

BEYOND THE PALE

by

Chad Feehan

based on the novel *Twilight*

by

William Gay

Vendome Pictures
9320 Wilshire Blvd. Ste 204
Beverly Hills, CA 90212
310-786-9900

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EXT. CALVERT FARMHOUSE - TENNESSEE 1973 - NIGHT

A farmhouse built in the lee of the Appalachian Mountains. An eruption of bloodcurdling screams is accompanied by the sound of crashing furniture. All is quiet.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

CLAUDELLE (17) is crying as she fights to pry the window open with desperation. Its edges are painted shut.

CLAUDELLE
(sotto)
Open damn it.

She SLAMS her palms against the base of the window frame. The ARROWHEAD necklace she is wearing swings on its leather thong with each hopeless attempt.

An unknown ASSAILANT arrives at the locked door and begins to twist on the knob. He starts HAMMERING his weight against the oak panels - WHAM! And again - WHAM!

GRANVILLE (O.C.)
*Let me in, Let me in, little pig or
I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll
blow your house in.*

Claudelle looks back; the hinges are already SPLINTERING. She uses her whole body as leverage. She pushes against the glass and the window slowly creaks upward.

WHAM! Again - WHAM! The door shatters. Claudelle screams with each POUNDING as she slides the window inch by inch. Suddenly the door SHATTERS out of its frame.

GRANVILLE SUTTER (40) storms into the bathroom like a tornado of terror. His eyes stare at the window curtain as it billows in the breeze.

EXT. CALVERT FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Claudelle sprints for her life. She moves through shadows and muddy bottomlands. She heaves with torment and falls and gets back to her feet. Mud is splashed across her nightgown.

Behind her the farmhouse door swings open as if it were under the onslaught of a mighty wind. Granville steps out to search the darkness for his prey.

EXT. BARN LOT - CONTINUOUS

Claudelle hides behind a crude shack. Her lips tremble. Tears stream down her face. Terrified she reaches for the arrowhead around her throat and begins to thumb it. After a long moment she peers around the corner of the shack.

The farmhouse door is open and light spills over the yard but Granville is nowhere to be seen. She eyes a black *Ford Bronco* idling 40 yards ahead.

She sits back down and closes her eyes. She breathes deep and thumbs the arrowhead once more before rising to her feet. She turns to sprint for open territory.

WHAM! A set of scarred and bony knuckles connect solidly with her nose. Claudelle flies onto her back with a muddy THUD.

She squints against the sting of her broken nose as Granville steps over her and grabs the leather thong around her neck.

He hoists her up and twists the thong in his hand so it coils against the flesh of her throat.

Claudelle begins slapping Granville. He remains unwavering as he chokes her desperate eyes into nothingness.

EXT. ROAD - THE NEXT MORNING

A truck emerges out of the sun. Its worn body is fired orange by the malefic rays of light flaring behind it.

The quilt-covered CARGO it hauls shifts with every crevice in the gravel road as the DRIVER disdains the shoddy route.

EXT. BLUEBIRD CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Still moving in a cacophony of rattles and shrieks and creaks the truck approaches.

A gregarious MAN is sweeping the sidewalk with his threadbare broom. He halts the driver with an upraised hand.

MAN

What you got there, Sandy?

The driver turns and spits chewing tobacco out the window. He wipes his mouth and glances at the quilt-covered cargo.

DRIVER

Dead folks.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - LATER

The truck and its curious cargo have already accrued a motley of EARLY RISERS; they journey like a parade to the courthouse lawn.

The driver exits onto the ice-coated grass. He turns to study the inquisitive people surrounding him.

DRIVER

Get Sheriff Bellwether out here.

A FAT MAN in overalls approaches like some beguiled patron of the macabre.

FAT MAN

Bellwether's done been sent for.
Who all is it, Sandy?

The driver pulls off the quilt. The fat man shuffles his feet clumsily as the other town-folk divert their eyes in shame.

FAT MAN (CONT'D)

Goddamn it, that girl's half naked.
Did you not have enough respect to cover her up?

DRIVER

I ain't Fenton Breece, Hooper. All I undertook to do was bring em in. That's all the undertakin I aim to do. You want to handle em, then you cover em up.

A little BOY goes unnoticed as he approaches the tailgate. He sees a MURDERED FAMILY of FOUR exhibited in grim fashion. His eyes zero in on Claudelle. The arrowhead thong is wound tight into her bruised flesh. A welter of pungent blood covers all.

FAT MAN

There are some sorry son of a bitches in this world.

DRIVER

I believe half of em are runnin wild in the Harrikin.

FAT MAN

Who's runnin wild? Who done this mess anyway?

DRIVER

God knows or more likely the Devil.

BOY

Look.

The boy is pointing to a BLOODY LUMP of curly hair inside the truckbed. A DOG is in there. His MOTHER quickly approaches to shield his young eyes from the horrific tableau.

FAT MAN

Well, I'll be damned.

The fat man pulls out the Scottish Terrier. Its eyes are wide open and its distended tongue is purple. But strangest of all its ears have been pierced with a gaudy pair of gemstones.

DRIVER

I don't believe I ever seen a dog wearin earrings.

FAT MAN

Reckon why whoever it was killed the dog anyway?

DRIVER

I've thought about that some. I believe it was just all there was left to kill.

FADE TO BLACK.

Beyond the Pale

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

CORRIE (21) and her brother KENNETH TYLER (18) walk through a stand of cypress that shrouds the graveyard. A heavy rain has begun to fall. It runs from the tip of his shovel.

13 Days Earlier

Corrie moves ahead amongst the milk-white gravestones shining her flashlight with a sense of purpose. Its stark beam hits a simple epitaph reading *Mann "Moose" Tyler 1932 - 1973*.

CORRIE

Here. This one here.

TYLER

(drawing near)

Yeah. This is crazy as shit.

Soaked to the bone Tyler glances at his sister and drives his shovel into the mud.

He begins to dump the loose earth atop the next grave. Corrie sits down underneath a cypress and pulls her legs close.

Shielding herself from the bitter rain she lights a cigarette and watches Tyler work this weird task. Even in this sinister setting Corrie Tyler is rather beautiful.

DISSOLVE TO:

The final embers of her cigarette radiate orange and close to the filter. Corrie removes it from her mouth and extinguishes it on the ground beside two others.

Tyler is now six feet under when the sounds of metal scraping against metal emanate from the fresh hole.

TYLER (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Bring me the light.

CORRIE
Come and get it.

TYLER (O.C.)
Goddamn, can't you do anything?

CORRIE
I don't want to see.

Tyler mutters something indecipherable and clamors out of the grave all gummed with mud. He wordlessly takes the flashlight and descends back into the hole.

The shovel strikes the casket. Corrie places her hands to her ears hoping to avoid the squeak of the coffin lid.

Silence. The uneasy moan of wind in the trees. Tyler comes up to the gravestone and sits hunkered in the rain with a ragged sound to his breath. He might be crying.

CORRIE (CONT'D)
What we thought?

TYLER
Worse.

Corrie leans forward to look and gasps. MANN TYLER lies naked in his casket. Lace panties cover his genitalia and mounds of rotten garbage litter his bloated corpse.

Corrie turns to Tyler; his frightened eyes are burning palely in the dark.

CORRIE
The son of a bitch--

EXT. CENTRE - THE NEXT DAY

FENTON BREECE (44) waddles through town wearing a fawncolored topcoat over a tan gabardine suit. A matching vest covers his well-fed belly.

TOWN-FOLK nod to him formally. He welcomes their pleasantries by effeminately tipping his felt *Stetson*. He passes a squalid watering hole called *The Bobcat Bar* and crosses the street to the much finer *Centre Bank & Trust*.

INT. THE BOBCAT BAR - CONTINUOUS

SHERIFF ODEL (52) pitches the *Centre Sentinel* onto one of the round tabletops; its headline reads *COST OF WATERGATE SCANDAL REACHES \$6 MILLION*.

ODEL

Jackasses.

Odel sips his beer and glances at the bar. Corrie is carrying a case of *Miller* from the storeroom to the icebox.

She is wearing high-waisted jeans. Odel canvasses the side to side movement of her hips.

HARLAN (O.C.)

I wouldn't kick that out of bed.

DEPUTY HARLAN (25) saddles the stool beside him; his eyes are also locked in lust.

HARLAN (CONT'D)

Unless there was more room on the floor.

Odel turns to see fiery red hair and an aquiline nose and the badge reading *Deputy Sheriff of Centre*.

ODEL

Who is that, anyway?

HARLAN

Old Moose Tyler's daughter.

Corrie begins unloading bottles into the cooler. Harlan swigs his tumbler of scotch.

HARLAN (CONT'D)

Don't know who she got her looks from, but she damn sure never got em from that son of a bitch.

MRS. TARKINTON (42) enters from the outside world and quickly sets her bitter gaze on the bar.

MRS. TARKINTON
Ms. Tyler.

CORRIE
(without looking up)
Gimme a sec.

MRS. TARKINTON
You've had twelve days.

Immediately Corrie feels a massive weight and she reaches for the ARROWHEAD necklace around her throat.

CORRIE
Mrs. Tarkinton--

MRS. TARKINTON
No more buts. You and your brother
have worn my patience thinner than
water.

Mrs. Tarkinton presents a piece of paper with *Eviction Notice* written at the top. Corrie reluctantly takes it.

CORRIE
It's come to this?

MRS. TARKINTON
You've got seventy-two hours.

Corrie sighs and shoves the paper into her pocket. She begins jamming more bottles into the cooler. Mrs. Tarkinton turns to find Odel watching the unpleasant exchange.

MRS. TARKINTON (CONT'D)
Sheriff Odel.

ODEL
Annie.

MRS. TARKINTON
May I have a word outside?

Odel eyes Corrie and stands. He readjusts his pistol belt and follows Mrs. Tarkinton out the door.

CORRIE
(sotto)
Shit.

Harlan shifts his sight from Odel's departure onto Corrie. He downs his drink and rises. He swaggers toward the bar like an ungainly bird.

HARLAN
Can I help?

CORRIE
Not unless you got a couple hundred dollars to spare or can convince Odel to let us be.

HARLAN
Depends on what's being offered in return.

Harlan reaches to touch her chest and she snaps back; a piece of blonde hair falls across her eyes. He tries to move it off her face.

CORRIE
Fuck off, Harlan.

HARLAN
What?

CORRIE
You heard me.

HARLAN
(sly)
No, I didn't. Say it again.

CORRIE
Sick bastard.

Corrie angrily pulls off her apron. She turns and marches for the rear door.

HARLAN
Don't forget you're a Tyler. A piece of poor white trash. It's in your blood.

She halts and stares at Harlan with spite; he smiles a toothy and unsettling grin.

INT. BELLYSTRETCHER CAFE - DUSK

Fenton Breece sits in one of the vinyl booths. He sets a bank deposit pouch on the table, then nods to an OLD-TIMER sitting nearby.

FENTON
Winter is coming.

OLD-TIMER
'tis.

An amicable WAITRESS approaches with a coffee and hands it to Breece.

FENTON
Thank you dear.

Breece grabs the sugar shaker and begins heaping the granular bits into his coffee.

WAITRESS
Everybody's real appreciative for last week, Mr. Breece.

FENTON
I was just sorry Mrs. Raymer came to pass.

WAITRESS
We were too. Only saving grace was an elegant service.

The waitress touches Breece with a tender hand and ambles off to the kitchen. He leans back to drink his coffee and notices the old-timer gazing outside.

OLD-TIMER
Anybody's dog who wants to go huntin.

Breece looks out the window. Corrie is leaning on the side of a primer-spotted pickup with tears in her eyes; she furiously smokes a cigarette.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Corrie feels Breece lock his eyes onto her soft breasts, then drop them to her crotch, then back to her breasts. She flicks her cigarette and raises her middle finger.

INT. BELLYSTRETCHER CAFE - CONTINUOUS

The old-timer is eyeballing Breece with sardonic amusement as Corrie climbs behind the wheel of the truck.

OLD-TIMER
You ain't so good, is you?

Breece avoids his eyes. The old-timer snorts phlegm and rises for the exit.

OLD-TIMER (CONT'D)
 Lookin at that girl like a puppy
 with two peckers.

EXT. TYLER HOUSE - NIGHT

The soft sound of music can be heard emanating from within. A CROW sits on Tyler's truck; it caws momentarily before taking flight.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Corrie and Tyler are sitting at a beat-up table, listening to an 8-track and finishing the remains of a meager meal.

CORRIE
 What do you think we ought to do?

TYLER
 Do? Put his sorry ass away. Tell
 the law and let them open the
 graves themselves.

CORRIE
 You think they would?

TYLER
 I know they would. What would you
 do with him?

She grows quiet and slips the arrowhead back and forth on her necklace; the low light causes her eyes to appear opaque.

CORRIE
 He's rich and respected. We're poor
 and hated.

TYLER
 Rich is no good here. All these
 dead people's folks. We just opened
 up a few of the graves. There's
 still worse covered up. Somebody's
 husband or son would kill the sorry
 son of a bitch.

CORRIE
 We've got to get more evidence.
 (duplicitous)
 Get him ourselves.

TYLER

More? What more do we need? Anyway, what's all this we mess? It's not our job. Let the law or somebody dig up a few more graves. There's your more.

CORRIE

Seems like we never had much luck with the law. Daddy never did.

TYLER

Criminals hardly ever do.

CORRIE

Well, you know so much about it. I doubt his son would either.

TYLER

You've got a hell of a way of looking at things.

Corrie grows quiet again. Tyler eyes her as he takes the last bite of his food.

CORRIE

I know where to make Fenton Breece pay where it'll hurt him the worst.

TYLER

How long have you been thinking about this?

CORRIE

I guess from the you minute you saw him hauling that vault back to the funeral home.

(softer)

Since the son of a bitch made a pass at me at my own Daddy's funeral.

TYLER

This is crazy and you know it, and whatever you got in mind, you can include me out.

CORRIE

You can't be included out of a family. Once you're in one, you're in it for life. You can't turn away from blood. Will you help me?

TYLER
This mess is too crazy for me.

CORRIE
He should pay for what he's done.

TYLER
No. Not only no, but hell no.

She reaches into her pocket and pulls out the *Eviction Notice* from Mrs. Tarkinton; she lays it on the table.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Jesus, why didn't you tell me?

CORRIE
I'm telling you now.

Corrie takes his hands. She squeezes until his regretful eyes meet hers.

CORRIE (CONT'D)
Please. You're all I've got.

EXT. BREECE FUNERAL HOME - THE NEXT DAY

Here is wealth beyond measure. The glass sign reads in Gothic script *Breece Funeral Home*.

Tyler sits hidden behind sassafras trees. He searches for any signs of life on the property. There is none. Tyler pulls the hood of his sweatshirt low and overhead.

Huffing down the grass slope toward the house, he first rings the door bell and waits. There is no answer. He looks through a bay window. The mortuary is deserted.

Tyler wanders around back. He passes curious Oriental-looking hedges and marble fountains and stone statuaries.

