say that?

This is overload -- impossible --

AMY

Because -- because he didn't
alright. What are you trying
to do? -- this is -- he's
dead -- it's insane what you're
saying -- take this and get
out --

She throws the ring at him.

TOM

I'm only trying to--

She finally crashes. Tears.

AMY

Guy leaves his whole life
behind for me. I've never done
anything even close to that.
What is that?

He wouldn't know. Can merely stand there.

AMY

Just go.

No other choice, he pockets the ring and walks out.

EXT. STREET - DUSK

Tom searches the storefronts. Arrives at his destination.
Steinbeck's Coffee Shop.

INT. STEINBECK'S COFFEE SHOP - DUSK

Greasy spoon. Booths and a counter. Regulars. He
searches their faces. To the annoyance of some. To his
own embarrassment.

Pulls out the Newsweek -- points out Kevin's mug to the
CASHIER --

TOM

Excuse me -- have you -- seen
this person?

She notes the context of the photo. Gives him the lunatic
once over, shakes her head. He can't blame her.

He wanders the rear dining room. Pokes his head into the
bathroom -- empty.

A final befuddled look and heads out.

EXT. STEINBECK'S COFFEE SHOP - DUSK

Out on the walk, staring at the restaurant. Utter bewilderment. Wild goose chase. Sheer folly. Stomps out of FRAME.

Just as a flickering light reflects in the coffee shop window. Tom promptly steps back into FRAME, bowled over --

Across the street, A BLUE NEON sign coming to life. It's letters clearly forming to read:

T O M , T H E W I N E C U R E S

He stands there, mouth agape, barely able to compute the words. He blinks, he can't possibly be seeing this?! And then their brothers and sisters alight:

STROMBERG, THOREAU & WINTERS SECURITIES

An I'll-be-damned gawk consumes his face --

TOM

Steinbeck's point of view...

INT. THE BAILEY COMPANY - FILE ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Brooks stands idle in the doorway. Concern carved in her face. Beyond her, Tom rifles through the file cabinets -- manic -- wild -- a foot of paper on the floor.

MRS. BROOKS

Mr. Bailey?

But he doesn't hear her. Obsessed.

MRS. BROOKS

Mr. Bailey, you vanish for two days? Now you do finally show up and... I've been concerned.

He finds it. A document. Reads it --

TOM

October 12, 1987...

MRS. BROOKS

The year you started the agency?

TOM

...family trust deed...Thomas Bailey grants ownership of all certain real property...Lot 1, Block 39, Tract 5906...

His mind goes into overdrive. Incredulous.

TOM

Standing there eatin' those
grapes. He asked me why. Why
I sold.

MRS. BROOKS

Sold what? Who?

TOM

Kevin Miller.

MRS. BROOKS

Kevin Miller...?

TOM

He was on Flight 300.

MRS. BROOKS

But -- I thought everyone on
that plane...?

TOM

They did.

She's lost. Fearful.

MRS. BROOKS

I don't understand.

TOM

I wouldn't expect you to.

He darts out the door. Then darts back in.

TOM

Mrs. Brooks. Judith. I'm
sorry.

MRS. BROOKS

For what?

TOM

For not telling you.

MRS. BROOKS

Telling me what?

TOM

Get everybody together tomorrow
morning, 9AM.

Takes ahold of her hand, gently --

TOM

I am sorry.

He leaves her. Anxiety ridden.

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE - DAWN

Sun peaks over the horizon. A new day.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAWN

In front of the mirror, straightening his tie. Clean shaven, sharp suit.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Suitcases on the bed. Latches them shut.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Stands before the cupboard, trash can in hand. Takes a breath and dumps each pill bottle, one by one.

Look of resolve.

INT. THE BAILEY COMPANY - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

His staff assembled before him. Spectrum of emotion. Shock. Sympathy. Discomfort. But Tom's all anxious juice --

TOM

...I realize that this is a lot to take in all at once. And I apologize for that. I should've told you sooner. But this is the first time I've had a terminal illness. Not real practiced at it.

He smiles. They don't.

TOM

I hope you can all understand why I have to do this.

Nobody knows what to say. Or how. Finally --

NANCY

Of course we do.

BILL

Just tell us what you want us to do.

End of the table, Mrs. Brooks remains silent. Bloodshot eyes. Hard time with this.

TOM

Rick, I'm gonna trust you to get a good price for this building. Nancy, you've got the most residential under your belt, if you'd handle my house. As usual, Mrs. Brooks will deal with all the paper work and your severances, all that.

He breathes. Looks at each face. Each set of memories. Each reminder of what will soon be gone.

TOM

You've all helped build something great here. Should be proud of yourselves. I really--...

But he can't continue. Too hard. Swallows the emotion and exits. Abrupt.

INT. ELEVATOR - LATER

Tom and Mrs. Brooks riding down in silence.

MRS. BROOKS

There has to be a way, Mr. Bailey. All the new treatments --

TOM

Not new enough, I'm afraid.

MRS. BROOKS

Surely you can beat this.. Keep the company. Your life.

TOM

I have to give it all up. Leave everything behind.

MRS. BROOKS

Why?

TOM

Because that's what he did.

MRS. BROOKS

This...Kevin person?

TOM

Yes.

MRS. BROOKS
But doesn't this grape growing
business take a long time?

TOM
So you think I've carved my
last pumpkin too?
(off her look)
Forrester doesn't even give me
'till October.

Frustration boils --

MRS. BROOKS
Stop it. Just stop it. How
can you be so -- you're willing
to place your illness in the
hands of some -- some dead
hallucination??

Paints it like it is. But there's instant regret. She
didn't mean it to come out that way.

MRS. BROOKS
I...apologize.

Elevator opens. They spill into the garage, arrive at his
car.

TOM
1987? Eleven years you put up
with me.

MRS. BROOKS
Guess so.

TOM
Ya know. I should've fired you
a long time ago.
(off her look)
You should be runnin' your own
place. God knows you ran mine.

He retrieves an envelope from his jacket. Hands it over.

TOM
Consider it start-up capital.

She's speechless. Salty eyes. They embrace. A long time.

MRS. BROOKS
Damn it. You better get
yourself well. Because I'll
never forgive myself for
letting you walk out of here
without a straightjacket.

His eyes smile. A last look, no words. He gets in the car, starts it.

TOM
Goodbye, Mrs. Brooks.

MRS. BROOKS
Goodbye, Mr. Bailey.

And off he drives.

EXT. BERKELEY - TRAVELING

Tom speeds through the perimeter of town. Car packed full of boxes, nervous grin stapled on his face. Excited anticipation.

EXT. BERKELEY NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A row of quaint Colonials. Tom's car in front of one.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

MRS. WHITTAKER in the garage with a table saw. A tough old dame. Comfortable with a man's tools.

MRS. WHITTAKER
...Most old folks cash out,
they take up golf, buy an R.V.,
tinker in the garage. But not
him. Sonofabitch was convinced
we were gonna be Ernest and
Julio Gallo.

She chuckles. Misses the sonofabitch. Opposite her, Tom's hunched on a saw horse. Suit and tie, briefcase.

MRS. WHITTAKER
My Henry was out there every
day breakin' his back. But two
years, couldn't turn up a
sprout. Time he was done
carvin' up that dirt, wan't
worth half what ya sold it to
us for.

She cuts a slab of cherry wood across the saw. Breathes in the timber smell, familiar smile --

MRS. WHITTAKER
Rain in the forest, Sunday
morning walk.

He fidgets, impatient. She notes it, keeps on --

MRS. WHITTAKER

Three years on the market, not a bite. Cursed, I figured, that land. Then... When I lost him... Dunno, decided to hang on to it. Guess it went up in value for me.

A moment. She shakes it off, self-conscious.

MRS. WHITTAKER

What's your angle, Mr. Bailey?

TOM

How do you mean?

MRS. WHITTAKER

Come now. You didn't want it a dozen years ago. Now, after that god awful nightmare happens up there, you want it back?! Might odd.

He considers the truth. Refrains.

TOM

I have my reasons.

MRS. WHITTAKER

Well like I said, me too. Sorry.

He stands, turns it on, Broker of the Year --

TOM

I'll meet list plus twenty percent.

MRS. WHITTAKER

Don't think you heard me.

TOM

Plus fifty percent. That's a half-a-million dollars.

Takes her aback.

MRS. WHITTAKER

A hundred people died on that land. My husband died on that land. What you want, this is a very eccentric thing, sir.

TOM

I realize that. I sold my business. My house.

His eyes. The desperation.

MRS. WHITTAKER
What is it with you men? Some
calling from the dirt?

TOM
Somethin' like that.

Piqued, she sets up another slab of wood. Steps out of the way, nods for him to give it a go. Crazy old bird, he obliges, runs the board through. Splits like butter. She breathes in the scent, indicates for him to do the same. He does.

TOM
...Sawdust?

MRS. WHITTAKER
Aren't you the romantic.

TOM
...Pine?

MRS. WHITTAKER
Pathetic.

She shakes her head, walks out. Leaving him. Alone with the wood. And not much else.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Typetrays and floral wallpaper. Whittaker relishing an afternoon beer, cigarette. Couple sips, couple drags, and he enters.

TOM
Sunburn. Smells like sunburn.
And Old Spice. My
grandfather's aftershave.
Built trellises together on
that land. Sawing and
hammering the middle of August.
Hot as hell.

How could saying something so simple be so difficult? She studies him. The seven-hundred dollar shoes. The Mercedes out front.

MRS. WHITTAKER
I remember now. The young man
that sold us that vineyard.
Wearin' his T-shirt and
sandals, full a piss 'n
vinegar. Drivin' off with our
(more)

MRS. WHITTAKER (cont'd)
 check fast as he could.
 (keen)
 Lot's changed, yeah?

He doesn't answer. Disquieted.

MRS. WHITTAKER
 Sunburn and Old Spice? Hm.
 You want to get back to that?

TOM
 Don't want to.
 (then)
Have to.

She considers. His stern look. The nervous, clenched hands.

Another sip, another drag.

INT./EXT. MERCEDES - TRAVELING - DAY

Driving. Grin on his face. Piece of cherry wood on the passenger seat...

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

The barren aftermath. Government pulled out, mourners replaced by crosses and flowers.

Tom's car, affront the farmhouse.

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

He stands in the middle of the field. The ring-producing vine. Wilting. Only sign of life.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

He sets down his suitcases amidst the clouds of dust. Home, sweet home.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

Wandering. Broken windows and cobwebs. Random pieces of abandoned furniture. The banister he slid down. Third slat in the kitchen floor that creaks on cue. He's transported.

Arrives at the staircase. Pauses, a recollection. Runs his fingers along the grooved wood panels. Finds the sweet

spot, pushes -- a crawl space revealed. A smile too. Can't help himself, kneels down, crouches inside -- barely fits. Closes the door behind him. Perfect hideout. Every thunderstorm, every mischievous misdeed.

Feels silly. Pushes on the door...jammed. Can see it now: *Man Found Dead in Crawl Space*. Rears up, rams against it -- topples out.

Laughs at himself.

INT. VINEYARD - WINERY - DAY

Doors slide open, light greets the long sleeping interior. He steps in, overcome. A series of rooms stepping down the hillside. Dormant vats and barrels, fermentation tanks, chutes, presses... And oddly, an upright Steinway piano in the corner...

Old friends.

CUT TO:

SERIES --

...Jeans and boots, hands and knees in the soil. Tom trowels the unyielding earth. Dry, malnourished...

...Digging, digging. An impenetrable floor...

...Deeper, deeper. Fingers in the black earth...

...He finds something. Gently tugs it free. A root. Alive. Anchored.

...Night. In the house. Lightbulbs, groceries, ice cooler. Setting up shop...

...On the floor with a pile of books. *Soil Fundamentals, The Grapevine, Irrigation Strategies*...

...Next day, in the dirt again. A dozen roots in his wake, isolated and drawn forth...

...A stake trellis pounds into the ground. He ties off a fledgling vine to its new support...

...A troop of stakes standing at attention. Row after row...

