

THE LOW DWELLER

a screenplay by

Brad Ingelsby

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William Morris

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There is no fade in or prefatory images or beginning credits,
just a --

GRAY FOX

alone in overgrown grassland. Eyes electric against the
darkness, preternatural.

It will be time to set out soon, to hunt and eat and fatten.
But not yet.

THE LOW DWELLER

EXT. SHAGBARK TREE - NIGHT

and there's a pie-eyed man at the base, late twenties, sturdy
and thick-wristed. His eyes are dark brown, but the liquor's
in him and they're barely open now.

This is the low dweller, CHARLIE 'SLIM' HENDRICK.

POLICE SIRENS fill the air. Distant, but encroaching.

There's not a mark on him to explain the blood on his shirt -
it's not his. He stirs a bit as if nudged and his eyes raise.

SLIM'S POV

across the rural dirt road, a weathered farmhouse sits vacant
on the land. An aged 'For Sale' sign peeks above the brown
summer overgrowth. The Gray Fox saunters away.

The SIRENS close in and throw their blue-red lights onto the
trees and the tall grass and finally...Slim.

And then, from the sky, MAYFLIES FALL. In sheets. Weightless,
thin-winged insects.

DEPUTY MULBY NOLAN, late twenties, approaches cautiously with
YOUNG DEPUTY in tow. Guns drawn. Nolan's strapping, virile,
and, at a modest twenty-seven, already earmarked for Sheriff.

DEPUTY NOLAN

Slim. Slim tell me what's goin' on.

YOUNG DEPUTY

Speak up, you sumabitch!

Young Deputy advances on Slim.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEPUTY NOLAN
 (harshly)
 HEY!
 (Young Deputy turns)
 Lemme do this...

Nolan holsters his pistol. Bends down beside Slim.

DEPUTY NOLAN (cont'd)
 Slim. Slim it's Mulby...
 (sees the blood)
 Jesus...what you gone an' done?

He removes his handcuffs and Slim doesn't resist when they're put on. His wearied eyes never leave the farmhouse.

The Mayflies twitch on the ground.

DISSOLVE TO:

A DEAD DOG - MORNING - SUMMER

on the edge of a wheat field. It's not pretty, blood and flesh, like the sun and heat have been at it for days and now the maggots and fleas and buzzards have taken over.

ACROSS THE RURAL HIGHWAY ROAD, through the heat-haze, the high barbed wire perimeter fence of a prison disrupts a cloudless blue sky.

WRITTEN WORDS
*Four years later. 1985. Lowlands.
 Southern Indiana.*

Guards escort Slim towards the gate. They remove the handcuffs and the gates open and Slim steps out, not joyous or doleful, he just steps out and squints from the sun and regards the dog a moment.

INT. ROADSIDE RESTAURANT - MORNING

A RECORD PLAYS ROBERT JOHNSON BLUES and a FAT TRUCKER sits in a corner booth eating runny eggs. The shack is empty less him and a lazy Doberman.

FAT TRUCKER
 -- Trucked ta Missoula. Trucked ta
 Amarillo. Trucked ta Reno an' near
 Puget Sound.

OWNER (O.C.)
 Whatcha sayin', Noah?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FAT TRUCKER

Sayin' I trucked nuff places, nuff
mailboxes...don't need ta be seein'
the world twice when ya' seen it
once already.

BAT-BAT the wooden screen door closes as Slim enters. The
DOBERMAN BARKS and the Fat Trucker looks up.

OWNER (O.C.)

Quit yellin' out, Girdie.

Slim takes a seat at the counter, wipes the sweat from his
forehead and THE DOG BARKS more as it ponders Slim.

From the kitchen, the pot-bellied OWNER steps out, limping
from an ancient injury.

OWNER (cont'd)

Oh quit it now...

Owner pats the dog's ribs and the dog quiets.

OWNER (cont'd)

He don't mean no harm. Big baby's
what he is. Ain't that right,
Girdie? Yeah, big baby...

(to Slim)

What can I do ya' for?

SLIM

Cup a coffee.

Owner hands Slim a menu, fills his mug. Black.

OWNER

Where ya' headed?

SLIM

Easton.

OWNER

Easton? By foot?

(Slim doesn't answer)

Hope you aint in a rush. Got a good
twunny miles a'head. Aint no one
'round ta drive ya'?

Slim considers the Owner and squirms a bit and looks behind
him.

OWNER (cont'd)

No need ta look back here. I know
where you're comin' from.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OWNER (cont'd)

Any man here on foot come from the same place.

SLIM

(beat)

Lemme have some eggs. Swiss and some fried onions. Side a slaw.

Owner limps back into the kitchen. Slim sips his coffee.

OWNER (O.S.)

You got work lined up then?

SLIM

Harvest season. Figure someone'll take me on.

OWNER (O.S.)

I'd say. An' a roof?

SLIM

...Yeah.

OWNER (O.S.)

How long were you in?

SLIM

(tired of the questions)

Forty-seven months an' since you gonna ask next, I killed a guy.

Fat Trucker drops his fork.

OWNER (O.S.)

Now don't get burnt up, fella. I was jus' tryin' ta pass the mornin'.

Slim looks around. The sun-tired dog wags its tongue. Owner returns with the omelet and the slaw. Tops Slim off.

OWNER (cont'd)

You're set up better than most I see. If ya' had a woman I'd say yous comin' out ahead a the game.

Slim don't wanna address it - woman or no woman - so he just leaves it and starts eating the eggs.

Fat Trucker stands, waves to Owner.

OWNER (cont'd)

Leavin', Noah?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FAT TRUCKER

Headed out.

OWNER

You give my friend here a lift?

FAT TRUCKER

Where's he goin'?

OWNER

Easton.

FAT TRUCKER

S'pose I could stop that way.

SLIM

Get along without me.

OWNER

Easton's damn near twunny miles,
fella.

SLIM

I said get along without me.

Slim continues to eat. Doesn't look back.

OWNER

You heard 'im, Noah.

Fat Trucker exits. Owner pats the dog's ribs.

EXT. ROADSIDE RESTAURANT - LATER THAT MORNING

Slim exits the shack and squints from the bedlamite sun and begins walking down the straight, endless road. Toward home.

EXT. RURAL BACKROAD - EARLY EVENING

PURPLE TWILIGHT NOW and Slim is sweating beneath his neck and under his arms and he wears the road's dust. CICADAS BUZZ in the tall grass, rubbing their wings.

A CAR APPROACHES and Slim hides his eyes. Passes a road sign with an outline of Indiana and underneath it, *Welcome To Easton: Home to Welter's Quarry.*

EXT. HENDRICK HOME - NIGHT

Modest. Ranch style. A faded Dodge Aries sits in the loose gravel driveway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Slim ascends the porch steps and walks into the home.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

IT'S DARK but the window allows a hint of moonlight to reveal two figures on a bed. Both nude.

There's a young man, mid-twenties, all knees and elbows with some ink stains of flaming motorcycles and hard-rock homage. This is RAYMOND HENDRICK, Slim's brother.

Beside him, an OBESE GIRL lies on her belly and her ashen, flabby ass is the moon.

THE DOOR OPENS. Slim peers in.

Raymond squints from the sudden hallway light. Stirs.

RAYMOND

Who the fuck's that?

SLIM

...It's me. I'm home.

RAYMOND

(beat)

Shut the door.

Slim takes a moment. Then does. The room darkens.

DISSOLVE TO:

A SPRAWLING WHEAT FIELD - DUSK - ONE MONTH LATER

ROLLING COMBINES in the somnolent, old-gold light. The HARVEST WORKERS, handsome young men, careless and profane, work on the periphery with scythes. Telling tales, talking pussy.

LATER - EVENING

THE SUN HAS FALLEN and the anonymous, sun-wearied WORKERS collect their day's pay from THE OWNER, a round man.

Slim is among them and there's a slight beard coming in on his sunburnt face. He steps up to collect.

SLIM

Like ta ask I might work weekends.

The Owner appraises Slim and he's watched the workers toil and knows who works and who doesn't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE OWNER

We start at dawn then. Hear that?

Slim nods and leaves the line.

INT. HENDRICK HOME - FAMILY ROOM - EVENING

AN OLD TV plays the baseball game behind a layer of fuzz and Slim watches with his feet up.

Raymond enters. Slim sits up, ready to talk, but Raymond breezes right into the hallway and shuts his bedroom door.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - GLOAMING

THE MEN LEAVING FOR THE DAY, faces worn and breathing quiet and bodies ready to sleep like dead ones.

But Slim remains in the field, stooking the wheat, tying bundles, preparing it for threshing.

INT. HENDRICK HOME - KITCHEN - EVENING

Slim enters and Raymond is on the couch, shirtless, watching TV with a beer and cigarette burning. Slim takes off his hat and walks to the refrigerator and removes a pop.

SLIM

I was thinkin' a goin' for a sandwich if you --

RAYMOND

Already ate.

INT. ABERDEEN'S TAVERN - NIGHT

A LABORER'S HANGOUT and there is much talk and all of it liquor-loud. Slim sits in the corner, alone. He quietly eats his hamburger and sips his pop and looks at no one.

EXT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - DAYS LATER - GLOAMING

The home sits, still-vacant, on the land. The very same 'For Sale' sign peeks above the tall grass.

Full-bearded and skin bronze, Slim stands on the porch, feeling the strength of the wood. He lumbers down the steps and approaches his weathered '76 Ford pick-up truck.

EXT. JILLY'S EAT & REST - NIGHT (LATE)

A woeful, dirt-infused establishment.

Owner and local bookie, JOHN O'RILEY, sixties, sits on the front steps, twisting his mustache and spitting sunflower shells and bits stick in his beard and teeth.

The Ford pick-up crawls into the gravel lot, squeaks to a stop. Slim steps out, leaves the car running and the look he gives the fat man lets us know they're not friends.

SLIM

Where's my brother then?

JOHN

'Round back...

John labors to his feet and follows Slim, waddling the way overweight men do. Like ducks.

SLIM

Who did it?

JOHN

Were a few of 'em. Garret Bickson's fists mostly. Got into it over some dame. Busted up his nose first, then went ta work on the rest of him.

They round the corner into the dark shadows --

BEHIND THE RESTAURANT

and glance down at Raymond who's a limp sack of bones on the ground.

John's already winded and PANTING and leans against the wall.

SLIM

An' what were you doin' while they got ta bruising 'im?

JOHN

I aint gonna lie, I watched same as the rest.

SLIM

Yeah same as the rest. The bunch'a yous whoopin' it up, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN

I don't whoop no more over dustups.
Too old. 'Sides, this one a the
more lopsided fights I seen.

Slim bends down, rolls his brother over. His nose is bloodied
and his eyes are blue-black, racoon-ish. If Slim's surprised
by the sight, he doesn't let on.

SLIM

(to himself)
Jesus, Raymond...

JOHN

Gabby cleaned 'im up a bit. He's
got the liquor in 'im. Lil' punk.

SLIM

Watch yourself.

JOHN

No I won't. Not at my own place.
He's a bad seed, Slim.

SLIM

You takin' his bets aint helpin'
that none.

JOHN

He changed when ya' left. You aint
seen it yourself, bein' away, but
ask anyone 'round here. Mention his
name an' some ill story's gonna
follow. That's all.

SLIM

(beat)
...Help me get 'im up.

Slim and John lift the boy and Slim tosses his brother over
his shoulders like a baby calf and walks back toward the
truck. John follows.

JOHN

He's inta me again. Took a horse
name Magellan in the fifth race
over at Pikestead. Cramped up on
the back stretch. Didn't show.

Slim opens the passenger door of the pick-up, lifts Raymond
in. Shuts the door.

SLIM

How much for?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN

Two grand.

SLIM

(beat)

When d'ya need it?

JOHN

Day or two.

SLIM

Could prolly come up with half by then. Not more.

JOHN

Like it all, but...have the kid bring over half if you got to. Got a little smoke showin'. Smells like you're burnin' coolant.

A tiny snake of smoke escapes the truck's hood.

SLIM

Loose cap...

Slim pops the hood and looks into the guts of the vehicle.

GABBY O'RILEY, early thirties, exits the empty restaurant in waitress uniform, eyes brown as oak and a beauty age can only temper, never remove. She bites softly into a peach.

GABBY

(to John)

I'm ready, Dad.

Hearing her voice, Slim turns. Gabby looks up. They share a glance. It simultaneously startles and softens her to see him, but she swallows both emotions and says nothing.

JOHN

Have Slim take ya' back. I've some things ta do inside yet.

GABBY

Dad, the babysitter --

JOHN

Goddamnit, Gabby! I've things ta do inside yet! Aint like he don't know where we live... An' get that one-eyed brother a yours ta take out the garbage.

CRUNCH-CRUNCH Gabby across the gravel and she climbs into the pick-up, ignoring Slim as she does.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The restaurant doors open and John walks back inside.

A BLUE OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS glides into the lot slowly now, almost hauntingly so, carrying two shadowy figures.

BUD DEAKINS, fifties, with eyes that need sleep, steps from the car in a cheap suit. He's balding. Amorphous red birthmarks burden his face and neck. Ugly.

BUD
(to Slim)
Restaurant open, pal?

SLIM
(without turning back)
Don't think. Might be able ta talk
John inta makin' ya a san'wich.
Somethin' cold if it's out.

BUD
Well, I sure hope so.
(looks around, stretches)
Been a long, empty ride.

Inside the car, THE SHADOW OF A FEDORA commands our attention.

INT. OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON TWO GIANT, HARDENED HANDS as they slice into a pepperoni log with a BOXCUTTER and the mouth of a Boxer Dog lifts its head to eat the thin slice.

EXT. JILLY'S EAT & REST - CONTINUOUS

BOOM! The hood of the Ford shuts. Slim climbs into the truck and it grumbles out of the lot.

Bud TAPS on the hood of the Cutlass then crosses to the restaurant.

INT. JILLY'S - BACK OFFICE - NIGHT

SMALL AND CONGESTED. John sits behind his desk and removes his BUSINESS LOG from a drawer. Takes out a pen.

THE DOOR OPENS. Bud enters like a tiptoeing fog.

BUD
How are ya', John-Boy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN
(without looking up)
Fine, I s'pose.

As though ritual, John pulls a thick envelope of cash from a drawer and hands it to Bud. Bud appraises it quickly then tucks it away and paces.

BUD
Anyone else here, John?

JOHN
Jus' me. How are things over East?

BUD
You know how it is being
everybody's dream machine.
(beat)
Richie says your numbers are a
little thin.

JOHN
Always a little thin harvest
season. The heat, I guess. I ain't
skimmin' if that's what you're
implyin'.

BUD
It's been a long, empty ride. How
about you make me one of them
reubens, huh? I remember likin'
that once.

John looks up at Bud and Bud eyes him right back and there's an unease about John suddenly.

INT. RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

CLINK-CLINK Bud drops two coins into the timeworn jukebox and cues LORETTA LYNN who begins to SING of 'the boys' and liquor and lovin'.

JOHN (O.C.)
Extra kraut, Bud?

BUD
Extra extra.

BEHIND THE COUNTER

John removes a few slices of bread, slides butter across them. Bud approaches, takes a stool at the counter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUD
Was sorry to hear about Mare.

JOHN
It's better. She lived with it too long.

Bud lights a cigarette, inhales deliberately.

BUD
Those medical bills, they can't be cheap, huh? All those machines to keep her breathing long as she did, pumping all that through her veins.

JOHN
Ain't so bad.

BUD
Even with all that cancer in her bones? Doesn't seem right...

A stream of smoke leaves the side of Bud's mouth.

BUD (cont'd)
Make that two reubens, John. I imagine Sam's hungry.

John's face goes limp.

JOHN
...Sam's here?

BUD
He came down with me. We made a few collections along the way.

John's fidgety as he cuts the sandwiches and if he was uneasy a second ago, he's skittish as hell now. He glances back at Bud, then inconspicuously SLIDES A STEEL KNIFE UP HIS SLEEVE.

JOHN
So you uh, you said Richie's doin' alright then, huh? He OK?

SIZZLE! the sandwiches against the pan and the hot grease and Bud smiles wryly as he watches John squirm.

BUD
(to John's back)
Make those sandwiches to go, will ya', John?

SSSS! the cigarette is stubbed out as Bud makes for the exit.

CLOSE ON JOHN

sweating as he flips the sandwiches - SIZZLE! against the grease - and he wipes his brow and DING! the entrance bell.

JOHN

We're closed...

There's the PIT-PAT PIT-PAT OF DOG FEET across the linoleum.

JOHN (cont'd)

What word don't ya understand, pal?

John turns and freezes and his face goes white like he's seen a ghost...Bud is gone...but there is the unnaturally tall man in the Fedora

SAM NEBRASKA

seated on a stool in a charcoal suit, the Boxer dog obediently by his feet.

CLOSE ON SAM NEBRASKA'S FACE and the moment we see it we know we'll never forget it. Forties, with eyes like dying embers. His face marred by cavities and a cleft palette the damage of which surgeries couldn't ameliorate.

JOHN (cont'd)

Sam -- you uh --

(swallows)

-- that brother a yours doin' alright...?

John turns back to the sandwiches, removes them from the pan and the hot grease and he's shaking like a leaf and his breaths are quick and fast and he can't think anymore so he PULLS THE KNIFE FROM HIS SLEEVE and whips back to Sam and --

SINK! SAM'S BOXCUTTER INTO JOHN'S NECK and John stumbles back against the counter, WHEEZING HORRIDLY for air.

Sam stands and moves behind the counter as smooth as unwinding smoke.

DING! THE ENTRANCE BELL as Bud enters again and he looks at John holding the hole in his neck and there's blood making trails down his shirt like witch fingers.

BUD

Hear that? Breaths are short and quick. It won't be long now...
Fucking thief.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sam stares at John's eyes as though reading them and when John's eyes raise to look at his killer, Sam softly closes his eyelids...so they won't look at him anymore.