EXT. CARPORT - CONTINUOUS

A gleaming *Lincoln* convertible is parked. Tyler passes it and his lean frame is reflected in the specular surface. He steps to the back door and drops his hand to the knob; it opens.

INT. MUD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tyler enters and is struck with the sheer opulence. The floor is crafted from Jerusalem stone and flocked paper adorns each wall.

INT. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

He steps onto the Oriental rug. Paintings of European hunters from centuries prior hang behind the stately desk. Tyler goes around it.

He opens the center drawer and rifles through a messy mixture of papers. He opens each progressive drawer and finds nothing until he pulls on the last one; it is locked.

Tyler hesitates, then snatches an ivory letter opener off the sideboard.

EXT. BREECE FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

Sunlight off the lustrous surface of a silver *Cadillac* hearse winks as it winds the curved drive.

Breece parks in the roundabout and steps out with mail in his hand. He goes to the front door and fumbles with his keys.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Tyler has the letter opener deeply imbedded in the drawer. He leverages with all of his strength - SNAP. The drawer springs open to reveal a SMALL BRIEFCASE sitting inside.

SLAM - the sound of the front door shutting echoes throughout the house. Tyler feels panic course his veins.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Breece ambles down the hallway while perusing the pages of an *Enchantingly Feminine* catalogue.

He's too distracted by the copious number of bras and panties and young models to see his office door move seemingly on its own.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Breece enters with his nose still buried in his catalogue. He sits in a silk chair and drops his mail on the desk.

He immediately sees the open drawer and its vandalized top as well the letter opener lying on the rug.

Breece's eyes dart about the room. There is no soul about. He rises and awkwardly rushes into the hall.

After a long moment the door swings away from the wall. Tyler is hiding behind it with the small briefcase in his hand.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Tyler runs for the front door and sees Breece standing at the far end of the hall; Breece whips around like a carousel.

FENTON

Wait a Goddamn minute!

Tyler yanks on the door handle, but it doesn't open. He tries again. Breece narrows the gap. Tyler looks back in horror. He fumbles with the dead-bolt.

EXT. BREECE FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

Tyler breaks out the door with Breece on his heels. As Breece tries to grab him, Tyler jumps off the landing and clears the stairs and bolts toward the grassy slope.

Breece runs down the steps like a penguin. As he steps on the drive his ankle gives and he tumbles onto the roundabout.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Tyler breaks through the cover of trees. He crashes through a thicket with brush whipping past him. He continues to sprint.

He finally slides behind a stump to catch his breath. He sits staring at the small briefcase. His heart THUMPS. Tyler pries the fastened latch until it breaks. He reaches inside.

A pair of lavender PANTIES. They are discolored down one side with a faded rust-brown stain on the hip. He lays them on the ground with wonder. He reaches back into the briefcase.

A stack of glossy PHOTOGRAPHS. Tyler slips off the rubberband and rifles hastily through them. Suddenly he drops them as if they seared his hand. His face looks infected.

The photos have scattered, some face up. They are all of NUDE WOMEN. Some young, some old. Some pretty, some ugly. They are arranged in grotesque configurations and all are UNMISTAKABLY DEAD. Legs spread flagrantly, some grouped in mimicry of acts of lesbianism. Their faces painted in carmine smiles. Here is BREECE himself. Nude and gross and grinning. Capering happily among them in pure necrophilic infamy.

INT. FRONT ROOM - EVENING

Corrie is on the end of their tattered sofa. She holds up the panties delicately by the unstained hem.

CORRIE

Well, you certainly outdid yourself.

She sets the panties aside, then reaches inside the ill-fated briefcase and pulls the photographs out.

CORRIE (CONT'D)

We've got the son of a bitch.

Tyler is straddling a folding chair across from her. His arms are folded over the top slat with one hand intertwined in his messy brown hair.

TYLER

I tell you what, Corrie. You've got him. Not me. I want nothing whatever to do with him. I don't want to talk to him. To see him. To even hear his voice.

CORRIE

I do. I want to watch his face when I tell him.

She studies the pictures clinically one by one before setting each down. Tyler watches his sister; he's touched with pity.

CORRIE (CONT'D)

Why are you looking at me like that?

TYLER

I was thinking I've known you all my life, and yet I don't know you at all.

CORRIE

There's nothing to know. I get up, I work, I do the housework. I go to bed. Then tomorrow I get up and do the same thing over again.

Tyler simply shakes his head which seems to infuriate Corrie.

CORRIE (CONT'D)

I don't know you. I don't know where you go when you're wandering around. What you think.

(MORE)

CORRIE (CONT'D)

No one's ever known what you think.
It's like you hardly ever talk.

TYLER

This is absolutely crazy as shit.
There is just no way he's going to
smile and start counting money into
your hand.

CORRIE

What can he do? Run to the law?
There's nothing he can do but pay
up. Put yourself in his shoes.

TYLER

I don't want in his shoes. And if I
was I'd cut my throat.

EXT. BREECE FUNERAL HOME - THE NEXT DAY

Thunder booms as obese rain drops ricochet off the glittering
bricks of the ostentatious mortuary.

INT. WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Corrie is sitting in a contoured lounge with *Better Homes and
Garden* in her hand. MS. CECIL (60) watches her disapprovingly
from behind a bureaucratic desk.

MS. CECIL

What was it about?

CORRIE

It was about me seeing Fenton
Breece.

MS. CECIL

Perhaps I could help you.

CORRIE

You couldn't unless you're Fenton
Breece, and I don't believe you
are.

Ms. Cecil feels her punctually coiffed and blueish hair as if
it were ruffled by the precocious girl.

MS. CECIL

I reckon you'll have to wait then.
Mr. Breece is a busy man.

CORRIE
You have no idea.

The outer door opens and Breece himself enters. He's dripping wet from the slantwise rain falling outside.

FENTON
Messy out.

He folds his umbrella and places it in the nearby wastebasket to drain. His pale hand smooths a misplaced wing of hair.

MS. CECIL
A lady to see you.

Breece turns to find Corrie; a moment of recognition flickers in his eyes. He looks back to the woman behind the desk, then down to his rose-gold *Rolex*.

FENTON
You can go any time, Ms. Cecil.
(to Corrie)
My office is back here.

INT. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Corrie sits in an antique armchair with her hands clutched in her lap. Her eyes are unwavering and fierce.

CORRIE
You buried my father.

Breece is fixed on the fullness of her lips and the sharpness of her clavicle.

FENTON
(nodding)
Mann Tyler.

CORRIE
He had an insurance. We paid for an eight hundred dollar vault to go over his casket, and it's not there anymore.

Breece stands up and crosses the oak floor. He peers down the hall and shuts the door. He returns to his chair.

CORRIE (CONT'D)
Just not there. And that's not all. He's buried without all the clothes we bought for him, and he's been... mutilated.

A tic begins to pulsate at the corner of one bulging eye like something monstrous is stirring beneath his flesh.

FENTON

Absurd. I'm a reputable businessman. My work is exemplary, a matter of pride to me, and you are treading on dangerous legal ground if you intend to accuse me of misconduct.

Corrie leans forward with her elbows on her knees. She smiles slightly as the word twists in her mouth.

CORRIE

Misconduct?

FENTON

Dangerous ground indeed. A matter to be taken up with my counsel.

Breece reaches for the rotary phone on the opposite corner of his desk. Corrie leans back unaffected as he begins to dial.

CORRIE

We dug him up.

FENTON

(stopping)
You what?

CORRIE

We dug him up. We had reason to suspect something was wrong with his burial, and we were proved right. Then just to be sure we dug up several more. I forget how many. I don't even want to think about the things we found. No one would expect to find the things we did.

Breece looks directly at Corrie, desperately trying to remain stoic in the face of her accusation.

FENTON

Graverobbers. Vandals digging up graves and committing atrocities. I've heard of such things--

CORRIE

I've heard of them myself. But none where these vandals took pictures of you and a bunch of naked dead women and hid them in your briefcase.

His eyes dart away; they are hard glassy blue and as slick as wet marbles. Lightning crashes outside.

CORRIE (CONT'D)

You're finished. You don't begin to expect how finished you are.

FENTON

What do you want?

CORRIE

I want the things done to my daddy made right. I want him buried with decency.

FENTON

Of course. If you aren't satisfied, I'll do anything to satisfy you.

CORRIE

I'm a *hell* of a way from satisfied.

FENTON

I'll refund your money. No question about that. I could even give you a liberal sum for what they call punitive damages.

CORRIE

And what would you expect in return for that?

Breece shamefully notes her secondhand clothing and the cheap arrowhead necklace around her throat.

FENTON

The pictures, of course. I'd have to have them back. They're subject to misunderstanding, a delicate subject, part of an experiment.

CORRIE

I expect you're right about that. I was wonderin about the panties. Are they part of the experiment too?

One hand trembles violently. Breece tries to stay it with the other. His cheeks turn crimson.

FENTON

I'd want your agreement to remain silent. I'd have to have it in writing. I have a position in the community, a reputation to maintain.

CORRIE

I want twenty thousand dollars. That's nothing to you, but pocket change.

FENTON

Whatever you call it, it's extortion. Blackmail. Both of them are against the law.

CORRIE

All right. We both go before a grand jury and tell our stories. We'll see how it all comes out when they dig up a grave or two.

FENTON

I may have to convert some bonds into cash.

CORRIE

Then you'd best be converting. We'll be waiting on you.

Corrie rises. As she is halfway toward the door, Breece makes some curious strangled noise.

FENTON

You must think I'm terrible.

Corrie doesn't have an answer for that. She walks through the door and pulls it shut.

EXT. BREECE FUNERAL HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Corrie exits onto the curved driveway. She looks up and feels the rain course down her cheeks as if grasping the soon to be freedom from this town.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Breece sits unmoving. He shuts his eyes hoping an alternative will rescue him. Dusk gathers at the windows.

Finally he opens his eyes and reaches underneath the stack of papers on his desk. He slides out *The Centre Sentinel*.

Its headline reads *LOCAL MAN ACQUITTED OF MURDER*. Measures of peace slowly return to his face.

FENTON
Granville Sutter.

EXT. DARLA'S BOUTIQUE - THE NEXT DAY

Granville Sutter is leaning against the column supporting the striped awning.

His face is reflected in the window. High cheekbones with the leathery skin pulled taut over them. A blade for a nose. Eyes brown and flecked in their depths with gold.

An austere MOTHER and her two CHILDREN are approaching on the sidewalk. Upon seeing Granville, they turn to walk on the far side of the street.

INT. DARLA'S BOUTIQUE - CONTINUOUS

LORENE CONKLE (55) fingers a dress and peeks covertly through the glass. Granville there. He catches her looking and levels his stare directly at her.

CLERK (O.C.)
Was it something I could help you
with?

Startled, Lorene turns to find a prissy little CLERK standing behind her.

LORENE
I reckon not right now.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Lorene exits to discover Granville standing on the corner. He is looking across the street and refuses to make eye-contact.

LORENE
I seen you parked across the street
from my house a few days ago.

GRANVILLE

I was just visitin a feller lives
down there.

LORENE

I want you to let me be. And my
husband Clyde, too. If I ever
mention to him--

GRANVILLE

Why don't you just mention it to
Clyde?

LORENE

He couldn't help being on that
jury, and he couldn't help voting
what he knew was right. What does
it matter anyway? You got out of
it.

GRANVILLE

It took a year out of my life. Two
trials. I'd of been acquitted the
first time if your old man hadn't
been bound and determined to send
me to Brushy Mountain. Eleven votin
not guilty and he had to hang the
jury.

LORENE

Yeah. Eleven people afraid you'd
burn them out like you did old Mrs.
Todd.

GRANVILLE

You think I burnt that old woman's
house?

LORENE

I know good and well you did. And
so does everybody else.

GRANVILLE

You believe too much of what you
hear.

Granville leans closer to Lorene; his face twists hostile and
his eyes narrow.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

You think you're better than me
cause your old man owns a
drugstore.

(MORE)

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

Wears a little white apron and mixes up pills all day behind a counter. *Yes, ma'am. No, ma'am.* I reckon you think your shit don't stink.

LORENE

You watch your nasty little mouth with me or I will go to the law. And yes, I do think I'm better than you. Not because of my husband but because I mind my own business.

He leans back and grins like the Cheshire Cat; Lorene becomes increasingly aghast with his sudden changes in expression.

GRANVILLE

Aww, you got me all wrong. You was to get to know me better you wouldn't be so down on me. You right nice lookin. A little long in the tooth, but you're holdin up alright. Me and you just might get together sometime.

Lorene's face goes white. She whirls around and walks blindly in the other direction.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

So long, *widow* Conkle.

LORENE

(without stopping)
I'm not a widow.

GRANVILLE

Not yet.

Lorene stops. She turns and raises her hand to shade her eyes from the setting sun.

INT. TYLER TRUCK - AFTERNOON

Tyler is behind the wheel and Corrie sits shotgun; *The Bobcat Bar* is a shabby visage outside her window. She opens the door and starts to exit.

TYLER

Wait...

CORRIE

What?

TYLER

Are you sure you want to do this?

Corrie sits back to look at Tyler, but doesn't shut her door.

TYLER (CONT'D)

I could figure something else out
if you give me a few days.

CORRIE

I love you, Kenneth, but I'd rather
die than spend another day in this
godforsaken town.

INT. THE BOBCAT BAR - CONTINUOUS

Corrie enters. JOE CREED (38) is behind the bar serving beers
and slinging stiff cocktails.

JOE

Where the hell you been? You left
me high and dry two days now.

CORRIE

I'm here to quit.

JOE

You're fuckin jokin?

CORRIE

Does it look like it? I got better
places to be.

JOE

You can shove it up your ass,
Corrie.

Corrie smiles with a certain sense of satisfaction. She turns
and exits without another word.

EXT. SUTTER HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is dark and isolated. Drizzle falls. Breece waddles
up the cobblestone walk and looks at his dainty watch.

He knocks on the front door. Almost directly the tiny antique
peephole opens. A gold-flecked eye peers out.

GRANVILLE

Whoever sent for you lied. I'm
still alive and kickin.

FENTON

I need to talk to you on business.
Let me in. It's cold out here.

The door opens. Granville is still wearing all black as if he slept in his clothes. Or not slept at all.

INT. FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Breece wanders around in the half-dark and seats himself in a rocker by the fire. He spreads his hands to its warmth.

FENTON

Turning colder.

Granville grabs a chair from the eating table and drops it on the other side of Breece.

GRANVILLE

I could of stuck my head out the door and told you that. You didn't drive all the way out here to give me a weather report.

FENTON

Like I told you, it's business. Someone has something that belongs to me, and I'm being blackmailed. I've got to have it back, and I think you're the man to get it.

Granville begins to roll himself a cigarette. Breece covertly steals glances at his bony face.

GRANVILLE

Who is it?

FENTON

A brother and a sister named Tyler. The girl is the one who actually approached me about the money, but the young man is the one who stole the article out of my house. That's what I want back, and I'm willing to pay for it.