...The dirt road. A PAIR of local oglers in a Ford pick-up watch this strange man. Furrowed brows, dismissive smirks...

...Moonlight. Surgical mask and goggles. Tank in one

hand, spray gun in the other. He douses the vines with pesticide...

...Bathroom. Brown water whirlpooling down the drain. And streaks of red. Tom, hunched in the shower, violently coughing. Blood...

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A calendar pinned to the wall. March. He's marked the passing days not with X's but with !'s. Each box another precious day.

Candles guide our path to the kitchen table. Tom chisels away with a knife. Purposed carving.

A Jack O' Lantern. Be damned if he misses out.

EXT. PORCH - LATER

Dark but for the ORANGE GLOW of his ghoulish masterpiece.

MATCH DISSOLVE:

INT. AMY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dark but for the ORANGE GLOW of her nightlight. Amy Calhoun, wide awake. She throws back the covers...

INT. STEINBECK'S COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

In a corner booth, Amy stares at a cup of coffee. Heavy heart, muddled mind.

The fluorescent sign BUZZING across the street -- Stromberg, Thoreau & Winters Securities...

INT. THE BAILEY COMPANY - DAY

Elevators open, Amy steps into disarray. MOVERS, boxes and bubble wrap. She navigates the obstacle course, searching for a Bailey-ite. Arrives at Tom's office -- sees a woman through the door. Mrs. Brooks. Tenderly packing away the Broker of the Year plaque.

She glances up to discover the young woman.

CUT TO:

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

PVC pipes networking the rows. Irrigation. Wrench in hand, Tom battles the main water valve at the property line.

SUNDAY BEST (O.S.)

Whatchou doin'?

Startles him. AN OLDER WOMAN in her Sunday best. Frail but spirited. Clutching a giftwrapped present. Something about her. The way the wind seems to encircle her.

TOM

I'm... Tryin' to turn on my water.

SUNDAY BEST

You lives here?

TOM

Do now.

Her face crumples up. Hard time understanding that.

SUNDAY BEST

Uh-huh. Well.

He searches the road -- no car in sight.

TOM

How'd...you get here?

SUNDAY BEST

My own two feet.

He gives her the once-over. Wants to touch her, see if she's real.

TOM

Kind of a long walk from anywhere.

SUNDAY BEST

When I get tired, they carrys me.

TOM

Who?

SUNDAY BEST

The angels.

Enough for him -- he leaps up, frenetic --

TOM

--Why are you here -- whaddyou
want with me??

SUNDAY BEST

I wants to leave this birthday
gift for my daughter.

TOM

Then why me -- why not just
talk to her??

SUNDAY BEST

'Cause she's dead, fool.
Didn't you see that big plane
crash outside your porch??
What the matter with you?

Oh. Ahem.

TOM

I ---... Nevermind.

SUNDAY BEST

So you mind I leave this or not?

TOM

No. Of course not.

She sighs, looks around. Searches. Finds the perfect
spot, sets the gift down. Backs away, assesses its
placement. Frets. Paces. Something's not right.

SUNDAY BEST

Will you open it?

TOM

Sorry?

SUNDAY BEST

Birthday presents gotta be
opened.

TOM

You want me to open it?

SUNDAY BEST

Well I can't open it, I bought
it.

Awkward, he takes it from her. Peels away the wrapping.
Opens the box. Sheet music. Chopin's *Lady of the
Camellias*.

SUNDAY BEST

So?

He plays the part as best he can.

TOM

Oh. I. Love it. Thanks.

SUNDAY BEST

She was a musician. Goin' to school for it and everythin'.

She shakes her head. Then, to the sky --

SUNDAY BEST

Well. Happy birthday, Celia.

She starts off. But stops. Just now realizing. The vineyard.

SUNDAY BEST

You replantin'? Here?

TOM

Yes ma'am. That okay?

She's not sure. Not really sure.

Tom's grip slips -- the wrench cranks, the valve opens -- water races through the PVC pipes, spraying over the land in a cascading shower -- the sun slices through the mist -- heavenly -- and a brilliant rainbow is born.

The sheer beauty of it. Reaches inside of her.

SUNDAY BEST

Yes. It just fine.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Tom, on the porch. Staring out at his labor. A few days' stubble. Literally twiddling his thumbs. Waiting.

EXT. VINEYARD - TIME LAPSE

Day turns to night. Turns to day. To night...

EXT. VINEYARD - NIGHT

Tom, the moon, the roots. And the vines. Or lack thereof. Barren, unforgiving soil. Dead soil.

He flops down amongst the posts. Pale. Frustration.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

Tom, in his sleeping bag. A pair of feet arrive at his side. He cracks his eyes open:

RICHARD

Love what you've done with the place.

EXT. PORCH - LATER

Tom emerges with pudding cups. Offers one up --

TOM

Breakfast?

RICHARD

I see you're eating well.

TOM

Subtle segue.

RICHARD

Segue?

TOM

To the friendly doctor-knows-best lecture that you surely came here to deliver.

Forrester bristles, but gets to it --

RICHARD

Still on your meds?

TOM

You bet.

Okay. Forrester sighs, produces a ziplock bag. The discarded pill bottles.

RICHARD

Then I guess these just accidentally ended up in your garbage?

TOM

Oops.

RICHARD

Needless to say, Mrs. Brooks was concerned.

No response. As Richard spots the carved pumpkin.

RICHARD

Tom, I'm glad you made a change, I really am. But this? My. Doesn't look so good.

TOM

What? Is it the beard ya don't like?

RICHARD

It looks like you came up here to die. All alone. Is this how you want to do it?

TOM

Richard, you don't know anything about what I'm doing. Go home.

He descends the steps, traipses into the field. Richard gives a moment, then follows. Redirects --

RICHARD

So. When do you plant the vines?

Gee, that helped.

TOM

These are the vines.

RICHARD

Oh.

Tom erupts, it getting to him --

TOM

What the hell's the matter with your eyes? Can't you see?! They're blossoming with life? This is a spectacular harvest -- it's a fucking surplus --

Cracking, he seizes a root, yanks it outta the ground --

TOM

-- the fruit of my labors -- the--

He instantly goes quiet. For there, tumbled from the root's bosom...

A 35mm camera. A Minolta, scuffed and scarred.

RICHARD

My. What kind of fertilizer you usin'?

Tom kneels gingerly, pries it free of the root's tentacles.

TOM
It's one of theirs...

RICHARD
Theirs?

The hatch springs open. Inside, a capsule of film.
Rewound, undamaged. He catches his breath --

Stands. Alive again. Marches toward the house --

TOM
Thanks for stopping by, Richard.

Richard blinks -- what the...?

EXT. PENNGROVE - ONE-HOUR PHOTO - DAY

Tom anxiously counting the minutes.

INT. MERCEDES - LATER

He rifles through the photographs: mountains. Nomadic
peoples. An exotic plant, shot after shot -- two dozen.

And...

The last photograph. On board the plane. Blurred, but
distinguishable. A man in his seat, photographing himself.
Behind him, chaos. Yet he is calm. Eyes staring into the
camera. Almost summoning. Fear, yet warmth. Fingers held
to his chest in a V -- peace sign.

A man's last moment. A silent voice from the dead.

EXT. HEAVENS - DAY

A 747 screams through the clouds --

INT. 747 - TRAVELING - DAY

Tom white-knuckling his seat. On edge, given the mode of
travel. In his hands, the *Newsweek* collage: a photo of the
man, the Minolta's owner. Less the beard, year or two
younger, but unmistakably the same.

Tom flips through the developed photos, the bizarre, leafy
plant. Brown and yellow, odd configuration of spores.
Picture after picture -- close, wide, far.

Unusual.

INT./EXT. RENTAL CAR - TRAVELING - DAY

He drives. Palm trees and wetlands. Florida. Sunshine suburbia.

EXT. JACOBS' HOUSE - DAY

Parks it at the curb and strolls up the drive. A modest rambler in need of a new paint job. Goes for the doorbell -- only to be stopped by an arrow in the heart -- of the rubber toy variety. A seven-year-old tyke (RUSTY) emerges from the bushes donning a headdress and facepaint, cupping his hand to his mouth --

RUSTY

You're dead. Now I get to scalp ya.

TOM

Yikes.

The kid stands there, scrunched up face.

RUSTY

You're supposed to fall down and bleed your guts out.

Ill-equipped, Tom rings the bell.

TOM

Is your mom home?

RUSTY

I don't have a mom. I was raised by wolves.

Mama wolf, MRS. JACOBS, opens the door. Heavy make-up, curled hair, denim skirt.

TOM

Mrs. Jacobs? Tom Bailey. We spoke yesterday.

MRS. JACOBS

(off-guard)

Oh. Yes? But -- I thought you lived...

TOM

I do. I caught the red eye.

Wary, she reaches out to her son --

MRS. JACOBS

Rusty, come inside.

But the boy defiantly stands where he is.

MRS. JACOBS

Mister, whatever you say you found, I told you to talk to the airline.

TOM

Yes, ma'am, but I--

MRS. JACOBS

How'd you get my address?

TOM

You're listed.

MRS. JACOBS

I'm not giving you any money.

TOM

I'm sorry?

MRS. JACOBS

They told us about you types. Whatever belonged to my husband, I've already gotten back, I tell you.

She pushes the door shut. He pulls out the Minolta. She freezes. Mouth agape.

EXT. PATIO - LATER

On the patio, Tom and Mrs. Jacobs. Minolta and photographs on the table. But she's entirely too preoccupied, a laundry basket at her side, folding clothes. Odd casualness.

MRS. JACOBS

He takes that camera everywhere with him. That he does.

TOM

I had them developed because I didn't know who--

MRS. JACOBS

Oh, s'alright.

A man's clothes. She's folding a man's clothes. Boxers, undershirts...

MRS. JACOBS

Ya know, for all the darn claims on that box, this ink's
(more)

MRS. JACOBS (cont'd)
just never gonna come out, I
tell you.

He shifts, uneasy. Eyes escape to the back yard.
Exploding with fruit trees, exotic flowers, a giant green
house. Practically a Seventh Wonder of the World.

TOM
Your husband worked with plants?

MRS. JACOBS
He does, he does. Brian's a
botanical chemist. Works for
Hutt and Meyers, pharmaceuticals.

Jesus -- of course -- a ray of light pierces the haze -- he
fumbles for the photos --

TOM
These plants --

MRS. JACOBS
Hmmm? Oh, Afghanistan. He'd
just returned. Barely stopped
in to say hi 'fore he was off
again to San Fran. Busy, busy.
Had to miss Rusty's T-ball
game. Got two singles and a
double.

TOM
So they're medicinal?

MRS. JACOBS
Wanna know somethin' shocking?

TOM
Please.

MRS. JACOBS
His funeral cost eight thousand
dollars. You believe that?

TOM
Uh. Sorry.

MRS. JACOBS
I mean, Brian and I have money
put away, no big deal. I was
just surprised, that's all.
How do people afford that? I
tell you.

TOM
 (pushing)
 Mrs. Jacobs, do you know if
 there was a particular area of
 medicine he was--

MRS. JACOBS
 Rusty! Get down from there!

She leaps out of her chair -- the little Indian's scaling a
 tree.

RUSTY
 Shut up, I can climb it if I
 want!

MRS. JACOBS
 No. You can't just climb trees
 all day.

RUSTY
 Why not?

She doesn't have an answer. He sticks out his tongue and
 runs off. Sigh, she returns to her seat. Smiles,
 attempting to hide it. But obviously rattled. Our first
 glimpse.

Then, almost as an afterthought --

MRS. JACOBS
 Cancer.

He nearly falls out of his chair.

TOM
 Your -- husband was looking
 for -- a cure?

MRS. JACOBS
 Oh no, he wasn't looking. No,
 no.
 (casual)
 He found it.

He does fall out of his chair. She pays no mind --

MRS. JACOBS
 Damn wrinkles.

Holds up a dress shirt, shakes her head --

MRS. JACOBS
 You married, Mr. Bailey?