SAM NEBRASKA
(direful)
Come here, girl.

The Boxer dog approaches his ankles and Loretta continues from the jukebox and it's goddamn frightening somehow, as though a lonely ghost were singing from the darkened corner.

INT. FORD PICK-UP (DRIVING) - EVENING

THE WINDOWS ARE DOWN but the car is silent less the WIND and the occasional groan from Raymond.

GABBY
How long have you been back?

SLIM
Few months now.
(a long beat)
'Preciate you straightenin' Raymond
up back there.

Gabby says nothing.

A long, awkward silence.

Raymond FARTS.

Slim smiles and Gabby smiles and when Slim looks over she's staunch again and looks out the window.

The pick-up rocks as it glides onto an unpaved driveway.
Slim shifts into park.

SLIM (cont'd)
I meant to come by --

She exits before he can finish.

He watches out the windshield as she approaches the front steps of the home and takes her son, BEN, six, from the arms of the Babysitter and into hers.

EXT. HENDRICK HOME - NIGHT

The Ford rolls into the driveway. Brake lights.

INT. HENDRICK HOME - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

DARKNESS AND FLICK A LAMP IS TURNED ON as Slim lays his brother down on the brown sofa. An old, sickly labrador - GUNTHER - approaches with companionable gleam and Slim ignores the animal.

He drapes a blanket over Raymond and regards his brother a moment. The weight of guilt is heavy.

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

THE BLUE OLDSMOBILE PARKED IN THE TALL STALKS and Sam takes John's body from the trunk and lays it down on the ground.

Bud leans on the bumper and the Boxer Dog is sniffing around.

BUD

Seem strange to you how many of these things we've been closing lately?

(no answer from Sam)

Guess I'm thinking too much. There's some money sitting in the log. Couple accounts worth sticking around for... There's a whore joint just outside town. Been there once. Fucked a piggy girl named Maryanne or Bethanne. Said she taught school during the week. They keep Bibles on the night stands.

Bud tosses the Boxer a restaurant mint.

SAM NEBRASKA

Don't feed her that...

Sam opens the dog's mouth and fishes out the candy and lets her know it wasn't her fault.

BUD

We get what we can. A little windfall would do me well.

Silence. The stalks are still. Bud pulls out John's BUSINESS LOG and his LIGHTER FLICKS ILLUMINATING A PAGE AND THE NAME ON TOP...Raymond Hendrick.

INT. HENDRICK HOME - BEDROOM

Outside, the CHINK AND CHAFE OF INSECTS and wide awake on the single bed is Slim, sitting in the trapped summer air.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

On the night stand, A PICTURE OF SLIM AND GABBY from a sun-brushed afternoon long forgotten.

FADE TO BLACK.

(O.S.) A PHONE RINGS --

INT. NOLAN HOME - BEDROOM - PREDAWN

THE LIGHT ON THE NIGHT STAND IS FLICKED revealing a bed and MULBY NOLAN. He sits up slowly, COUGHS and answers the phone.

SHERIFF NOLAN

Hello... He didn't call?... I'll get my mother up an' then be over.

He hangs up the phone, wipes the sleep from his eyes. The fleshy NAKED WOMAN beside him, forties, stirs.

NAKED WOMAN

Should I go?

SHERIFF NOLAN

...Yeah.

NAKED WOMAN

I gotta pee first...

She looks at Nolan as if for a kiss or a goodbye. He gives her nothing. She leaves for the bathroom.

From the night stand drawer, Nolan removes and opens a new bottle of bourbon. He sips and we hear the woman PEEING.

In the grey predawn light, he's just over thirty. A functioning alcoholic, he's developed a chronic cough. The five years since we last saw him look like ten and to him they feel like twenty. Somehow, he thought things would be different.

He coughs, loud and deep-lunged. The TOILET FLUSHES.

INT. BATHROOM - EARLY MORNING

Nolan sits on the edge of the tub, bathing his MOTHER, seventies. She is old and so frail and barely cognizant.

MOTHER

I'm tired, Mulby.

SHERIFF NOLAN

Are you takin' your medicine?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOTHER

I don't know.

SHERIFF NOLAN

Lean your head close. Closer now.

She leans and he shampoos the wire hair on her freckled scalp. Then he cups water into his hands and washes it out. The water runs down her face.

MOTHER

My knees hurt.

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

In Sheriff's uniform, Nolan sits at the kitchen table eating a fried egg. Across from him, Mother nibbles toast.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - LATER

Nolan lays his Mother down on the sofa. He turns the TV on for her. A gameshow. Turns it LOUD because she can't hear.

INT. HENDRICK HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

DUSTY SUNLIGHT and Raymond's seated at the kitchen table in a construction t-shirt, drinking a beer and fashioning his toast into a temple, egg yolk as the glue.

Slim enters, pours himself a black coffee, takes a seat at the table. He reaches over, turns his brother's face toward him to appraise the bruises. Raymond resists.

SLIM

(about the beer)

You're lettin' yourself get too used ta that stuff.

RAYMOND

(straightening his temple)

Yeah well, that's the one thing Pop left me with. His thirsty insides.

Raymond takes a piece of bacon from his plate and dangles it over Gunther's mouth. The dog numbly accepts.

SLIM

Don't feed 'im that. No wonder his wires are all messed up.

RAYMOND

He likes it. Right, Gunth?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM

He don't like it. He don't know what it is. He'd eat sawdust if you put it in your palm.

RAYMOND

Walked into the wall the other day. Right into it like nothin' was there. Then he pissed 'imself an' jus' stood right in it. He don't know a fuckin' thing that dog.

SLIM

I'm gonna hafta put 'im down.

RAYMOND

Take him to Doc Callens an' have --

SLIM

I'll do it myself...

(beat)

The hell you doin' puttin' in bets with John O'Riley?

RAYMOND

(sighs)

Christ don't land that on me now, not now. It's too early.

SLIM

How we ever gonna get the farmhouse if you keep --

RAYMOND

Oh there he goes again with that damn farmhouse. He never ends.

Raymond stands, brings his plate to the sink.

RAYMOND (cont'd)

There are two types a people in this world, Slim: those who take and the ones they take from an' when ya gonna see we were born on the wrong side a that line? B'sides, I don't remember ever wantin' that place. That's your dream, not mine.

Slim pulls an envelope of cash - his harvest pay - from his faded jeans and tosses it onto the table.

SLIM

Drop that over to John. That's half what you owe. For now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Raymond considers the envelope. Enraged, he tosses his beer bottle across the room. SMASH!

RAYMOND

GODDAMNIT with that guilt! It's gonna drive me insane -- I swear I'm gonna burst on someone!

After a moment, the air settles and Raymond lights a cigarette and inhales deeply. Releases.

RAYMOND (cont'd)

I was gonna be a nuthin' whether you went in or not. All the brotherin' in the world weren't gonna switch that...

(takes a drag)

Don't kid yourself neither; you were never much to look up to anyhow.

SLIM

...You went wrong someplace.

RAYMOND

I went wrong same place you did. Wherever Mom and Pop met.

(beat, feels the humidity)

I hope we get a breeze today, boy I do. Day just goes when there's a breeze.

Raymond crosses to the table and grabs the cash.

RAYMOND (cont'd)

There's a party tonight. Don't know when I'll be home, don't know that I will.

He exits the home and Slim watches his brother climb into the Dodge Aries and drive away.

INT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER (DRIVING) - MORNING

SUMMER SUN on the windshield as Nolan drives. Outside, something catches his eye and he slows.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Nolan exits the Cruiser and considers a pair of bare feet protruding from a line of shrubs. Clothes are strewn about.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF NOLAN
Brady? That you?

The scrawny legs stir a bit and reveal they belong to the naked body of a young man.

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Brady?

BRADY (O.C.)
...Who the hell's that?

SHERIFF NOLAN
Mulby.

BRADY (O.C.)
...Mulby Nolan?

A RUSTLING and a head peeks out now. This is BRADY O'RILEY, twenty-two, slight and callow with a terribly lazy right eye. He looks up at Nolan. Still drunk, head wobbly.

BRADY (cont'd)
Gonna arrest me?

SHERIFF NOLAN
Hope not.

BRADY
You're just...out patrollin' an' whatnot?

SHERIFF NOLAN
An' whatnot.

Brady looks himself over. Realizes he's nude.

BRADY
...Where the hell am I?

SHERIFF NOLAN
In Mrs. Danamer's shrubs.

BRADY
Well that's one helluva fuckin' prank, aint it? I mean, leave a man alone in a woman's shrubs. Fuckin' amoral what it is. I get my hands on the two bastard cocksuckin' fucks who did this --

As Brady rambles, ELAINE DANAMER, a coy, elderly woman who lives alone, peeks out the front door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELAINE DANAMER

Mulby...?

SHERIFF NOLAN

I'm handlin' it, Mrs. Danamer.

ELAINE DANAMER

I saw his penis.

SHERIFF NOLAN

He'll be covered.

Brady stands. Birth naked.

ELAINE DANAMER

I see it again.

BRADY

Then quit lookin', you old bag! It aint a fuckin' peep show - drop a quarter in you wanna see a dick!

SHERIFF NOLAN

Brady! -- Go back inside, Mrs. Danamer. He'll be covered.

(to Brady)

Put some goddamn clothes on, will ya?! Jesus fuckin' Christ, Brady.

Nolan hands Brady his ten-gallon hat and Brady puts it over his crotch. A passing car slows.

BRADY

T'fuck d'you want?

(lifts the hat)

I'll let ya' kiss it for sixty-five cents!

Elaine shuffles back into the home, watches behind the door.

Nolan begins to gather Brady's clothes from the sidewalk and street - rawhide jacket and cowboy boots.

SHERIFF NOLAN

Get dressed in the car. I'm headed to your place anyhow.

BRADY

You gon' arrest me?

SHERIFF NOLAN

Your dad didn't come home last night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRADY

Hopefully he drowned in a puddle.

Nolan pushes Brady toward the Cruiser.

BRADY (cont'd)

Why don't you never come 'round no more, Sheriff? Never come round to see my sister no more.

Nolan stiffens a bit. Brady climbs inside.

BRADY (cont'd)

Why is that, Sheriff?

Nolan doesn't know the answer. He rounds the hood and HONK! Brady hits the horn, startling Nolan.

Nolan climbs inside and starts the car.

BRADY (cont'd)

You aint gonna tell my sister, are ya'? Bout me yellin' at that woman.

They drive away.

EXT. O'RILEY HOME - MORNING

Gabby waits on the front steps with a coffee.

BEN (O.C.)

One's out.

She turns back, watches Ben inside the home. Dressed in baseball uniform and glove, he tosses a ball to himself.

BEN (cont'd)

(to himself)

Two out. Three's out.

She smiles.

The Sheriff's Cruiser rolls into the driveway. Nolan and a now-dressed Brady exit. Brady stalks into the house without speaking to Gabby. Nolan approaches.

GABBY

Should I even ask about that?

(Nolan shakes his head)

Did I wake you up this morning --

SHERIFF NOLAN

I was up anyhow. You know how I sleep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABBY

I'm prolly just gettin' worked up,
but he didn't come home. Not like
Dad not to call.

SHERIFF NOLAN

He with anyone last night?

GABBY

(reluctant)

Slim came by the restaurant. They
were talking about Raymond.

Nolan considers that a moment - *Slim* - and his thoughts
wander far beyond the case.

INT. O'RILEY HOME - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Brady sits on the stairwell. Nursing a liquor headache, but
listening in.

EXT. O'RILEY HOME - CONTINUOUS

SHERIFF NOLAN

(coming back)

I'll uh, check around. Jilly's then
the OTB. See if he didn't pass out
there.

(sees Ben inside)

First game today?

GABBY

(nods)

Doesn't start 'til eight. I think
he slept in the thing... He loves
that glove. It was nice a you.

SHERIFF NOLAN

They figure him a position?

GABBY

Not yet. Don't think he cares. Just
likes being out there.

SHERIFF NOLAN

Got a good arm. Strong. Third base,
somethin' like that, be good.

A long pause and Nolan watches Ben inside the home and
neither Gabby or Nolan speaks.

GABBY

You look thin, Mulby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF NOLAN

I was on a date with Lorie Peters last night.

GABBY

Oh, Mulby, don't do this again --

SHERIFF NOLAN

It didn't mean nothin', I jus' --

GABBY

I don't care anymore, Mulby, I just...

Nolan COUGHS and COUGHS and wipes the sweat from his forehead and Gabby looks at him like an injured mouse.

SHERIFF NOLAN

I guess I'll be goin'...

He walks back to his Cruiser. Reverses out of the drive.

Gabby sips her coffee.

BEN (O.C.)

Wanna have a catch, Uncle Brady?

BRADY (O.C.)

Nope.

BEN (O.C.)

Why not?

BRADY (O.C.)

'Cause I'm tired that's why not.

THUMP-THUMP-THUMP Brady up the wooden staircase.

GABBY

(beat, calls inside)

Come on outside, sweetie. Mommy'll have a catch with you.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

THE HARVEST WORKERS SPREAD OUT IN THE FIELD and Slim walks alongside a combine with a scythe. The day wanes but he is not tired.

He pauses a moment. Admires the wheat. His gaze finds THE OWNER & HIS SON seated on the front porch. Talking. The Owner slides his arm over his son's shoulder.

Slim returns to work.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DUSK

SLIM WALKING TO HIS PICK-UP and Brady steps out of the Ford wearing a buck-colored cowboy hat and there's a bulge of tobacco in his cheek thick as a softball.

SLIM
(recognizes Brady)
You like sneakin' in people's cars,
kid?

BRADY
It was unlocked.

SLIM
What's that got ta do with
anythin'?

Slim tosses his belongings into the truck bed. Brady follows and, IN A FLASH OF MOTION - CRACK! BRADY'S FIST AGAINST SLIM'S MOUTH and Slim winces and spits out a streak of blood.

BRADY
That's for what you did ta my
sister! Next'll be for what you
done ta my Father you sonofabitch!
He didn't come home last night an'
I know his business, know you was
the last one with him - you an'
that shiteatin' brother a yours!

SLIM
(hunched over)
I left 'im early. Ask your sister.

BRADY
My sister!? You sonofa --

Brady draws his arm back again. Before he can throw a punch, Slim grips his shirt and pins him against the pick-up. Brady writhes --

BRADY (cont'd)
Get the fuck off'a me Motherfucker -
Get off'a me --

But this is man versus boy and he don't got a chance.

SLIM
You do that again an' I ain't gonna
hold my fists back no more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRADY

I bet not. I remember what happened down in Rittsfield...at that bar you crazy sonofabitch.

He lets Brady down.

SLIM

I ain't been that way in a long time.

BRADY

Some things ya' don't lose.

Slim don't wanna hear it and he climbs inside the Ford now and BU-BU-BU-BU-RUMP! the engine kicks.

The truck pulls away and Brady watches it go and there is a look on his face like that of a bullied youth. Hurt.

EXT. RANCH STYLE HOME - EASTON - NIGHT

The front door of the modest home SHOOTs OPEN releasing the SOUNDS OF A HUMBLE PARTY and Raymond shoved out by TWO MEN.

RAYMOND

(drunk)

Oh come on...come on, fellas. I wasn't grabbin' on her none...

They close the door on him.

RAYMOND (cont'd)

Oh come on, Hank... stop foolin'.

(knocks again. Nothing)

Come on, Davie, she was beggin' for it with a skirt like that...

No answer and Raymond moves into the street, lights a cigarette.

RAYMOND (cont'd)

(to himself)

Fuck y'all...cocksuckers...

INT. DODGE ARIES - SAME

SHROUDED IN DARKNESS, Sam Nebraska sits emotionless in the backseat, eyes under his Fedora like candle flames through caverns.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Raymond enters and the light clicks and floods the car momentarily and Sam Nebraska presses his SILVER .45 PISTOL against Raymond's temple. His cigarette sags.

SAM NEBRASKA
(ice cold)
...Drive.

RAYMOND
What i-i-s it you want, fella?

Raymond turns to view Sam and with that Sam reaches over, grabs Raymond's palm and SLICES! ACROSS IT WITH HIS BOXCUTTER. Raymond SCREAMS IN PAIN.

SAM NEBRASKA
Take the back roads...where it's dark...

Raymond is panting now, his eyes straight ahead, blood dripping from his palm onto the steering wheel.

The SENILE ENGINE COUGHS and TURNS and the car pulls away.

VIEW ON THE REAR VIEW MIRROR

as the headlights of the Blue Cutlass emerge from darkness.

INT. HENDRICK HOME - KITCHEN - EVENING

AT THE KITCHEN TABLE Nolan's made himself at home and he pours a little bourbon (the bottle's half empty now) into his coffee and pets Gunther at his feet.

Slim enters and the men appraise one another wordlessly.

SLIM
The long arm of the law...

Gunther leaves Nolan and saunters up to Slim's feet and Slim moves behind the counter and pours himself a coffee.

SHERIFF NOLAN
What happened to your lip?

SLIM
Fell.

SHERIFF NOLAN
I handed you --
(coughs)
handed you the football four --
(coughs louder)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd)
four years in high school an' I
don't recall you fallin' once...

Slim opens the sliding glass door and lets the dog out. He
takes a seat at the table. Away from Mulby.

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd)
Raymond been inta John O'Riley for
any money?

SLIM
Everyone in this town's been inta
John for money. That aint special.

SHERIFF NOLAN
Special now that he's gone missin'.
Man gets in a bind, he thinks a
ways ta get out, that's all. It's
natural.

SLIM
There's a difference between what a
man thinks an' what he does.

SHERIFF NOLAN
That's a thin line you're talkin',
thin as the light around a shade.

Nolan stares at Slim long after the words end. Finally, he
coughs - loud and deep - and when he can't stop, Slim rises
and brings him a glass of water. He sips and it soothes.