GRANVILLE

The article?

FENTON

Yes.

GRANVILLE

Say I try to do it for you. Do I get to know what the article is, or do I just wander around finding things that look like they might have belonged to you.

FENTON

Of course, you'll know what it is.

GRANVILLE

(lighting his cigarette)
Then let me in on it.

FENTON

All right. Some photographs were taken of myself and a...young lady. They are potentially very damaging. The photographs are of a very incriminating...a very intimate nature. The young woman is connected politically, and they are threatening to go to her husband if I don't pay them twenty thousand dollars.

Granville appears impressed with the obvious lie. He allows a small smile as smoke escapes from his lips.

GRANVILLE

Of course, we both know that's bullshit. But it's your business what you done and what specie of animal you done it with. Pictures then. If they're as bad as you say, why don't you just give them the twenty thousand dollars? That's chickenfeed to you.

FENTON

If it were simply a matter of the money, I'd pay it and be done with it. However...there was something in the Tyler's woman's eyes. It was clear she means to ruin me. She'll take the money and then want more.

(for affect)

There was a vindictiveness in her face. Utter viciousness.

GRANVILLE

Wait a minute. Let me guess. You was doin things of an incriminating nature to this Tyler gal, and then your attention wandered to this gal who was politically connected, and the Tyler gal got pissed and aims to run you out of the undertakin business.

FENTON

It's not necessary to ridicule me.

GRANVILLE

Then quit actin like I'm a goddamn fool. Quit jerkin me around and get on with it.

FENTON

Very well. I'll give you the money. All twenty thousand dollars, half now and the rest when I have the pictures.

Granville spits into the flames. He shoots Breece a harrowing look.

GRANVILLE

It's not just the pictures. They've got some kind of deathlock on you and you want it off. You want me to kill them.

FENTON

No, no, certainly not. I can't condone murder, hire murder done.

GRANVILLE

Sure you can. You just don't want to know about it. You don't even want to say it. You want me to do it for you.

Breece is quiet for a moment. He studies the hypnotic flicker of the fire.

FENTON

How many...how many people have you killed?

GRANVILLE

You don't owe me for them.

FENTON

Will you tell me that if I tell you something of my own past?

GRANVILLE

What is this, you show me yours and I show you mine? I don't care about your past.

FENTON

I killed someone myself once, while I was still in college. I killed a whore in Memphis.

Granville gives Breece a quick glance of dismissal as he lays another stick of wood in the sparkling coals.

FENTON (CONT'D)

I killed her with a Pop-Cola bottle.

GRANVILLE

What'd she do, run out on you and you busted her head with it?

Breece falls silent; his eyes glaze over as he looks off into this curious memory.

FENTON

Oh, it wasn't anything like that. She took to bleeding. You never saw so much blood. The bedclothes were soaked, white sheets with great crimson centers, like flowers...the bottle broke something loose inside her, punctured her in there somewhere, and all the blood ran out of her.

Granville eyes him with confusion, then his face furrows when comprehension overcomes him.

GRANVILLE

I don't want to hear anymore of this perverted shit. You just keep anymore stories you got about Pop-Cola bottles to yourself.

Breece casually laces his fingers across his corpulent belly.

FENTON

Did it ever occur to you that we're a lot alike?

GRANVILLE

Let me get this straight. You want the pictures and you want it hushed up.

FENTON

Yes, that's what I want.

GRANVILLE

Give me the money.

FENTON

I'll have to get it from the bank.

GRANVILLE

Alright. Tomorrow, then.

Breece rises. He stands awkwardly for a moment as if about to proffer a hand to seal this bargain.

FENTON

I've kept you up long enough.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Granville lies down on his bed still fully clothed. He clasps his hands behind his head and stares at the ceiling. Darkness surrounds his face.

GRANVILLE

All these sons of bitches.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - THE NEXT DAY

Gasoline washes paint brushes and red ochre hits the pavement as if it were the throat-blood of a hapless pig.

Tyler flicks the brushes clean and turns to place them in the bed of his truck. The trim on the rooftop behind him is fresh and wet.

DE VRIES (O.C.)

You done me a good job.

He turns to find DE VRIES (56) standing behind him, carefully thumbing through bills in his wallet.

TYLER

It's painted, anyway.

De Vries counts cash into Tyler's hand. He holds a ten poised in midair with hesitation, then places it atop the others.

TYLER (CONT'D)

That's ten more than we agreed.

DE VRIES

You stayed with it, Tyler.

TYLER

Thank you, sir. You hear of anybody else wants anything done, try to get word to me.

Tyler turns for the driver's door of his truck, but something in De Vries's manner causes him to hesitate. He looks back.

DE VRIES

Yeah. Hold on a minute. It's a feller been hanging around out front waitin for you to get done.

EXT. DE VRIES HARDWARE - MOMENTS LATER

The bench in front of the store sits empty. Granville hunkers beside it, calmly smoking.

TYLER

You looking for me? I'm Tyler.

GRANVILLE

I know who you are. You old Moose's boy. You don't look much like him. Old Moose was heavy and built right close to the ground. You kinda rangy. Must of took after your mama's side of the family.

Tyler is momentarily caught off balance; he studies Granville as if measuring his size against his own.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

Or who knows? Maybe you do look like your daddy. *Names and blood don't always go arm in arm.*

TYLER

You might ought to watch your mouth.

GRANVILLE

Follow me, Tyler.

Granville starts walking toward the railroad tracks and after a moment, Tyler falls in behind him.

EXT. ABANDONED BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Granville sits on the staircase and rolls himself a cigarette while watching TWO BLACK MEN unload boxes from a flatbed onto a train car.

GRANVILLE

I asked around about you. When the feller told me what he told me.

TYLER

What fellow told you what? I don't know what you're talking about.

GRANVILLE

The feller whose property you stole. He wants it back. I been studyin about you, Tyler. I keep askin myself, what's a boy who's sharp in school doin tryin to blackmail Fenton Breece out of twenty thousand dollars.

Granville licks the paper and removes a piece of tobacco from his tongue. He lights his cigarette.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

Course a man can get the bigeye thinkin about all that money. I can understand that. All he wants is the pictures back.

TYLER

Pictures of what?

GRANVILLE

Course I took into consideration maybe it wasn't all your doin. Maybe you just easy led, and I ought to went to your sister to begin with.

TYLER

You leave Corrie out of this.

GRANVILLE

What it is, you don't quite see the whole picture. You've got some idea about Fenton Breece and you're judgin me by him. Fat and soft and very likely some specie of queer. Let's get it straight right now that me and him ain't nothin alike.

TYLER

What's he paying you?

GRANVILLE

I won't lie to you. He's payin me plenty. Because he's got a lot to lose and because he thinks I can stop up the holes where it's spillin out. And make no mistake about it, Tyler, I can. I'm the fix-it man, and you're the problem I been hired to fix.

TYLER

I don't have them.

Granville stands. He flicks his cigarette onto the ground and faces Tyler, trapping him against the steps' iron railing.

GRANVILLE

But you know where they live. Whatever you have to do, you better get your mind right to do it.

TYLER

I got to get on.

Tyler turns toward the street, but Granville GRABS his biceps and YANKS him back.

GRANVILLE

Not just yet.

Tyler tries to break free, but Granville LOCKS onto his other biceps and SLAMS him into the iron railing with a BANG. Tyler momentarily loses his breath.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

Think about this. I'll do what I have to do. It's a hell of a lot of money, and it would move me pretty far down the line, and it looks like I need to be there. All these sons of bitches. I'm goin to lay some folks out to cool if I have to, and I don't particularly care who. But what I want you to think about is the worst thing that can happen. You know when somethin bad happens, how folks kind of console one another. They say, well, it could of been worse. Well, not this time. Believe it.

(MORE)

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

I am absolutely the worst thing
that can happen to you.

TYLER

I just don't know.

GRANVILLE

You better know. If you don't it'll
be on your head.

TYLER

What will?

GRANVILLE

Whatever happens. Whatever it
takes. It's enough that you know
that Fenton Breece ain't the only
man can bury the dead, and the
grave ain't the only place to put
em.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Corrie and Tyler face off in her room. Dried flowers decorate
the walls and candles are half-burnt on the bureau.

TYLER

We're going to the law.

CORRIE

No, we aren't. That would be the
end of it. The money and
everything. This is our last chance
to get away from this town.

TYLER

I'm watching out for you.

CORRIE

Granville Sutter is bluffing.
Trying to scare us.

TYLER

You didn't hear him.

CORRIE

Think what it would be like,
Kenneth. Us somewhere else, some
big city where no one knows our
names. No more harassment. No more
eviction notices. With all that
money. Doing what we please. You
could even go to college.

(MORE)

CORRIE (CONT'D)

(pause)

Besides the law won't help us.

Tyler studies his sister and discovers a palpable desperation in her eyes; it seems rationality is impossible for her.

TYLER

Give me the pictures.

CORRIE

What are you going to do with them?

TYLER

(reluctant)

Hide them. Just in case.

Corrie exits her room. When she comes back in, she places the photographs on the bureau.

CORRIE

It will work out.

Tyler takes a TOBACCO TIN from his shirt pocket and slips the photos delicately inside. He wordlessly leaves the room.

INT. COURTHOUSE - THE NEXT DAY

Deputy Harlan walks down a corridor led by his fiery red hair and aquiline nose with a bundle of warrants under his arm. He goes through a side door and descends a staircase.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Harlan enters the basement to see Tyler sitting on a bench in the distance; he has a bottle of *Coke* in his hands.

Harlan stops at the door closest to Tyler; it's marked in big black letters *Sheriff's Office*. He fumbles with his keys.

HARLAN

You want something?

TYLER

I wanted to see Sheriff Odel.

HARLAN

He ain't in.

TYLER

I figured.

HARLAN

I'm a duly sworn Deputy Sheriff. If it's got anything to do with the law, you can take it up with me.

TYLER

When do you reckon he'll be back?

HARLAN

Odel will come when he comes.

Harlan unlocks the door and walks inside. Just as quickly, he walks back out, locks the door and saunters away.

Tyler watches him go and takes a big sip of his *Coke*. He sets the bottle down - 2/3 full.

DISSOLVE TO:

The bottle sits totally empty when Harlan returns through the side door with Sheriff Odel in tow.

Again, they approach the door marked *Sheriff's Office*. Harlan unlocks it and glances toward Tyler.

HARLAN (CONT'D)

Him.

ODEL

(skeptical)

Uh-huh.

Sheriff Odel goes inside the office. Harlan nods for Tyler to follow.

HARLAN

You better not waste his time.

EXT. SUTTER HOUSE - DAY

Granville is sitting underneath a great walnut tree. He trims his fingernails with a switchblade knife.

A county car pulls into the driveway. Deputy Harlan exits and crosses the cobblestone drive with a SEARCH WARRANT under his arm. He squats in front of Granville.

GRANVILLE

(without looking up)

Harlan.

HARLAN

I heard something you might be interested in.

Granville continues pairing his nails in silence; Harlan eyes this curious task.

GRANVILLE

Well, are you going to tell me, or are we playin guessin games?

HARLAN

You remember that state prosecutor you got into it with at your trial? Schieweiller? He's trying to get you a new trial, and get it moved out of the county. He's workin with Sheriff Bellwether, over at Ackerman's Field.

Harlan hands the warrant to Granville. He clinches his jaw as he reads *Ackerman's Field* on top and the signature of *Sheriff Bellwether* below.

GRANVILLE

Hellfire. They can't try me again on that. They done tried me on it twice already and it done got thrown out.

HARLAN

Well. They claimin jury tamperin. Perjury too, what I hear.

GRANVILLE

Jury tamperin. I never tampered with one of them son of a bitches. Never had to. They was already scared shitless.

HARLAN

I just told you what come down. Like I always do. Watch out for Bellwether. He's a sanctimonious shit.

Granville shoves the switchblade knife into the soil and sets the warrant down.

GRANVILLE

All these sons of bitches. Push and push and keep on and I've had about all I want of it.

HARLAN

It'll be my ass they ever catch me
out here.

GRANVILLE

I appreciate you warnin me, Harlan.

Still Harlan sits, his Adam's apple bobbing up and down every
time he swallows.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

Was there somethin else?

HARLAN

The Tyler boy came by.

Granville gazes past Harlan, his gold-flecked eyes peering at
the setting sun.

GRANVILLE

He did, did he?

EXT. HAGGIS HOUSE - DUSK

Two weathered stone lions stand guard a gate which is bent on
one canted hinge. Tyler ambles up the concrete walk; he hears
soft jazz playing inside.

He raps on the peeling door. The porchlight comes alive above
his head and the door creaks open. HAGGIS (35) looks at Tyler
from behind thick glasses; he is holding a book of poetry.

HAGGIS

Kenneth?

TYLER

Hello, Mr. Haggis.

Haggis looks back into the house. He closes the door slightly
to prevent Tyler from seeing inside.

HAGGIS

I thought you were in Knoxville.

TYLER

Well. No. Not yet. Maybe next
semester.

HAGGIS

If you wanted to talk about it,
this is not really a good time for
me. Could you come back tomorrow?
Perhaps in the afternoon?

TYLER

I did want to talk to you, but not about that. Could I come in for a few minutes? I need to talk to you about Fenton Breece.

HAGGIS

Fenton Breece?

MR. BRANDT (40) appears behind Haggis. He's an effeminate man in a starkly pressed shirt and pants.

BRANDT

Hello Kenneth.

There is a weird mixture of humility and defiance on Haggis's face as he looks back at his lover. Realization hits Tyler.

HAGGIS

You remember Mr. Brandt from the junior high.

TYLER

Yes. Hello.

Haggis smiles quick and neurotic and steps outside. He closes the door, leaving Mr. Brandt inside.

HAGGIS

I had him over to discuss some poetry and we decided to have a bite to eat.

(beat)

You know how things are.

TYLER

I'd better get on.

HAGGIS

Well, if you must, then I suppose you must. I hope it wasn't anything urgent?

TYLER

I'll let you get back to your guest.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

A black *Ford Bronco* sits off the side of a homemade road. The dark figure behind the wheel brings a flask to his lips.

INT. FORD BRONCO - CONTINUOUS

Granville doesn't even show the faintest sign of a grimace as the liquor hits his mouth. He tilts his head back and guzzles the flask dry.

GRANVILLE
(opening the door)
Time to move myself down the line.

EXT. TYLER HOUSE - NIGHT

Corrie stands on the porch, backlit from the lights emanating within.

An angular shadow appears in the distance. He walks closer to the house. Corrie sees the scoped rifle held aloft across his chest.

Granville. As he approaches the fence, he makes no attempt at the gate but simply steps over it.

GRANVILLE
Hidy.

Corrie attempts to appear strong as Granville takes the first step onto the porch and stops.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)
I been waitin up there in my
Bronco. I been kinda holdin off
thinkin he'd come, but I don't
think he's goin to.

He lowers his rifle and sets its stock atop his haggard black boot.