TOM

I -- no -- but you were saying--

MRS. JACOBS

If you were, you'd know about wrinkles, yes you would. He asked me to iron this for his trip. But I got busy, forgot. Well he was upset. So then I got upset. All of a sudden we're fighting. And he storms out...

(winces)

Takes an earlier flight.

Air leaves his lungs. Bowled over. This whole thing.

MRS. JACOBS

I'm sorry, you were asking?

TOM

You...said he found...

MRS. JACOBS

Oh yes. At least that's what he thinks. But Brian has his detractors. Always has. They call him a dreamer.

TOM

San Francisco. That's where Hutt and Meyers is based? He was taking them these pictures?

She finally flips through them. As if perusing snapshots from a family vacation. Until the last one, the self-portrait on the plane. Jarring. Cold water in the face.

MRS. JACOBS

Why? ... Why are you here, Mr. Bailey?

TOM

I -- just thought it was important...-- Did he bring plants back with him from his trip?

MRS. JACOBS

You could've mailed these. I really don't understand what you're doing.

He's backed into a corner. Looks her squarely --

TOM

I know this might sound odd.
But what your husband found. I
think -- I think it's meant to
help me. Save me.

She stares at him. Her eyes at last focused, quivering, as
if waking from a slumber --

MRS. JACOBS

You need to understand
something. My husband is--
(breath)
was obsessed. He came back
like he always came back,
saying he'd finally found it.
But no one believed him. This
wasn't the first time. That he
thought he'd discovered...

She trails off. The photograph staring at her. Tormenting
her.

TOM

But Mrs. Jacobs, maybe this
time--

MRS. JACOBS

I tell you, you're really just
wasting your time here. Now,
if you'll excuse me, I have an
appointment.

TOM

Mrs. --

But she up and walks inside. Leaving him sitting there.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Tom starts the car, empty-handed.

INT./EXT. RENTAL CAR - TRAVELING - DAY

Eyeballing the rearview mirror as he leaves the house
behind. Brick wall. Exasperation building. Makes a
decision --

Cranks the wheel.

EXT. SIDE STREET - LATER

The afternoon sun hangs lower. Parked around a corner, Tom

spies the Jacobs house. Car backs out of the driveway, zooms past.

He starts the engine.

EXT. JACOBS BACK YARD - DAY

He creeps into the yard. Swallows hard, scoops up the photos still on the patio table, goes for the greenhouse --

INT. GREENHOUSE - DAY

African violet, Ginkgo biloba, Asian hemlock... He searches the endless indoor landscape, comparing plants and herbs with the photos.

Arrives at the man's work station. Microscopes, test tubes, terrariums. Grateful Dead CD's on the stereo, incense, books by Leary and Ginsburg.

He moves on -- shit, a NOISE -- he's caught --

An arrow in the back of the head. Little Geronimo, in the doorway --

TOM

I -- where's your mom?

RUSTY

Gone.

TOM

You're by yourself?

RUSTY

I'm supposed to be taking a nap at Mrs. Abernathy's next door. Shhhh.

TOM

Make ya a deal, I won't tell if you won't.

Kid nods.

RUSTY

How come you're in here?

On edge, Tom continues his search, doesn't answer.

RUSTY

Know what? I'm Dalzar, mutant human hybrid from the twenty-eighth century.

He pulls out a flashy action figure. Plops him into a terrarium.

RUSTY

Have to save the planet from
the Falconian wasp monsters.
But first I gotta escape from
their torture cave.

TOM

Uh-huh...

RUSTY

(hopeful)

You can be my partner. If ya
want.

He offers up another action figure. But Tom's a little
preoccupied --

TOM

Is this the only place your
daddy kept his plants?

The kid's playtime exuberance stops cold. Eyes to the
floor.

RUSTY

I dunno. He's. Out of town...

Tom glances up from his self-absorption. Sees what he did.
Feels like shit.

TOM

Hey, I didn't mean to...

RUSTY

Dalzar can't escape.
(quiet)
Without his partner.

TOM

Well. We can't have that.

Tom sticks out his hand. Brightening, Rusty hands over the
second action figure: a Flash Gordon.

TOM

Huh... I used to...

RUSTY

Flash has to fly his ship over
and lower a rescue line.

Tom inadequately holds Flash over the torture cave.

TOM

Okay then -- uh, crawl on up.

RUSTY

On what?

TOM

Well -- pretend there's a rope?

RUSTY

Nuh-uh -- you're doing it wrong. First, there has to be cool sound effects for the spaceship -- CH-CH-CH-CH!

Bolts to his feet, escalating -- bounds across the room --

RUSTY

--And then if he was here, what he'd do is -- he'd fly Flash Gordon over to the Dark Mountains -- CH-CH-CH-CH -- battle the giant beetle bugs -- POW BLAMMO BANG! -- to get the magic stretchy branches!!

TOM

Hey shhh, remember?

RUSTY

--Then he'd tie 'em to Flash's leg and fly him -- CH-CH-CH-CH -- zooming down to the rescue --

Racing back, he brushes into Tom -- tumbling the photos to the floor --

RUSTY

Do it like that. Do it like he did it.

Like my dad did it. Tom, the substitute. Doesn't even know where to begin. So he doesn't -- scrambles to pick up the photos -- the noise, the mess, running out of time --

But then stops. Realizing. Staring back at him all this time. The photograph of Jacobs on the plane -- his fingers on his chest, the V -- the peace sign.

RUSTY

C'mon, the wasp monsters are attacking!

Tom spins to the man's work station -- there it is -- next to the incense tray, a tattered sticker -- a peace sign, on a lock box. He snatches it -- frantic -- searches for its

corresponding key -- desk, cabinet, no dice -- screw it, he throws it to the ground -- it catapults open -- eureka! A bounty of hermetically sealed plants -- the plant -- yellow and brown, the spores. A journal and video tape as well.

Nervous, uncontrolled smile on his face. Everything leading to this. His panacea? Frenzied, he gathers the plants, the accompanying journal and video tape, replaces the lock box, and walks right past the kid out the door.

Rusty trails as Tom sets the photos back on the table.

RUSTY

What are you taking?

TOM

Borrowing.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

Tom hops in the car under the boy's confused eye.

TOM

You take care, okay?

RUSTY

How?

TOM

Well. Just hang in there.

RUSTY

You didn't save him. Dalzar's dead.

Tom blanches. This heartbreaking kid.

RUSTY

All ya had to do was fly to the Dark Mountains and get the stretchy branches. That's all you had to do.

His little eyes grow heavy, watery. His brow scrunches up, flustered.

RUSTY

How come? How come you couldn't do that?

Tom struggles for an answer. But the kid's not waiting around, hurls his Flash Gordon at him, into the car. Trudges off, disappears around the house.

Tom's eyes fall to the floor. Where Flash stares back at him. Even he seems disappointed in him.

INT. AIRPORT LOUNGE - DUSK

Establishing. Frequent FLIERS grabbing tea, checking in.

ANGLE - CONFERENCE ROOM

Skeptical awe on Tom's face. Staring at a monitor, Jacobs' video tape playing: *Nomadic mountain people. Furs and kelts. Makeshift drums and horns before a raging fire. A ritual dance encircling a sickly young woman. She lay on a grass platform, drawing smoke from a long, ceremonial pipe.*

FAST FORWARD -- *the ceremony continues, building with intensity, rhythm. Tom focuses on the pipe. Its spiraling smoke. The woman. Trembling, ill. Eager eyes.*

Not unlike his own.

INT. 747 - TRAVELING - NIGHT

Headed home, Tom pours through the man's journal. Page after page of cryptic notes and figures. Scientific chicken scratch.

RICHARD (V.O.)

Where'd you come up with this?

TOM (V.O.)

Just tell me what it means.

INT. PENNGROVE - DRUG STORE - DAY

Tom at the local copy machine. The journal. Blood counts, stats...

RICHARD (V.O.)

Patient chronologies. At least from what I can tell. T-cell counts before and after. Some kind of treatment.

TOM (V.O.)

For cancer?

INT. FORRESTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Journal pages spit forth from a fax machine. Forrester curiously ingests them as they come.

RICHARD (V.O.)

So it would seem. Look Tom, I don't know what quack you got

(more)

RICHARD (cont'd; V.O.)
 these from -- but -- it's
 fiction --

TOM (V.O.)
 Richard. Please.

RICHARD (V.O.)
 (sigh)
 They start through the roof,
 then stabilize.

TOM (V.O.)
 Over how long?

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Tom, in the kitchen. Eyes locked dead ahead. The pack of
 herbs before him.

RICHARD (V.O.)
 It's ludicrous. Days.

TOM (V.O.)
 Remission, isn't it?

RICHARD (V.O.)
 I don't know what kind of so-
 called -- treatment -- this is.
 But you can't just be
 experimenting with your body--

TOM (V.O.)
It's remission, isn't it?

A sigh of resignation --

RICHARD (V.O.)
 Sure, Tom. Sure.

Tom's gaze doesn't budge. A long moment.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

Decided, he rips open the pack -- immediately met with a
 ghastly aroma. Tears free a bud, grinds it in his fingers.
 Lays the herb inside a rolling paper.

CUT TO:

A JOINT

The joint of all joints. Tom lights her up. Self-
 conscious, acutely aware of the absurdity. But what the
 hell, takes a deep drag.

Hacks like a kid's first Marlboro.

SERIES --

...Tom's boom box. CD spins, speakers fill with Bob Marley's *Jamming*...

...His eyes but red slits, his head a ten thousand pound bowling ball on his shoulders...

...Rolls another doobie, air drumming to the steel drum beat...

...On the roof with Flash Gordon, token' to the moonlight, ear to ear grin...

...Loads another, an old pro...

...Munchies -- bags of Doritos and Hostess treats ravaged before him...

...Onward and upward to a water bong...

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Arms over his head, standing before the mirror. Examines his armpits -- lymph nodes swollen, discolored.

Some cure.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Transfixed on his newly purchased TV. Replaying Jacobs' tape. Searching for subtleties missed. The woman in the circle. The ceremonial pipe. What's he doing wrong?

INT. PENNGROVE - SMOKE SHOP - DAY

The VENDOR pulls from beneath the glass case an ornate wooden pipe. Long and narrow. Close enough, Tom pulls out his wallet.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Before the video again. Pipe in his hands, he's flat on the floor, emulating the woman's exact posture, technique. Looks ridiculous, has to laugh. But does it anyway.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Hunched over the toilet, he nearly throws a kidney. Violent retching.

More blood.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The pack. . Depleted, down to the last bud. He stares at it. Do or die. Literally.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Again, in front of the TV, studying the wild, nomadic ritual. Has been for hours.

EXT. VINEYARD - DUSK

He hauls firewood, kindling, old boards into a pile...

Runs cable from the house...

Carries the TV, VCR into the field...

Douses the wood with lighter fluid...

EXT. VINEYARD - NIGHT

A MATCH SPARKS in the dark breeze...tossed into the pyre...flames rage --

Tom hits the remote and the outdoor video feed comes to life. Dueling ceremonies. The direst of circumstances, he lights the pipe, hands quaking, then gives it his best shot. Stilted, awkward, he kicks up his heels, does like the natives do. Attempting to match each beat, each step as he circles the wild flames.

A madman?

Yes. He stops cold. Feels like an ass. A goddamned ass. Senses he's being watched.

Because he is. A DEER across the way eyes this lunatic.

TOM

What? You think I'm a whack job? Huh?!

The deer snorts, indulges him.

TOM

Standin' here in the middle of a goddamn airline crash! Smoking god knows what! What's left of my skin stinkin' of imminent death?!

The deer cocks her head.

TOM

Well you're right, I'm a
fuckin' nutcase -- I've totally
lost my shit -- would a sane
person do this --

He jumps up and down on one foot, flails back and forth,
lets out a WAIL --

TOM

How ya like that? Yessir, put
your right foot in, take your
right foot out, s'what the
cancer dance is all about!
Whew, feel better already --
I'm cured -- I'm cured!

He HOWLS, spinning like a top, arms this way and that. The
fire rages. The AFGHANI BEAT surges, creeping up on him.
Spinning, spinning. Losing himself. Releasing. His own
ceremony in full bloom...