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd)
Raymond around? Been in?

SLIM
We aint eleven no more, Mulby, he
don't check in with me. B'sides, he
was here las' night. Found 'im
behind Jilly's in no shape ta be
doin' the things you're askin'.
Those the boys you should be
lookin' for, ones left 'im that
way.

SHERIFF NOLAN
Anyone see ya leave?

SLIM
Gabby rode with us.

SHERIFF NOLAN
(beat)
Things around here aint the same as
when ya' left, Slim.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A long beat. Nolan puts his Sheriff cap back on, stands. Before he leaves --

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd)
Let Raymond know I stopped by.

Nolan exits. The dog TAPS on the glass with its paw. Slim doesn't move.

EXT. EXPANSE - NIGHT

IT'S MADLY, IMPOSSIBLY DARK and CLOSE ON RAYMOND'S FACE --

CRACK! SAM'S GIANT FIST connects with his bloodied and blue and red face. He's down on his knees. Hands bound behind his back. Sobbing like a child.

And CRACK! his head lurches and his lip opens and a blood rivulet leaks down his chin. CRACK!

BUD DEAKINS

sits on the hood of the Cutlass, those odious little eyes counting the money from Cormac's envelope.

BUD
When can you get us the rest of the money, kid? You get it by tomorrow?

RAYMOND
(weakly)
Oh Jesus... Oh God...

SAM NEBRASKA CRACK! and a large gash opens above Raymond's eye and he is delirious, frantic in his helplessness.

RAYMOND (cont'd)
Oh Jesus you fuckers!...
(out of breath)
Oh Jesus God...please just stop...
hitting me...don't hit me...

CRACK! Raymond falls back into the tall yellow grass. Sam pulls him to his knees. CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! Brutal.

BUD (O.C.)
Jesus, Sammy. Take it easy...

Raymond's head wobbles and his eyes narrow and Sam backs away and Raymond falls again into the grass.

CLOSE ON RAYMOND'S BEATEN FACE

His eyes remain open but aloof and his breaths are short and quick and...slowly...*WHOOF*...life leaves his body in a tiny exhale. *Things end quietly without notice.*

Bud approaches, reaches down for a pulse. Nothing. He turns back to Sam, indifferently.

BUD

That's all...

Bud removes Raymond's wallet, takes out a few dollars cash.

Sam Nebraska bends down and regards Raymond a moment - his youthful face. Finally, he closes the kid's eyelids.

SAM NEBRASKA

Come here, girl...

Sam stands and is joined by the Boxer Dog.

From the sky, *MAYFLIES FALL*. Hitting the ground without so much as a sound.

BUD

(looking around)

What the...hell...

Bud swats the flies away and Sam Nebraska just lets them fall. They twitch on his Fedora and shoulders and when they've all fallen...silence.

BUD (cont'd)

...Fuckin' bugs.

They enter the Cutlass and the engine kicks and the wipers streak the Mayflies across the windshield. Brown-yellow.

EXT. TOWNSHIP BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

The Sheriff's Cruiser sits on the dirt shoulder just beyond the outfield wall.

INT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

Nolan watches Ben, bored in right field. The bottle of bourbon is nearly empty and he pours the final sips into his coffee. His eyes find Gabby in the bleachers.

A LINE DRIVE caroms sharply into right field.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MULBY
 (to himself)
 OK, handle it first, then find the
 relay.

Ben adroitly scoops it up. Tosses it to the 2nd baseman.

MULBY (cont'd)
 At-a-way. Saved a base there. Now
 get set again. Case it comes back.

He drinks.

INT. OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS (DRIVING) - LATER

THE NIGHT SKY CAVERNOUS AND THE STARS HAVE DIED as Bud and
 Sam drive. The Boxer Dog sleeps in the backseat.

The CAR SHAKES.

BUD
 Goddamn belt. I need to get this
 thing inspected. Tags are up.

Bud hands Sam his share of the money.

BUD (cont'd)
 Let's see about that whore joint...
 They got Bibles on the night
 stands.

Sam Nebraska doesn't say a single word.

INT. HENDRICK HOME - KITCHEN - SAME

WIDE AWAKE, Slim with a mug of black coffee, waiting up for
 his brother to return home.

FADE OUT.

EXT. EXPANSE - DAWN

Beleaguered by tall grass and forest, the Dodge Aries sits
 like a stranger in an alien land. The humidity heavies the
 air and there is the sound of a LABORING WOODPECKER.

RAYMOND'S FACE

in the grass and the blood has dried and cracked and his
 cheek is pressed against the ground as a dead Mayfly rests on
 his head.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - SAME

A POLICE CRUISER glides past the expanse. BRAKES SQUEAL and wheels slide, shooting up a dirt cloud.

EXT. EXPANSE - LATER THAT MORNING

A COMMOTION NOW as POLICE CRUISERS and DEPUTIES surround the scene. A young deputy, DEPUTY BOGWIGGIN, is there, sweating after having just thrown-up.

Standing over the body, an OLDER DEPUTY pinches the wings of the Mayfly and removes it from Raymond's forehead and regards the insect.

OLDER DEPUTY

(to Bowiggin)

Helluva way ta live, huh? The Mayfly. Their mouths don't work. Can't eat. Usually live less than a day. Imagine tryin' ta squeeze a life into a day.

The SHERIFF'S CRUISER arrives. Nolan steps from the car having already received the news. He bends down to Raymond's level, considers the body.

DEPUTY BOWIGGIN

Who the hell'd do a thing like that, Mulby?

SHERIFF NOLAN

There's jus' an evil in this world.
(a long beat)
Anyone tell the family?

OLDER DEPUTY

Not yet.

THE SKY IMPLODES. It begins to rain heavily.

EXT. HENDRICK HOME - AFTERNOON

From a distance, the side of the house. Rain percusses the aluminum awning above the side entrance where Slim sits.

Gunther prowls the front yard, sniffing tufts of weeds.

The Sheriff's Cruiser idles to a stop. Nolan steps out and approaches Slim slowly with the news.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRIEST (V.O.)

*This other son of yours wasted your
money on bad women.*

And in seconds it's all been said.

CLOSE ON SLIM

listening to Nolan, but not at all. There's a vacancy in his eyes.

INT. SAINTS PETER & PAUL CHURCH - AFTERNOON

A PRIEST recites the Bible passage from the podium. An urn sits at the altar.

PRIEST

*And now that he has come home, you
ordered the best calf to be killed
for feast.*

Nolan and Gabby are there, separately. Nolan watches Slim.

No one among the small number of MOURNERS is crying. Their presence is perfunctory: a town member died. All except --

SLIM

his eyes are wet and burning.

EXT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - EVENING (DUSK)

THE SUN WANING AND THE SKY ORANGE as Slim scatters his brother's ashes over the land.

PRIEST (V.O.)

*His Father replied, 'My son, you
are always with me, and everything
I have is yours.'*

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Slim lying in bed and the air is heavy in the room and he won't be falling asleep soon.

PRIEST (V.O.)

*But we should be glad and
celebrate... Your brother was dead
but he is now alive.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

So he rises and exits into the --

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

and peers into Raymond's empty bedroom. Stark. Nothingness.

PRIEST (V.O.)
*He was lost and has now been
 found.'*

Outside the window, MAYFLIES FALL IN DROVES, touching the earth as soft as baby steps.

INT. BASEMENT - MINUTES LATER

A LIGHT STRING AND A HAND PULLS DOWN ON IT and lights floods the unfinished basement revealing Slim.

He moves to a corner where a mounted oak gun rack hosts a 12 GAUGE SHOTGUN with silver side plates. He removes the gun.

ON SLIM'S HANDS

hardened, feeling the weight and texture of the gun.
 Remembering.

FADE TO BLACK.

(O.S.) THE SOUND OF WIND SWIRLING THROUGH CAR WINDOWS and --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT./EXT. FORD PICK-UP - NIGHT

Slim drives through the night. Windows down. Night black.

EXT. COSMIC BURGER - NIGHT

A throw-back to the 50's burger pits. Waitresses tend to customers car-side.

Brady eats on a bench, eyes watching the teenagers mingle with a hue of jealousy over things never had.

TEENAGER
 T'fuck's wrong with your eye, man?

LAUGHS FROM THE KIDS and one makes a screwy face meant to resemble Brady. Brady's head sinks and he wishes he could just disappear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly, SLIM'S HAND YANKS BRADY UP by the collar --

BRADY

What the...

(looks back, sees Slim)

The hell's this about!? Huh!?

SLIM

You know your Father's business?

BRADY

I aint finished eatin'!

Slim considers that, pauses.

SLIM

Get your sandwich... Go on dammnit!

BRADY

I don't want it no more. You upset
my stomach, you asshole!

And Slim drags Brady to the Ford and opens the passenger door and throws him inside. Brady opens the door to climb out. Slim slams it shut.

EXT. O'RILEY HOME - NIGHT

The Ford pick-up parked by the curb.

INT. FORD PICK-UP - CONTINUOUS

SLIM ALONE and now Brady enters and closes the door behind him. He hands Slim a sheet of paper. Slim eyes it.

BRADY

Collector named Cullen Meanan. Used
ta work for Dad. Big, sloppy, three-
hunnerd pounds - only thing he knew
how to do was eat. I didn't care
for 'im much. Liked rubbing
everyone's nose in their own shit.
Figured he'd know somethin'.

SLIM

This the only name you got?

BRADY

Well shit, I don't see you bringin'
nothin'.

SLIM

I don't know nothin'.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Slim starts the car and hastily reverses.

BRADY

You goin' now!? He lives all the way over in Egan Valley for chrissakes!

SLIM

You got somewhere else ta be?
(Brady doesn't)
Then put your head against that window an' get some sleep.

Slim shifts the truck into drive. It barrels down the road.

CUT TO:

A RESTAURANT SIGN - EGAN VALLEY - EARLY MORNING

ZINDEL'S DINER and just below it a sign announces, *Today's Special: Eggs - Runny, Over-Easy, Scrambled, Poached, Fried. \$2.95 w/sausage patties.*

PAN TO REVEAL -- the Ford pick-up in the parking lot.

EXT. FORD PICK-UP - CONTINUOUS

Slim watches the outside. Hasn't slept. Brady's asleep, head against the window, drool dripping onto his shirt.

Slim sees something. Nudges Brady.

SLIM

That him?

Brady stirs, wipes the drool from his face. Looks.

BRADY

Yeah...that's him...

Slim reaches behind his seat and grabs the Winchester.

EXT. GRAVEL LOT - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON A THICK SILVER BELT BUCKLE OF A CONFEDERATE FLAG and the fold of a fat man's gut hangs over the belt as he walks.

The gut belongs to the truculent CULLEN MEANAN, mid-thirties, on his way to his car. He pinches the ass of his homely girlfriend, DIANA, twenties.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIANA

Stop it, baby! I just ate. You'll
make me pee my pants. Gosh...

Nearby, Slim and Brady exit the Ford pick-up and approach
Cullen. Slim holds the Winchester tight to his side.

BRADY

Cullen. Remember me? Brady O'Riley.

CULLEN MEANAN

(without stopping)

Nope...

BRADY

I got a question.

CULLEN MEANAN

Well I ain't got time ta answer
questions from people I don't know.
The lady an' me planned a mornin'
of debauchery.

Brady jogs to catch up.

BRADY

Jus' slow down there, fat-body,
will ya?

CULLEN MEANAN

(turns back sharply)

T'fuck you jus' call me?

SLIM

We got a question's all.

CULLEN MEANAN

(to Slim)

Who you a'pose ta be? I asked the
boy a question. Let him answer on
his own.

(back to Brady)

What'd you jus' call me, crazy eye?

BRADY

Fat body...?

CULLEN MEANAN

That right? I assume that's some
kinda gag on my weight, huh?

DIANA

I'd say it was, baby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And with that Cullen's hand is at Brady's throat, SLAMMING HIM AGAINST A CAR. Slim raises the shotgun from his side, levels it at Cullen --

SLIM
Get off'a him, Mister...

CULLEN MEANAN
(turns to Slim,
incredulous)
What the - you - you sonsabitches
came ta shoot me!? AT BREAKFAST!?
I got a belly a eggs an' ham!

SLIM
Now we didn't plan --

BA-WHOOMP! Cullen drills Slim in the gut. Slim doubles over and Cullen SMASHES his fist into his ear.

Diana is CUSSING --

DIANA
You goddamn no good lil' dick
bastards! --

-- AND THRASHING HER PURSE at Brady.

Cullen RIPS the shotgun from Slim, SLAMS it against the pavement, warping it.

CULLEN MEANAN
Fat body, huh!? That what you
a'holes said!? My woman likes me
big an' healthy!

Slim's bent over, cringing, his ear a cauliflower and Diana is DRUBBING HIM NOW --

DIANA
You fuckin' bastards tryin' ta hit
my man - you don't EVER hit my man!

CULLEN MEANAN
(laughing)
Tell 'em, Di-girl!

And then, mid-swing, Slim grabs Di-girl's purse and pulls it to him. She lunges forward and CRACK! his fist meets her nose. She SCREAMS IN PAIN!

Before Cullen can react, Slim shoots up, takes a revolver from his jeans and sticks it under his meaty chin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM

Move an' I'll blow this wattle
right through your fuckin' neck.

CULLEN MEANAN

...You jus' struck a woman you no-
good coward.

SLIM

No I just struck your woman an'
she's lucky that's all I did...
We're lookin' for the men who
killed my brother. Men we assume
killed John O'Riley, too.

Brady dabs his bloodied nose with a handkerchief.

BRADY

My nose is bleedin', Slim.

SLIM

(without looking back)

Lean your head back.

(to Cullen)

Why don't I just figure it was you
an' blow off that fat-shit head a
yours?

CULLEN MEANAN

'Cause I never collected from John
O'Riley. I collected for 'im... An'
I don't collect no more.

SLIM

(pulls the hammer down)

You're talkin' nothin' but wind.

CULLEN MEANAN

I aint collected in two years. Got
a landscapin' biz'ness over in
Atland.

Cullen points to a shiny white pick-up truck in the parking
lot. The arborvitae logo of *C & V Landscaping* on the side.

Slim looks back at Brady. Disappointed in this lead.

SLIM

Who collected from John then?

Diana struggles to her feet. Slim pushes her back down with
the heel of his boot.

SLIM (cont'd)

You better answer, fat body.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CULLEN MEANAN

I don't fucking know, OK? And you goddamn fuckin' cowards can kiss my fat, FAT BODY ASS! There! How's that!? Fuckin' pricks...

In an instant Slim DRILLS Cullen in his tubby belly and then CRACKS! him across his face and Cullen is bent over moaning and blood is pouring from his broken nose...

Slim aims the revolver and BANG! BANG! BANG! the windshield of the white landscaping pick-up is a cobweb and he shoves the hot gun back under Cullen's double chin and his eyes are full of wild light.

CULLEN MEANAN (cont'd)

OK-OK-OK! Crazy bastard!

And that is the black-eyed dog inside Slim, the hell fire behind his eyes.

CULLEN MEANAN (cont'd)

I-I used ta know a guy named Terry Adams. He would come down and collect from me on occasion.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DIRT SHOULDER - EARLY AFTERNOON

THE FORD is pulled over. Slim pukes on the dirt. Inside the car Brady dabs his nose with a blood-drenched handkerchief.

SLIM (V.O.)

Where can we find 'im?

Slim makes for the car, pauses, pukes again.

CULLEN MEANAN (V.O.)

Last I heard he was livin' in Ohio...some little town. Bowenburg or Bowentown or...Bowenville.

EXT. SHANTY - FAR OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - AFTERNOON

The tiny home stands alone on a gravel back-road. Just it and the birds. A PACKAGE lies outside the front door.

CLOSE ON THE PACKAGE

JONAH FINN, ANTIQUE GUN REPAIR, 13 Embrook Road, Cedarton, Indiana.

The door opens and a hand brings it inside.

INT. SHANTY - AFTERNOON

JONAH FINN, sixties, at his unkempt work station under a desk light and he slowly takes apart a Smith & Wesson .45 Triplelock Revolver, readying it for repair.

He's a man built solid as oak possessing a handsomeness marred only by the droop and hue of age.

JONAH'S HANDS

shaking as he disassembles the revolver. The barrel. The cylinder. The gate catch. The grip. The frame. The backstrap. The hammer.

He holds the cylinder up. Squints as he appraises it.

JONAH

Rusted bitch...

The room is suddenly flooded with light and Jonah looks to the door and there is Slim with the busted-up shotgun.

Jonah smiles, removes the tattered cigarillo from his mouth.

JONAH (cont'd)

Well I'll be...

INT. SHANTY - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

SILENCE among Slim and Jonah at the square kitchen table. Their eyes are focused outside on LEENY FINN, Jonah's daughter, eighteen and deaf. She picks daffodils, watches her three-legged rabbit roam.

JONAH

Jesus Christ. He was my Godson. I remember the day he was born. Your Father an' me sat on the roof.

(beat)

How they done it?

SLIM

Beat 'im.

That makes Jonah so sick he can't speak. Finally --

JONAH

Know who it was?

SLIM

I aim ta find out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH
...I'll see what I got.

(O.S.) BOOM! BOOM!

EXT. SHANTY - BACKYARD - DUSK

ON A LINE OF HANDMADE VASES PERCHED ON A TREE LIMB and BOOM!
a shot is fired. The vases don't move. BOOM! Nothing.

SLIM AND JONAH STAND AT A DISTANCE, Jonah with a revolver,
taking aim, his hands shaking wildly.

SLIM
Alright there?

JONAH
Fine...caught a chill's all.

Jonah steadies himself and - BOOM! - a FAMILY OF BIRDS FLEE
an Ash tree above the thin stream.

JONAH (cont'd)
(takes the cigarillo from
his mouth)
Goddamnit!