CORRIE
Then you ain't seen him?

GRANVILLE
Not today, little sister. Ain't you
goin to ask me in for supper?

CORRIE
No. I don't know what you're doin
here in the first place. Kenneth'll
run you off when he gets in.

GRANVILLE
Kenneth couldn't run water through
a garden hose.

Granville treads onto the edge of the porch; his gold-flecked eyes are as compassionless as a cat's.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

Let's go in.

He grabs her arm, but she JERKS away and spins around to slap him, then thinks better of it.

She quickly moves through the front door and tries to slam it shut, but Granville KICKS it violently.

INT. FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Corrie FLIES down beneath the power of his foot thrusting the door open. She HITS her head against an end table and TUMBLES to the floor.

Granville enters and shuts the door. He casually sets his gun against the wall, then looks at Corrie apathetically.

GRANVILLE

Let's cut through the front part and go right to the end. The front part is where I ask for the pictures and you tell me you don't know what I'm talkin about. None of that is in question. I know you got em. Now come up with em before you do somethin to put me in a bad mood.

Corrie rises to her hands and knees. A solitary drop of BLOOD falls from her hairline and splatters into a crimson star.

CORRIE

You can kiss my ass.

GRANVILLE

Temptin as that offer is, I'm goin to have to let it slide. Maybe later. I hardly ever mix business with pleasure.

She glances at Granville; more BLOOD dribbles to the linoleum floor.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

Let's have em. Where are they?

CORRIE

Where you'll never find them.

He GRABS Corrie by the hair, YANKS her to her feet and TWISTS the blonde locks back.

GRANVILLE
Well, we'll see.

Corrie begins to cry. Granville SLAPS her and MUCUS and BLOOD sling across her face.

CORRIE
Kenneth'll kill you.

GRANVILLE
It's been tried before. By better man than he is. I figured you for a harder case than this. Folks into blackmailin and extortion need a harder shell than what you've shown.

CORRIE
You ought to know.

Granville releases Corrie and she falls to the floor. He goes to the chest of drawers and dumps each one onto the linoleum.

GRANVILLE
Be puttin this shit up.

He walks into the kitchen and begins rifling through cabinets as Corrie rises listlessly.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)
(returning)
What's them pictures show, anyway?

CORRIE
Just dead folks.

GRANVILLE
Dead folks? Why's he wantin pictures of dead people so bad?

Corrie shakes her head mutely. She bends over to pick up some fallen papers and stifles a sob.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)
Is he screwin dead women or what?

Corrie looks at Granville. He walks across the room and stops awfully close; she stammers back in fright.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)
Maybe you got em on you.

CORRIE
I'm not that stupid.

GRANVILLE
It might be fun to look.

CORRIE
How much is he paying you?

GRANVILLE
Doesn't matter.

CORRIE
They're worth a lot. Me and Kenneth
will give you five thousand dollars
and all you got to do is leave us
alone.

He looks at her cunningly. Corrie grows more afraid; her eyes flutter to the floor.

CORRIE (CONT'D)
Half, then.

GRANVILLE
It's a hard fact that half of
nothin is nothin. That's what you
got and that's what you're going to
wind up with.

Granville GRABS her blouse, one hand on each collar. He YANKS and the buttons POP off.

CORRIE
Please...

He unpockets his switchblade and presses the pearl button. He slips the blade in between her breasts.

GRANVILLE
Let's see what's under here.

Granville PULLS the knife outward and the narrow edge of cold steel SLICES her bra strap. He uncovers her breasts and feels them clinically.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)
No pictures here. Nothin here but
titties.

CORRIE
You're going to pay for this, you
son of a bitch.

Suddenly the clamor of a truck is heard laboring up the drive and Granville turns; headlights sweep across his face.

GRANVILLE

He got a gun in that truck?

CORRIE

I don't know what he's got.

GRANVILLE

You holler and I swear I'll kill you. I'll cut your throat, then hide behind the door and cut his.

EXT. TYLER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tyler exits his pickup and crosses the front porch. He has an old thermos bottle in one hand and a toolbelt in the other.

INT. FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tyler enters and stands framed darkly against the night, eyes growing wide as he takes in everything at once.

GRANVILLE

I don't believe you thought I was serious.

Granville stands behind Corrie. He holds her left arm TWISTED behind her shoulders with the blade of his knife PRESSED into the flesh of her throat. Her right breast remains exposed.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

She can't keep her clothes on. Somethin about me affects women that way.

TYLER

I told you to leave Corrie out of this.

GRANVILLE

She'd had mine off, you hadn't shown up when you did.

He releases Corrie and steps away. He pushes the pearl button to close the blade.

TYLER

Sooner or later I am fixing to kill you.

(MORE)

TYLER (CONT'D)

You had no business going after my sister any such chickenshit way as this.

GRANVILLE

Whatever works.

Tyler HURLS the thermos at Granville, but Granville sidesteps it; the bottle CRASHES loudly against the wall.

Tyler rushes Granville and THUMPS his rib cage, but Granville remains unaffected and SLAMS a LEFT HOOK into the boy's jaw.

Rising up, Tyler SWINGS his toolbelt and Granville catches it one-handed. He JERKS forward. Tyler stumbles and meets a huge UPPERCUT to the abdomen - WHOOSH!

Tyler falls to the floor. He rolls over GASPING, desperate to catch his breath. Granville eyes him half-amused as he ambles over to his rifle and picks it up.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

Now get out the memory box and let's take a look at them old family pictures.

TYLER

I don't have them.

GRANVILLE

You think I just fell off the haywagon? Shit, Tyler, you can do better than that.

TYLER

I went to the law with them. Sheriff Odel's got them. I told him the whole thing and they're going to be looking for you.

GRANVILLE

Fact is, I know you went to the law. But you went with some cock-and-bull story about me and your floozy sister. Harlan done talked to me about it. We had a laugh.

TYLER

There is just no way you can get away with this.

GRANVILLE

We're in the process of getting away with it right now.

Tyler glances at Corrie; she is sitting against the wall with her knees pulled close.

CORRIE
Don't tell him.

TYLER
They're in the truck.

GRANVILLE
We'll see if they are. You go first. Little sister stays with me. You try anything even approachin what you done a minute ago, she gets another slit cut in a place where she's got no use for one.

EXT. TYLER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The truck is facing the house with the passenger door closest to the porch.

TYLER
They're taped under the dash. If you want them, you'll have to get them out.

GRANVILLE
Not in a million fuckin years.

Tyler reluctantly opens the door. He lays across the seat and fumbles underneath the dashboard. The TOBACCO TIN is taped to the backside of his radio.

TYLER
It's gone.

Involuntarily Granville leans forward to look and Tyler KICKS him the chest as hard as he can.

Granville drops his rifle and FALLS backward. Tyler scrambles behind the steering wheel.

TYLER (CONT'D)
(to Corrie)
Get the hell in here.

INT. TYLER TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Corrie JUMPS in and tries to shut the door as Tyler turns the ignition and pops the clutch. The truck SPINS in reverse.

Gravel flies. Tyler SLAMS the shifter into low and shoots out of the driveway sideways. The rear tires fishtail against the loose rock and the passenger door PITCHES open.

TYLER

Shut the door!

BOOM! The window ERUPTS in flying pellets of safety glass. As Tyler looks back through the window, he sees Granville aiming his rifle again. Tyler SMASHES his foot into the accelerator.

CORRIE

Kenneth!

TYLER

Get down! Shut the door and lay down in the seat!

Corrie hurriedly drops down, but leaves the passenger door to FLOP open with each progressive BUMP of distance between them and Granville. The truck speeds down the roadway.

BOOM! The side-view mirror SHATTERS into pieces. Granville is receding in the distance as the truck moves faster.

Tyler reaches over Corrie and tries to shut the door, but the truck is going too fast for an approaching curve in the road.

He tries to correct the SKID and the rear tires SCHOOL-HOP on the packed earth violently. POP! A tire blows out.

The truck MOVES eerily sideways on an embankment; brush WHIPS past at an alarming rate.

Corrie SLAMS into Tyler. The truck ROLLS upward and over in a cacophony of RENDING metal and BREAKING glass.

The truck HITS an enormous rock and ROCKETS further upward as Corrie SMASHES through the windshield and out of the cab.

CRUNCH! The truck PROPELS itself into a tree and stops in one final OUTRAGE of SHRIEKING steel.

Quickly Tyler scrambles off the floorboard and out the broken window.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

He looks around wildly; BLOOD drips from his nose as he feels himself for broken bones. His feral eyes stop and lock.

A WHITE BODY is strewn on the homemade road. Tyler jumps over broken brush. He picks Corrie up by her armpits and drags her toward the truck; she is totally slack.

Laying Corrie down, Tyler pulls his rifle out from behind the passenger seat and grabs the TOBACCO TIN underneath the dash.

He slings the rifle over his shoulder and shoves the tin into his back pocket. He hoists Corrie up and drags her toward the woods as fast as he can.

BOOM! A bullet WALLOPS firmly into the earth. It sends chunks of dirt skittering. They fall to the ground.

Tyler lies stock still like a shell shocked soldier. He looks at Corrie. Her arms are out-flung helpless. Her eyes are open with the exposed whites rolled upward. Both sticks and leaves are tied up in her hair. Her cock-eyed neck is clearly broken from the wreck and death sits in her colorless face. He feels her pulse hopelessly.

TYLER
(sotto)
Corrie...

Tears well in his eyes. With a heartbroken effort, Tyler rips the ARROWHEAD off of her necklace.

TYLER (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. So sorry.

BOOM! Another shot ricochets off of a nearby tree. Bark flies through the air.

Tyler gets his rifle off the ground and runs into the shelter of the woods, disappearing amongst its density.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Tyler comes cautiously back through the tree-line to discover the accident site alive with activity.

Varicolored lights flicker like spirit lamps. SHADOWED PEOPLE move from vehicle to vehicle; disembodied voices drift out in surreal fashion.

An ambulance moves onto the roadway and its tires slew on the gravel. It meanders off toward town.

Another vehicle backs around and its headlights sweep through the tree-line. It's a wrecker with a revolving strobe.

A FIGURE at the wrecker pays out lengths of cable and carries it to the totaled truck. He passes in front of the headlights and Tyler recognizes him; it's Deputy Harlan.

Harlan hooks the cable onto the truck's hitch and shouts. The cable grows tight and the creaking winch slowly pulls Tyler's truck off the tree it's impaled on.

Tyler starts walking toward Harlan, then abruptly stops as if he were making the gravest discovery.

A second FIGURE emerges from behind the truck and motions his arm in a circular fashion to pull faster. His angular body is unmistakable; it's Granville Sutter.

Granville approaches Harlan. He places his bony hand onto the Deputy's shoulder and whispers something into his ear; Harlan nods in agreement.

Both men stand side by side and supervise the pickup as it is pulled back onto the roadway. Tyler walks backward toward the tree-line while watching this tableau of corruption unfold.

EXT. SUTTER HOUSE - LATER

The house is dark. A pale ribbon of smoke rises from the flue and dissipates in the windless air.

Tyler lies in the knee-high grass beyond the perimeter of the property, watching for activity. He pillows his cheek against the polished walnut of his rifle and squeezes the trigger.

BOOM! A window pane EXPLODES and glass falls into the home. A moment of silence passes.

Tyler shoots again - BOOM! It seems the place is deserted. He stands and yokes the rifle across his back.

INT. FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CRACK! CRACK! The oak door shutters underneath the banging of his rifle stock. It finally gives and swings open.

Tyler stands backlit with his rifle ready to shoot, but there is no soul about.

The front room is neat and austere. The dishes are washed and put away in the drainboard. Tyler eyes the wood stove and can see a vestigial of heat emanating within.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door is eased open by a trepidatious hand to reveal Tyler standing in the frame. His eyes canvass the entire room.

Stabbed to the wall with a big *Bowie* knife is the copy of the WARRANT from Harlan.

Tyler rips it off and eyes the county of *Ackerman's Field* and signature of *Sheriff Bellwether*. He pauses before folding the warrant into his pocket.

He approaches the carefully-made bed and rips the quilt-cover off.

INT. FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tyler drops the quilt-cover onto the floor and approaches the wood stove. He opens the door and looks inside.

A bed of coals waned in their delicate cauls of ash. Suddenly Tyler wrenches it over.

It topples onto its side in a hail of breaking stovepipes and simmering coals. He scatters the coals with his foot.

The linoleum darkens and bubbles underneath heat. Tyler yanks a window curtain from its rod and places it on top.

He kneels down to blow. A flame flickers and catches, a small cutting edge of fire on the delicate fabric.

He grabs the quilt and places its patched corner to the blaze and steps back. It ignites.

EXT. SUTTER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Tyler trudges up the slope with his rifle by his side. Behind him, smoke cascades out of the windows like some heavy breath of an awakened beast.

EXT. BREECE FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

The ambulance lingers up the curved drive and comes to a rest in front of the garish mortuary.

Breece exits the house in a blue robe and velvet slippers. He meets a MEDIC at the rear of the ambulance.

They open the back doors and pull the gurney out. Its legs go straight and its wheels touch the pavement. Breece unzips the body bag to find the lifeless face of Corrie staring at him.

His eyes flare as he stares back and counts the possibilities of him and her together.

This moment is finally broken when a clipboard is pushed upon him.

MEDIC

Sign here.

EXT. SUTTER HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING

Granville crouches before the quaking ash. He holds his hands outstretched to the smoke and sits staring mutely at all that is left of his burnt and leveled home.

GRANVILLE

Ready, set, go, you son of a bitch.

He spits into the soot and rises to his feet. Granville turns and marches toward his idling *Bronco*.

FADE OUT.

The Harrikin

NOTE: The Harrikin is a section of the Appalachian Mountains. It's a deserted and eerie land much like the Sherwood Forest.

EXT. HARRIKIN - ESTABLISHING - TIME LAPSE

Tyler trudges a path long faded to a ghost-path. His rifle is at his side. The timber is thick with honeysuckle and kudzu.

The ground is sunk with vertical mining shafts and horizontal tunnels while climbing with hills and sheer limestone bluffs.

Tyler passes abandoned farms and fallen houses with uncovered ridgepoles and broken-out windows.

Everything is landscaped by the fallen leaves of decades past and rusted mining machinery long forgot by fleeing settlers.

EXT. HARRIKIN - DAY

A spectral road cuts through the piney trees on the border of the Harrikin. On the shoulder, a rusted fifty-gallon oil drum sits.

From its recessed top, a great horned OWL watches Granville's *Bronco* approach wavering and ephemeral.

INT. FORD BRONCO - CONTINUOUS

Granville drives with steadfast eyes. He brings a hand-rolled cigarette to his lips and exhales great plumes of smoke.

As he passes the fifty-gallon drum, the owl takes flight. Its huge wings set off concussions above him as it disappears for the world beyond.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

The owl circles over a ramshackle building with two gas-pumps outside.

The field to its right is given over to an enormous graveyard for wrecked automobiles.