ANGLE - DIRT ROAD

A pair of headlights approach...

VINEYARD

Tom WAILS. Faster, faster. Laughing, laughing. Wild,
furious, passionate.

DIRT ROAD

The car parks. Lights extinguish. The driver peers at the
bizarre ongoing.

Amy Calhoun. Struggling to comprehend the oddity her eyes
take in. Steps out of the car, edges closer.

Below, Tom rages on. Arms stretched to the sky. A million
miles from here.

She beholds the spectacle. Captivated.

Exhausted, he finally falls to the earth. Elation. A
child on summer grass. Contented smile.

The curtain closing, the deer nods a farewell and heads on
her way.

Amy backs away, downright bedazzled.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

Late. A dim light.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

A huddled mass in the corner. Blankets, trembling.
Within, a shivering Tom. Soaked in sweat. Wheezing.

Paying the price.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAWN

- The sun awakens. As does Amy. Back seat of her car.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MORNING

Amy stepping onto the porch. A reassuring breath and
knocks on the door. Waits. No answer. Tries again.
Peers through the boarded bay window -- the dark living
room.

And Tom. Still enveloped in the blankets, crouched on the
floor. Lifeless. Eyes wide open.

AMY

Mr...Bailey?

He slowly turns his head. But that's all.

AMY

You alright in there?

His eyes come to focus. Sees her. Might be more surprised
if he gave a damn anymore.

TOM

Million bucks, Ms. Calhoun.
Please. Come in.

She tentatively steps inside. Nose met with the scent of
sickness.

TOM

Pull up a chair.

There are no chairs. He attempts a chuckle. Comes out a
cough.

AMY

You look... Not so good.

TOM
Allergies.

Right. No welcome mat, she gets to it.

AMY
I came because--

TOM
It's in that bag over there.
Top pocket.

She fidgets a moment. Then goes for the bag. Digs it out.
The ring. Clenches it tight. Gazes at the inscription.
Accepts it as her own.

He watches her. The tide of emotion. These two people.
Life's valleys.

TOM
I'm going to have some pudding.
You?

AMY
What?

TOM
Chocolate. It's good.

Strange. Makes her smile.

AMY
Pudding. Sure.

He climbs to his feet, a little trouble with that balance
thing. Traipses into the kitchen.

She surveys the ramshackle lodging. The agriculture books.
The unusual pipe. The unopened bag of pills.

TOM
Pardon the plastic, the maids
are polishing the silver.

He enters, hands her a plastic spoon, pudding cup.

AMY
Your office said I'd find you
here. Mrs. Brooks. Said you
bought this place -- again?

TOM
I was feeling nostalgic.

An awkward silence. The onus on her. The ring.

AMY
I didn't believe you.

TOM
Get in line.

AMY
I still don't know... But I
s'pose I figured I owed him the
benefit of the doubt.

TOM
Right.

Tables turned. She finds herself the one trying to believe.

AMY
Have you...seen him? Again?

TOM
'Fraid not.

AMY
Oh. Well. What about Steinbeck's?

TOM
What about it?

AMY
I don't know?

And there they are. The well run dry, she sets down her
pudding, moves for the door.

AMY
Well. Thanks for the pudding.

He nods a farewell. But she can't walk out. Cracking,
eyes welling --

AMY
I don't get it. I don't get
you.

TOM
Don't beat yourself up about it.

AMY
I'm sorry for your --
'allergies' -- but you're the
one who came to me. And you
know what? To hell with you
for that. For -- for...

She trails off, what's the point? But it hits home. And
he feels like an asshole.

TOM

For raising your hopes.

(then)

I'm sorry. I know what that is. Probably shouldn't have gone to you in the first place.

AMY

So...what? Now you think you imagined seeing him?

TOM

Maybe. I don't know.

AMY

(the ring)

Then what about this?

TOM

Souvenir. Doesn't mean anything.

That's not good enough. Doesn't believe him.

AMY

I saw you. Last night. What the hell did that mean?

Caught with his pants down. Refuses to go into it.

AMY

If you know something, I deserve to know.

TOM

This isn't about anybody else but me. My little made-up fantasy world. There are no ghosts, no Kevin Miller, no magical connection, no cure. There's nothing in that field but dirt. Dead dirt.

He arrives at the window, nearly throws up his pudding --

TOM

And...vines...?!

He bolts out the door --

Utter, heart-stopping bafflement. For the barren, dry field is no more -- in its place, a maze of foot-tall adolescent vines. Healthy, burgeoning leaves reaching for the sun. Dozens.

TOM

W-What's...going...on...?

She arrives at his side, unimpressed.

TOM

Those -- are new. Really new.
Like from yesterday new.

AMY

Excuse me?

TOM

That was the Sahara yesterday.

AMY

Okay...?

He bounds into the dirt to be amongst his children.
Touches them, inhales them. Life. Rebirth. Strong and
vibrant.

She follows, ever mystified by this man.

AMY

Sure you're not imagining this,
too?

TOM

You said you were here last
night, did you see 'em then?

AMY

It was dark. Didn't see
anything.

TOM

Trust me.

He's running now -- bursting -- greeting each impossible
vine like a long lost friend.

AMY

Lemme guess, you traded a cow
in for some little beans or--

TOM

I'm tellin' you -- I've been
here for two weeks and there
hasn't been one weed -- I know
how this--

AMY

Shut up.

TOM

Look, I--

But her eyes are frozen --

AMY

Shut up.

He stops. Follows the path of her stare -- nestled in a limb's leafy paw...gift-wrapped in stems...delicately presented for the world to see, sparkling like a prospector's treasure...

A set of keys on a ring. Car keys.

They share a look. His sanity validated. Her hope quenched.

AMY

I believe you.

INT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Tom pacing, effervescent --

TOM

I'd like to know what the hell's goin' on here?

AMY

You and me both.

Bouncing off the walls, he walks, pounds his head, breaks the strewn pipe in half --

TOM

Runnin' around like an idiot. Stoned outta my mind for what? Can probably add lung cancer to the list. For what? For what? A set of spare keys?! Am I supposed to be growing grapes or running a lost and found?

AMY

I don't know. Maybe... You just gotta see where it takes you.

He stares out the window. A hard nervous laugh.

TOM

Where it takes me? Uh-huh. And that'll take how long? Just -- nevermind -- there are things -- things you don't know.

But she does know.

AMY

Well. What's the alternative?

He sits down. No alternatives.

AMY

Besides. I hear Cloverdale's nice this time of year.

She tosses him the keys. Stamped on the back of the key chain: DONNY SHOEMAKER'S AUTOWORLD -- CLOVERDALE, CALIFORNIA.

AMY

Maybe we should take a drive?

TOM

We?

AMY

This whole thing. Started with Kevin. I want to know why.

He considers.

INT./EXT. MERCEDES - TRAVELING - DAY

The lonely highway. The pair ride in awkward silence. Strangers thrust together. She attempts to take the edge off --

AMY

Still has new car smell.

He nods, adjusting to a stowaway on his journey.

AMY

Somebody should bottle that and sell it.

TOM

They do.

AMY

No kidding?

TOM

No kidding.

AMY

I don't know what you're doing for insurance, but my company... can probably get ya...

Nevermind. More silence.

TOM

She told you, didn't she?

AMY

What?

TOM

Mrs. Brooks.

AMY

(lie)

Told me what?

TOM

Come on. You haven't asked me one question. Gee Tom, why'd ya quit your job?; how come you're so obsessed?; and oh yeah, Tom, why do those 'allergies' make ya look like a Feed-the-Children ad?

No use. She comes clean.

AMY

Sorry. Figured it was yours to talk about.

TOM

Just as well. Somebody's gonna have to explain it to the coroner.

She stares at him, aghast. He smiles.

EXT. GAS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Tom emerges with a tray, climbs back into the car --

TOM

Your bran muffin, my chili dog; your orange juice, my Slurpee; and two hot 'gourmet' coffees. Cream, sugar?

She hesitates. The coffee. Something about it.

AMY

Black's fine.

He takes a heaping bite out of the sloppy dog --

TOM

(mouth full)

Wanna bite?

She doesn't answer. Her eyes peering deep into the java. Bothered.

Strange. He starts it up, drives. And more silence.

AMY

So what. Was he translucent or something?

Takes him a second. Slurping his Slurpee.

TOM

No. Wasn't rattling any chains either.

AMY

He wasn't injured or bleeding...?

TOM

Nothing like that.

AMY

What'd he have on? I mean -- clothes?

TOM

Looked like a regular guy. Jeans, shirt, cowboy boots, I think. Baseball cap.

AMY

Royals.

TOM

That's the one.

AMY

(amazed)

Always wore that ratty thing... What else? Did he seem. Okay? Happy?

TOM

(careful)

He knew. He wasn't going to see you again. Wasn't gonna get to...ask you.

Stings. Bad.

AMY

Yeah, well then that's bullshit. I thought it was supposed to be so great, peaceful.

TOM

I...

Don't know. And that ticks her off --

AMY

He was right there? Right in front of you? Why?! Why weren't you paying attention? -- you must've missed something--

TOM

(yields)

Maybe.

Her fingers crush into the bran muffin. Doesn't even realize.

AMY

Goddamn turkey legs.

She looks at him as if that should explain everything.

AMY

College. He came up with this bright idea to sell turkey legs on the street. Like hot dogs or pretzels. Took out a loan, bought the carts, all that.

TOM

Turkey legs? Kinda good idea.

AMY

It's a stupid idea. Out of business in a week, defaulted on the loan, bankruptcy, total mess. He... He should've known better. Mr. Spontaneity.

Her voice cracks, she stops. More at work here than turkey. To Tom's bafflement.

She rolls down the window, dumps out her coffee.

TOM

That bad?

AMY

I don't drink coffee. Anymore.

TOM

I thought...you said you wanted one?

AMY

Changed my mind.

She dodges. He eyes her oddly. Drives on.

EXT. CLOVERDALE - DAY

Driving down the off-ramp. Small town-turned-mini-mall haven.

EXT. DONNY SHOEMAKER'S AUTOWORLD - DAY

Giant neon sign, used cars by the hundreds. Through the showroom window, Tom and Amy at the desk of a SALES MANAGER. A few words and the man turns to his computer, clicks away...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A cloud of dust as the Mercedes pulls up to a gated ranch. Parked out front in the grass, a beat-up Chevy. Sky blue, '68 convertible. "For Sale" sign on the dash.

Eerie. Keys in Amy's hands. Lonely kinship. Tom drives through the gates.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Log cabin-style home, acres of grassy plains, barn. Tom and Amy park it, climb out. A stillness in the air as they ascend the porch steps. About to knock when --

A SHRIEK. They turn -- a tall, gawky CREATURE vanishes around the house.

AMY

What...was...that?

It appears again with another CRY -- this time in full glory -- AN OSTRICH?! Ruffled and posturing. Gives a warning SQUAWK -- they backstep around the corner --

Oh shit -- right into a pack of THIRTY MORE on the other side of a corral fence --

BIRDY (O.S.)

G'dangit, Harriet -- get away from those folks!

The bird bobs her neck in protest and scampers off. The chubby little man ambles up. BIRDY BANKS. Fifty-somethin', looks older. Big, bright eyes, a broad, embarrassed grin --

BIRDY

My apologies. Old bird's a bit of a quack.

(sticks out his hand)

Birdy Banks.

TOM

Tom Bailey, Amy Calhoun. Hell
of a watchdog you got there.

BIRDY

Aw, she's harmless. Just a
little outta sorts lately.

(then)

What can I do fer ya?

TOM

Jerry Banks. Your son?

A flinch. Then a fond smile.

BIRDY

The one and only. What's your
intrest?

TOM

(breath)

Flight 300. I live on the land
where it went down.

BIRDY

Aw hell. Sorry ta hear that.

TOM

No, I'm sorry for you, sir.

BIRDY

'Ppreciate that. He was one a
the good ones.

The pleasantries stall. Amy hands over the keys.

TOM

Found them on my property.
Tracked 'em through the
dealership.