Slim turns back. Leeny watches from the yard, skeptical of
both the shooting and Slim.

SLIM
(about the vases)
You're certain Leeny don't want 'em
no more?

JONAH
Don't matter. We ain't hittin'
nuthin' but tadpoles anyhow...

Slim takes the gun, aims and BOOM! A SPLURT! as the bullet
hits the stream and the Mallards flee.

JONAH (cont'd)
Shit, that wasn't even close, Slim.

SLIM
And yours? Bit rusty's all.
(off Jonah's skeptical
look)
...that's all it is...

JONAH
Hand me that other one, will ya'?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Slim hands Jonah a WINCHESTER MODEL 21 SHOTGUN from the bevy of antique firearms Jonah's gathered.

JONAH (cont'd)
This here's my baby. Beavertail
forearm. Still got the paperwork.

Jonah narrows his eyes and - BA-WOOM! - the Winchester explodes and A VASE SHATTERS.

JONAH (cont'd)
Oh I remember now...yeah...
(offers Slim the gun)
You take that...

SLIM
You got somethin' newer?

JONAH
Ah 'new' don't mean nothin'. The
Colts'll do us just fine.

SLIM
Us?

EXT. SHANTY - MOMENTS LATER

Slim exiting the backyard, approaching the pick-up. Jonah struggles to keep pace, pleading.

JONAH
-- Oh come on, Slim. I need ta get
out on the road.

SLIM
You seem like you're keepin' busy.

JONAH
Busy!? Only thing I do is watch
the grass grow an' mallards fuck!

SLIM
I can't do it, Jonah. Not ta Leeny.

JONAH
Oh hell! I ain't seen a whip a
action since Korea an' with them
closin' the mine...

Slim climbs into his pick-up, starts the car.

JONAH (cont'd)
Goddamnit, Slim!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The pick-up reverses.

JONAH (cont'd)
(calls to him)
I'M DYIN'!

A beat. The comment hangs heavily in the air. The Ford glides back up, stops beside Jonah.

SLIM
That's a helluva prank.

JONAH
No prank. Got asbestos in my lungs.
All those years minin' it.
Breathin' in poison. Doctors say I
aint got too long. I'm gatherin'
dust here. There's no dignity in
that.

SLIM
(considering)
What about Leeny?

JONAH
She gets along fine. Takes care a
herself better than I do...

And on Jonah's face is a man who doesn't want to die in bed.

SLIM
OK...

JONAH
OK what?

SLIM
We leave tomorra.

Slim reverses again. Jonah watches him and the slightest hint of a smile slowly curls on his face.

INT. HENDRICK HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

HEAVY RAIN AGAINST THE WINDOW and, on the stove, Slim starts heat under a teapot.

(O.S.) THE SCREECH OF TIRES.

He moves to the front door. OUTSIDE, Gabby steps from her Buick with purpose, ignoring the mailbox she knocked over.

SLIM
Shit...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Slim runs back to the kitchen, shuts off the lights, then - CLING-CLANG-CLINK he knocks over some pots.

SLIM (cont'd)
Fuck. Goddamnit...

Quiet.

A KNOCK. Nothing. Another KNOCK.

GABBY (O.S.)
I know you're in there, Charlie. I saw the light on when I pulled in!
(beat)
It's rainin' like hell, Charlie!

Slim doesn't move.

EXT. HENDRICK HOME - CONTINUOUS

Gabby in the pouring rain, roaming the house, peering in windows.

GABBY
I know what you're doin', Charlie!
They'll send ya back ta jail an' I don't care - I really don't - but I won't let you take Brady. Oh would you open the door you coward!
(beat)
They'll send ya back ta jail, Charlie!

The thought settles on her and she begins to cry and somehow this isn't about Brady at all. The rain falls on her head, fast and hard.

Slim opens the door slowly and holds a section of newspaper over her head.

SLIM
Jus' come inside will ya'...

She allows herself to be close against his body for a moment. Then she SLAPS! him across the face. Hard. His eyes fall.

GABBY
You ruined what we had but I won't let you take Brady. He's just a kid and I won't let you take him...

She takes a moment to compose herself, clears her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He watches her walk away and climb into the running Buick and we see Ben in the passenger seat.

(O.S.) THE TEAPOT WHISTLES and he doesn't think to remove it.

EXT. CORNFIELD - PREDAWN

THE SKY IS BLUE-PURPLE and an ELDERLY FARMER walks alongside his Hound Dog. The man's pipe smokes white. He pauses. Looks down at the insect-ridden body of John O'Riley.

The Hound Dog sniffs and the Elderly Farmer stares emotionless, like it were a squirrel.

EXT. HENDRICK HOME - BACKYARD - MORNING

CLOSE ON A BOWL OF DOG FOOD and Gunther eating lethargically.

The Winchester approaches the dog's head...against his skull...Slim stands over the animal...aims...narrows his eye...finger finds the trigger...

...but he can't do it. He lets the gun down.

SLIM

Shit. Goddamn you, Gunth...

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Slim moves to the Ford, tosses a duffle bag into the flatbed, notices the DEPUTY CRUISER spying him from across the street.

EXT. SHANTY - MORNING

JONAH AND LEENY wait on the front porch. Quiet.

The Ford enters the driveway. Leeny hands Jonah a bagged lunch she's packed for him. He stands and walks away and she watches as he enters the truck and watches still as it disappears down the road.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - LATER THAT MORNING

The Sheriff's Cruiser parked just before the train tracks, blocking passage. Nolan's outside, back against the car.

The Ford pick-up approaches, slows to a stop. Slim exits.

SHERIFF NOLAN

Headed outta town someplace?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM

You stoppin' me if I am?

SHERIFF NOLAN

You aint done nothin' wrong yet,
have ya?... We got leads on John's
business we're lookin' into --

SLIM

Oh cut it, will ya', Mulby!? Just
stand there an' watch 'til this
truck vanishes over that road an'
then you can run to her...jus' like
ya did the last time.

SHERIFF NOLAN

She came to me the last time.

SLIM GRIPS NOLAN'S SHIRT, pushes him back against the
Cruiser. Their faces just inches apart.

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd)

It's on you, Slim. You went in. You
left her.

SLIM

An' if I didn't go in?

Nolan won't answer that.

SLIM (cont'd)

Goddamn you, Mulby...anyone but
you...

Jonah steps from the truck. Slowly in his age.

JONAH

Take it easy now, Slim. Go easy.

He gently pulls Slim off of Nolan.

SLIM

It don't matter no more...she don't
want neither of us.

Slim and Jonah climb back into the pick-up and Nolan watches
the car vanish. Alone.

INT. FORD TRUCK (DRIVING) - MOMENTS LATER

THE FERTILE WIND SWIRLS THROUGH THE CAR and Jonah opens the
lunch bag Leeny's provided, bites into a pastrami sandwich.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

Wanna tell me what that was about?

Slim doesn't.

JONAH (cont'd)

I tell you 'bout the time Slow Joe Paulson an' me went up ta Hunt's Point with two blondes that aint never been had yet?

(Slim doesn't answer)

Well fuck you then. I'm tellin' it anyway. Live with jus' a woman long enough, man gets the need ta tell ol' yarns. 'Bout cock an' pussy. Bout bein' young an' uneasy. 'Bout men.

Jonah doesn't like the sandwich. Tosses it out the window. Lights a cigarillo now and that tastes good. He settles in.

JONAH (cont'd)

Carly O'Malley had tits bigger an' puppies an' a pussy softer than mohair. Joe Paulson had a curse. Genetic. His pilly-packer weren't no bigger than a caterpillar...

EXT. HIGHWAY REST STOP - AFTERNOON

Slim gasses the Ford. Jonah emerges from the shop, swigs a fresh pint bottle of whiskey, lets it tarry in his mouth.

JONAH

I do miss that taste...

A FREIGHT TRUCK GLIDES IN and Brady hops out with a knapsack, watery-eyed.

BRADY

Didn't think you dizzy bastards was goin' without me, did ya'?

JONAH

Who you a'pose ta be?

SLIM

Christ, Brady...

JONAH

(to Slim)

You know 'im?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM
Gabby's brother...

BRADY
Been on you two since you left
Gulchwood.
(wipes his tears)
Found my Pop this mornin'. Deke
Casey's field. Goddamn asshole's
dead. Bastard sonofabitch.

Brady can't hold it together and his stomach heaves.

Slim looks at Jonah who's already looking at him and neither
knows what to say so Jonah offers up his whiskey.

JONAH
Take some a that back.

BRADY
NO!

JONAH
Oh hush, will ya'? I'm standin'
right next ta ya'.

Brady abides. Swigs. Coughs.

JONAH (cont'd)
Feel better?

BRADY
Hell no, Mister!

SLIM
Take it back slow for chrissakes.
You're burnin' your throat.

Brady takes some more back. Slower this time. Doesn't cough.

INT./EXT. FORD PICK-UP - LATE AFTERNOON

Slim, Jonah and Brady driving along the country highway,
fields of wheat unfolding behind them, and passing a road
sign now: *Bowenville - 35 Miles.*

EXT. MAIN STREET - BOWNENVILLE, OHIO - EARLY EVENING

If time moved past the 1960's, no one told the store owners.

The Ford pick-up crawls down the road and parks outside a
hamburger joint, *Archibald's.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brady steps out. Enters the restaurant.

INT. FORD PICK-UP - SOME MINUTES LATER

Slim and Jonah wait.

JONAH
-- the hell's he doin' in there?
Waitin' tables?

SLIM
Here he comes.

Brady enters the car, licking a tall, strawberry ice cream cone. He says nothing. Slim and Jonah stare at him.

JONAH
Well...?

BRADY
Well what?

SLIM
You get an address?

BRADY
No one knows Terry Adams.

JONAH
(beat)
All them people in there an' you're
tellin' me not one knows a name?

BRADY
Yeah that's what I'm tellin' ya'.

JONAH
Watch yourself, kid. I don't know
you well 'nuff.

CLUNK - Slim opens the door and exits and Jonah opens his door and gives Brady an earnest stare before leaving.

INT. ARCHIBALD'S - EVENING

A MODEST CROWD fills the space and it's Friday night so the JUKEBOX PLAYS a little louder.

DING! Slim and Jonah enter and Slim removes his baseball cap. Eyes take them in with a hue of xenophobia, then quickly return to conversations and burgers and pop.

They approach the counter where a THIN MAN cleans the grille.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM
Excuse me, sir.

THIN MAN
(without turning back)
Menus on the counter.

SLIM
Wondered if you might help us.
Lookin' for an old friend.

THIN MAN
(turns now)
Which old friend's that?

SLIM
Terry Adams.

Thin Man smirks and approaches the counter.

THIN MAN
I didn't know him ten seconds ago
when your friend asked and I don't
know him now.

JONAH
Seem an awful small town not to
know someone.

THIN MAN
If it's so small, Old Dog, you go
find 'im.

PATRONS CHUCKLE at the counter and the man in Jonah's been
hurt a bit, made feel small.

Thin Man retreats.

THIN MAN (cont'd)
(to a Waitress)
I'm gonna fill the bathroom paper.

EXT. ARCHIBALD'S - MOMENTS LATER

DING! Slim and Jonah exit and Slim moves to the Ford but
Jonah's got other plans and veers.

INT. BATHROOM - ARCHIBALD'S - EVENING

Thin Man refills the toilet paper roll inside a bathroom
stall when - BOOM! --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE DOOR'S KICKED OPEN BY JONAH'S HEEL and he grabs the Thin Man and shoves his head down, inches from the toilet water.

JONAH

Got a memory of 'im now? He come in lickin' ice cream cones?

Slim appears now and says nothing. Goes over and locks the bathroom door.

THIN MAN

(struggling)

I yell an' everyone a them customers come in an' beat your asses rotten --

KNOCK! Jonah elbows Thin Man on his skull and covers his mouth with his hand.

Jonah looks down at the toilet water. Clean. Been flushed.

JONAH

There piss an' shit in one a them, Slim?

Slim looks into the neighboring stall.

SLIM

Both.

Jonah YANKS the Thin Man up, drags him next door, shoves his head down into that toilet. It's filled with brown water, piss and sloppy wet shit.

Thin Man resists with all his might and his neck veins are showing and his face is a furnace, but his head's moving closer to the shit water...still...closer...

...finally, HE SHAKES HIS HEAD FURIOUSLY.

Jonah freezes. Releases his hand.

JONAH

Say it.

THIN MAN

He runs a movie theater. Drive-in off'a Duncan Road.

SLIM

We aint from around here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THIN MAN

Two miles up. Third stop make a right. Take it til you see the lights.

Jonah relents and A SPASM OF PAIN RUNS THROUGH HIM and he cringes in pain and collapses against the stall door and clutches his chest.

Thin Man falls back as well, too tired to yell or fight.

EXT. ARCHIBALD'S - EVENING

CAREFULLY, Slim aids the ailing Jonah into the pick-up. He is an old vase.

CUT TO:

EXT. CROSSROADS DRIVE-IN - NIGHT

BUT OUR VIEW'S FAR, FAR AWAY and the screen is just a tiny rectangle of light in the middle of no man's land.

Slim's truck is a speck crawling down the dirt entrance road.

EXT. TICKET BOOTH - NIGHT

WITH A SIGN, *Tonight: Stand By Me. Family's - \$8.*

Inside the thin booth, an ASIAN WOMAN cradles her NEWBORN while she watches the picture.

THE MOVIE SCREEN

is wide and *Stand By Me* plays and the hairless fatso Vern Tessio is panting and crying as a locomotive is about to ram up his ass.

THE CONCESSION STAND

under yellow lights, a PURE-FACED GIRL eats caramel popcorn and reads a magazine about what makes a boyfriend good.

THE HOOD OF A CHEVROLET

reflects the blue of the movie screen and behind it a young couple necks. HE reaches up, palms her breast. SHE resists.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHE

Wait.

HE

What is it?

SHE

Your hands are cold.

She smiles, rubs his hands. To warm them to touch her.

PAN ACROSS the line of domestic cars, the patrons, and we see the passengers - some old, some young, some families and some lovers. Popcorn and soda and goobers and gummies.

Finally, we pause at the Ford. Inside are Brady and Jonah. Jonah is tired, eyes fading. Brady eats chocolate raisins.

BRADY

How the hell they gonna outrun a train? I mean, a train comin' on like that. It aint believable. Bullshit what it is.

Brady adjusts the speaker so he can hear better.

JONAH

Turn that thing down.

SLIM

walks the dirt grounds between cars. He crosses now to the rear of the lot, toward the wooden shed that is the projection room.

He pauses outside the door, tucks his revolver into the waist of his jeans.

KNOCKS. Waits.

PROJECTIONIST

(from inside)

Picture's fine. No refunds.

Slim KNOCKS again.

PROJECTIONIST (cont'd)

I said no refunds!

Slim KNOCKS again.

PROJECTIONIST (cont'd)

GODDAMNIT!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The man behind the voice YANKS open the door. He's forty, tall and tattooed, face harsh and voice black-lunged. Looks about as much like a projectionist as a whore does a nun.

PROJECTIONIST (cont'd)
Got complaints, take 'em up with
the girl workin' concessions.
There's a box --

SLIM
I'm here for Terry Adams.

PROJECTIONIST
(beat)
What for?

SLIM
Need to ask 'im some questions.

Projectionist sees the gleam of the revolver in Slim's jeans and he stares at Slim as though reading him.

PROJECTIONIST
Don't know the name --

SLIM
I know he's here. Either you point
'im out or I shake up every one a
your payin' cars lookin' for 'im.

PROJECTIONIST
(beat)
This about somethin'?

SLIM
About my brother. Got killed over a
debt owed. I heard he used'ta do
some collectin' from John O'Riley.

PROJECTIONIST
What if I said he don't do that no
more? Hasn't for some time.

SLIM
I'd say he's got ten seconds to
prove it before I drive my fuckin'
truck through his movie screen.

Projectionist retreats a step. Slim draws the revolver.

A resigned look washes over Projectionist and Slim knows it's TERRY ADAMS and Terry Adams knows the past has run him down.

Terry wanders back into the darkness of the projection room. Stares out the tiny shed window at the movie screen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TERRY ADAMS

Just let the movie run out. Then we'll talk.

EXT. CROSSROADS DRIVE-IN THEATER - NIGHT

THE MOVIE RUN OUT and the crowd dispersed.

AT THE TICKET BOOTH, the exiting cars return their speakers to the Asian Woman.

BRADY sits on the hood of the Ford, eating a hot dog. He watches the Pure-Faced Girl sweep the trash. When she looks his way, he quickly turns. Self-conscious about his eye.

OUTSIDE THE PROJECTION ROOM, Slim and Terry sit on folded chairs eating concession food.

TERRY ADAMS

-- started collectin' when I was nineteen. I wasn't goin' nowhere. Friend a mine knew a guy named Richie Nebraska who took bets, ran books. Said he lived outside Philly, had little operations scattered all over. Needed a few bruisers to go around an' collect for 'im. I weren't no husher back then so the job didn't bother me none. I'd get my list every week, go shake a few pockets, toss some fists if needed. All there was to it. I was young, hungry an' thirsty, an' the pay filled most a that.

SLIM

Man we met said you'd know who collected from John O'Riley.

TERRY ADAMS

Sure he would. Use'ta be my route.

SLIM

Now?

Terry turns away, squirms. Reluctant.

SLIM (cont'd)

We never came here if that'll help.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TERRY ADAMS

(beat)

Men you're lookin' for are Bud Deakins and Sam Nebraska. Richie's younger brother.

SLIM

You know 'em?

TERRY ADAMS

Did a job with Sam once. Guy down in Virginia placed a large bet, couldn't hold his end.

FLASHBACK - INT./EXT. TERRY'S CAR - DUSK - YEARS EARLIER

TERRY AND SAM NEBRASKA driving and Sam's in the same charcoal suit and Fedora and the Boxer Dog's in the backseat. Sam cuts slices of pepperoni with his boxcutter.