Tyler crosses through the barbed-wire fence and trails a foot path worn between the rows of cars; his rifle is at his side.

INT. GAS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Tyler prowls the aisles and selects tinned sausages and thick bars of *Hershey* chocolate.

Lastly he grabs a dripping *Coke* from an ice-chest and sets it on the wooden counter. The tattooed old KEEP totes it up in a paper sack.

TYLER

I need a box of .22 long rifles.

The keep fetches a box of shells from underneath the counter.

KEEP

Huntin in the Harrikin?

TYLER

Somethin like that.

KEEP

Best be careful less you're used to it. First time I got lost in there prowlin quail and like to never come out. Course it's also a great place to hide.

(pause)

Be fourteen eighty with the shells.

Tyler hands him a twenty and pockets the change. He grabs the sack and turns for the door.

KEEP (CONT'D)

You hear about that girl getting herself killed over on Lick Creek?

TYLER

What girl?

KEEP

Heard about it this mornin from Granville Sutter. Her and her brother both drunk and her killed when they turned the truck over. A young girl layin out dead in the woods with whiskey all over her and inside her. I'd hate to meet my maker with whiskey on my breath, wouldn't you?

Tyler feels a cold point of ice on the nape of his neck as if it had been stuck with an icepick.

TYLER

I get that close I don't expect to have much of a breath left.

KEEP

Make sport of me if you want to. It ain't me found dead cut all over from a broke whiskey bottle. Nor me that's run off and hid and bein hunted by Sheriff Odel for manslaughter neither.

TYLER

(softly)
Manslaughter?

The keep notices the pain in his voice which seems to cut him with a sore memory of yesteryear; he shakes his head.

KEEP

Granville said you'd be in. Said to tell you he'd see you on the road somewheres. Although a hunted man has no place bein on the road.

TYLER

When was he in?

KEEP

Not morn an half hour ago.

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Tyler hustles through the field of wrecked cars with the sack under his arm.

From behind a totalled *Lincoln*, Granville watches him go down the blued length of his rifle barrel. He lays a cheek against the stock, stares into the scope and aligns the crosshairs.

GRANVILLE

(sotto)

Bang.

But he does not shoot. Tyler continues to hurry past the dead vehicles, totally unaware.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

(lowering the rifle)

Fuck it. I'll get you where folks ain't so thick.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

In a hushed world of locked doors and drawn shades, Breece is dragging his television across the hardwood floor.

Its feet make little skidmarks on the waxed oak. Breece walks around to its back-side, and begins shoving it with his heavy shoulder toward a double door.

INT. EMBALMING PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Breece props the doors wide and stands for a moment breathing hard and perspiring almost audibly.

The parlor has become more of a Badgers Den with a collection of his favorite things. A magazine rack and plushy chairs and a hassock exist amongst the tools of his trade.

Breece tugs the television inside, closes the double door and slides the dead-bolt into place.

He pushes the television across the tile floor, plugs it into the wall and turns the knob. A soap opera comes to life.

Satisfied, he turns his attention to Corrie. She's lying on a steel table nude with her arms alongside her torso.

FENTON

What am I going to do with you?

He takes up a spray bottle filled with glycerin and water and mists her face.

FENTON (CONT'D)
We'll get you all fixed up.

KNOCK. KNOCK. Annoyed Breece shifts his attention from Corrie to the double door.

FENTON (CONT'D)
You can go anytime, Ms. Cecil.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

FENTON (CONT'D)
I said you're free to leave--

GRANVILLE (O.C.)
Hey undertaker man.

Breece freezes at the sound of Granville Sutter. He turns off the television and clears his throat.

FENTON
Yes?

GRANVILLE (O.C.)
Hey undertaker man.

FENTON
One moment.

Breece drapes a sheet over Corrie and looks for anything else that may be out of place.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Breece unlocks the double door and shoulders Granville out of the way; he quickly shuts the doors behind him.

GRANVILLE
What are you up to, undertaker man?

FENTON
I thought you were my secretary.

GRANVILLE
What are you up to? You're red as a beet. You look like a kid his daddy caught jackin off behind the barn.

FENTON
I was working.

GRANVILLE

Workin my ass. Workin some kind of devil's business with that Tyler girl'd be my guess.

FENTON

Poor old Mrs. Hull died. I'm preparing her for burial.

GRANVILLE

If there's a Mrs. Hull back there or ever was it'd come as a big surprise to me.

FENTON

What are you doing here?

GRANVILLE

We talked about money.

FENTON

Oh. Yes, I'd forgotten. In my office. Just walk this way.

INT. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Breece steps behind his desk and opens a drawer. He takes out a manila envelope and lays it before Granville.

FENTON

This is half. Everything is just the way we discussed it.

Granville sits in an armchair. He withdraws a bundle of bills and licks his finger to count.

FENTON (CONT'D)

The bank counted it and they were satisfied. I counted it and I was satisfied. It's ten thousand dollars.

Granville stops. He looks up and narrows a gaze on the uneasy man.

GRANVILLE

You know, Breece, one of the five or six thousand things I don't like about you is that you think you're smart.

(MORE)

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

You think because you went to college and learned how to puncture folk's insides with Pop-Cola bottles you can run a number on me. Forget that. Put that thought away and don't look at it no more.

Breece looks away and makes a tiny gesture of dismissal as if please continue.

FENTON

Count by all means. If you don't trust me.

GRANVILLE

There's damn small question about that. I don't trust you worth a shit and I pity the fool who does.

Granville goes back to counting the bills. Breece sighs as he watches him work this task meticulously.

DISSOLVE TO:

At length, Granville seems satisfied. He folds the money once and shoves it into his pocket and rises to leave.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

I got places to be.

FENTON

Have you made any progress?

GRANVILLE

You've seen the result of some of that progress and I expect I could smell her on your fingers if I was a mind to. That playpretty I sent you special delivered. That wasn't supposed to be. It went south too quick for me to stop and it's fixin to cost you more money.

FENTON

What do you mean?

GRANVILLE

Maybe she had a little breath in her and I had to suck it out. Maybe her neck wasn't twisted just right and I had to retwist it. Maybe I didn't have as much time as I needed to set that wreck up in a way the law would buy.

(MORE)

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

Or go on buyin. Anyway it'll all show up on the final bill.

FENTON

My money seems to buy an awful lot of maybes. I'd like a little more certainty. I explained to you it's crucial I get those pictures back.

GRANVILLE

I'll get your precious pictures. Maybe when I bring em I'll bring that mouthy houseburnin boy so you'll have a matched set of playpretties. Like salt and pepper shakers. How'd that suit you?

FENTON

Just get the pictures.

Granville turns for the door. As he goes through it, he looks back at Breece.

GRANVILLE

I'll leave you and poor old Mrs. Hull to finish your business.

EXT. BREECE FUNERAL HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Granville exits the mortuary and lights a cigarette. He gazes at the moon and begins strolling down the drive while singing a ballad; smoke trails his silhouette.

GRANVILLE

Once upon a time there was a pretty fly / He had a pretty wife, this pretty fly / But one day she flew away, flew away.

He begins to WHISTLE the ballad until it morphs into an eerie TUNE. This sound carries into the next scene.

EXT. HOLLOW - THE NEXT MORNING

Tyler is trudging up a deep hollow that is a funnel for winds and a maelstrom of debris. He follows an eerie WHISTLE of one constant and mournful note. This one is created by the land.

EXT. WHISTLING WELL - CONTINUOUS

He climbs up the mouth of the hollow to higher ground to find an irregular OPENING six feet wide and cleft out of limestone and shale. It is the source of this ceaseless whistling.

A crude fence has been constructed around the hole of castoff boards wound with barbed-wire.

Tyler climbs over the jury-rigged fence and warily approaches the whistling well. Peering down, he can feel an updraft cold from the earth. He grabs a stone and drops it; the hole seems totally bottomless.

On the other side of the fence sits a narrow man-made ARCH of stone. Tyler walks toward it and kneels underneath it. A FLAT CIRCULAR STONE is buried in the earth.

Tyler pries it free and scratches a hole in the mud. He takes the TOBACCO TIN out of his pocket and sets it in the hole. He covers the keeper of pictures with the circular stone.

EXT. HILLSIDE - CONTINUOUS

The hill begins to descend. Through the cover of trees, Tyler can see tended land and a wooden farmhouse leached gray.

An OLD MAN exits and hobbles toward the nearby barn where his GOATS are grazing. Tyler eases through the shadowed trees.

EXT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

The old man dumps a bucket of water into a trough and sets it on the ground. He wipes his hands on a bandana.

EXT. BOOKBINDER FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

As the old man returns to his house, he sees Tyler sitting on the end of his porch with the rifle in his hands.

BOOKBINDER

How do. Coolin some, ain't it.

TYLER

Aren't you Mr. Bookbinder?

BOOKBINDER

I'm Hollis Bookbinder. I ain't never been Mistered too much. Who might you be?

TYLER

My name's Tyler. I heard your goatbells. You got a lot of them?

BOOKBINDER

They's several. I don't know exactly how many. Ain't run a census on em lately.

(pause)

That's a right nice rifle you got there.

TYLER

Thanks. My granddaddy gave it to me.

Tyler hands his rifle to Bookbinder. The old man canvasses it with a nostalgic smile.

BOOKBINDER

Winchester lever action with that octagon barrel. Gave one to my son too.

TYLER

You seen a man named Granville Sutter come through here?

BOOKBINDER

(handing his rifle back)

Was you lookin for him?

TYLER

No. I'm pretty sure he's hunting for me, though. Do you know him?

BOOKBINDER

I know him well enough to stay wide of him. Granville strayed from the ways of men long time ago.

Bookbinder ascends the porch steps and opens the screen door.

BOOKBINDER (CONT'D)

I ain't had the rest of my mornin coffee. How about you?

TYLER

I didn't have any.

BOOKBINDER

Then I reckon you ready for some.

He disappears into the house. Tyler glances off to the wooded area beyond; it looks like a hostile land. He reaches for the WARRANT in his pocket and studies it momentarily.

BOOKBINDER (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Sutter got in for ye, has he?

Bookbinder returns with two cups of opaque coffee. He extends one to Tyler and sits beside him.

TYLER
I reckon.

BOOKBINDER
It ain't none of my business, but what did yins have your fallin out about?

TYLER
Well. It come up about my sister. We got into it over her.

BOOKBINDER
And you took to the Harrikin. I would of thought this was something for the law to handle.

TYLER
They never paid me any mind. I heard there's a sheriff in Ackerman's Field supposed to be an honest man. Bellwether?

BOOKBINDER
I know of him. He's got the name of bein pretty straight law. There's a lot of these laws around here their badge just guarantees they can do their meanness and get away with it, but he's supposedly alright.

Bookbinder gazes off in the way elderly sometimes do; both he and Tyler sit quiet. Tyler finishes his coffee.

TYLER
Could you tell me the best way to get to Ackerman's Field?

BOOKBINDER
These old roads wind and twist and sometimes just peter out. Go due east till you hit the railroad tracks. They growed up, but they still there.

(MORE)

BOOKBINDER (CONT'D)

It's about twenty or so mile. The tracks run north and south. Go south another several and you'll come out right in Ackerman's Field.

TYLER

That's all there is to it?

BOOKBINDER

First you got to get to the railroad track, and that ain't no Sunday drive, specially if you ain't used to the Harrikin.

Bookbinder takes the last sip of his coffee and sets it down.

BOOKBINDER (CONT'D)

I wouldn't worry too much about Sutter. Likely he's forgot about you by now and he's drinkin him a cool one somewheres.

TYLER

No. He's not forgot. When he comes here, just tell him where I went. That won't hurt me, by then I'll be somewhere else. I didn't mean to mix you up in anything.

BOOKBINDER

I ain't tellin him jackshit. And you ain't mixed me up in nothing. I reckon I can set on my own front porch and drink a cup of coffee with whoever I want to. But if that stuff about Sutter is so, you need to be anywhere else besides the deep pineys.

TYLER

I believe the Harrikin is my best chance to get to Ackerman's Field. Get to Sheriff Bellwether and tell him the whole story.

BOOKBINDER

I reckon you know your business.

TYLER

(rising)

Well. I'll see you, Mr. Bookbinder.

BOOKBINDER

Hold on.

Bookbinder reaches into his pocket and withdraws an old WORLD WAR II ZIPPO made of porous steel and a black crackle finish.

BOOKBINDER (CONT'D)
 (offering it up)
 You'll be needin to build a fire
 tonight.

Tyler takes the lighter and studies the *U.S. Marines* seal. He wonders its course in history.

TYLER
 Thank you, sir.

BOOKBINDER
 You just remember what I said. Due
 east.

And with that, Tyler steps off the porch and heads toward the dense wilderness beyond.

EXT. CENTRE PRESBYTERIAN - DAY

It is a quiet Sunday afternoon with a chill in the air. A few late WORSHIPERS climb the steps to the church.

Haggis walks past and turns down Maple Street. Breece Funeral Home looms in the distance.

He adjusts his glasses on his nose as if readying himself for a scholarly confrontation.

EXT. BREECE FUNERAL HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Haggis pushes against the front door but it does not open and for a moment, he just looks at it in perplexity.

He knocks and glances around the yard. A garbage can has been overturned and the wind has kited trash into the hedges.

The door opens no more than three inches and Haggis can see a narrow section of Breece's face and a necktie knotted beneath his ponderous chins.

FENTON
 Yes?

HAGGIS
 My name is Haggis. I want to make
 an inquiry about Corrie Tyler.

Breece doesn't open the door. Perhaps he shuts it a fraction.

FENTON
What about her?

HAGGIS
Well, I assumed there'd be a funeral.

FENTON
Of course there'll be a funeral. Arrangements haven't been finalized.

The door goes closer to the jamb; the slice of Breece narrows to one eye. Haggis sets his hand against the handle.

HAGGIS
Hold on here a minute. I want to talk about these arrangements.

The eye Haggis can see seems distracted as it wanders like an errant pendulum.

HAGGIS (CONT'D)
I know both of the Tylers and know the young man rather well, a student of mine. Perhaps it's none of my business, but I'm aware of their financial situation.

FENTON
It's been taken care of.

HAGGIS
Taken care of how?

FENTON
Just don't worry about it, Mr. Haggis. As I said, it's taken care of, nothing for anyone to pay.

HAGGIS
When are the services? I'd like to view the body.

FENTON
I don't mean to be indelicate, but the body has been badly damaged in the accident. Face crushed and so on. Of course it will be a closed casket ceremony.

HAGGIS

Something's not right here. I've spoken with people in the Sheriff's Department and been informed that she was unmarked. In fact, I was told that the broken neck was her only injury.

FENTON

I'm a professional, Mr. Haggis. Don't you think I'd know the condition of a body I'm preparing? At any rate it's a moot point. The body has been claimed. It is being transported. By an aunt, I believe.

HAGGIS

I told you I know this family. Known both of them all their lives, I've taken an interest, had one of them as a student. There's no aunt.