BIRDY

Well I'll be godd--

He pauses, in the company of a lady. Gently takes the
keyring. Precious. Feels the singularity of every groove.
Spins them once on his finger. Beams. Spins them again,
and again --

BIRDY

S'what he always did. If'n he
was nervous. I'd guessed...he
probably had 'em goin' like a
pinwheel. Figured tha's why
they weren't on him, in his
pocket.

He sighs, but doin' just fine. Amy, however, can't stomach the details. Excuses herself, slinks off to the car.

BIRDY

Did I -- she alright?

TOM

She'll be fine.

BIRDY

Din't mean ta upset her. Guess I jus've spent my time with it. And know in my heart, he's doin' okay, in a good spot. Ya know?

TOM

Sure.

BIRDY

Figure there's a bigger and better bowl game up there. I know him, he's already throwin' touchdowns.

(shakes it off)

Awful kind to bring 'em all this way. Anything I can do in return?

TOM

I see you've got the car up for sale. Wonder if I could take a look?

The man blanches. Immediate resistance. But, courteous --

BIRDY

Sure. Least I can do.

They head up the drive, come to Amy at Tom's bumper.

BIRDY

You okay, miss?

AMY

Yeah, just my -- allergies -- acting up.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - LATER

The key slides into the rusted Chevy lock. Perfect fit. Tom pulls the door open, eager. Hell if he knows for what.

BIRDY

(dissuading)

Can't make any promises. Kid was under that hood every weekend, poundin' her out.

Amy hovers in anticipation as Tom sinks into the driver's seat. Instantly transported to another time. The vinyl, the gear shift, the radio...

TOM

Anything special about this car, anything he ever talked about?

BIRDY

How ya mean?

TOM

I don't know, anything odd or bizarre or -- I don't know -- anything?

BIRDY

Uh. I don't quite foller.

Tom searches -- for something, anything -- under the floor mats -- beneath the seats -- kicks open the glove box -- rifles through the stack of papers. Birdy raises a brow.

BIRDY

Lookin' for somethin' particular?

TOM

(sotto)

The point...

Amy diverts --

AMY

So... Ostriches?

No response, Birdy eyeing Tom's meticulous examination.

AMY

What do you raise them for?

BIRDY

(cold)

Burgers.

Tom moves onto to the backseat. Combs the ash trays, floor, windows... Nothing. Exasperation. Suddenly --

A SCREECH -- Harriet pops her head through the window -- goes for his nose --

BIRDY

Harriet -- get yer gizzard
outta there!

He leaps after the bird -- she dodges clear, scampering
wild, SQUAWKING in contempt --

BIRDY

Godblessed bird. Been tryin'
to wrangle her for weeks.

AMY

Maybe she's not too keen on
accompanying fries and a shake.

BIRDY

Naw, she's a breeder. All bent
outta shape since... She was
Jerry's. Ate right outta his
hand, slept in the house
sometimes... Reglar house pet.

AMY

(amazed)

She...misses him?

Oblivious, Tom climbs out, heads on to the trunk.

BIRDY

Gonna be missin' her 'fore too
long -- gettin' scrawny, won't
eat.

Standing alone in the field, Harriet plunges her head in
the dirt. Amy gazes out at her. Knows the feeling.

Tom closes the trunk. Sighs.

TOM

The hell if I know.

BIRDY

(relief)

Yeah, don't blame ya. Tall
order goin' from your German
machinery to this bucket a
bolts.

TOM

Oh don't get me wrong, I gotta
have it.

Catches Birdy by surprise. Not what he expected. Or wants.

TOM

Somethin' wrong?

BIRDY

Mr. Bailey, I'll be honest with ya. I thought about holdin' on to her myself. But then I got ta thinkin'. It ain't much, but it's a young man's car. Burnin' down the highway; smoochin' with your gal in the backseat? Figure he'd want somebody doin' her justice. Not this old fart behind the wheel, toolin' around ta the post office.

TOM

Can't guarantee I'll do much smoochin' in the back seat, but I'll definitely work that engine.

BIRDY

I'm sorry, I jus' like to see her go ta... Well, a kid.

TOM

(desperate)

I'm younger than I look?

BIRDY

You can understand.

TOM

Mr. Banks, there's something you don't understand. Ya see--

BIRDY

(open wound)

Please now.

Dead end. Tom pushes it no further, given the circumstances.

They head for the house. But -- Amy's wandered off, headed for the feeding trough. Something in her eyes. Birdy scratches his head, watches her scoop up a handful of grain, head for the despondent fowl yonder.

ANGLE - HARRIET

Head pops up. Eyeing this trespasser. Backsteps warily.

AMY

It's okay, girl. Shhh. Ya hungry, want some food?

Harriet hisses, sticks out her black tongue.

AMY

Yeah, know exactly how ya feel.

Another hiss. Amy hisses back, sticks out her tongue. Takes the bird aback, bobs her slinky neck in suspicion. So Amy retorts, bobs right back. The bird cocks her head, stands on one leg. Amy does likewise.

ANGLE - TOM AND BIRDY

Engrossed. Fascinated.

ANGLE - AMY AND HARRIET

Amy slowly offers up her hand of grain. Harriet shuffles, refuses. So Amy takes a bite herself --

AMY

Mmmm, you're missin' out.

But nothin' doin'. Harriet heads on.

AMY

Okay. Well, guess that just means more for me.

She turns to leave, reverse psychology -- hooked, Harriet curiously strides after -- Amy holds out her hand again and the ostrich edges closer -- slowly, slowly -- plunges her beak into the feed.

AMY

That's a girl. Good stuff, huh?

Harriet downs every last seed. CHIRPS a thank you and nuzzles Amy's cheek. Seemingly sighs, in need of a friend.

AMY

I know, I know... You can tell me all about it...

Commiseration. WE PULL AWAY, leaving them to their girl talk...

ANGLE - TOM

A smile. Taken by this woman.

ANGLE - BIRDY

Flabbergasted. Touched.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - LATER

Birdy and Harriet come waddling out of the house --

BIRDY

Can't let ya get away empty-handed.

He hands over a package to the pair. Whispers, out of Harriet's earshot --

BIRDY

Ground patties.

AMY

Oh. You don't have to--

BIRDY

Hush now, least I can do.

Tom fidgets, last ditch --

TOM

Birdy. That car. Me finding those keys... There's somethin' to that, don't you think?

Birdy averts his eyes. His boy heavy in his heart.

BIRDY

I'm...sorry.

Not as sorry as Tom. He nods, heads into the Mercedes. Amy climbs in. Stops. Finds herself giving the man a hug, a kiss. The first smile we've seen on her face.

AMY

Thank you, Mr. Banks.

BIRDY

For what?

AMY

For being here. We've got a lot in common.

Touches him. Knows not why. Harriet squawks, me too. Amy hugs her neck, then gets in the car.

Tom starts the engine. Slowly pulls away. Birdy watches, chewing his lip. Harriet looks at him coldly.

BIRDY

Wha?

She squawks. He sighs. Regret welling. Decides -- trots after the car, waving. Tom stops as the old timer saddles up to Amy's window.

BIRDY

(to Amy)

Ya know. Those allergies a yours...

He stares out at the Chevy. Lets go.

BIRDY

Well. Jerr used ta say a stretch a interstate in that baby'd cure ya a just about anythin'.

Off their looks --

EXT. RANCH - LATER

Harriet pumping her wiry legs at full speed, a sweetheart on the train platform. Chasing the Cal Bears bumper sticker on Jerr's pride and joy. Amy waves as Tom cruises it down the highway.

Harriet slows to a trot. Stops. Whimpers.

A WAILING captures her attention. The house. The Mercedes alarm blowing.

ANGLE - MERCEDES

Birdy in the driver's seat, scrambling to disengage it. Eventually does. Content with the trade, he goes to town on the amenities. Sunroof, car phone, CD player. Has a good disbelieving chuckle.

That unexpectedly turns on him...

The old man starts to cry...

INT./EXT. MUSTANG - TRAVELING

Tom and Amy. Windblown hair. Sun in their faces. He watches her. Charmed.

TOM

You got a real way with poultry.

AMY

I won't lie. It's a gift.

TOM

Old guy was pretty impressed with you.

(then; open)

I was too.

She looks at him. Lips upturn. Embarrassed.

AMY
Why thank you.

TOM
Why you're welcome.

Feels like a schoolboy. Can't contain a smirk.

AMY
What?

TOM
Nothin'.

AMY
What?

TOM
Well, here we are.

AMY
Here we are.

TOM
Be nice to know where.

AMY
Maybe -- we're supposed to
drive it somewhere?

TOM
Maybe.

AMY
The interstate?

TOM
Happen to know which one?

AMY
No idea.

And there it is. He shrugs. She shrugs.

TOM
(amused)
Just like that. I'm drivin' a
convertible hot rod. It's...
ridiculous...but cool?

AMY
Just remember, after the malt
shop, my dad wants me home by
ten.

TOM

I thought he said eleven.

AMY

Ten-thirty.

They both smile, enjoying, relaxing. He slides his seat back, rides low. Adjusts the rearview mirror. Flips down the sun visor -- oh --

Cut into the vinyl, a heart: JB + BW. She notices him noticing. Steals the wind out of the ride.

TOM

That poor kid. No more smoochin' in the backseat...

(fading to memory)

Roadtrips to Tahoe... Skinny dipping with the local girls... No more of any of that.

(undone)

Time's up. Watch your step and exit to the right.

Poor kid. Poor Tom. A moment. He sits with it, eyes glaze over. Oblivious as they fast approach a hay truck chugging along in their lane.

AMY

Tom...?

He focuses. Lets up on the gas. But... The Chevy refuses to slow -- in fact, speeds up --

AMY

Tom, slow down --

He goes for the brake -- no response --

TOM

It's stuck -- the pedal --

AMY

Whaddya mean stuck?!

He kicks at it with his feet --

TOM

Grab the wheel --

Amy clamps on -- he reaches down -- attempts to wrench it free -- useless --

He yanks on the emergency brake -- no dice -- rear of the truck just feet away -- opposite lane traffic whizzing by -- no choice -- he veers onto the shoulder -- speedometer climbing, screams past the truck --

A road sign dead ahead -- shit -- he screeches it off the highway, sliding down the grassy incline -- spins -- into a dried riverbed -- struggles to keep control, wrestles the wheel -- faster, faster --

AMY

Tom!

Plows through a pool of water -- mud sprays, blankets them -- blinded -- he punches the wipers --

A fallen tree ahead -- he scales the banks -- rips through a barbed-wire fence -- a field -- charging into a herd of grazing cattle -- dodges as Amy slams on the horn -- the bovines scatter and MOO --

Rumbles past -- into a clearing -- phew, clear -- cranks the wheel all the way to the left -- a wide perpetual circle, taming the 40mph beast for the time being. Relief.

AMY

Uh...

TOM

Tell me about it!

AMY

So how much was that Mercedes worth?!

TOM

(just realizes)

I was leasing it!

He laughs. She laughs. Caked in mud, loop-d-loops in cow pies.

AMY

What now?

TOM

Beats me. Gotta run outta gas sooner or later.

The fuel gauge -- full. Great.

AMY

Lemme know when we get there.

She settles in, turns on the radio. Flips the stations, finds the perfect COUNTRY DITTY.

TOM

You're killin' me.

AMY

Kansas girl, remember?

TOM

Well yeehaw.

He spins the wheel to the TWANG -- a fishtail here, a figure eight there. A regular Dukes of Hazzard, giddy from the absurdity. She cranks the tunes, he gets daring -- weaving through trees, hay bails...

Letting go. Both of them.

But he runs out of room -- cows and an irrigation ditch --

AMY

Don't think this is what Birdy had in mind --

He veers, hops the property line, speeds onto a fire road, just trying to hang on, wild fans of dust behind. Until...

They run out of road -- a rickety, old fence dead ahead -- ditch on one side, elm trees on the other --

TOM

Uh. Got your seatbelt on?