TERRY ADAMS (V.O.)

Richie tells me ta pick up Sam on the way. First time I met him. Tall. Big hands. Crude, mutilated face. Something 'bout him I couldn't shake. He crept into my skin.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL HOME - RURAL VIRGINIA - EVENING

Terry's car idles to a stop outside the slipshod home.

TERRY ADAMS (V.O.)

End up at this house in some town God forgot an' when we go inside...

INT. RESIDENTIAL HOME - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

A RECORD PLAYER and JOHNNY MATHIS' *Chances Are* plays.

A scared TEENAGE BOY, seventeen, face full of braces and zits, sits beside his GRANDPARENTS, eighties, on the sofa. The Grandparents look comatose, unmindful, *American Gothic*.

Terry questions the boy while Sam stares longingly at the Boy's unmarked face.

TERRY ADAMS (V.O.)

...Find it's just some punk-ass kid. Thought he could make some money, bit off more than ten a him could chew.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

TERRY TOSSES OPEN DRAWERS and empties jewelry boxes full of porcelain rest stop trinkets. Nothing of value.

TERRY ADAMS (V.O.)
I go upstairs ta try an' find
something we could pawn. People was
dirt poor.

(O.S.) BANG! BANG! Terry pauses. Turns.

TERRY ADAMS (V.O.) (cont'd)
I go back downstairs an'...

INT. RESIDENTIAL HOME - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The Young Boy's on the floor, body limp from a broken neck. The Grandparents have bullet holes in their foreheads and blood rivulets drip off their noses.

Terry enters. His face sobers. Sam's bent down, closing the Boy's eyelids.

INT. TERRY'S CAR (DRIVING) - LATER THAT NIGHT

BLACKER THAN MIDNIGHT UNDER A SKILLET and Terry's deeply unnerved by Sam beside him.

TERRY ADAMS (V.O.)
...He'd killed them all. Broke the
kid's neck and shot his grandfolks.

EXT. CROSSROADS DRIVE-IN THEATER - NIGHT

Slim listens to Terry Adams.

TERRY ADAMS
I aint been scared of a single
thing in this life but the mention
of that name...
(beat)
That's when I got out. Got afraid
of my own dreams. Ran way the hell
out here to hide. S'where I met
Lee.

Terry signals the Asian Woman holding the newborn. His wife.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TERRY ADAMS (cont'd)
 She aint a beauty, but she's soft
 at the end of the day. Breaks up
 the loneliness.

SLIM
 Where can we find 'em?

TERRY ADAMS
 You gotta know I can't do that to
 myself. Got a family now.

SLIM
 Mister, we ain't leavin' 'til we
 know where we're goin' next.

Terry eyes Slim and Slim doesn't flinch.

TERRY ADAMS
 (resigned)
 Richie's got a bar in Pennsylvania.
 Coatesville. Calls it Cooz's.

SLIM
 Coatesville?

TERRY ADAMS
 (nods)
 Bud and Sam live upstairs.

A long beat.

TERRY ADAMS (cont'd)
 Listen, Mister, I don't know you
 from that dirt under your feet. But
 I were you I'd gather my boys and
 head on home. You don't know what
 you're walking into.

LEE approaches with the newborn. Hands him over to Terry.

TERRY ADAMS (cont'd)
 There he is. Ol' sleepy-eyes.

They stand. Move to enter the projection room: their home.

TERRY ADAMS (cont'd)
 Stay the night if ya' like. Plenny
 a space.

Slim doesn't wanna stay another minute, but he looks over at
 Jonah lying in the flatbed of the truck, blanket draped over
 him. Old and so tired.

EXT. FORD PICK-UP - FLATBED - LATER THAT NIGHT

Slim sits beside Jonah. Quiet, then --

JONAH
(softly)
Look at the kid.

UNDER THE MOVIE SCREEN, Brady sits beside the Pure-Faced Girl. She's opened his palm and is showing him the intricacies and promise of the lines.

JONAH (cont'd)
You still with his sister?

SLIM
She won't see me no more.

JONAH
That don't mean anything. I 'member
the way she looked at you.
(beat)
You still up for this?

SLIM
(beat)
We used to fish together when we
were young. Stay til it was dark.
Talk all the way home 'bout
nuthin'. We were friends... He
never built a house or fathered a
child or kept the company of a
woman more than a few hours.
There's nothin' left a him.
Nothin' ta hold. He was better than
that. Better than what they done ta
him.

JONAH
You didn't fail 'im, Slim...

Jonah COUGHS and it's the old man in him as much as the
poisoned lungs.

SLIM
What're you thinkin' about?

JONAH
Leeny...happens like that when ya'
get old. Your thoughts shrink...
settle on just a few things...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His voice trails off and then he's asleep. Slim takes one of his blankets and lays it over him.

DISSOLVE TO:

A SERIES OF IMAGES - CROSSROADS THEATER - DAWN

JONAH asleep in the flatbed, blanket draped over him, mouth slightly open. He is an infant held by his Mother.

BRADY and the Pure-Faced Girl cuddled inside a sleeping bag under the wide movie screen.

SLIM stands in the middle of the grassland and the sun is a mere suggestion of light on the horizon. His face wears his heart's loss: the dream of days that never happened.

He walks away now. *Time to move on.*

INT. PROJECTION ROOM - DAWN

Terry's awake, staring at his infant son, watching his delicate white belly balloon then deflate.

He sits up. Looks out the window and sees the men packing their belongings into the Ford.

INT. HIGHWAY DINER - LATE MORNING

A converted train car. It's humid, the DIN of the kitchen loud. Brady scarfs down pancakes. With a night's sleep in him, Jonah looks slightly healthier. Slim reviews a map.

SLIM
(to Brady)
Hungry?

BRADY
May-be I am. I was exercisin' last night. Need ta replenish myself.

JONAH
You were lovin' a little?

BRADY
Hell yeah I was. The hell you think we was doin'? Talkin'?

JONAH
I guess not...

Jonah slides his toast across a runny egg yolk. Eats.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH (cont'd)

The first girl I ever had was Summer Ingersoll. I didn't even have hair in some places yet. Behind Mac's Tall Burger Pit when she was on break. She smelt like grease.

Brady stops eating suddenly.

JONAH (cont'd)

Didn't make a sound the whole time we shook. Pulled up her pants and drank a strawberry milkshake. I was fourteen.

SLIM

(eyeing the map)
We'll get there before night.

A beat. Brady squirms. Swallows hard. Begins to pant.

SLIM (cont'd)

What's wrong?

BRADY

I's just thinkin' - goddamn it's hot in here, aint it? -

SLIM

The air don't work. They said --

BRADY

Well how 'bout the fans!?
(calls behind the counter)
Hey! Turn the goddamn fans on, WILL YA!?

JONAH

They aint workin' either, kid.

BRADY

(back to Slim, fanning himself)
I was jus' thinkin' that might be the las' time I ever touch a girl again - I mean - I feel goddamn sick, Slim. Like I could puke.
(wipes his forehead)

SLIM

Take it easy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRADY

I'm pourin' sweat!
 (shows his wet palm)
 Look at this! Goddamn fans!

Brady brings his napkin up to his mouth. Gags. Pukes a bit. He stands up, rushes off to the bathroom.

JONAH

...She told me to shine my shoes.

SLIM

You're still talkin'?

JONAH

Only sound she made. 'Shine your shoes, boy.'

Slim and Jonah sit in the humid air. Jonah slides his toast over the yolk.

INT. FORD PICK-UP (DRIVING) - DUSK

EARNEST LOOKS from the men and silence pervades the car.

THE WINCHESTER peers above the backseat, nearly hidden but loud as thunder. RAIN PATTERS against the windshield.

EXT. ROUTE 31 - COATESVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA - NIGHT

IN THE DISTANCE, A MASSIVE STEEL MILL exhales from the white-hot of a day's toil.

Slim's pick-up plods into town. Like a tired horse.

EXT. COATESVILLE STREET - NIGHT (LATE)

SHEETS OF RAIN POUND a grimy street. It's a husky city, Coatesville. Brawling. Big-shouldered.

On the corner, a local bar. A neon light blinks Cooz's and a 'Sold' sign sits low in the window.

INT. COOZ'S - BEHIND THE BAR - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON A POT OF RAIN WATER. DRIP-DRIP-DRIP and --

JIMMY PERCY, forties, a slight, pig-nosed bartender looks up and sees the rain dripping from a crack in the soft ceiling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIMMY PERCY

Christ...

The lights are up as the shoddy, saloon-like bar has closed for the night. ELLIOT & CC HARDINGS, forties, curious twin brothers - Elliot slight and CC plump - sit at the bar.

CC HARDINGS

(drunk)

-- I'm just sayin', the boy's interested in things that shouldn't interest him at his age. Like caterpillars.

ELLIOT HARDINGS

He's immature is all.

CC HARDINGS

He's incontinent, Jimmy. Shit himself at school last week. Shit in his own pants.

(shakes his head)

Goddamn. Imagine the teasing you'd suffer.

ELLIOT HARDINGS

OK. Let's go on home. Mom'll throw a fit if we're late in this rain. Think we drown.

Elliot helps his dejected brother to his feet and it's not easy because they've been beside the bottle for a while.

ELLIOT HARDINGS (cont'd)

See ya', Jimmy. Tell Richie'll we'll call him tomorrow.

The two brothers exit. Jimmy wipes down the bar.

Moments later, the ENTRANCE DOOR OPENS and FRANCIS, a strung-out male transvestite in a white gown (transparent from the rain) enters. Jimmy doesn't flinch, keeps wiping.

Francis moves across the bar, up the REAR STAIRCASE.

(O.S.) A TOILET FLUSH.

DOC BARSTOW, a hefty, bearded collector steps from the bathroom, one arm in a sling, the other raising his zipper. He takes a stool at the bar.

DOC BARSTOW

Twins leave?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIMMY PERCY

Just missed 'em. CC was all worked up over Magwynn again.

DOC BARSTOW

Strange, different kid that one. He shit in his pants, ya know.

JIMMY PERCY

(about the dripping rain)
How many times do I have to tell someone to fix a fuckin' thing around here before it gets done?

Doc pours himself some scotch.

DOC BARSTOW

Plenty more than you have. Asked Richie to get the shitter fixed for seven months once. Finally I fished out the block on my own.

JIMMY PERCY

...What was it?

DOC BARSTOW

You really wanna know?
(beat, as if very mysterious)
A sweat sock...

Doc raises his glass and lets out a great horselaugh.

JIMMY PERCY

Asshole...

DOC BARSTOW

I wouldn't get too uneasy. They'll rip everything outta this place in a few weeks anyhow. Be a goddamn island burger heaven...
(shakes his head)
There's just different people coming down these days. Soon they'll forget we ever lived here.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON A BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTO AGAINST A BARE TILED WALL. A young Sam Nebraska beside RICHIE NEBRASKA outside a home. Richie stands over Sam, fatherly, and if Sam looks deformed now, he was goddamn frightening as a child.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sam sits in the full bathtub and outside is the Boxer Dog and he's petting its head gingerly.

RICHIE NEBRASKA (O.C.)
 (voice slow and smoky)
 ...Rawlings and Oberton. Then
 Altoona. Close them all. It's time.

Seated by the window, staring pensively outside at the rain is RICHIE NEBRASKA, fifties, a small, tired man dressed in a grey suit. Could easily be mistaken for a lawyer or a judge.

RICHIE NEBRASKA (cont'd)
 I'm old, Sammy. Old and tired and
 my blood's different than it used
 to be.

SAM NEBRASKA
 Bud know?

Richie turns back to Sam.

RICHIE NEBRASKA
 I told my brother first. Like I
 always do. You make yourself some
 money over at Jilly's?
 (Sam nods)
 Good for you, boy...
 (about the dog)
 They won't allow her at the new
 place, Sam. They got rules.

Sam pulls the dog closer.

RICHIE NEBRASKA (cont'd)
 Oh God she's sick, Samuel. Her
 heart's failing her.

Sam nearly cries.

RICHIE NEBRASKA (cont'd)
 Goddamnit, Sam!

Richie stands, SLAPS SAM ACROSS THE FACE! Sam hangs his head like a child amid his Mother's reproof.

RICHIE NEBRASKA (cont'd)
 I should've known better than to
 bring that up. She'll feel only a
 pinch and then...endless meadows
 and lilacs.

Guilt burgeons in Richie. He moves to his brother and rubs his blotched scalp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

If I did?

BRADY

Well if ya' did...they still haunt
ya'? I mean, their faces an' all?

JONAH

It aint the face that haunts ya'.
It's learnin' ya' have that inside.

BRADY

(beat, about the picture)
She your daughter or somethin'?

JONAH

(nods)
Leeny...

BRADY

...I didn't do nothin' with that
girl last night but sleep.

JONAH

Sometimes it's better like that...
Most times. I learned that from
Hazy Jane.

BRADY

Who's Hazy Jane?

JONAH

Doesn't matter now.
(pensively)
Slow slow Jane. Goddamn, girl. I
wonder what it is you're doin' now.
Prolly poachin' an egg.

INT. COOZ'S - NIGHT

Doc refills his scotch and Jimmy slides the full trash bag
from the bin and Richie enters from the rear staircase.

JIMMY PERCY

Hey, Richie, what d'ya say about
gettin' this ceiling fixed over
here, huh?

RICHIE NEBRASKA

...I'll call the plumber.

Doc's eyes widen incredulously and he looks at Jimmy as if to
raise a celebratory glass when --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The ENTRANCE DOOR OPENS and Slim and Brady enter in slickers.

JIMMY PERCY
Bar's closed.

SLIM
We aint here ta drink.

JIMMY PERCY
Then you're in the wrong place
anyhow.

SLIM
This Cooz's?

DOC BARSTOW
(off Slim's drawl)
Where you from, boys?

SLIM
Lowlands. Indiana.

Richie lifts his eyes now. Views Slim and Brady.

DOC BARSTOW
I had a client out that way... Low-
Dwellers. Isn't that what they call
you?

SLIM
Call us a lotta things...

And Slim draws the Winchester from inside of his slicker and
takes aim at Jimmy --

JIMMY PERCY
...What the...

SLIM
I'm lookin' for Bud Deakins and Sam
Nebraska.

Richie tightens his coat, making sure his pistol is hidden.

RICHIE NEBRASKA
What for, son?

Slim nods to Brady and Brady moves to cover the rear entrance
and he pushes Richie up to the bar with the others.

SLIM
...I'm here ta kill 'em. For what
they done ta my brother.

EXT. COOZ'S - REAR OF THE BAR - CONTINUOUS

JONAH WALKING QUIETLY UP THE FIRE STAIRS and now on the landing, looking into the bedroom window and seeing Sam on the bed with the Boxer lying beside him.

Jonah moves over to the adjacent bathroom window and quietly slides it open.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

In the charcoal suit, Sam lies emotionless on the bed and there's the SOUND OF BUD MOANING from the neighboring room. The Boxer Dog sleeps in the corner.

INT. BUD'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Francis gives Bud a blowjob under the sheets and BUD BANGS HIS BACK AGAINST THE HEADBOARD.

INT. COOZ'S - CONTINUOUS

Slim and Brady hold Jimmy and Doc at bay and Brady is breathing heavily and Slim looks up at the ceiling at the rhythmic DRIP-DRIP-DRIP of rain water.

DOC BARSTOW

lets his hand slide towards his holstered pistol --

SLIM
Don't go there, fella...

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jonah climbs in the window and his HAND TREMBLES WEAKLY in his age and he slips slightly and his foot touches down on a scale - KINK - the slightest sound. Jonah freezes --

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sam doesn't move, his eyes fixed on the ceiling. BUD CLIMAXES NEXT DOOR IN A LOUD ORGASMIC U-U-UGH!

Then silence...

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jonah exhales and his feet touch the ground. He removes his Colt Revolver and pushes the bathroom door open slightly and through the space between hinges, he sees the bed is empty.

He pushes slowly into --

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

and only the Boxer Dog is there, looking calmly to the opened window. Jonah turns...Sam Nebraska stands outside on the landing, gun drawn.

BOOM! BOOM! Jonah crumbles to the ground, clutching his stomach.

INT. COOZ'S - CONTINUOUS

Slim looks up.

SLIM
Jonah? JONAH!?

JIMMY PERCY

ducks down behind the bar.

DOC BARSTOW

reaches for his pistol --

SLIM
Don't fuckin' do that!

but Doc draws the Pistol anyway and BA-WOOM! the Winchester explodes and DOC FLIES OFF THE STOOL, blood squirting from his neck.

Richie has his coat open and he's struggling greatly in his age to get his pistol from the holster and Slim takes two steps closer to him, gun aimed at his chest.

Richie looks at Slim, beaten. He spits in Slim's face. Slim pulls the trigger - BA-WOOM!

INT. BUD'S BEDROOM - SAME

Bud slides his pants on quickly and --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

(O.S.) BA-WOOM! He freezes a second...now grabs a pistol from a drawer in the night stand.

BUD
(to Francis)
Get outta here, whore.

Bud exits. On the bed, Francis smokes from a crack pipe, oblivious.

INT. COOZ'S - CONTINUOUS

Brady has retreated to the rear staircase landing and he is trembling and sweating. Standing over Richie's body, Slim reloads - KLUCK-KLUCK - and takes aims at the bar.

SLIM
If you aint Sam or Bud, there aint no reason ta do this!

JIMMY PERCY (O.C.)
BULL FUCKIN' SHIT, ASSHOLE! You just shot my friend!

SLIM
He was reachin' for his gun...

JIMMY PERCY (O.C.)
HE HAD ONE GODDAMN ARM!

SLIM
How many you need to kill a man?

Slim aims - BOOM! BOOM! - two shots strike the bar front.

JIMMY PERCY (O.C.)
GODDAMNIT FUCKIN'! Stop with that shit!