FENTON

Of course there is. From Michigan or somewhere, one of those upnorth states. Good day, Mr. Haggis.

HAGGIS

This can't be. Kenneth came by my house the night of the accident. He seemed agitated and even mentioned your name. Why would he do that?

Breece grows wide-eyed. He slams the door and clicks the lock into place, leaving Haggis to stare at panels of fine oak.

HAGGIS (CONT'D)

Breece? Open this door.

He knocks hard and waits but there is only silence within. He hesitantly turns and walks into the wind, hand sliding on the railing. Face furrowed.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Breece is standing quietly on the other side of the door like a victim of paralysis. He looks through the peephole and sees Haggis descend the steps, look back at the door with an angry thought and finally, proceed down the curved drive.

EXT. BOOKBINDER FARMHOUSE - DUSK

The world has gone sepia with dusk and twilight's lengthening shadows run like dark liquid across the packed earth.

Bookbinder dozes in his rocking chair with an old plaid shawl across his lap.

Granville emerges from the woods and approaches the porch. He uplifts one foot and the old man's eyes blink open. Granville stands for a moment in awkward indecision, then sets his foot down in the yard.

GRANVILLE

Mr. Bookbinder. You recollect me?

Bookbinder nods, head clouded by the tatters of an old dream.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

I'm looking for a young feller up this way, figured you might have seen him.

Granville reaches into his jeans and pulls out his wallet. He flashes a glimpse of a badge and a card.

As he repockets it, Bookbinder looks away. When he looks back at Granville, his face holds a look of utter contempt.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

Well you seen him?

BOOKBINDER

I don't know if I have or I ain't. You got ary picture of him?

GRANVILLE

No. Course to hell I ain't got no picture. You don't need one to make you remember if you've seen a young feller wanderin around.

BOOKBINDER

Some days I get a run of em. I don't know if I've seen this one you're lookin for or not.

The air grows menacing; Granville spits in the yard. He spies a baby GOAT meandering toward the porch from the barn.

GRANVILLE

I always been a respecer of age, Mr. Bookbinder, but I ain't got no time for no jokin around here.

(MORE)

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

You seen that badge. I'm a duly sworn constable of the Sixth District, and you got to cooperate with me.

BOOKBINDER

You're goin to have to get further into the Harrikin than this to work that kind of bullshit.

The goat approaches Granville; it nuzzles against the calf of his leg.

GRANVILLE

You a mouthy old son of a bitch. To have one foot in the grave and the other in a pile of owl shit. You tired of livin or what?

Granville pulls his switchblade out of his pocket. He fingers the button and the knife flicks out. He GRABS the goat by its head and TWISTS upward; it bleats with pain.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

I reckon a man lives alone puts a lot of store in his animals.

BOOKBINDER

They a right smart company.

GRANVILLE

This'n acts like a pet. I bet if I cut its throat it'd make you remember where that boy went.

The goat begins to jerk against Granville's grasp. Its hooves make tiny dancing motions as he lifts it in the air.

BOOKBINDER

Or it might make me blow a hole in the middle of you a log truck could drive through.

GRANVILLE

You might if you had a gun.

Bookbinder removes the shawl. It slides off his lap and lands soundlessly on the porch. He's pointing a WORLD WAR II pistol at Granville and the hammer is thumbed back.

It so surprises Granville that he releases his grip; the goat lands on its feet and flees toward the barn.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)
It ain't loaded.

BOOKBINDER
I done a lot of foolish things in
my life, but I ain't never
threatened to kill a man with a
empty pistol.

GRANVILLE
Piece of shit would likely blow up
in your face anyhow.

Bookbinder moves the barrel away from Granville. He points it at a fence-post and fires - BOOM! The resulting concussion is deafening as the post splits in chunks of rotten wood.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ.

The old man doesn't say anything as he easily aims the gun at Granville.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)
You know I'll get you for this.
You're graveyard dead and don't
even know about it yet. I'll come
through your window like a cat some
hot night and cut your throat.

BOOKBINDER
You come ahead. And they'll be
scraping bloody pieces of you off
my wall with a goddamned putty
knife.

Granville turns to walk off. At the yard's edge, he hesitates and goes to say more, but Bookbinder lifts his gun. Granville keeps moving until he vanishes in the darkening woods.

Bookbinder sets the gun down and squeezes his trembling hands in between his thighs to still them.

BOOKBINDER (CONT'D)
(sotto)
Things in this world better let
alone, Tyler.

EXT. HARRIKIN - NIGHT

Tyler sleeps restless in a stump-hole covered with dry leaves and branches. A fire is dwindling beside him.

The land is eerie and strange as black shadows and slivers of firelight dance into the early hours of dawn.

EXT. BLUFF - THE NEXT DAY

Tyler climbs an immense bluff of limestone covered with clods of wild ivy. A windy table of stone sits at the SUMMIT.

He looks up and sees the mouth of a CAVE within the bluff. He begins climbing toward it.

INT. CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Tyler crawls into the narrow cave. He looks around to see the calcified bones of luckless animals fallen prey. He grabs one of his *Hershey* bars and takes several satiating bites.

He reaches inside his pocket and pulls out Corrie's arrowhead and studies it between his fingers.

He sets it aside and takes off his belt. With his pocketknife he slices a thin thong of cowhide and loops a slipknot around the ears of the arrowhead. He ties the amulet about his neck.

As Tyler turns to exit the cave - BOOM! The rock splinters in shards of bright metal like bits of hot molten slag. The shot sends Tyler reeling down the bluff.

EXT. BLUFF - CONTINUOUS

Tyler army-crawls through the wild ivy with the rifle cradled underneath his chin.

BOOM! A closer shot clips shreds of limestone and careens off into space. Tyler hunkers down behind an outcropping of rock.

He aims his rifle and waits. Can't see anything in the timber far below - BOOM! Another shot whizzes past Tyler.

Granville emerges from the woods with his rifle; he's running toward a thin ridge of timber closer to the bluff.

TYLER
(panicked)
The son of a bitch.

Tyler fires - BOOM! But Granville simply ducks behind a cover of trees.

Tyler scrambles further up the bluff. His feet sliding on the loose shale.

He hits a stockpile of stone. It creates a makeshift stairway and Tyler hurriedly climbs it to the SUMMIT.

EXT. SUMMIT - CONTINUOUS

Tyler crests the enormous table of windy stone and looks down the opposite side. He immediately loses his breath.

It is 120 feet straight down to a brown field which rolls out with a tangled blue-gray forest; a green river snakes quickly out of the bluff and dissipates into the trees beyond.

Tyler studies his position critically. There is a small LEDGE sticking out 40 or 50 feet below him with a handful of cedars in between.

He turns around to look for Granville on the back side of the bluff. Granville is significantly closer and hustling through the cover of trees.

Without hesitation Tyler turns toward the abyss and begins to slide dangerously toward the nearest cedar while gripping his rifle one-handed.

EXT. BLUFF - CONTINUOUS

Tyler reaches the cedar and clutches it close to his body and tries not to look at the dizzying landscape below. A long way down, he begins to realize the folly of his choice.

Tyler slides downward to the next sapling. He grabs the trunk and its roots slowly RIP out of the earth.

He desperately CLAWS at the limestone and the rifle falls out of his hand and clatters down the face of the bluff and BANGS loudly on the rock below.

Tyler manages to grab a wrist-size pine and he holds it for a moment in giddy relief before it also gives. He SCRATCHES his face and arms against the limestone as he falls.

EXT. LEDGE - CONTINUOUS

Tyler lands with a sickening THUD. He lies momentarily before staggering to his feet. BLOOD drips off his face and arms. He looks dazed. He sees his rifle nearby.

He picks it up and quickly inspects it. If it is broken Tyler is unable to tell.

He goes to the edge of the ledge and stares down. The fall is even further at 70 or 80 feet straight down to the top of the trees with the clocking river below.

Tyler looks acutely at the SUMMIT above, then at the ledge he is on. He is trapped and a BOULDER offers the only cover.

He has no choice and hurries behind it. He aims his rifle and waits.

DISSOLVE TO:

The day wanes; light gathers in the west above the timber and the sky turns red.

Granville materializes at the rim. His head, then his arm and Tyler throws up his rifle to squeeze the trigger, but it does not fire. He twists the gun in his hands with disbelief.

Granville shoots - BOOM! The bullet hits the boulder and bits of splintered rock shower Tyler and CUT his neck. He searches the ledge in horror; there is nowhere to hide.

BOOM! The bullet RIPS through his shirt sleeve and grazes his arm.

He quickly backs himself against the bluff - BOOM! The bullet splits the ledge between his feet.

Tyler runs off the edge and keeps running and LEAPS as far as he can, brandishing the impotent rifle aloft as gravity works against his kicking legs.

He turns in midair and there is a gray-brown picture of stone and cedars rushing dizzily upward, going shapeless with speed as he PLUMMETS down to the RIVER.

EXT. RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Tyler HITS the water and rockets all the way under. He twists in the swift current and immediately begins wrestling for the surface. His unmanned rifle sinks to the rocky riverbed.

He surfaces in an EXPLOSION of spray, fighting for air. He is on his back bearing downstream - BOOM! The shot falls short.

Tyler wipes the water from his eyes and sees the BLUFF. It is diminishing rapidly, but Granville is silhouetted against the pale sky. He lowers his rifle and stands as dark and still as a crude sculpture of obsidian.

EXT. HARRIKIN - MOMENTS LATER

Shivering cold, Tyler wades out of the river and hustles into the cover of the forest. He looks around desperately lost and bloody with the walls of night drawing in on him.

INT. EMBALMING PARLOR - NIGHT

Corrie lies on a steel table quite composed and nude with her legs together. Her eyes are wide open and adorned in mascara.

Breece combs her hair in a becoming way. He places a gardenia behind her left ear.

There is a small cut on her forehead he had worked on earlier and he fingers it delicately.

Unsatisfied, Breece unpockets a tube of tinted cream from his smock and meticulously daubs the wound. He studies its effect and wipes away a minuscule amount.

He slides a pair of silk underwear up her legs, then pulls an evening gown over her head.

Pleased, he takes off his smock and tosses it aside. He picks Corrie up underneath her armpits.

INT. SITTING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Breece struggles to carry Corrie into a great amphitheater of a room with sloped ceilings and dark wooden beams.

He eases her onto an antique settee with a grunt, then stands for a moment breathing hard and admiring his recent work.

Her head tilts forward and lolls loosely sideways. He takes a pillow and slips it behind her head to stay it; Corrie's face wears a slightly quizzical look.

Breece goes to the *Crosley*. He drops its needle onto a record and waits for his favorite orchestra to play.

Returning to Corrie, he sits himself beside her and takes her hand. For a moment, he simply listens to the music.

FENTON

That's Mahler.
(abruptly)
Brandy?

Breece rises and from the credenza, he grabs a crystal bottle of brandy and two snifters. He pulls a table next to Corrie's legs and places one of the snifters atop it.

FENTON (CONT'D)
 (pouring the brandy)
 I don't suppose you're familiar
 with Mahler.

He sits with his own snifter held in his tiny white hands. He sips it while watching Corrie, then smiles softly.

FENTON (CONT'D)
 Gustav Mahler was an Austrian
 composer from around the turn of
 the century. This is a cycle of
 songs called the *Kindertotenlieder*.
 Translated, that means 'Songs of
 Dead Children.' Don't you think
 that's a nice touch of irony?

Breece downs the rest of his brandy and sets his snifter atop the table. He moves her hand onto his thigh. He wraps his arm around her shoulders and cups her breast with his left hand.

FENTON (CONT'D)
 That's fine?

He draws her closer to him with a stricken urgency and buries his face into the soft white curve of her neck.

FENTON (CONT'D)
 Oh, Corrie.

Across his shoulder, Corrie with her unfocused eyes looks out across the great empty room as if someone were watching.

EXT. SANDY HOUSE - NIGHT

An old house sits in a clearing surrounded by dense trees. It is unlit and silent.

A pale moon beckons Tyler on. He comes into the yard and sees a GERMAN SHEPHERD lying chained to a clothesline; it does not move. Tyler approaches and stares in bemused wonder.

The shepherd is lying in a pool of blood which looks black in the moonlight. Its eyes are inanimate and its lips are pulled over its teeth in a perpetual snarl at death. A HUNTING KNIFE is still lodged in its disemboweled belly.

Tyler stands hesitantly and glances toward the dark house. He steps over the dead dog and walks up a stoop of stacked rocks and hammers on the door.

TYLER

I need help.

There is silence within, a flare of dull light, then a covert stirring.

SANDY (O.C.)

You'll by God need some shortly if you don't get off my porch.

TYLER

I'm lost. I just need to talk to you a minute.

SANDY (O.C.)

I was just sittin here thinkin about blowin a hole in my front door with this shotgun. You standin on the steps, you liable to get hit.

Tyler wisely steps to the side of the door. He looks over his shoulder at the dense trees and shivers.

TYLER

Open up a minute.

The door springs inward. An overalled FIGURE appears in front of Tyler clutching a double-barrelled shotgun.

His cheeks are florid and unshaven. He looks half-demented in the dim light from within.

Unmistakably, he's the DRIVER from the beginning of the story also known as SANDY.

SANDY

How is it all you crazy son of a bitches always know how to find me? Out of all the people in this round world and half of it covered in trees, why is it you fools keep wanderin up out of the same goddamn woods into my front yard?

TYLER

Put your gun up. I don't aim to hurt anybody.

SANDY

I shore can't say the same about myself. How many of you's is out here?

TYLER

Just me.

SANDY

It's folks has to work for a livin. Has to sleep. All of us can't get by running in the woods all night long.

TYLER

Who else was here? Somebody's killed your watchdog.

SANDY

No shit.

TYLER

Granville Sutter's after me. He's gone crazy and I need help.

SANDY

I can guarangoddamntee he's crazy as a shithouse mouse and getting farther into the territories all the time.

TYLER

He aims to kill me.

SANDY

You need to get the hell on away from here. As long as you're somewhere else I'm thinking he'll be as well.

TYLER

I'm trying to get to Sheriff Bellwether. Have you got a car?

SANDY

Course I got one.

TYLER

Take me to Ackerman's Field.

SANDY

Not likely. I'm a Godfearin man. I ain't messed up with you two and don't plan to be.

(MORE)

SANDY (CONT'D)

I know for a fact he stuck my dog
with my own damned knife, and no
telling what you done.

TYLER

Let me in awhile. I'm cold and
starving.

Sandy breathes raspy and hard and does not speak, nor does he
move to unblock the door.

TYLER (CONT'D)

At least show me the way the
railroad tracks are.

He points mutely into the dark night. Tyler looks the way his
finger indicates and there is nothing but dense trees.

TYLER (CONT'D)

That's the goddamn way I came.

SANDY

I can't help that. They've always
been there, and unless they moved
em they're there still. Now head
out. And the next man prowls into
my yard tonight they goin to have
to drag him out.

Sandy steps backward and slams the door shut in Tyler's face.