Faster, faster the wheels spin -- smiles vanish, this isn't gonna be pretty -- their hands find each other, clench tight -- deep breaths -- they duck down, cover their eyes -- and they explode through the barrier --

Wood splinters, dirt flies --

And the wild ride comes to an end. The dust clears. And wouldn't ya know it, the gas pedal innocently pops free. Like magic. Heads cautiously poke up...

TOM

You okay?

AMY

All things considered. You?

TOM

Oh, never better.

Breaths of relief. Eyes fall to their trembling hands. Still clutched. Shared moment of silence. Which eventually gives way to hard belly laughs.

AMY

For a minute there...
(then)
We're alive.

But Tom doesn't answer. His eyes turning serious, focusing across the way. Hypnotized, he climbs out of the car. She watches in confusion as he walks zombie-like through a

patch of trees. Each step, his face darkening. Until he stops, stares dumbstruck. At...

Headstones. Before him. Small, private cemetery. A family plot. And there's fresh dirt piled high. An empty grave. Staring back at him. The end of the line.

She arrives at his side. He swallows hard, shaken. Trying to form the words. Then --

TOM

This is it. Where we were supposed to go.

AMY

Tom, come on...

TOM

It's my grave.

AMY

What are you talking about --
(re: headstones)
it's the -- Wilkins family --

TOM

Maybe not here, not now. But it's still mine. They brought me here.

(off her look)

Jerry Banks. Kevin. All of them. Wanted me to see it.

AMY

What?? No -- pedal got stuck, that's all.

TOM

Do you really believe that?

No. She doesn't answer. The wind SHRIEKS through the trees. He kneels into the moist soil. Feels the edge of the pit. The dirt, the bugs, the worms.

TOM

This is how it'll look. Feel. Smell.

He swallows and climbs down inside. Crouches into the darkness.

AMY

Tom, don't do this to yourself.

But he's already doing it. What he's previously refused...

TOM

The older kids used to take me to this gorge outside of town. Summertime, go swimming. There was a ledge. A big drop, thirty, forty feet that they used to jump off. Kept tryin' to get me to do it with 'em. But no way in hell I was gonna. One day they dragged me up there, goading me, layin' it on thick. And I thought this was it, I'm gonna have to jump. Gonna have to. But -- I didn't. I turned around and ran, got the hell outta there. And I didn't feel bad about it. And I didn't feel like a coward. I just felt... relieved. Because I didn't have to jump.

He looks a lot like the kid on that ledge right now.

TOM

But this time. I can't turn and run.

He sinks into the earth. Raw, ugly fear. Splitting him apart. He cries.

What can she say? There's nothing.

TOM

This is how it is? On that ledge -- every minute 'till it's up.

AMY

But maybe...that's better?

He looks up at her. Forgot she was there. As she dares to presume to have something to say --

AMY

No more road trips to Tahoe, no more skinny dipping with the local girls? You said it yourself. Poor kid.

TOM

Wha--?

AMY

You're right. Jerry Banks' time is up. Kevin. His time is up. But yours. Isn't.

He climbs to his feet, unable to disguise the contempt --

TOM

Let's just go.

AMY

...What?

TOM

This isn't about Kevin. Just because I get a few more ticks on the clock.

AMY

No, Tom, Tom, that's not what I meant. It's not.

TOM

What did you mean?

AMY

Just that-- You've still got--...

(then)

No. Maybe you're right. Maybe I did mean that. ...

(heated)

Yes, I did. After all this, it just seems to me you've been given...a gift.

TOM

...A gift?

AMY

Yeah... Time.

The moment cools, calms. He tries to take it to heart.

TOM

What do I do? With this gift?

AMY

I guess only you know that. Whatever you want. Whatever makes you happy.

But he doesn't know that. She senses. This man. This man's life. Feels for him.

AMY

Look, I don't know what to say -- I work for an insurance company, I spend half my day with a Xerox machine -- and I wouldn't know how to say it

(more)

AMY (cont'd)

even if I did. But I saw you dancing around in the vineyard last night. And I saw you in that beat-up Chevy...-- And you were laughing. You weren't Tom, the guy who's dying. You were just Tom.

(gentle)

Let yourself do that. As much as you can, ya know? Crazy, wild. Passion. Whatever.

TOM

Passion... That's what Kevin said.

AMY

He...did?

TOM

You're right. Maybe I did miss something. Missed everything...

Sick with himself, he turns and walks. Losing himself in the trees. She lets him go.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PASTURE - DUSK

A red glow melts over the auburn landscape. Still, hushed.

ANGLE - TOM

Alone in a field. An hour by himself. She appears behind him, a hand on his shoulder.

AMY

How ya doin'?

Better. Time to think.

TOM

I watched my grandfather work that land, bleeding himself dry fourteen hours a day. Squeezed out a couple good vintages, but died same way he started. Slave to the bank. My folks had already died, so he put all his eggs in my basket. Always had. I got out of college, and there I was. With this vineyard. But I just -- wanted
(more)

TOM (cont'd)

more.

(regret)

I couldn't understand. The
audacity he had to be so...
Happy? Happy as hell.

(breath)

And now I realize. Your Kevin
was trying to explain it to me.

(off her look)

I've looked in the mirror a
thousand times. But never come
close to the gleam my
grandfather had in his eyes.

Saddens him. Her too. The sun dips below the trees and
the sky fills with pink afterglow. They breath it in. She
takes his hand.

EXT. TREES - NIGHT

The Chevy. Tom inserts the key, fires it up.

INT./EXT. CHEVY - TRAVELING - NIGHT

The muddy cowdodgers headed home. She, curled up, sleeping
like a baby. Peace. He, cruisin' the open road. Eyes
wide open. Literally. Figuratively.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

He tucks her into his Four-Star lodging. Pulls the
sleeping bag warm around her as she drifts away.

And he can't help but watch for a spell.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

Amy stirs awake with the early light. Orients herself,
curious as to his whereabouts.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

She steps out onto the porch. Shudders at the sight.
Thick, mature stalks, at least six feet tall. Blossoming
white flowers. And grapes. Far and wide, high and low.

Tom's head pops out of the greenery.

AMY
(speechless)
Good -- good -- good --

TOM
Morning?

AMY
Yeah -- that.

TOM
(overflowing)
As tall as I am! -- they're
almost ready! -- you know how
long this is supposed to take??
A year!

AMY
It's un...believa...ble!

TOM
Look how sticky -- the Brix,
sugar -- they're Cabernets.

AMY
My favorite. As of right now.

She notices the mountainous pile of pruned sprigs and
limbs. A full night's work. Amazement suddenly battles
concern.

AMY
You sleep at all?

TOM
Sure.

AMY
Liar.

The look on her face. He hears what she's not saying.

TOM
Look around, how can I deny
this?

She says no more, watching as he moves on down the line,
trimming at the wrapping like a kid on Christmas morning.
Kick in his step, whistling as he works.

TOM
It's all comin' back to me --
pruning at angles, curling the
tendrils to support the
grapes -- all of it.

How deny this indeed.

Her turn. To be taken with him.

AMY
Then can I help?

TOM
Sure, pair of clippers over there.

AMY
No, I mean...I've got some vacation time coming. I wanna help with...everything.

Stops him. Breaks his heart.

Until the SHRIEK of tires skidding on the dirt road. The Ford pick-up with the pair of local ogles. And this time they've really got something to ogle at. Jaw dropped astonishment.

Tom acknowledges with a tentative wave. Continues pruning.

INT. WINERY - DAY

Tom flings open the sweeping bay door. Lets the skeletons out and leads Amy to the towering fermentation tank.

TOM
This is where it starts. First stage of fermentation.

AMY
This where we run around barefoot and stomp 'em?

TOM
You've been watching too much *I Love Lucy*.

She moves to the Steinway in the corner. Regards it oddly.

TOM
For the harvest. My grandma used to saddle up to it, fire up the troops.

AMY
I know how to whistle?

He hands his student a scrub brush and bucket.

INT. WINERY - LATER

Tom and Amy hands and knees in the base of the tank. Eight

feet across, ten feet deep. Giving its rusted walls a spic-and-span treatment.

He has to stop, winded.

AMY
You alright?

TOM
(a smile)
Quit doting.

AMY
Okay, okay...
(then)
So when do we get to the drinking part?

SERIES --

...They climb down the winery ladder into the cellar, a dark, cobwebbed abyss. Wall-to-wall aging barrels. A secret treasure room...

...Patching, hammering, showering with cleanser -- the barrels undergo a restoration...

...Tom fixes the archaic corking machine -- inserts a bottle beneath -- the glass shatters on contact...

...An assault of Hitchcockian birds enjoy breakfast of grapes -- Tom races out of the house, hootin' and hollerin' -- the flock flees...

...The dirt road. The locals are back. This time with an entourage. FARMERS and TOWNSPEOPLE stare down at the miracle. Awe...

...Amy removes plastic hoses from the holding tank -- a rat scurries out, disregards her screams and carries on about its business...

...Round two with the corking machine. After a tinker here, a tap there, he edges another bottle close -- THWOCK -- perfect fit. ... Until it cracks into a million pieces...

...A final lipstick smile and the scarecrow is complete. Uh, a circling crow lands on its head, takes a crap, and retreats to the field for lunch. Amy repaints said smile into a frown...

...A determined Tom, ready for war with the corker. Readies the bottle -- THWOCK -- success! ... Except that the machine cracks into a million pieces...

...The local vintager shop where Tom and Amy avoid LOCALS'

stares as they load up on vineyard 101 supplies -- bottles, hoses, presses... And a new corking machine...

LOCALS (AD LIB)

(hushed)

...Word is he's doin' voodoo dances... ...It ain't right, growin' up there... ...I say we call Hard Copy...

That's it, Tom turns, addresses his detractors --

TOM

Actually, if you want to know the truth, I'm with the government. We're testing a new agent in the soil. It's only slightly radioactive.

He smiles and walks out.

...The dirt road. Completely empty of spectators...

...A brilliant fluttering of light... Silver streamers tied to each vine, whipping back and forth in the air. Our familiar crow lands nearby, squints in horror, and quickly exits. Tom and Amy watch proud...

AMY

What now?

TOM

We wait.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Tom, on the porch beneath a mound of blankets. Staring out at the grapes. Freezing. Knows he should be indoors. But can't leave their side. Restless.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Mr. Coffee drips into a pot. Sitting at the table, Amy peers into a full cup. Filled to the brim. Hasn't taken a sip. Who knows how long.

Forget it. She rises, moves to the sink, dumps it. Rattled. Reaches for the pot, dumps it too. Worked up -- turns --

Tom in the doorway. Been watching. Curious.

AMY

Hi.

TOM
Kind of a love-hate thing you
got goin' there.

AMY
Too strong.

TOM
Oh...

Obvious. She doesn't even buy it. Sighs, difficult.

AMY
Last time we saw each other.
Sat in this booth all day.
Steinbeck's. Drank coffee.
(moves on)
Ya hungry?

TOM
Amy...

She puts up a hand -- please, let's not. Sees it in her
face. Lets it be.

EXT. PORCH - LATER

The wind calls out with her EERIE HOWL. Tom still waits
out the night. Amy steps out with a pillow.

AMY
Any point in me tryin' to
convince you to come inside?

He smiles, no. So she sits down next to him.

AMY
Got any room in there?

He smiles, yes.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

The vines drip with dawn's dew.

ANGLE - PORCH

Wrapped up in each other's arms, they come awake together.
A moment's awkwardness. She rises, helps him to his feet.
Trepidation as they descend into the field and he gently
tears free a bunch. Afraid to pierce its flesh.

TOM
Color looks okay...

AMY

That's good...

TOM

Skin looks okay...

AMY

That's good too...

He hands them over --

TOM

You do it.

AMY

Oh no -- this is your vineyard,
mister.

He gazes at the fruit, the answer hidden inside. Finally, grits his teeth and crushes them in his hands -- juice. Sticky. Pure.

TOM

(whisper)

They're ready.

CUT TO:

SERIES --

...Tom goes vine to vine slicing bunches free, filling baskets with the purple bounty...

...Taking the heavier labor, Amy loads the baskets into a wheelbarrow, carts 'em off...

...She wheels the barrow around the back of the winery, up to the chutes...