BEHIND THE BAR - CONTINUOUS

the splinters of Slim's blast nearby and Jimmy is fumbling with shotgun shells and clearly this is new to him.

JIMMY PERCY
BUD! SAM! Get the FUCK down here!
NOW!

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Bud glides down the dimly-lit hallway, under the DRIP-DRIP-DRIP of rainwater from the ceiling. The Boxer Dog saunters lazily past.

Bud peers into Sam's bedroom and --

SAM NEBRASKA

stands over Jonah who is crawling on his belly, leaving a streak of blood on the weathered hardwood floor. Sam watches, listens to his breathing.

BUD
(an angry whisper)
Sam what the fuck's goin' on?

Sam never turns his eyes from Jonah on the floor. Bud forgets him, exits and continues to the --

REAR STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

and descends the shadowy stairs. At the bottom is Brady, nervous, eyes searching the bar floor. Bud takes aim at the kid when --

SLIM (O.C.)
Psss...

Bud freezes...puts his back against the wall.

INT. COOZ'S - CONTINUOUS

Slim points Brady to the bathroom.

BRADY
What?

SLIM
Get in the bathroom...

Brady shakes his head, feigning bravery.

SLIM (cont'd)
Get in the goddamn bathroom, Brady.
Close the door...

Brady moves into the bathroom and closes the door and Slim makes his way across the bar floor, around the pool of blood at Doc Barstow's head --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM (cont'd)
Jonah?! Jonah goddamnit say
somethin' if you're up there!

still keeping aim at the bar --

BEHIND THE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy peeks around the bar's edge. Nothing.

JIMMY PERCY
Bud! Do you FUCKIN' hear me up
there you ASSHOLES?!

REAR STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Bud moving down the stairs again, towards the landing, eyeing
the bathroom and --

INT. COOZ'S - CONTINUOUS

Slim moves to the space under the stairs, amid empty liquor
boxes and brooms and a mop and bucket. He looks towards the
bar for Jimmy.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jonah has stopped crawling and Sam hears FOOTSTEPS outside
his door. Now a shadow. He aims his pistol. More FOOTSTEPS
and Sam pulls the trigger - BOOM! BOOM!

REAR STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Bud looks to the ceiling. His foot LANDS HARD on the stairs
and CREAKS...

INT. COOZ'S - CONTINUOUS

Under the stairs...Slim looks up.

SLIM
Jonah?

No response.

REAR STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

A beat. Bud looks down and BOOM! BOOM! the STAIRS ARE SPLINTERED and he FLIES down to the landing.

BEHIND THE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy shoots up from behind the bar --

JIMMY PERCY
You MOTHERFUCKERS!

-- and takes aim at Slim who is reloading the Winchester and JIMMY PULLS THE TRIGGER AND MISSES, just above Slim's head. Slim winces. Scrambles to reload. Hands moving quickly.

Jimmy shoots again...A MISFIRE...A beat.

JIMMY PERCY (cont'd)
...Shit...

Slim aims and BA-WOOM! BA-WOOM! JIMMY FLIES ONTO THE SHELVES OF LIQUOR...SMASH!

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

BLOOD SEEPS UNDER THE DOOR like an army of encroaching ants and Sam slowly opens the door revealing...the Boxer Dog. Dead. Blood.

His heart sinks and his face trembles in a seizure of shock and anger. He picks up the bloody animal and rushes to the bathroom.

INT. COOZ'S - CONTINUOUS

Slim reloads again.

Brady peeks out the bathroom door and there is Bud dead on the landing and Jimmy dead behind the bar and Doc dead on the floor and the old man Richie dead nearby.

He looks at Slim, a bit scared of him. Slim stares back.

SLIM
Stay in there...

FOOTSTEPS DESCENDING THE STAIRS and Brady steps into the bathroom and closes the door and Slim moves under the stairs again.

...a long beat...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Moments later, a stoned Francis stumbles by Slim in only his underpants. He moves to the bar and pours himself a drink.

Slim moves out of the space and up the staircase.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON THE RED BATH WATER and the Boxer Dog submerged and Sam is WHIMPERING as he scrubs the animal furiously with soap as though that will help and there is blood all over the tiled floor.

Under the door, the SHADOW OF A MOVING FIGURE...Sam turns.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Slim enters slowly, Winchester leveled. He moves to Jonah who is sitting up against the bed, shirt blood-drenched, breaths deep and long, eyes dying.

SLIM
Jesus Christ...

Slim sees the two bullet holes and the blood. So much blood.

JONAH
(a faint whisper)
...bath...room...

SLIM
I'm gonna get you outta here...

JONAH
(slightly louder)
Bath...room...

Slim looks up and in the window reflection...Sam Nebraska slowly opens the bathroom door, pistol drawn.

SLIM LUNGES FOR THE DOOR and WHAM! Sam's giant hand is SLAMMED AGAINST THE WALL and his PISTOL FALLS to the ground.

There is a struggle, each man pushing and...

...their eyes meet for a long moment: THE BLACK-EYED DOG AND THE GLOWING EMBERS...

Slim cocks his fist back and CRACKS! SAM ACROSS THE FACE. Sam flies back into the bathroom.

SLIM
You the man killed my brother you sonofabitch?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Slim reaches for the pistol but SAM RUSHES THROUGH THE DOOR now and barrels Slim AGAINST THE WALL and CRACK! against his face and CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! a furious series of blows.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brady on the toilet, trembling. Too scared to move.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

CRACK! Slim falls to the ground now, face bloodied and Sam reaches for the boxcutter. He bends down to Slim's level and Slim is clutching his stomach and MOANING and Sam looks deep into his eyes when --

BANG! Sam's shoulder is shot. He turns, Jonah is holding his Colt Revolver weakly, aiming again, struggling with the hammer --

SAM RUSHES INTO THE BATHROOM and out the window before Jonah can pull the trigger and Jonah's hand sinks slowly to the ground.

SLIM

Brady! BRADY GODDAMNIT GET UP HERE!

FOOTSTEPS and moments later Brady enters the room.

SLIM (cont'd)

Stay here with Jonah...

BRADY

(scared shitless)

Wait... Where you goin'?...You aint leavin' us are ya?

Slim struggles to his feet and picks up the Winchester --

SLIM

...There's one'a them still left.

-- and he exits the room.

INT. COOZ'S - CONTINUOUS

Francis in his underpants stands at the jukebox, eyeing the options.

Slim enters from the stairwell, Winchester aimed, eyes darting. He steps up to the cash register, SHINK! it opens and he removes \$1,000. No more. No less.

CLOSE ON THE JUKEBOX

as the mechanical arm LIFTS A RECORD from a row and SIMON & GARFUNKEL'S' *Cecilia* blares through the bar, eerie as hell like a requiem.

SLIM

is startled by the music and it's just GROWING LOUDER AND GODDAMN LOUDER and he whips around and Francis is dancing now, all alone, lost in some drug-induced bliss.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brady sits beside Jonah and the music is heard from downstairs and BLOOD-HUED WATER IS OVERFLOWING AND RUSHING OUT FROM UNDER THE BATHROOM DOOR.

BRADY

(crying)

...fuckin' drive-in asshole...never said nuthin' 'bout this shit...

Jonah's head slumps onto Brady's shoulder and he sighs like a man come to the end of something. And then he dies.

Brady begins to cry, tries to steel himself and only half succeeds. He removes Jonah's head from his shoulder and gets to his feet and takes Jonah's Revolver.

INT. COOZ'S - CONTINUOUS

Francis dancing. Winchester drawn, Slim KICKS OPEN the rear entrance, looks outside. Nothing. The percussion of rain and darkness.

Slim's trying to focus but his eyes are uneasy with the MUSIC and Francis and he's acutely aware of his own breathing.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

REVOLVER DRAWN, Brady charily walks through the SPLICK-SPLACK of the water at his feet as he approaches the DRIP-DRIP-DRIP of the rain from the ceiling and the soft wooden floor and suddenly WHOOSH! HE FALLS --

INT. COOZ'S - CONTINUOUS

-- THROUGH THE CEILING, plaster and water following him down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Slim turns, looks up, and --

SAM NEBRASKA

bursts through the rear entrance with a HORRID YELP! that comes from the black-oil boughs of hell and he tackles Slim to the ground and the WINCHESTER FLIES ACROSS THE BAR FLOOR.

There is a great struggle...neither man getting an advantage. And then, finally, the massive Sam Nebraska manages to climb atop Slim and HE REMOVES HIS BOXCUTTER and regards Slim's beaten face a moment when --

BOOM! A beat.

Only the music is heard.

Sam turns back, sees --

BRADY

standing amid the pile of plaster, Winchester aimed.

SAM NEBRASKA

looks down now as blood permeates his shirt. He lurches, then falls off Slim, face to the bar floor...eyes open...but fading...

FRANCIS

dances still to the music like a circus act and there is the SOUND OF ENCROACHING SIRENS.

SLIM

We gotta get outta here...

BRADY

(breathing heavily)
...You think I killed 'im?

SLIM

GODDAMNIT, BRADY!

SAM NEBRASKA

breathes short, heavy breaths.

SAM'S POV

staring at Richie Nebraska's dead body. SIRENS fill the air.

EXT. COOZ'S - NIGHT

PATROL CARS, lights flashing, screech to a halt outside. A bevy of OFFICERS, guns drawn approach the door.

INT. COOZ'S - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON THE DOOR as BOOM! it's kicked open and --

OFFICERS' POV

Francis dancing. Bodies litter the floor. Blood.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT./EXT. FORD PICK-UP - NIGHT

TILTING UP FROM THE INDIANA STATE LICENSE PLATE and Brady is seated in the flatbed. Jonah's body's at his feet wrapped in blankets.

Inside the truck, the back of Slim's head and the headlights shine a path down a quiet, rural highway and there is no wind or rain, only the METALLIC GRUMBLE of the old engine.

INT. COOZ'S - NIGHT

The OFFICERS have entered and checked the bar.

OFFICER

I got one breathing over here!

We pan to OFFICER. Kneeling beside Sam Nebraska...

FADE TO:

A SERIES OF DISSOLVES

- NIGHT and the Ford pulling into the driveway of Jonah's SHANTY. A LIGHT UPSTAIRS is on...Leeny.

- THE O'RILEY HOME and Brady steps from the truck. FROM AN UPSTAIRS WINDOW, GABBY LOOKS DOWN. But not at Brady. Into the pick-up. At Slim.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

- MORNING AT THE WHEAT FIELD and Slim toils among the harvest workers.

- AFTERNOON and Slim at the WEATHERED FARMHOUSE. He takes the 'For Sale' from the soil. It's his now.

- DUSK BEHIND THE FARMHOUSE and Slim digging with a shovel and now taking the Winchester and burying it. Deep.

FADE OUT.

(O.S.) A WHINY FIDDLE BEGINS...

...and we're jolted by A TORRENT OF ACTIVITY...

...as people dance, swinging one another around, swapping partners, whizzing by...Gabby is among them as are Deputy Bowiggin and Leeny.

ON STAGE

A lively FOLK BAND plays as A HOMESPUN BANNER stretches above them, announcing - *Easton Folk Festival*.

FAIRGROUNDS

Modest amusements and food stands and the whole town is there, eating candy apples and funnel cakes and pulled pork and fried pickles.

ON A BENCH

Brady wipes Ben's mouth free of powdered sugar and Slim's eyes are focused on the dance floor. The murders linger on their faces, shrink them somehow, and Brady is looking around anxiously as if everyone knows and is watching.

BRADY

I uh...actually slept a bit last night. Wasn't much, but...closed my eyes at least.

SLIM

(beat)

I think I'll be goin'...

Before Slim can leave, Leeny approaches and grabs him, pulls him towards the dancing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM (cont'd)

Oh no...

(she tugs harder)

You go, Leeny. Plenty a boys'd love
to have your hand out there.

She pouts.

BRADY

Go on...

Slim gives in.

EXT. DANCE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Bales of hay flank the giant makeshift floor and Slim and Leeny enter now, mid-song, and THE FLOOR IS ALIVE and there's the swing of the crook of arms and the bobbing of heads.

GABBY

sees Slim among the crowd and her smile fades.

SLIM

being swung around...the passing faces all a blur...except Gabby.

GABBY

catches Slim gazing and turns away upon the meeting of eyes.

The SONG ENDS.

BAND LEADER (O.C.)

Oh boy, it's been a good time with
you folks tonight. We're gonna slow
it down a minute here...

Led by a MOUNTAIN DULCIMER, the band walks into their version of BOB DYLAN'S *4th Time Around*. Slim looks around for Gabby but he's lost her in the crowd.

ON THE BENCH

Leeny returns, sweating and flush, sits beside Brady and Ben.

BRADY

You Jonah's daughter?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She doesn't answer.

BRADY (cont'd)
 (nudges her)
 Hey...
 (she nudges him back.
 Hard)
 Damn, I didn't mean nothin' by it,
 jus'...

She signs at him, vituperatively - a tough girl she is - and he just now realizes she's deaf.

BRADY (cont'd)
 Oh hell, I never...jus' that I seen
 a picture a you b'fore. Thought you
 were awful pretty - I mean it
 wasn't mine or nothin' an' I
 weren't lookin' at it long or
 strange-like, I jus'...hell you
 can't hear a damn thing I'm sayin'
 anyway, can ya'?

Leeny just stares at the people walking by.

BRADY (cont'd)
 (deflated)
 Yeah...

SLIM

looks for Gabby and he's just about to give up when...a hand pulls him back...Gabby's. She doesn't speak as she escorts him through the crowd to the dance floor.

They begin to dance closely, her head on his shoulder, neither looking at the other.

Years of hurt stand between them.

MULBY NOLAN

outside the dance floor, alone, not drunk, not sober, and he watches as Slim and Gabby dance.

SLIM & GABBY

as the song progresses, she holds him tightly, his back and the bones of his shoulders hard as pig iron, and she remembers him. There is a look on his face of not wanting to be alone anymore.

MULBY NOLAN

can't bear to watch anymore. He walks away.

THE MUSIC STOPS and CLAPS ensue.

Gabby retreats slightly and looks at Slim. He at her. She walks off the dance floor doesn't look back.

He watches her go.

EXT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

The Ford pick-up glides into the gravel driveway.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Slim at the kitchen table with a bottle of Sloe Gin beside him and it's the first time we've seen him drink yet.

He pours himself another and soon he will feel no edges.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Slim stumbles into the dark room and he's drunk something good now and it's on his face. Gabby stands by the window, lit by slivers of moonlight around the shade, holding the picture of Slim and her.

GABBY

I'd forgotten this day...

SLIM

Gabby --

GABBY

Sshh...

She drops her homemade dress from her shoulders and stands naked now, skin white as porcelain with a shock of gold hair.

GABBY (cont'd)

Sshh...

She shivers. He moves towards her.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

SILVER-WHITE MOONLIGHT on the bed and Slim and Gabby making love and this is much more than physical: two people capable of loving only the other.

EXT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - PORCH - PREDAWN

NIGHT LINGERS IN PURPLE and Slim sits up with a blanket over him while Gabby draws invisible shapes on his back.

GABBY

You killed them, didn't you? The ones who got my Father...

(he doesn't speak)

I don't care. How bad am I for saying that, but I don't. I just wanted you to come home.

(kisses his shoulder)

Back to me.

(a long beat)

He's not yours, Charlie. Ben. He's not your son... When you went in, Mulby an' I...for a while I was just so angry...

Tears form in her eyes but Slim doesn't flinch and it's clear this wasn't news to him.

SLIM

It aint my right ta be mad, Gabby. I lost that when I went away.

GABBY

He gave me everything and I couldn't love him... It all was dead without you...all the places we'd go - the river and that old house where you would make love to me...and that spot with the tall grass - do you remember it? Did you ever think about it? The sun never reached it, remember? They were all dead when I went without you...it was like they never made sense, like the air didn't reach them anymore...

(beat)

I used to cry when we made love.

A beat. His stomach heaves and, despite his attempts against it, he begins to cry for all he's done. She pulls him down into her arms and holds him.

GABBY (cont'd)

Don't leave me anymore, Charlie.

(kisses his forehead)

Don't ever leave me.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

Slim's awake, looking over at Gabby asleep beside him. He watches her breathe.

EXT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - MORNING

Slim exits the home with a cup of coffee and the Sheriff's Cruiser is in the driveway. Nolan leans against the car and he looks drunk and he hasn't slept.

SHERIFF NOLAN

Got a call this mornin'. One of our leads got shot ta hell over in Pennsylvania...placed call Cooz's.

(approaches Slim)

You know anythin' about that?

SLIM

Cooz's? No I don't --

CRACK! NOLAN'S FIST AGAINST SLIM'S FACE and Slim drops the coffee and slams back against the home.

SHERIFF NOLAN

I loved her you sonofabitch an' --

Nolan grabs Slim and tosses him down the porch steps. Slim winces and rolls around, lip-blooded.

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd)

I take good care a that boy. See that he's got clean clothes, shoes on his feet --

Slim stands and charges after Nolan again but Nolan easily tosses the weakened Slim down.

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd)

...You never looked at her the way she needed to, you never once gave a damn she walked this earth!

SLIM

(weakly)

That was a long time ago...

Nolan COUGHS and COUGHS and leans tiredly against the Cruiser.

SHERIFF NOLAN

An' stupid goddamn me - stupid fuckin' me what do I do?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd)
 I go an' love her an' give her the
 earth an' - I GAVE HER ME
 GODDAMNIT! I gave her me an' she
 didn't want it...
 (he wobbles a bit)
 You ruined me...

Gabby steps from the house.

GABBY
 Mulby what're --
 (sees Slim on the ground)
 Oh Jesus, baby...

She rushes to Slim's aid. Her choice devastates Nolan.

SHERIFF NOLAN
 What're you- what about me? What
 about me goddamnit!? Come and check
 on me!