TYLER

Wait...*please*?

Silence. Tyler turns and trudges down the stone stairs toward
the line of trees. Halfway across the yard, he looks back.

TYLER (CONT'D)

How far is it?

The dim light from within is turned off. The windows go still
and secret and black. There is only the moonlight.

TYLER (CONT'D)

How far?

The house appears vacant. Tyler is suddenly taken by a fit of
rage and begins screaming.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Goddamn you! I never made these
crazy sons of bitches! None of it's
my doing. They're just put here for
me to contend with.

(MORE)

TYLER (CONT'D)

They've killed my sister and tried to kill me, and I don't even know if she's been buried or not. Fenton Breece is crazy, sick somehow, the things he's doing to dead folks. Open a few graves and you'll see what I mean.

Tyler falls to his knees and grabs a goose-egg of a stone. He hurls it at the dark house and it ricochets off the door.

Still there is nothing from within. After a long while, Tyler rises and in an act of defiance, he approaches the bloody dog and yanks the hunting knife out of its belly.

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

Granville washes his bloody hands and leaves a trail of brown liquid to run through the natural channel of water.

INT. SITTING ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Breece is half-dressed and sleeping at the foot of the settee with Corrie lying beside him; she's nude and her evening gown has been discarded.

The sound of a door is heard closing. His eyes spring open as if snapped back by an invisible puppet string, then he stands in a disheveled whirlwind.

MS. CECIL (O.S.)

Mr. Breece?

He looks at himself, then Corrie and panics. He quickly grabs his trousers and thrusts one fleshy leg into the opening, but he's too late.

Ms. Cecil is standing in the threshold of the room, her mouth covered with one spider-veined hand.

MS. CECIL (CONT'D)

Heavens.

FENTON

It's not--

But Ms. Cecil spins on her heels and begins an old lady's run down the hallway. With one foot still in his trousers, Breece awkwardly hops forward, then trips over Corrie.

He lands with a fatty WHAM on the floor. He quickly scrambles to his feet, kicking off his pants.

FENTON (CONT'D)
(to Corrie)
Goddamn you!

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ms. Cecil barrels down the hall, her bluish hair bobbing left and right with every step.

Breece appears behind her and begins narrowing the gap in his penguin-like run.

FENTON
Ms. Cecil!

MS. CECIL
You're a sick man!

Breece grabs a weighty rock statue of two birds off a console table and increases his speed; he's never moved so fast.

Ms. Cecil turns for the staircase and Breece reaches back and SWINGS the statue with all of his might.

It CONNECTS with her pompadour. BLOOD squirts across Breece's face as Ms. Cecil begins to tumble.

She FALLS down the steps, bones CRUNCHING with every movement until she lands on the bottom step in one stomach-turning and disjointed mess.

Breece stands still as death with blood running down his face and the statue of the two birds clutched in his small hand.

FENTON
Oh dear.

EXT. HARRIKIN - DAY

Tyler passes rusted and purposeless mining machinery. A light yet piercing sleet has begun to fall and it chills him.

He comes off a long ridge of chestnut and descends a hill. An old motorless *Buick* is sitting next to a tree. By some divine miracle all of its windows are in tact.

Tyler opens the door and climbs inside. He wearily stares out the blurred windshield pelted with frozen rain; his eyes grow heavy as he shivers.

He reaches out with his forefinger to draw on the window. The condensation splits and he pulls his finger back to reveal:

Corrie Tyler
1952 - 1973

DISSOLVE TO:

Dusk has fallen and the sleet has subsided; reddish hues fill the sky. Tyler exits the *Buick* and trudges on.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

He follows a dirt road and the songs of disembodied voices. A white tent sits in a muddy clearing and a PREACHER steps into the chilly night. WORSHIPERS follow and pay their respects.

PREACHER

Good night, brother. God bless you.

WORSHIPER

See you at the meetin tomorrow.

Tyler moves off the road as religious folk pass by and extend weary glances; he looks near death.

A FAMILY approaches, led by a MAN and his rawboned WIFE. They are followed by a BOY and a TEENAGE GIRL with dark hair.

Unmistakably, it's the MASSACRED FAMILY from the beginning of the story also known as CLAUDE, PEARL, DREW and CLAUDELLE.

Claude stops and studies Tyler with a curious eye; his family huddles behind him.

CLAUDE

Boy, are you washed in the blood?

TYLER

I don't reckon.

CLAUDE

This ridge is a place for worshippers tonight. No place here for sinners.

TYLER

I just heard the singing and followed it. I'm lost.

CLAUDE

Lost?

Claude leans closer. Tyler glances around skittishly until he is suddenly offered an enthusiastic handshake.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
I know all about lost. I wrote the
book on lost.

The rawboned wife touches her husband with a grateful hand as she steps forward.

PEARL
Claude was saved tonight. He was a
drunk for twenty years, but tonight
he gave it all up.

CLAUDE
Amen.

Claudelle is a beauty and staring at Tyler; he meets her gaze momentarily and she offers a mischievous smile.

TYLER
I'm just trying to get to
Ackerman's Field. I come from
Centre.

CLAUDE
Lord, you're a long way from home.

TYLER
I can maybe catch a ride to town
from here then?

Claude clamps onto Tyler and seeks his eyes with a divine and altruistic fixity.

CLAUDE
You goin with us. You goin to get
somethin to eat and a bed to sleep
in and you goin into town with us
in the mornin.

Tyler attempts to object, but he is abruptly pulled toward an old pickup.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Claude waves them to table with an expansive arm. Tyler's eye takes in a platter of pork chops, white beans cooked with ham and a bowl of snowy mashed potatoes.

Claude and Pearl sit down at the heads with Drew and Tyler on one side and Claudelle on the other.

CLAUDE
Just help yourself.

Tyler begins dishing the potatoes onto his plate as Claudelle watches him.

TYLER

Thank you. I was about starved out.

Tyler passes the potatoes to Claudelle with a small smile; he takes the platter of pork chops from Drew.

CLAUDE

Who are you anyway, Lost Sheep? You say you from over around Centre?

TYLER

I'm a Tyler. We always lived down on Lick Creek.

CLAUDE

Lick Creek? You ain't kin to old Moose Tyler, are you?

TYLER

That's what folks always called my father.

Claude dumps his utensils and stares at Tyler with disbelief.

CLAUDE

Well, I'll be double-dipped in dog shit. Old Moose Tyler's boy.

PEARL

Be baptized at a meetin and come straight home and talk that way at the supper table.

CLAUDE

'Shit' ain't takin the name of the Lord our God in vain. Or wadn't the last time I looked.

PEARL

It's vulgar talk, Bible or no Bible.

CLAUDE

(ignoring Pearl)

If this ain't the beatinest thing. Boy, I knowed your daddy thirty year or more. He used to drink whiskey better than a fish drink water, and I shore was sorry to hear when he died.

(MORE)

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
I've passed out in your front room
more times than once.

Pearl watches Tyler closely as if his social standing dropped precipitously; he begins to eat incrementally faster.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
Didn't you have a sister a little
older than you? Pretty little thing
with big eyes?

TYLER
Yes.

CLAUDE
Where's she at? She ain't lost too,
is she?

Tyler's jaw ceases working. He lowers his fork and sits quiet for a moment.

TYLER
She died, too.

INT. FRONT ROOM - LATER

Claude is sitting in a plush recliner with a Scottish Terrier on his lap; its unmistakable gemstone earrings glimmer. Tyler eyes it with curiosity as Drew fiddles with the TV.

TYLER
Is that dog wearing earrings?

CLAUDE
Ain't that somethin? Drew pierced
her ears for me with a needle.

Garbled chunks of noise ring out of the TV as Drew cranks the dial from one end to the other. Claude grows annoyed.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
Leave it in one place. Put it on
eight. They might have *Gunsmoke*.

DREW
I ain't studying no *Gunsmoke*. I'm
trying to find *The Six Million
Dollar Man*.

CLAUDE
Boy, *The Six Million Dollar Man*
ain't goin to get you in heaven.

DREW
He'll come about as close as
Gunsmoke.

CLAUDE
Let me see that thing.

Claude pushes the terrier onto the floor and rises. He nudges Drew aside and spins the dial.

DREW
You gonna drift off anyhow.

Tyler looks toward the kitchen and sees Claudelle standing in the doorway. He glances at Claude and when he looks back, the doorway is empty.

CLAUDE
What I'd say? *Gunsmoke* it is.

Satisfied with the TV station, Claude returns to his recliner and grabs a bent apple pipe from the side table. He lights it and closes his eyes for some sleep.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Claudelle is standing at the sink with her back turned to the door, washing dishes. Tyler quietly enters.

At his step, her hand holding the sponge stops its motion and she seems to be waiting for something. Tyler can see her face reflected in the window.

He reaches for her shoulder and she pivots; they are close to touching, but she refuses to meet his eyes.

CLAUDELLE
Why don't you just slip up on a
body?

TYLER
You heard me coming.

CLAUDELLE
I did not.

TYLER
You were waiting for me though.

CLAUDELLE
Waiting for you to do what?

She looks at Tyler; her eyes are darkly fringed with gorgeous lashes. He wants to speak but the words fail to come out.

She kisses him. Tyler doesn't pull away, but stiffens and his lips clinch.

Her hand is wet with soapy water as it comes up to clutch the back of his neck. Tyler tries to succumb, then turns his head away and his gaze falls to the floor.

TYLER

I'm sorry. I can't.

Claudelle searches his face. Her hand slides off his neck and lifts his chin so his pained eyes meet hers.

CLAUDELLE

Are you okay?

TYLER

I don't know.

Hesitation fills his face. Claudelle takes his hand and pulls him to the table. She sits and interlocks their fingers, then looks up at him.

Tyler studies her sensitive eyes underneath him. So sweet. He suddenly falls to his knees and buries his face in the warmth of her lap and begins crying. Finally mourning with a painful and quiet desperation.

Unsure of how to respond Claudelle places her hand on the top of his messy brown hair. She leans down and kisses him on the crown of his head. She puts her arms around him as Tyler sobs heavily.

CLAUDELLE

It's going to be okay.

EXT. HARRIKIN - NIGHT

A small bitter rain falls from the pewter sky. The wind blows and drives a bevy of dark SPARROWS from an enormous cedar.

Granville comes off the long ridge of chestnut and approaches the old motorless *Buick*. He opens the door and climbs inside.

He observes Tyler's oily fingerprints on the window and leans forward to blow on the glass. The epitaph is revealed:

Corrie Tyler
1952 - 1973

A look approaching regret crosses Granville's face. He lights a cigarette and watches a spherical vision of rainy trees and thinks only of Tyler.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Tyler lies on the couch with a mothball smelling quilt pulled to his chin; he listens to the sounds of the house.

His eyes fall in and out of dreams, then clarify on Claudelle standing above him. She shucks her nightgown overhead and the bloom of her pale body is unveiled.

She tugs the quilt aside and lays the warmth of her body onto Tyler; her breasts pool against his chest. Tyler tries to say something but Claudelle places her fingers over his lips.

CLAUDELLE
(softly)
Shhh.

Tyler envelopes Claudelle, then rolls her over. Both of their eyes are so near, seemingly dark and wise beyond their years.

He caresses her black hair behind her ears and kisses her. He enters her gently and she arches back, eyes are unwavering as they make love.

DISSOLVE TO:

Tyler is asleep on the couch. Claudelle is standing above him as she pulls her nightgown overhead. She leans over and lands a gentle kiss on his forehead, then turns and dissipates down the hallway.

DISSOLVE TO:

Claude is standing over Tyler and shaking him secretly. Tyler comes awake slowly as if he were rising out of muddy waters.

CLAUDE
Get up.

TYLER
Crawl in next to me.

CLAUDE
What? Wake the hell up, boy.

Tyler awakens at once and shoots up; his eyes sweep the whole room. He feels a rush of relief as he focuses on Claude.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
Get up. It's mornin.

Tyler glances around. It's so dark he can't even see a window yet alone a hint of light.

TYLER
If it's morning why isn't it light?

CLAUDE
It's getting light.

TYLER
Where?

Claude falls silent and Tyler can hear the steady rasp of his breathing like an alcoholic in fix.

TYLER (CONT'D)
What was it you wanted?

CLAUDE
You didn't have a little drink hid out, did ye?

TYLER
No. No, I don't even drink.

CLAUDE
I just thought bein as you was Moose's boy, you might.

TYLER
I thought you quit?

CLAUDE
I did, I did. I reckon I'll go look for somethin to eat.

Tyler falls back to his pillow and Claude stumbles off. Windy rain begins to pelt the farmhouse.

INT. BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Breece is asleep in his four poster bed. The phone rings. His groggy eyes fight to open. He clicks on the bedside light and reaches for the receiver.

FENTON
Hello?

ODEL (O.S.)
 Mr. Breece. I apologize for the
 early morning intrusion, but this
 is Sheriff Odel.

Breece springs upward. He furiously wipes his eyes to awaken.

FENTON
 Yes?

ODEL (O.S.)
 I had an interesting conversation
 with Mr. Haggis from the high
 school.

FENTON
 You did?

ODEL (O.S.)
 I did. And something else, your
 secretary Ms. Cecil was reported
 missing this morning.

FENTON
 She was?

ODEL (O.S.)
 I need you to come by my office and
 answer some questions. Say noon.
 Can you do that for me?

FENTON
 Of course. Most certainly.

ODEL (O.S.)
 Goodbye Mr. Breece.

Breece closes his eyes as if envisioning the inevitable grief
 that will fall upon him.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Pearl is standing beside a pan of eggs and pointing a spatula
 at Claude; he is red-faced and drunk.

PEARL
 You take the cake. Baptized one
 night praisin Jesus and up before
 the daylight drinkin whiskey.

CLAUDE

The Bible ain't down on spirits.
Why even them old prophets and
disciples and suchlike of old was
known to take a dram of wine.

PEARL

They never blowed the grocery money
on it, though.

CLAUDE

They would if they had a
sourtongued old bitch like you
doggin their every move.

Pearl slams the spatula down. Claude avoids her stare and she
shakes her head in disbelief.

INT. FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tyler is sitting on the couch and pulling on his boots. Pearl
enters and stops at the sight of him with bitter eyes.

PEARL

You got him to thinkin about
whiskey again.

TYLER

If I did, I never meant to.

Her face is as stoney as a banker's; Tyler avoids her eyes as
she exits.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Tyler enters to see Claude sitting at the table with his back
turned to the door.

CLAUDE

Don't pay her no mind. I don't need
it nohow, I'm shut of it.

TYLER

We still going to town?

Claude turns to look at Tyler; the heaviness of his addiction
is on his mind.

CLAUDE

Boy, I don't need any more
temptation than I already got.

TYLER
 (sinking)
 I got to get on, then, Claude.

CLAUDE
 I'll see you.

Claude turns back. Tyler hesitates before stepping closer; he clears his throat.

TYLER
 Listen. There's a man looking for me named Granville Sutter, and he may come here. If he does, don't fool with him. Don't even let him in.