...Dumps the load down the gaping funnel, into the fermentation tank -- thousands of plump marbles raining down...

...As Tom fills the last of the baskets, his ears perk up to a familiar jingle -- CHOPSTICKS. Spots Amy in the winery at the Steinway, plunking away.

AMY

It's all I know...

...Long day's night. Atop a ladder, he guides her hands over a giant oar, stirring the mixture...

...Inside the vat, powder sprinkles down, an enchanting weightless dance...

...Bags of yeast serve as pillows as Tom and Amy sleep in

the corner. The tank, however, wide awake, bubbling with vitality..

...Tom in rubber leggings standing inside the tank, punching down the thick, foamy swill of skins and stems...

AMY

And that's what we're drinking?

...Tom jerks open the valve and the juice ROARS through filters and drainage tubes to the holding tank below...

...Siphoning the nectar into the individual barrels. One after another, tedious and exhausting. Tom weathering through it...

...Rolling the barrels down the incline, lining them along the cellar walls. Every single one. Job well done...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

Strain taking its toll, Tom guides Amy to the winery.

INT. WINERY - DAY

They stand before a makeshift chem lab. Funnels, beakers, siphons. He extracts a sample from a barrel's bung hole. Dips a freshly plucked dandelion inside, watches it turn blue.

TOM

How my grandfather read the acid levels. When it's orange, we go to bottles. Pray for orange.

She picks up a bottle. Regards its naked surface.

AMY

Have to come up with a name, label.

But he doesn't answer. Eyes suddenly vacant.

AMY

What was your grandfather's called?

Still nothing. He wavers, unsteady.

AMY

Tom...?

He plummets to the floor -- the bottle shatters -- his eyes flutter, face twitches.

AMY

-- Tom!

TOM

...I'm...okay.

She helps him up, cradles his head. His voice a whisper.

TOM

It's starting.

(wry)

All downhill from here...

AMY

No -- no -- you just overdid
it -- gotta take it easy --

TOM

Shhh.

The room gets small. Quiet.

EXT. VINEYARD - DUSK

Next day. Tom pushes his body toward the winery. Snatches a stray dandelion from the soil as he goes...

TOM (V.O.)

Weakness, dizziness come
first...

EXT. VINEYARD - DUSK

Next day. He struggles with each step. Another flower...

TOM (V.O.)

As it takes over my lungs, just
breathing'll become a battle...

EXT. VINEYARD - DUSK

Next day. Desperation...

TOM (V.O.)

It'll be all my heart can do to
keep up. Eventually it just
won't...

EXT. VINEYARD - DUSK

Next day. Hope faltering...

TOM (V.O.)

And then...

INT. WINERY - DUSK

A dandelion. Blue. Still blue. He just stares at it, bowing to its inevitability.

TOM

...That's it.

AMY

No. It'll happen.

TOM

I just thought. The vines were so fast....

(lost)

You don't have to stay for this.

AMY

'Quit doting.'

TOM

You're not hearing me -- I'm not going to make it. This takes months, years...

But she's not going anywhere.

TOM

Why? Would you want to stay?

AMY

In a word... Pudding.

That helps. A lot. She takes his hand.

AMY

C'mon. I wanna show you something...

Leads him outside.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

She weaves him through the trees. He lets himself be guided.

TOM

Where are we going?

AMY

Oh, somewhere I found...

And just like that, she drops his hand and runs ahead. Suspect, he traipses after. Around a bend...to...

A shimmering pond. Nestled in a pocket of vegetation. The twilight glistening on its surface. But she's nowhere to be found.

TOM

Hello...?

AMY

Here's your local girl. Now's your chance.

She's in the water. Buck as a jaybird.

TOM

Uh. What are you doing?

AMY

I don't know. I really don't. But why don't you do it with me?

TOM

I --... Just drop 'em? All my clothes?

AMY

You're the expert.

TOM

I don't know, Amy... This is -- strange.

AMY

No doubt about it.

TOM

I mean. You and me strange.

AMY

Hey, I'm not trying to...

The moment festers. Spoiling.

AMY

I'm sorry. Just thought it'd be fun. For you. I'm sorry.

She swims for the bank. But before it sours completely, what the hell, he peels off his clothes, dives in --

TOM

Jesus -- it's freezing. I
could catch cold and die.

AMY

Oh god, I didn't even think of--

TOM

It was a joke.

AMY

Oh. Not funny.

She splashes him. He splashes back. Turns silly. Which
makes it turn awkward. As if the forbidden apple only just
now swallowed down...

AMY

So...?

TOM

So...?

They're just dog-paddling there.

TOM

(then)

Can I confess something?

AMY

Uh oh.

TOM

I've never been skinny dipping.
I was the scrawny kid who
wouldn't take off his shorts.

She chuckles. Eases it up.

AMY

Well I was the gawky, freckly
girl who wouldn't even get
invited to the swimming hole.

TOM

Come on, you were a cheerleader.

AMY

I was also in the chess club.

TOM

Big deal. I was in band.

AMY

Lots of people were in band.

TOM
I played the triangle.

AMY
Ouch. You win.
(a chill)
Childhood.

Tom stops. Thinking. Realizing.

TOM
I miss it.

She stops too. But refuses to let the moment drown.
Closes her eyes and --

AMY
Marco...?

Swims toward him -- he doesn't get it --

AMY
Marco...?

He makes senses of it -- dives, escaping --

TOM
Polo...

She rears back, calls out Marco. He eludes, Polo. Back and forth, splashing, even giggling. Until she vanishes under water -- ten seconds, fifteen, twenty...

TOM
... Amy?!

She pops up behind him -- slaps him on the back --

AMY
You're it.

He turns. Face to face. Skin to skin. She swallows down a breath. Eyes suddenly nervous.

AMY
I... Wouldn't've said yes.

TOM
About what?

She refrains. But then has to get it out --

AMY
If he'd gotten off that plane,
I wouldn't've said yes... And I
hate that.

(more)

AMY (cont'd)

(difficult)

We'd had our time. A long time ago, we were kids. But then? I got on with my life, I didn't want to be a country mouse,

(regret)

I couldn't wait to join the big city rat race.

Staring at every decision she's ever made. Right in the face.

AMY

Good friends, great friends, that's what we'd grown into. We'd joked about always being there for each other, worst case, if we got old and nobody else wanted us. But they were...jokes. ... I did still love him. Dammit. But. I wasn't in love with him.

(cracking)

He should've known. He should've known.

(then)

People didn't want turkey legs.

Then the tears come. Streaming down. Sadness. Guilt.

TOM

Amy. You didn't make him get on that plane.

AMY

I know. But I just wish I knew.

He leaves it alone. Quiet, tranquil. Closes his eyes. A long beat. Too long.

TOM

Marco...?

No answer. He nudges her, milks it...

TOM

Marco?

She fights it. But loses.

AMY

(soft)

Polo.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

The dampened nightswimmers settled in. Amy before a crackling fire. Glazed eyes. Tom emerges from the kitchen, a pair of mugs.

TOM
Fire, check. Blankets, check.

AMY
Hot chocolate?

He doesn't answer. Sits down beside her, hands over a mug. Her face goes to stone.

AMY
...Coffee?

TOM
Coffee...

Takes her aback. Pisses her off.

AMY
Please... Don't.

TOM
(gentle)
A plane crashed. He happened to be on it.

She stares into the mug. Worst enemy.

AMY
Because of me.

TOM
But you didn't make it crash.

She doesn't budge.

TOM
You didn't make it crash.

He wraps her hands around the mug. Eases it to his mouth, takes a sip. Eases it to her mouth. Tears run. Ache.

TOM
You didn't make it crash.

She can't do it. But then. Just does. Sips. Swallows it down. Everything.

He holds her. Probably will all night.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - MORNING

Waking to the day, Amy peers out the bay window. Sees Tom up the hill.

THE GREAT OAK

Its protective limbs enveloping him. Seated on one above the ground. Legs dangling.

INT./EXT. CHEVY - TRAVELING - DAY

Sunday drive. Amy at the wheel, more of those country DITTIES. A feeble Tom clutches the windshield, head high in the wind.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Burgers frying in a pan. Box of ostrich meat on the counter. Looking green, Amy gives 'em a flip. Crumpled in a chair, Tom looks on, licks his lips.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Candles and paper plates. After dinner puddings. Drained, he's fallen asleep halfway through his. She just sits. Watching him...

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

A rich, blue sky hangs above the vast field of vines. Below, a lone figure. Dwarfed by the vines like a child. WE DESCEND toward the soil below. Tom in the dirt with Rusty's Flash Gordon. Gaunt and jaundiced. Weak voice. Wielding Flash through the terrain.

TOM

...Dalzar, mutant human hybrid
from the twenty-eighth
century...

And this time, he does add the cool sound effects --

TOM

...CH-CH-CH-CH-CH...

But he runs out of breath. Tired. Tosses Flash to the ground.

TOM

I blew it, huh, Flash?

He would seem to agree. Were it not for his arm,

accusingly pointed yonder. Tom curiously follows its path up a stalk...to the top of a vine...blooming in the flowers...a child's barrette. He moves to it, reaches for it -- only to be struck by another vine -- a pair of sunglasses. Another -- woman's lipstick. Another -- a pocket knife. A bracelet, an address book, a belt buckle...

Every single vine, there's something. Newly hatched, like ornaments on a Christmas tree. Each item, a life... A life missed.

But there is no surprise on Tom's face. Only widening eyes. And understanding.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

A purpose carries him into the kitchen -- Amy, at the stove --

AMY

Hope you're hungry, ostrich omelettes comin' right up.

He unfolds his shirt -- his harvest dumps free to the table.

AMY

(speechless)

-- out -- there??

TOM

All I had to do...was fly to the Dark Mountains...get the stretchy branches. How come I couldn't do that?

AMY

I don't follow.

TOM

This kid. He needed something from me. But I was so concerned with me, the cancer. But I don't think it's about me. It's bigger than that.

(then)

It's for Birdy Banks. Barbara, Rusty Jacobs. The woman with the music. You.

(solace)

The wine. The cure. I think it's for all of you. To take something away from all of this. Something positive. I didn't see it then. But. I do now.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Card stock and envelopes. Tom and Amy addressing invitations with care. She whizzes through as he struggles just to finish one. She can't help but notice. Worry.

AMY

Tom. What if the wine's not ready in time?

TOM

It will be.

So certain. So at peace.

AMY

If they come, what do you think...will happen?

TOM

Whatever's supposed to.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Amy at the mailbox, cramming in every last invitation.

INT. WINERY - DAY

A mason jar filled with the immature wine. Feeble, Tom sits propped in a chair, his voice barely audible.

TOM

Stand back and behold...

Amy watches as his trembling hands crack an egg over a spoon, allowing the whites to drop into the jar. Dirt and sediment attract to the sinking goo like a magnet, cascading to the base.

TOM

Positiv. charge of the egg takes out all the sediment. Four whites per barrel.

He points to a syphon and hose.

TOM

Stir it quick and hard, then you're ready to fill the bottles. One at a time -- cork as ya go and don't let it breath too long--

AMY
I'm never gonna remember all
this.

He stops. Looks her in the eye. Grave.

TOM
You have to.

He need say no more. She knuckles down.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Tom. Eyes closed, head heavy. She puts a spoon of soup to his mouth, feeding him.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Tom at the base of the steps. Beside a patch of wildflowers. Breathing them in. Gazes up at the blue sky. Breathes it in.

But he's shivering. Middle of the day and freezing.

Amy arrives, attempts to shepherd him inside. He won't leave. She thinks...

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Next day. She guides him to the bedroom. Throws open the door to reveal...

His wildflowers and sky. She's painted the wall and ceiling blue, puffy clouds and all; potted the flowers, his own indoor garden.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Tom, on his back. She contracts and extends his legs. Exercising the dormant muscles.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Wet washcloth, fingers running along his naked back. Bathing him.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

In the distance, a caravan. Approaching cars, taxis, buses.

ANGLE - PORCH

Amy, in a dress. Nervously waiting.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Dark. Flowers dead. Tom on his last legs. On the mattress, struggling to breathe. She enters with warmth and smiles, making it look easy. It's not.