Desperate, Nolan rips Gabby away from Slim, pulls her close to him.

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd)
 What about me goddamnit!? I'm drunk
 and ruined, Gabby! Drunk and
 ruined!

She SLAPS HIM ACROSS THE FACE, releasing his grip, and she rushes again to Slim. Always to Slim.

SLIM
 (from the ground, weakly)
 Don't come by here no more, Mulby.

SHERIFF NOLAN
 If you done somethin' they'll come
 for you. An' when they do I aint
 gonna stand in their way.

Nolan climbs into the Cruiser and the car storms out of the driveway. On Slim in the dirt and Gabby holding him we...

FADE OUT.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - AFTERNOON - TWO WEEKS LATER

CLOSE ON A PAIR OF GIANT HANDS in the lap of a hospital gown.

Sam Nebraska is carted by a NURSE down a sun-drenched hallway where TWO DETECTIVES wait in the distance.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - LATER

The Detectives stand by the glass window looking into a makeshift room at Sam Nebraska. A DOCTOR stands with them.

DOCTOR
-- just hasn't returned.

DETECTIVE #1
He doesn't remember anything?

DOCTOR
Not yet. The EEG didn't show any brain injuries, but slight amnesia's not at all uncommon, gentleman.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sam Nebraska sits in the room, staring vaguely at nothing at all, as docile as an abused mutt.

DETECTIVE #2 (O.S.)
How long will it take?

DOCTOR (O.S.)
There's no way of telling. His cognitive functions appear normal. It could be tomorrow, it could be six months from now. It could be never. It's not out of the question.

DETECTIVE #2 (O.S.)
...Let us know.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT (LATE)

A bored COP, thirties, sits outside hospital room 204, sleepy under the soporific evening lights. Reading the newspaper.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM 204 - CONTINUOUS

THE REFLECTION OF THE STEEL MILL on the window and Sam Nebraska stares outside, seated in a wheelchair. Behind him, a NURSE, sixties, straightens the bedsheets.

NURSE
Anything you need before I go?

Sam doesn't respond. His eyes focus on the bed pan. She drapes a blanket over him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NURSE (cont'd)

To keep you warm... Nights have
been chilly...they run the air so
damn low.

Sam looks into the bathroom...a men's bathroom kit...the
grooming scissors...

Nurse moves to exit. Before she does --

SAM NEBRASKA

(ice cold)

'Birds without wings...'

She turns.

NURSE

What's that, sweetie?

CLOSE ON SAM NEBRASKA

His eyes. No longer embers. Explosions. The death of stars.

And if we didn't know already, we know in that look he hasn't
forgotten a single thing.

The Nurse exits.

EXT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT (LATER)

The COP lurches, his eyes fading. He shoots up. Clears his
face. Looks around.

INSIDE THE ROOM, A CRASH...something metal hitting the floor.

Cop stands up, feels his pistol.

COP

What's going on in there?

(beat)

Answer me inside that room...

Urine leaks out from under the door.

COP (cont'd)

(to himself)

Christ...

(into the room)

Back away from the door in there!

You hear me!?

He finds his set of keys, unlocks the door, draws his pistol
and enters. A pause. Silence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COP (O.C.) (cont'd)
What's going on in here?

(O.C.) A struggle is heard. A GASP FOR AIR. A GURGLE. Then a body drops...then scissors...then quiet.

Moments later, Sam Nebraska steps from the hospital room, strolls down the hall as quiet as mist.

Blood seeps out from under the door. Into the hallway.

EXT. COATESVILLE STREET - MORNING

VIEW ON A GAUDY PINK NEON SIGN, 'THE OCEAN SPRAY' with the white crest of a blue wave towering over the letters.

It's Cooz's...except it's not Cooz's at all. A renovation has begun with an 'Opening Soon!' banner in the window.

AT THE STREET CORNER

Sam looks up at the sign. What used to be his home.

By the side of the bar, the Oldsmobile Cutlass has a boot on the wheel, signs on the dash declaring - *Past Inspection!*

INT. THE OCEAN SPRAY - MOMENTS LATER

FAUX PALM TREES IN SANDBOX OASES and innocuous, steel-drum Island music. A few CARPENTERS labor behind the renovated bar. DRILLS and SAWS.

Sam walks across the floor.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON SAM, eyes sunk and there is a quiver in his lip as he stares at THE BLACK & WHITE PHOTO of Richie Nebraska and himself.

A FOREMAN peers into the room.

FOREMAN
You're here for the plumbing?

Sam's eyes never leave the photo and the Foreman takes that as a 'yes.'

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FOREMAN (cont'd)
 Musta been a goddamn massacre.
 Upstairs is gonna be a fuckin'
 effort, huh?

The Foreman looks down at the BLOOD-RIMMED BASIN OF THE BATHTUB and he shakes his head and leaves and Sam's eyes haven't moved a fucking inch.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

THE CLOSET DOOR OPENING and Sam pulling out the Charcoal suit and the Fedora from the shelf above.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sam stands in front of the mirror shirtless, feeling the pink-white raised, stitched skin of the Winchester blast scar - large and amorphous and --

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - FROM SAM'S POV

Glimpses of moments from that night at Cooz's.

- RICHIE NEBRASKA leaving the bathroom.
- JONAH bloodied, crawling on the floor.

And there are words coming and going throughout, pieces of things heard - *'Brady...Brady get up here!' 'fuckin' drive-in asshole' 'You the man who killed my brother you sonofabitch?' 'BOOM!' 'Birds without wings.'*

- THE BLOOD OF THE BOXER DOG seeping under the door like a legion of approaching ants.
- SLIM'S FACE, when their eyes met. The black-eyed dog and the glowing embers.
- THE BOXCUTTER approaching Slim's face.
- RICHIE'S FACE, dead against the floor. Blood-coated.
- BRADY with the Winchester and BOOM! it explodes in A FLASH OF WHITE and --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

-- CLOSE ON THE WHITE OF A SINK BASIN and DRIP-DRIP-DRIP BLOOD SPOTS IT RED.

Sam Nebraska shaves, dressed in the charcoal suit. He finishes now, wipes the blood from his neck and puts on the Fedora.

INT. THE OCEAN SPRAY - CONTINUOUS

VIEW FROM THE FLOOR as the curiously tall man walks out of the paradise bar: a black silhouette against the fading sun.

INT. SPENARD GUN DEALERS - EVENING

ON A REVOLVER being shown to Sam by the DEALER. But Sam's eyes don't even view the pistol...they're focused on the wall where a side-by-side double barrel shotgun is mounted.

INT./EXT. TAXI - NIGHT

Driving. Under the vastness of a black sky. In the backseat...Sam Nebraska.

EXT. HARDINGS HOME - PREDAWN

A duplex. Sam Nebraska steps from the taxi, the double barrel shotgun at his side.

In the driveway, he sees an old CADILLAC BROUGHAM.

INT. HARDINGS HOME - BEDROOM - PREDAWN

A BOY SLEEPS SOUNDLY in a room filled with posters of Toucans and there are ant farms and pet caterpillars, too.

This is MAGWYNN HARDINGS, seventeen. The boy who shit himself.

VIEW ON THE WINDOW

as the Fedora slides by, throwing its unearthly shadow on the wall beside Magwynn's bed, stirring him momentarily.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CC soundly asleep on the sofa, snoring. A DOORBELL RING.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CC HARDINGS
(groggy)
Jesus Christ...what fucking...

Another DOORBELL.

CC trudges to the door. Outside, shrouded in darkness, is Sam and we can't make out a single feature except his eyes and the glint of the shotgun.

CC HARDINGS (cont'd)
Sam...? Jesus...what time...

Elliot appears in the home now. Squints to see who's there.

SAM NEBRASKA
I found some work...

CUT TO:

EXT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - AFTERNOON

LEENY'S THREE-LEGGED RABBIT runs about and Ben gives chase, baseball glove in hand. Running circles.

NEARBY IN THE FIELD

Slim and Brady till the land, sweating and sun-red, preparing it for planting.

BRADY
Gotta be careful a smut.

SLIM
You hear somethin'?

BRADY
Saw Cud Banks at the hardware center. Told how he had it last year. Came out one day, whole field smelt a fish. Had ta burn it all.

Slim pauses, regards the field. The task ahead awakens a near-smile on his face.

SLIM
We'll be alright, I think...

LEENY EXITS THE SCREEN DOOR with purpose and stands now with impatient eyes at the boys. She STOMPS HER FOOT: *lunch is up.* Slim turns.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM (cont'd)
OK, OK...we're comin', Leeny.

Leeny walks back inside.

BRADY
(beat)
You think she's pretty that Leeny?

SLIM
You an' her? That right?

BRADY
I aint sayin' for me I was jus'
sayin'...like in general.

SLIM
In general?

BRADY
Yeah in general...
(sees Slim smiling)
Oh hell with you then...

Brady exits the field, heads in for lunch.

Slim turns, watches Ben toss a baseball to himself, making
basket-catches.

SLIM
You're s'pose to catch above your
head.

BEN
No I'm not.

Slim lets his tool down. Approaches Ben.

SLIM
Lemme show ya'...'fore you develop
a bad habit...

INT. BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

GABBY AT THE VANITY, smiling.

BRADY (O.C.)
Gab? Lunch is up...

She straightens up quickly, tosses A TISSUE-WRAPPED PREGNANCY
TEST into the waste bin. She looks herself over, making sure
her smile isn't telling.

Brady appears in the doorway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRADY (cont'd)
You hear me?

GABBY
I heard ya'...

BRADY
Well why the hell didn't you say
anythin'?

GABBY
Sorry...

BRADY
Goddamn...
(as he leaves)
People are blatant ig'rant 'round
here anymore...

Before she gets up, something catches her eye. Outside. Slim and Ben and Slim's showing the boy the right way to catch. She watches a moment, then leaves the vanity.

INT. EASTON COUNTY POLICE STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

NOLAN AT HIS DESK with a bag of fast food lunch and bourbon.
The DOOR OPENS - Deputy Bowiggin.

DEPUTY BOWIGGIN
Gotta message this mornin',
Mulby... From Pennsylvania.

SHERIFF NOLAN
What is it?

DEPUTY BOWIGGIN
One from that bar shootout come
outta his coma.
(Nolan looks up)
Said he didn't remember nothin'...
wondered if you still had an
interest in questionin' him.

EXT. HIGHWAY - EVENING (DUSK)

CC's CADILLAC BROUGHAM rolls down the highway.

INT. CADILLAC BROUGHAM - CONTINUOUS

CC driving, Sam Nebraska beside him. In the backseat, Elliot and Magwynn, the kid, looking wholly out-of-place and skittish.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CC HARDINGS

He's not a smart kid, Sam. He needs to find a trade... Kids at school tease him something awful.

ELLIOT HARDINGS

Oh would you quit it?

CC HARDINGS

What?

ELLIOT HARDINGS

Quit bothering the boy.

CC HARDINGS

I aint bothering him.

(Elliot shakes his head)

I'm just sayin', he's not going to college so he better take up something soon. There'd be no point in college for him.

VIEW OUT THE WINDSHIELD

a road sign passes - *Bowenville, Ohio.*

CC HARDINGS (O.C.)

...He just doesn't have the mind.

A DROP OF RAIN hits the windshield.

INT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

A DRIZZLE OF RAIN NOW and Brady ensconced in a wicker chair, thick bubble of tobacco in his cheek. Slim exits the home with a mug of coffee.

BRADY

Comin' ta the end of the long days an' short nights. Figure we plant now an' we'll see beards come Spring. Five feet high, I'd say.

SLIM

Be nice if we saw 'em by Spring.

BRADY

Have us a King Harvest, huh?

(beat)

Slim... What happened that night...down in Rittsfield?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Slim looks out into the cavernous night and rain drips off the eaves and it's a question he don't wanna answer.

SLIM

...I don't remember much. Left home 'round ten. Wim Redbrook come by an' pick me up like he always done...says we'd go ta some bar down in Rittsfield jus' open up. I'd been drinkin' a while, all day I'd guess, it's who I was then, an' when I walk outta the house I hear this mewling in the air, like a damn injured cat. I turn an' there's Pop sittin' under the barn light. Liquor-hazy. There weren't nothin' special in that 'cept now he's talkin' an' Pop don't talk... Can't make out much, so I step closer to 'im an' I can hear 'im now an' he's sayin' the same thing. Over an' over...*'I shoulda yelped. I shoulda yelped 'til it burned an' burned.'* Man laid concrete his whole life, never said a word about it til then. I got in Wim Redbrook's car an' that was the last I ever saw him. Died while I was inside.

Slim turns back to Brady.

SLIM (cont'd)

That's what I remember 'bout that night. Nothin' at the bar, nothin' 'bout when that man come at me with a knife an' nothin' 'bout when they found me under a Shag tree with his blood on me...

A beat.

The HEADLIGHT OF THE SHERIFF'S CRUISER shine on the gravel driveway. Nolan exits and approaches through the rain.

SLIM (cont'd)

What the hell you want? I thought I told not to come --

SHERIFF NOLAN

I aint here for you. I came here for her sake. Got a message from Pennsylvania. Sayin' one survived from that bar...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brady looks at Slim.

SLIM

Who was it?

(beat)

Goddamnit, Mulby, which one!?

SHERIFF NOLAN

Said his name was Sam Nebraska...

And the faces of Brady and Slim go cold and numb.

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd)

Said he come outta a coma not
rememberin' a thing an' if I --

SLIM

Where is he now?

SHERIFF NOLAN

In the hospital... I'm headed up
that way in the mornin'.

A beat. Nolan puts his cap back on, walks through the
sideways rain back to his Cruiser.

Slim looks into the bedroom and the yellow glow of the
bathroom where Gabby and Leeny bathe Ben. Gabby takes the boy
into her arms and wraps a towel around him.

INT./EXT. CADILLAC BROUGHAM - NIGHT

Parked. The eyes of Sam Nebraska are seen through the rain-
blurry windshield.

INT. PROJECTION ROOM - CROSSROADS DRIVE-IN - NIGHT

POURING RAIN outside and Terry is taking down the film reels.

INT. OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS - CONTINUOUS

Elliot lights a cigarette. CC looks over at Sam and WE REVEAL
Sam is looking out the windshield at the projection room.

SAM NEBRASKA

Stay here...

CC HARDINGS

Stay here? Sam I wanted to take
Magwynn, see if I couldn't show --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sam Nebraska steps out of the car and the SOUND OF RAIN intrudes momentarily before the door closes on CC talking.

INT. TICKET BOOTH - NIGHT

Lee shuts the ticket window and turns out the light.

INT. PROJECTION ROOM - NIGHT

RAIN HITS THE WOODEN ROOF HARD as Terry puts the film back into the reel tins.

A NOISE. He turns to the doorway. Sees the silhouette of Sam Nebraska.

EXT. TICKET BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Waiting for the rain to still, Lee rocks the baby and HUMS A LULLABY. She looks over at the projection room. Notices Terry's shadow is joined BY A CURIOUSLY LARGE SHADOW.

EXT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - LATER

RAIN FALLING IN SHEETS NOW and Slim and Brady stand outside the running Buick in the driveway.

SLIM

-- I got an Aunt Suzanne I aint seen in too long. We'll head up that way tomorra.

BRADY

You don't think he'd come for us, do ya' Slim?

H-O-N-K! The car horn startles Brady.

BRADY (cont'd)

GODDAMNIT!...fuckin' hell...

INSIDE THE CAR -- Gabby chuckles and Leeny sits with Ben in her arms and he's cradling the three-legged rabbit.

BRADY (cont'd)

What'll I tell Gabby?

SLIM

Tell her nothin'. Don't let her veer from your sight an' don't let her leave ta come here. Keep a pistol close in case.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM (cont'd)
Come mornin', I'll pick up some
food in town an' then get Leeny. Be
ready.

Brady nods, climbs into the car.

Slim watches the car reverse. We move in on his eyes...

...as they DISSOLVE INTO...

...the GLOWING EYES OF SAM NEBRASKA. He's walking. Out of the
projection room.

VIEW FROM THE DOORWAY

THE RAIN and Sam Nebraska strolls across the grounds toward
the Cadillac. The moon flaunts its silver reflection across
the land, a sinuous bridge of light.

PAN INTO THE PROJECTION ROOM: to Terry Adams. Head dropped to
his shoulder. It's grisly. Neck's been broken and his face is
beaten so bad we hardly recognize him.

INT. NOLAN HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nolan, the defeated man, bathes his Mother.

MRS. NOLAN
I'm tired, Mulby...my knees hurt...

INT./EXT. FORD PICK-UP - NIGHT

Slim in the car, Gunther beside him. He glances outside his
window to the O'Riley home.

He takes a pull from the bottle of Sloe Gin now. Keeping
watch. Revolver in his lap. Suitcase in the backseat.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. O'RILEY HOME - FRONT LAWN - MORNING

THE SWAYING SHADOWS OF GAUNT SHAGBARK TREES and it's windy
but no rain.

INT. FORD PICK-UP - CONTINUOUS

THE WIND WHISTLES against the car windows. Slim stirs, opens
his eyes. *Morning*. He gathers himself, starts the truck.

INT. O'RILEY HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

THROUGH THE WINDOW Brady watches the pick-up drive away. He turns to the clock - 8:00 am - sips his coffee.

INT. CADILLAC BROUGHAM - MORNING

CLOSE ON MAGWYNN'S HAND AS A CATERPILLAR explores his fingers and Magwynn watches with child wonder.

ELLIOT HARDINGS

-- never figure we'd see him again.
Terry Adams runnin' a fuckin'
picture house.

CC HARDINGS

Never liked that fucker anyhow.
(turns back to Magwynn,
sees the caterpillar)
Oh Jesus Christ... Get that off!
Fuckin' dumb-dumb!

CC knocks the caterpillar out of his Magwynn's hand. Magwynn WHINES and kicks the back of his Father's seat. Loud.

Sam Nebraska turns back, grabs the boy's hand, jerks him forward. He removes his boxcutter, SLICES THE PALM.

Magwynn SCREAMS IN PAIN!

CC looks at Sam as if to intervene but thinks better of it.

Sam's eyes are fire.

EXT. MAIN STREET - EASTON - MORNING

And it's not much of a Main street, but it's the primary artery of town.

Slim exits the market, tosses the last bag of groceries into the bed of the truck. He climbs in and when the truck is out of view --

The Cadillac Brougham glides onto the street.

INT. EMPORIUM - MOMENTS LATER

A PHARMACIST stands behind the counter preparing a prescription and DING! THE ENTRANCE BELL and soon a shadow kills some of the light around him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM NEBRASKA (O.C.)
 (ice)
 ...Brady come in today?

PHARMACIST
 (without looking up)
 Brady? Brady O'Riley? I aint seen
 him in years.

SAM NEBRASKA (O.C.)
 Still live over in the place on
 Plankers Street?

PHARMACIST
 Don't know. Father owned a place
 off'a Mossville before he passed.

SAM NEBRASKA (O.C.)
 Which one?

PHARMACIST
 Well that's awful bold now aint --

Pharmacist looks up. His face sobers as he takes in Sam
 Nebraska's face and he can't get out a word.

SAM NEBRASKA
 ...Which place?

PHARMACIST
 It's blue...b-blue with red
 shudders. Some uh, some reason you
 ask, Mister?

But Sam is gone.

EXT. O'RILEY HOME - EARLY AFTERNOON

RED SHUDDERS BANGING AGAINST THE HOME and it's windy as hell
 and the trees CREAK like masts.

ON THE ROOF

A WEATHERVANE OF A WINGED PIG oscillates wildly.

RABBIT CAGE - BACKYARD

THE THREE-LEGGED RABBIT is uneasy, its eyes darting out to
 the expanse that stretches to a patch of woods.

RABBIT'S POV

a Gray Fox waits in the expanse.

FRONT PORCH

Brady stands atop a chair, hanging a birdfeeder that's swinging uncontrollably. He steps down now, eyes its placement. Content, he goes inside.

INT. O'RILEY HOME - FOYER

Brady enters, struggling against the wind to close the door.

BRADY

Goddamn... Got that birdfeeder up,
Gabby. Weren't easy. Gabby?

He walks into the --

KITCHEN

Just beyond the sliding glass doors, Gabby's in the backyard where the wind fills the bedsheets hung on clotheslines like sails.

On the kitchen table...A CARD. Brady picks it up.

It reads, *To Charlie: Congratulations, Dad...Love always and always. Gabby...*

He regards his sister outside. UPSTAIRS, FOOTSTEPS. Brady looks up.

EXT. SHANTY - MORNING

Leeny sits inside the Ford. Outside, Slim's packing her suitcase into the bed of the truck.

He climbs inside. Starts the car.

INT. O'RILEY HOME - BEDROOM - MORNING

Brady helps Ben pack a suitcase.

BRADY

No, I don't think we need
swimsuits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Why?

BRADY

'Cause the water's gettin' cold
that's why. You wanna swim in ice?

BEN

Yeah...

BRADY

Fine, bring it then. See what your
Mother says.

(O.S.) CAR TIRES GRUMBLE OVER GRAVEL.

Brady moves to the window. Looks. OUTSIDE, the Cadillac
Brougham rolls into the gravel driveway.

Brady's insides freeze. He grabs Ben, opens the closet door.

BRADY (cont'd)

Get in there an' don't make a
sound. Don't leave 'til I come
back... OK? OK!?

Ben's shaken by Brady's sudden turn of emotion.

BRADY (cont'd)

Keep quiet...

Brady shuts the closet doors, rushes out.

EXT. CADILLAC BROUGHAM - CONTINUOUS

IN THE DRIVEWAY. Sam steps out, looks around. No neighbors.
He approaches the front door with the shotgun. Elliot
follows.

CC tries to drag Magwynn out. The boy resists, kicking his
Father.

CC HARDINGS

Hey! Goddamn sonofabitch! Get outta
that car!

Magywnn resists. CC shakes his head, approaches the home.

GABBY

in the backyard (an expanse of grassland) and the wind is
crazy as she holds the three-legged rabbit in her arms and
bites down on a peach.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABBY
 (to the rabbit)
 Aw you're nervous, sweetie, aren't
 ya? It's jus' an angry wind is all.

INT. O'RILEY HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Brady RIPS open a drawer, digs through and removes a revolver. His hands are shaking as he loads the gun and bullets are hitting the floor and he's looking outside at Gabby taking the bedsheets down.

BRADY
 Gabby! GABBY!

But she can't hear a word over the wind. The gun is loaded now. Brady looks out the window, sees the top of Elliot's head. He shoots - BANG! THE WINDOW SHATTERS. Elliot ducks.

BRADY (cont'd)
 GABBY!!

Brady RUNS TOWARDS THE BACK PORCH DOOR AND --

BA-WOOM! BA-WOOM!

...he falls to the floor.

SAM NEBRASKA

shotgun drawn, steps towards Brady like the glide of water over ice. He looks down at the boy crawling towards his sister...the wake of blood he's leaving behind.

BRADY
 (blood-gurgled)
 ...Gabby...Gab...by...

SAM NEBRASKA
 Where's the other one?

Sam follows the direction of Brady's eyes...to Gabby outside.

EXT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

GABBY'S BARLEY-COLORED HAIR strands blow across her face and there is only the sound of WILD WIND WHISTLING and it's loud as hell and you can't hear a thing besides it.

CC steps around one corner of the home. Elliot the other.

Gabby pauses, takes them in. Their guns. Her eyes narrow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE SLIDING GLASS DOORS OPEN and Sam Nebraska steps out slowly and drops his shotgun...removes the Boxcutter.

Gabby drops the peach.

She is alone with all that can happen.

CLOSE ON THE GRAY FOX

watching everything. Emotionless. Eyes like pools of tar.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE MUTILATED, INSECT-RIDDEN BODY

of the three-legged rabbit. Nearby, the Gray Fox saunters back to the woods.

EXT. O'RILEY HOME - DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Ford glides into the gravel driveway behind the Buick.

INT. O'RILEY HOME - FOYER - AFTERNOON

Slim enters, Leeny behind him.

SLIM

Gabby? We're takin' a trip, babe.

Slim approaches the kitchen. Brady's body lies just inside the sliding glass doors. Slim rushes up to him...he's barely breathing. Blood.

SLIM (cont'd)

Brady? Brady Jesus answer me...

Slim rolls him over. His belly bleeds. His breaths are low and fading and his eyes are closing.

SLIM (cont'd)

Brady what happened? Brady talk to me goddamnit! Brady talk!

Brady can't speak. He just stares. But he's alive.

SLIM (cont'd)

(frantic)

Gabby? Ben - oh God, Ben -

(calling out)

Gabby!? GABBY!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Leeny leans down and pushes Slim aside like a Mother and she's got a blanket for Brady.

Slim stands and looks around frantically when...his eyes find the backyard. He freezes.

BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Slim exits the home like a zombie. Gabby lies dead in the grass, blood soaking her hair. Eyes closed.

On the facade of the home, written with her blood -- '*Birds without wings.*'

Slim falls to his knees beside her body. Broken.

DISSOLVE TO:

DARKNESS - LATER

Leeny opens the closet door, flooding Ben with light. He whimpers.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BATHROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON BLOODY BATH WATER and Gabby's body sits up in the tub.

Slim is beside her, pink-eyed from tears held back. He's holding the card in his hand. Reading it over and over.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - DUSK

THE SKY BOILS LIQUID FIRE and IN THE DISTANCE is Slim with a shovel, digging, and now pulling the Winchester from the deep soil.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

THE WINCHESTER ON THE TABLE AND THE BOTTLE OF SLOE GIN and Slim is taking pulls and the black-eyed dog's in his eyes and there are explosions in his chest.

HEADLIGHTS FLASH INTO THE HOME momentarily. Slim turns.

EXT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MOONLESS AND EVEN WINDIER THAN BEFORE. Slim bursts out of the house, Winchester leveled, ready to shoot. He pauses...

Nolan stands at the bottom of the steps in uniform, Sheriff's Cruiser in the driveway. His eyes take in the Winchester and Slim doesn't hide it.

SLIM
Goddamn it, Mulby, what you doin' here?

SHERIFF NOLAN
On my way back from Phil --
(sees the blood on Slim's shirt, the gun)
Who's blood you got on your shirt?

Nolan feels his pistol. Slim raises the shotgun.

SLIM
Get back in that car, Mulby!

SHERIFF NOLAN
Where's my son?

SLIM
He's fine now get outta here.

Slim's talked enough and he turns, walks back inside the home. Nolan follows.

INT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SHERIFF NOLAN
Where's Gabby? It's her blood...
GODDAMN YOU, is it hers?!

SLIM
You're too late, Mulby.

Nolan grabs Slim's shoulder, whips him around. Slim shoves the Winchester under Nolan's chin.

SLIM (cont'd)
You got three seconds ta get in that car. Three seconds before I kill you an' I will.

SHERIFF NOLAN
It's that one...one that got outta the hospital...I seen it...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM

She's gone...

Nolan falls back against the wall and for a moment he forgets how to breathe.

SHERIFF NOLAN

Jesus Christ, she's...

Slim peers out the door windows.

SLIM

They'll come for me. It wont be no use callin' no one neither. It'll all be said before they get here.

SHERIFF NOLAN

They killed her...

SLIM

GET OUTTA HERE, MULBY!...I'll kill you. I don't have an ounce a care in my body no more.

Nolan doesn't move. Doesn't flinch. He stares right back at Slim.

SHERIFF NOLAN

I don't either...an' whatever I did left with her...years ago...

SLIM

She never loved you.

SHERIFF NOLAN

But I loved her...what's it matter if she loved me back?

Nolan COUGHS and COUGHS and takes a flask from his pocket and sips. Finally, he draws his pistol, steels himself.

A very long beat. The two men stand on either side of the door. Quiet. Old friends and the basest enemies...thinking of her.

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd)

...Why didn't you run?

SLIM

Run ta where? I run as far as I'd like but that shadow aint never gone...an' I can't see that it ever will be.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

(O.S.) DIRT CRUMBLING UNDER TIRES. Slim looks outside. The Cadillac pulls into the driveway.

INT. CADILLAC BROUGHAM - CONTINUOUS

DARKNESS CLOAKS SAM NEBRASKA. CC and Elliot are silent, afraid to look at Sam. Magwynn is whimpering, holding his cut hand.

EXT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - PORCH - CONTINUOUS

THE DOOR SHOOTS OPEN and it's Slim with the Winchester leveled at his shoulder and BA-WOOM! BA-WOOM! and --

Nolan is right behind him, FIRING HIS PISTOL - BANG! BANG! BANG!

They rush back inside to reload.

INT. CADILLAC BROUGHAM - CONTINUOUS

THE WINDSHIELD IS COBWEBBED and all are ducking except Sam Nebraska who hasn't moved.

CC is WHEEZING FOR AIR and there's a hole in his stomach and Magwynn is SOBBING loudly.

INT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Slim and Nolan reload and peer out the door windows.

EXT. CADILLAC BROUGHAM - CONTINUOUS

Sam Nebraska exits with his shotgun. CC falls out of the car, stomach a bloody mess.

Elliot climbs out now, sees his brother.

ELLIOT HARDINGS

CC?

(seeing all the blood)

Jesus fuckin' christ! You fuckers!
You fuckers killed - aw Jesus
Christ, CC...

Elliot stands and takes his pistol from his waist and follows Sam towards the home.

INT. WEATHERED FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Slim by the door and Nolan nearby and Slim nods and Nolan moves to the rear of the house.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

SAM NEBRASKA approaches the sliding glass doors and, looking inside, Nolan is by the back door, gun drawn. A BARK! Sam turns to see --

Gunther in the backyard. BARKING at him.

SLIM

leaves the front door, moves towards the kitchen when BANG! BANG! TWO SHOTS SHATTER THE WINDOW BESIDE THE FRONT DOOR.

Slim falls to the ground. Hit. Elliot KICKS OPEN THE DOOR. Slim's struggling with the Winchester. Elliot takes aim --

ELLIOT HARDINGS

You motherfucker --

- BOOM! BOOM! ELLIOT FLIES OUTSIDE ONTO THE PORCH, crumples to the ground.

Slim looks up...

NOLAN STANDS IN THE HALLWAY, pistol in hand. Slim looks at him, nods slightly, then sticks out his hand. Nolan takes it, helps Slim up.

SHERIFF NOLAN

(to Slim)

You alright...?

SLIM

He hit me...

Nolan looks around, checking for Sam as he carries Slim into the --

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

and into the dark corner. Nolan sits beside him. Reloads. Silence. We hear them BREATHING. Then --

VIEW ON THE SLIDING GLASS DOORS

-- SMASH! GUNTHER'S BODY FLIES THROUGH THE GLASS and lands THUD! in a messy and bloody pile on the tiled kitchen floor.

From the darkness, Sam Nebraska steps into the home.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nolan breathes heavily beside Slim, trying to muffle his own coughing.

SHERIFF NOLAN

(quietly)

Slim? Slim you alive...?

Slim's head slumps and his eyes are wearied and fading and blood paints his hand covering the bullet hole in his side.

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd)

Slim...?

We HEAR FOOTSTEPS NEARBY. Nolan quiets his breathing. Slim lifts his head slightly.

SLIM'S POV

looking out a window to the land flanking the home. And suddenly the darkness is light-flooded land. Gold and warm with tall wheat.

And, and now Raymond is there, walking the field. And there, there's Jonah, the old man, and he's talking to his Godson.

And Gabby, his love, enters with folded starched sheets pulled from clotheslines.

They are talking, something of great interest but little importance.

Darkness falls once again.

SLIM

stares blankly outside the window. Nolan nudges Slim.

SHERIFF NOLAN

Slim? Slim...?

Slim's head lurches.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

More FOOTSTEPS and Nolan looks up to see Sam Nebraska approaching the front door, SHOTGUN DRAWN. He walks past the body of Elliot and climbs the wooden steps slowly, methodically. THUD...THUD...THUD...THUD.

When he's gone from sight --

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd)
We gotta go, Slim. We gotta go now.

Nolan tries to lift Slim up but his body is limp.

SHERIFF NOLAN (cont'd)
Jesus Christ, Slim, get up...We
hafta go now. Slim...?

Slim's head lifts slowly and his fading eyes move to the kitchen where he sees Gunther...dead among the broken glass.

Slim labors to his knees, moves towards the dead dog.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sam Nebraska walks slowly under a single yellow light. Downstairs, THE SOUND OF FEET MOVING AND A DOOR OPENING and Sam turns, moves to the stairwell and --

BY THE FRONT DOOR

Nolan is exiting when BA-WOOM BA-WOOM! Nolan drops. Sam descends the staircase. THUD...THUD...THUD...THUD.

By the landing, Nolan is panting and bleeding from his chest and he's crawling towards outside desperately, coughing blood.

Sam raises his shotgun...BOOM! A fatal shot to Nolan's head.

There's a trail of blood leading out to the porch.

EXT. PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Sam steps onto the porch, reloads, and the WIND FLAPS HIS SUIT JACKET WILDLY. He follows the blood trail down the steps and into the DARKNESS OF THE FRONT YARD.

Two eyes glisten in the night before him. He REMOVES HIS BOXCUTTER and --

From the sky, MAYFLIES FALL IN DROVES. Thousands of them hit the earth without a sound. And Sam just lets them hit him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Soon they've all fallen. Only the primordial wind is heard.

Sam moves towards the eyes...getting closer...something discernible...the dog...Gunther...

SLIM (O.C.)
Sam Nebraska...

Sam Nebraska turns slowly back to the house and --

BA-WOOM! SLIM ON THE BOTTOM OF THE PORCH STEPS, one weak hand holding the Winchester.

Sam drops to the earth. Blood soaking his charcoal suit.

Slim struggles to his feet, stumbles weakly towards him.

SLIM'S POV

looking down at Sam Nebraska among the twitching Mayflies. His eyes now dark.

SAM NEBRASKA
(a blood-mumbled sound)
...b-birds...w-w-without...wings...

Slim reloads the Winchester, aims the gun down at Sam Nebraska breathing short quick breaths and BA-WOOM!

The curious-looking man dies.

BY THE CADILLAC

MAGWYNN'S WHIMPERING on the ground, holding his dead father CC in his arms and the poor boy's pissed himself.

SLIM

looks at Magwynn holding his Father. And he tries to walk towards the home now, but his legs fail him and he falls to the ground.

CLOSE ON SLIM

blood permeating his shirt and there is nothing left of him...nothing at all...it's all taken...his eyes fading...looking up at God.

FADE TO BLACK.

ON A GORGEOUS FIELD OF WHEAT - SOME YEARS LATER

THE SUN LAY ON THE WHEAT and warms it. A sea of gold. The sky is blue and endless. All is quiet.

Ben comes into view, now eight, hair the color of barley. He walks about aimlessly, letting the wheat heads tickle his open palm. He turns now to -

SLIM

walking the field, his field, earnestly checking the beards and kernels. At peace.

BEN

Dad?

SLIM

What is it?

BEN

It's hot...

SLIM

You wanna go inside?

(Slim looks up. Ben nods)

Come here...

Ben walks towards Slim and Slim, the man with the black-eyed dog inside him, takes the boy into his arms and we watch as they approach the weathered farmhouse, painted and refurbished.

Brady sits on the porch swing beside Leeny, her head resting on his shoulder.

BRADY

Goin' in already?

SLIM

He's tired...

Slim walks inside the home.

And soon, very soon, it will be time to harvest.

But not yet.

FADE OUT:

THE END