AMY

Tom, honey. They've come.
They're here.

He fights to open his eyes, focus on her.

TOM

The wine...?

She hides the truth.

AMY

Don't you worry. No worries
for you.

She runs a hand through his hair. He drifts off again.

INT. WINERY - DAY

She fumbles with a dandelion -- a last test --

Still blue. Damn blue.

Disheartened, she throws it to the floor amidst a dozen others. Walks outside -- the vehicles arriving.

ANGLE - ROAD

Airport charter bus parks. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters disembark... Mrs. Jacobs and Rusty. The boy tossing a football in his hands to avoid the reality... A number of familiar faces -- Sunday Best who brought the birthday music, various others...

SUNDAY BEST

Well I'll be...

Her gaze on the shining vineyard, the farmhouse -- fresh coat of paint, curtains in the windows. Tables with white linen, buffet of food, flowers... Complete transformation. No sign of what once was.

But the focus is diverted by a SCREECH. Mercedes skidding to a stop on the shoulder. Birdy (and Harriet) Banks.

ANGLE - AMY

Watching as these welcome strangers descend upon the land that's caused so much pain. Some wearing the ache like shackles. Some, beyond that, relishing the catharsis. Others, confused and unsure.

She belonging to the latter.

EXT. VINEYARD - A FEW LATER

The group has gathered. Come together, commiserated, shared tears. Amy weaves through with hellos, stands to address them.

AMY

Hello. Hi. My name is Amy Calhoun. Welcome.

She's nervous. Wondering what in the hell she's gotten herself into.

AMY

I want to thank you all for coming. I know this is odd, difficult, I know. I also lost somebody, a dear friend on that flight. On this land. This land where...well, just look at it now. At this amazing life. ... It was Tom Bailey's idea to bring you here.

She swallows, not accustomed to saying the words.

AMY

He's...sick -- maybe later he'll... Well. He wanted to give you all a piece of this land, this life. He worked the soil, he nurtured these vines, he protected them, he harvested their grapes. And he made wine.

(awkward)

Enough for each of you. His first vintage. He'd hoped it'd be ready for today. But I'm -- so sorry. ... It's not.

And it's tearing her apart. Doesn't know what else to say. Looking into each pair of expectant eyes. The Mother whose little girl missed the recital. Blue Collar who couldn't find his wife.

AMY
I'm...sorry -- but at least
we're here and --

BIRDY (O.S.)
What the heck you talkin'
'bout, 'lil lady?

Heads turn to the old eccentric -- emerging from the
winery, bottle in hand --

BIRDY
Darn near the best vino I ever
did taste!

AMY
...Excuse me?

BIRDY
I'm a snoop, cain't help it.

AMY
It's...wine?!

BIRDY
I ain't no connoisseur --

He hands the bottle to a YOUNG WOMAN in a suit. She takes
a hesitant sip. Face lights up.

YOUNG WOMAN
It's...good. Really good.

A buzz befalls the crowd.

CUT TO:

THE WINERY DOORS

burst open -- Amy races to the tapped barrel -- fills up a
beaker -- tastes it --

She's never tasted anything like it. Immediately grabs a
dandelion, tests it -- orange. Bright, beautiful orange.
A miracle.

BIRDY (O.S.)
Red thirty-nine! Red thirty-
nine! Set -- hut -- hut!

All eyes whip curiously to the crazy fool -- now clutching
Rusty's football, dropping back from an imaginary line of
scrimmage -- searches downfield, scrambles -- finds his
man, fires the pigskin -- right over Rusty's head --

...twenty...thirty...forty...fifty yards!

Uh... The crowd utterly dumbstruck by this feat of athletic prowess. Hell, Birdy utterly dumbstruck. Shaking with disbelief, he sprints after the ball, lookin' like a thoroughbred. Picks it up, reloads -- searches for another receiver -- spots the tire swing hanging from the great oak -- thirty yards down -- he fires --

Right through.

He giggles to himself. Can't believe it.

AMY

Birdy...?!

BIRDY

I...feel...him? I swear I feel him. Like he's in me.

(calling out)

Jerr?? Jerry, are ya with me??

Quiet enchantment. The man's face beaming with emotion --

BIRDY

My son...my son...

A tear streaks down his face. So unexpected. So marvelous. Starts laughing through the tears.

BIRDY

Amy... Ya know what I need?

AMY

No, Birdy?

He rushes past --

BIRDY

More a that wine!

He dashes for the winery. The crowd follows, lines up for a taste. MURMURS, WHISPERS, CHUCKLES --

And MUSIC. Sweet strains from the old Steinway. Amy follows the enchanting melody -- at its tired keys, Sunday Best with the birthday sheet music, halfway into a glass, tears streaming down her face. Expertly fingering the piece with beauty and grace.

SUNDAY BEST

It's Chopin.

Amy nods, askance.

SUNDAY BEST

I don't plays the piano. Never have. It's her.

And no music can be complete without dance -- pirouettes and pliés. The proud Mother, bottle in hand. Eyes closed, dancing as only a little girl can. Up on her toes, spinning, leaping. Won't miss her child's recital after all...

MOTHER

My baby, my baby...

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME

Tom's eyes crack open. The MUSIC filling him.

INT. WINERY - SAME

Amy stares as a button-down BUSINESSMAN juggles bottles like an old carny pro... A WOMAN works out an elaborate scientific formula near the winery lab...

FARMHOUSE - PORCH

Tom edges outside, inhaling these lulling notes, these people. And... To his sheer wonder, something else...

WINERY

Sunday Best has an admiring observer seated beside her on the piano bench. HER DAUGHTER. Shrouded by a glowing aura. Heart brimming over. And she's not the only one...

Giggling with delight, another light. The little BALLERINA. A peaceful gaze, watching her mother...

Beyond... JERRY BANKS. The glimmering quarterback has a good laugh as pops lets loose another Hail Mary...

And all the rest. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters...

PORCH

Tom's eyes dance. As only those witnessing heaven and earth can. Tom, the wine cures. Indeed.

WINERY

A CONSERVATIVE WOMAN kicks off her heels to build castles in the dirt, singing a sandbox rhyme... A TEENAGE GIRL approaches Amy with nails in her mouth, hammer in one hand, wine in the other --

TEENAGE

(gruff)

Your foundation's a little warped, mind if I reinforce your support beams?

AMY

Uh...no.

The girl hands her the wine and moves on. Amy stares into the bottle. Bites her lip, dare she? Not another thought -- she swigs it down -- and --

SMASH TO:

COWBOY BOOTS

stepping up the porch. Heels clicking. Arrive behind Tom. A bunch of grapes slide forth --

KANSAS CITY (O.S.)

Want some?

Tom turns, beholds the K.C. Royals cap. After everything, hardly surprised. Just glad to see him.

TOM

Kevin...

KANSAS CITY

Tom... How ya feelin'?

TOM

Minute by minute.

KANSAS CITY

The best way...

TOM

How are you?

KANSAS CITY

Worked out some of the kinks. You should see me. I'm a big hit.

TOM

Yeah?

KANSAS CITY

Oh yeah. Got turkey leg stands on every corner.

A still moment as the wind carries echoes of winery laughter through the land.

TOM

Ya know... You coulda just told me.

KANSAS CITY

Mysterious ways. All that.

TOM

Guess I'll find out soon enough.

KANSAS CITY

Minute by minute, Tom.

Kevin offers his hand. Tom takes it, suddenly light on his feet, almost weightless, as he's escorted down the steps, into the vines.

KANSAS CITY

I wanna thank you for what you've done.

TOM

Nearly lost 'em to the crows.

KANSAS CITY

Not what I mean.

Tom follows his gaze...AMY -- emerging from the winery, bottle in hand. She looks up to the porch. And sees. Goes white. Can't move. Cold shock. Forces her limbs into action -- running -- straight for them -- everything in her --

Tom looks at her, then Kevin --

TOM

She's been hoping for this.

KANSAS CITY

Don't think so...

Tom cocks his head -- just as she rushes for them -- and right past, not even seeing them -- to the porch --

To the body collapsed against the rail. Tom's body. Dead?

In the vines, the Tom with Kevin -- thunderstruck --

AMY

Tom! -- Tom?!

But there's no answer from the lifeless man. Frantic, she sits him up --

AMY

No -- it's ready, sweetheart --
no --

She takes his head, brings the bottle to his lips -- desperate tears --

AMY

It's just like you said -- the
(more)

AMY (cont'd)
 people came -- the wine's
 ready -- drink, drink --
please -- it's your cure too --

Tom reels. His death. Her pain.

TOM
 Oh god -- it's not fair --

Kevin watches. Feeling for these mortals.

TOM
 She doesn't deserve this. She
 can't go through this again.

KANSAS CITY
 She won't have to...

Kevin glances at him. Knowing smile.

KANSAS CITY
 S'good wine. You should try
 some.

He winks and...

ANGLE - PORCH

The body jerks conscious -- cough of wine --

AMY
 Tom??

He shakes out the stars. Swallows the wine.

TOM
 Strong character. Deep
 texture. Rich aroma. Not bad.

His eyes sparkle and she clutches him tight, teeming. He
 clutches her back, everything in him.

Beyond, Kevin. Looking on, teeming himself.

KANSAS CITY
 Well. I got a flight to catch.

But no one hears him. So without another word, he heads
 down the steps. WE FOLLOW his path through the
 crowd...past the vines...and up the hill...where he joins
 them. Brian Jacobs. Jerry Banks. Blue Collar's wife.
 The little ballerina. The pianist. All of them...

A last look. Shining eyes. Joyous smiles.

Kevin pops a grape into his mouth and vanishes into the

crowd. Only the SWEET MELODY from the winery left in his place. And --

Blue Collar emerging from the kitchen in an apron, stirring a bowl of cookie dough --

BLUE

Answer me this. How am I supposed to make snickerdoodles without cinnamon?

Tom and Amy chuckle. She helps him up. But he doesn't need it -- never felt better.

AMY

Are you...?

TOM

God, I think so.

They step into the vineyard, hand in hand -- but are nearly knocked flat over -- a pair of Indian braves racing by -- Rusty and Barbara Jacobs spilling over with bliss, cupping mouths, dancing about. Best of friends, mother and son again.

TOM

Round up the wagons, Agnes -- Apaches!

Tom pulls out his imaginary six shooter and gallops after, unleashing an arsenal of sound effects. But the Indians overwhelm this cowboy -- he takes an arrow to the chest. And this time, he does it right -- clutches his chest and falls to the ground, bleedin' his guts out.

RUSTY

Now I get to scalp ya!

ANGLE - DIRT ROAD

Car pulls up. Two doors open. Mrs. Brooks and Richard. Awestruck eyes ingest the vines. The people. The celebration.

And Tom. On the ground, clutching his chest --

MRS. BROOKS

Mr. Bailey --

RICHARD

Oh lord --

They race across the field -- clear past the crowd -- get to him -- and he's dying. Well, of laughter. Sidesplitting pain from the boy's attack of tickles. He finally gets clear, notices the latecomers.

TOM
Oh, ya made it.

Leaps to his feet, a great big hug to Mrs. Brooks, a firm handshake to Richard. Both speechless.

TOM
What's the matter? You two
look like you've seen a ghost.

He winks to Amy. But they just stare. Doesn't make an ounce of sense.

Tom and Amy lead them into the throng of revelers. Brimming with spirit. In more ways than one. WE RISE AND...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

A year later. Clean and downright livable. New furniture, rugs, knick-knacks...

But no Tom and Amy...

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

Harvest time. Another burgeoning crop. The vines richer and taller than ever before. Baskets line the rows, some full, some empty.

But no Tom and Amy...

INT. WINERY - DAY

Renovated. Looking sharp. Fermentation tank half-full.

But no Tom and Amy...

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A trail of clothes scatter the familiar path.

But no Tom and Amy...

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Splashing and laughter from the pond:

AMY
Marco...

TOM

Polo...

Tom and Amy.

FADE OUT.

THE END.

no?