CLAUDE
 (meeting his eyes)
 You bring the son of a bitch on. After the mornin I've had and it not over yet, nobody's goin to come here and jerk me around.

EXT. CALVERT FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Tyler trudges up the hill; chilly rain courses down his body.

Claudelle runs out of the farmhouse. She is carrying a FOLDED BLANKET and a paper bag with the top rolled down.

CLAUDELLE
 Tyler.

Tyler turns back. Claudelle hustles after him, getting soaked in the rain. She stops before him and offers up the effects.

CLAUDELLE (CONT'D)
 It's Daddy's army blanket and a little breakfast.

TYLER
 Thank you.

CLAUDELLE
 Bring that blanket back. It's Daddy's, and he wouldn't take nothing for it. You are coming back, aren't you?

TYLER
 I need to take care of some business first.

CLAUDELLE

I've just got a bad feeling I'm never going to see you again.

TYLER

Even your mother couldn't keep me run off. Promise.

CLAUDELLE

Can I have something of yours to keep? To remember you by.

Tyler sets the blanket and paper bag on the ground. He unties the ARROWHEAD amulet from around his neck and wraps it around Claudelle's throat. He ties it shut and kisses her lips.

CLAUDELLE (CONT'D)

I don't even know your first name.

TYLER

It's Kenneth.

CLAUDELLE

Thank you, Kenneth.

TYLER

If a man shows up around here and asks about me, you head out. If you have to go out a window or whatever. Just stay out of his way.

Tyler picks up the blanket and bag, then stares squarely into her rain-soaked eyes.

CLAUDELLE

Daddy always says you gotta look a bully in the eye.

INT. OFFICE - MORNING

Odel is seated behind his desk; his palms are laid flat on it and his eyes are suspicious. Harlan stands beside him.

ODEL

So tell me again. When was the last time you seen Ms. Cecil?

Breece is sitting across the desk; he looks squeamish and his face is flushed crimson.

FENTON

Yesterday. No, the day before Tuesday. Or maybe it was yesterday?

ODEL
Which one is it?

FENTON
The day before yesterday.

ODEL
Uh-huh.

Odel glances over his shoulder. Harlan meets his eyes with an impish smirk. Breece notices and grows increasingly anxious.

FENTON
(suddenly)
Somebody ought to check out
Granville Sutter.

ODEL
(looking back)
What's Sutter got to do with this?

FENTON
Well, uh, Ms. Cecil spoke to me
about some trouble she was having
with the man. I simply thought it
was nothing to worry about, and
told her as much. But now, looking
back and in light of her
disappearance, maybe there is more
to it. Apparently, he threatened
her. Perhaps you should arrest him.

HARLAN
The law's a funny thing, Breece. It
requires evidence.

Breece bobs his head metronomically; Odel's stare grows heavy as the undertaker nervously looks away.

ODEL
How bout you just let me know if
you plan on leaving town anytime
soon.

FENTON
Ah, yes. Okay.

Odel nods his goodbye. Breece rises and shuffles out. After a moment, Odel turns to Harlan.

EXT. HARRIKIN - AFTERNOON

The fog is thick and the light wanes beneath it. Tyler climbs an embankment and looks out from its peak.

The railroad tracks lay on crossties gleaming palely with wet phosphorescence in the near distance.

Giddy with relief, Tyler rushes down the embankment and heads toward them.

EXT. CALVERT BARN - NIGHT

Granville's *Bronco* drives up the road. Its headlights refract off the rain and illuminate the sleeping farmhouse.

He parks and cuts the engine. He exits and cases the house as enormous BIRDS pass the remote face of the moon.

EXT. CALVERT FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Granville climbs the muddy grade and steps onto the porch. He hammers on the door.

GRANVILLE

You better be in there.

He can hear an abrupt scuttle of claws crossing the floor and the grating bark of the Scottish Terrier.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

Shut up, you little bitch.

The barking becomes almost hysterical and a light flickers to life inside the farmhouse.

PEARL (O.C.)

What on earth? Claude?

Footsteps cross the floor and move toward the door. Granville hammers once more.

CLAUDE (O.C.)

You the Lost Sheep back?

GRANVILLE

As lost a sheep as ever was.

The door opens onto the dimly lit front room. Claude focusses his eyes on Granville; he is clearly still drunk.

CLAUDE
 What the hell? It's two o'clock in
 the mornin.

INT. FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Granville ambles into the center of the room. His clothes are reeking and dripping water onto the rug. Claude stares at him incredulously.

GRANVILLE
 How long's he been gone?

CLAUDE
 Who?

GRANVILLE
 That Tyler boy. You tell me what I
 want to know and I'll be on my way
 without anybody gettin hurt.

CLAUDE
 Just who the goddamn hell do you
 think you are, mister? You seem to
 forget you're on my property.

Pearl enters the room, followed by Drew and Claudelle; she is clutching the Terrier to her chest. Granville keenly observes the arrowhead tied around her neck.

GRANVILLE
 (to Claudelle)
 I'm the fellow that's huntin Tyler
 and if you don't tell me damn quick
 where he's at I'm going to unbreech
 you like a shotgun.

Granville furtively reaches into his pocket and pulls out his switchblade; it winks dully in the light.

PEARL
 Tell him, Claude.

CLAUDE
 Shut up. I ain't tellin him
 jackshit. And you ain't neither.

PEARL
 He went to Ackerman's Field.

Claude throws a savage blow and catches Granville hard enough to stumble him; he spits BLOOD onto the floor.

Claude lists to the side like some drunken bear and begins to windmill his arms wildly. Granville simply rises up and steps inside his flailing fists.

He DRIVES his knife deep into Claude's belly and JERKS upward in an explosion of guts and putrid gasses; Claude momentarily leaves the floor as BLOOD dribbles onto his chin.

PEARL (CONT'D)

Oh my God!

Granville spins around to find the family aligned against the wall like spectators of some twisted bloodsport. He YANKS the blade out of Claude and charges toward Claudelle.

She drops the Terrier and turns to run as Granville grabs for her neck. Drew throws himself against Granville and Claudelle sprints free.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Claudelle breaks into the bathroom. She quickly turns to lock the door and steps back. Tears form in the corner of her eyes as she hears Granville FIGHTING with her brother.

EXT. ROAD - THE NEXT MORNING

The road is familiar from the beginning of the story; Tyler's following it with the army blanket wrapped around him.

He approaches a city limits sign which reads *Ackerman's Field* and a smile emerges from his lips; his pace quickens.

EXT. ACKERMAN'S FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Cresting a hill, Tyler sees a *Plymouth Fury* cocked inward and gleaming in the pale sun. *Ackerman's Field Sheriff* is painted on its door; a tall uniformed MAN sits behind the wheel.

Tyler hustles down to the driver's door and knocks as quickly on the glass.

There is an instant look of revelation on Tyler's face as the driver cranes his neck. GRANVILLE SUTTER is dressed from head to toe in fully deputy regalia.

The door flings outward and HITS Tyler - WHACK! He falls down to the seat of his pants.

Granville jumps out the door and GRABS at Tyler like flies on shit; an iron grip CLAMPS his throat and LIFTS him off of the road.

WHAM! Scarred and bony knuckles HIT Tyler in his temple solid and the world tilts on its axis as he crumbles to the ground.

As the world rights itself, Granville's face is very close to Tyler's and full of contempt.

GRANVILLE

I got you now, you little son of a bitch.

Tyler tries to TWIST away, but Granville SLAMS him in the jaw and the back of his head RICOCHETS off the road like a paddle ball; the world goes completely black.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. PLYMOUTH FURY - LATER

He awakens to a dull throb in his temple and singing from the driver's seat; his wrists are bound with duct tape.

GRANVILLE

*...and I wound up her little ball
of yarn / It was just two weeks
from this I went out to take a
piss...*

Tyler looks out the window and sees clumps of trees streaking past as the cruiser bounces over a dirt road.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

*..and I found myself a burden of
great pain / For it had been to my
mishaps I had caught a dose of the
claps.*

He creeps his bound hands over his thigh toward the door, one inch, then no more, one inch, then no more.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

Move em again and I'll leave you a bloody stub to jack off with.

Tyler knots his hands into fists and lays them on his lap. He begins to work his tongue against his swollen jaw.

TYLER

Where are we going?

GRANVILLE

Far enough so's there ain't no
busybodies around.

EXT. HARRIKIN - CONTINUOUS

The road vanishes into a heavier timber. The *Fury* drives over small saplings which cause it to labor harder; it snakes back into the Harrikin.

INT. PLYMOUTH FURY - LATER

Tyler is eyeing Granville as the cruiser hits a little gully; it lurches sickeningly.

TYLER

Where'd you come by that getup?

GRANVILLE

Do you honestly want to know?

TYLER

No.

GRANVILLE

I thought not. Now I looked you over pretty good while you was dozed off. You ain't got no pictures. What I want to know is where they are and how we get to em.

Tyler prods his jaw with his tongue; a tooth breaks and blood fills his mouth. He leans forward and spits it on the floor.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

Damn, boy, ain't you had no raisin?
This car belongs to the Sheriff of
Ackerman's Field.

He sits staring at his tooth and a dull anger seizes him. The cruiser reaches a veritable wall of timber with no give.

Granville kills the engine and something gives under the hood with a soft whoosh and a rising curtain of steam.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

You see what meanness you've brought on everybody, and all that's happened might never have been? It was your choice, and ever bit of it is on your head.

(MORE)

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

There's people been killed over your stubbornness, and more could come. I told you to imagine the worst thing that could happen and it would be so.

Tyler looks out the window; the timber ends with a sedgefield rolling steeply downhill in stone tapestries.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

It's just business to me and the only holdup is you.

TYLER

I promise the only man that'll get them from me is Bellwether.

GRANVILLE

You'll give em to me. Oh, yes. When I'm through with you, you'll be beggin me to take em. You'll say, *Please, Mr. Sutter, take these nasty things and be done with em.*
(opening his door)
Now get your ass out.

EXT. HARRIKIN - CONTINUOUS

Tyler exits into the cold; a wind with the taste of ice in it is looping up from the sedgefield.

GRANVILLE

Fixin to snow.

Granville studies the onecolor sky as if he were some curious weatherman.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

Me and you got to get to them pictures and get the hell out of Dodge before the snow flies.

He moves toward the trunk of the *Fury* and opens it. Inside an ill-fated DEPUTY looks out with dead eyes. Granville leans in and reaches for a tire iron beside his bludgeoned head. Tyler sees his final opportunity.

He sprints around the *Fury* and leaps upon him. He flails both fists and kicks before Granville can even hit the ground.

Granville rolls away from the kicks and is fighting to get up as Tyler stumbles over a whiteoak branch; Tyler grabs it with both bound hands.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)
 You blindsidin son of a bitch.

CRACK! Tyler hits him alongside his temple with the length of the branch; chunks of rotten wood fly. Granville falls to his knees and Tyler hits him again - CRACK!

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)
 You're graveyard dead.

But Tyler doesn't stop; he sobs with rage and frustration and swings the makeshift club as hard as he can - CRACK!

Granville attempts to crawl away on his hands and knees; he's half-dazed. Tyler does not cease - CRACK! CRACK!

Granville falls facedown and clamps his hands around the back of his head. CRACK! CRACK! Tyler beats his knuckles and blood soaks through his hair. CRACK - the branch breaks.

Tyler looks around for another stick and picks up the biggest one he can find. Granville struggles sluggishly like some odd half-crushed insect. CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

Tyler quits and eyes Granville with loathing as he rolls onto his back.

TYLER
 Goddamn you.

Granville's face resembles something you'd unwrap from bloody butcher paper and the skin has been beaten off of his hands.

TYLER (CONT'D)
 Why won't you just leave me the hell alone?

Granville lies breathing heavily. The beating crushed his jaw and bloody bubbles froth from the corners of his mouth.

TYLER (CONT'D)
 By God you will lay here and die directly.

Tyler throws the stick and walks around the back of the *Fury*; he shuts the trunk on the dead deputy, then climbs behind the wheel.

INT. PLYMOUTH FURY - CONTINUOUS

For a moment Tyler sits staring through the windshield at the timber beyond and breathing heavily.

He twists the key. The engine turns over lethargically but it doesn't hit. He tries again and again until the starter turns slower and slower and ultimately clicks dry.

Tyler looks over the backseat and finds his HUNTING KNIFE and OLD ARMY BLANKET. He grabs them and exits the cruiser.

EXT. HARRIKIN - CONTINUOUS

Tyler uses the knife to cut the tape bounding his hands, then slips the knife into his belt. He drapes the blanket over his shoulders and turns to walk out the path they had come.

After a few paces, Tyler stops. He defiantly turns to go back into the deeper timber.

EXT. HILL - LATER

Tyler crests the summit of a hill and stops to rest. He looks up and huge snowflakes begin to list out of the heavens, gray against the pale steely gray of the sky.

He looks back the way he had come. Below the hillside, a flat valley is spread out and merging with a row of trees. Another slope ascends, already whitening.

Tyler sees Granville trudging down that slope; he is tiny and dark and furiously animated against the field.

EXT. SLOPE - CONTINUOUS

He's crazed all over with dried blood and his body aches, but Granville keeps pushing himself through the snow with a rifle in his hands, limping closer and closer.

A dark shifting cloud of BIRDS comes flying out of the timber and a CARDINAL arcs from tree to tree like a drop of blood.

EXT. SUMMIT - CONTINUOUS

Tyler turns and hustles down the backside of the hill leaving snowy footprints in his wake.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - AFTERNOON

TWELVE MEN are gathered loosely about the courthouse steps in *Ackerman's Field*; they are armed to the last man with rifles.

The door to the courthouse opens and SHERIFF BELLWETHER exits into the falling snow.

The gang of men settles as Bellwether looks up with pale eyes and wavy hair going prematurely gray.

BELLWETHER

Gentleman. Deputy Garrison and I will go in the county car, and the Holt brothers will bring you all behind us in their trucks. We've got a bunch of flashlights. Everybody make sure you have a light and make sure it works.

MAN 1

What about the state?

BELLWETHER

For right now they're manning roadblocks.

MAN 2

Roads ain't nothin to Granville. He could be in Alabama by now.

MAN 3

Where we goin?

BELLWETHER

Last place we know for sure he was at was Claude Calvert's place. That's where the truckload of bodies came from. From there we'll just have to play it by ear.

MAN 3

It's two or three hundred square miles in the Harrikin. What are we lookin for, clues? Fingerprints? He's long gone from there.

BELLWETHER

He may well be. But all the same it's got to be done. You understand this is purely a voluntary thing.

MAN 3

I never said nothin about not goin.

INT. BEDROOM - DUSK

Breece is packing his clothes in a leather suitcase; he wears a silk lounging robe and velvet slippers. The phone rings. He answers it.

FENTON

Good evening?

He hears heavy breaths on the other line, then the mechanical click as the anonymous caller hangs up.

Breece returns the receiver to its base and stands for a long moment. He opens the nightstand and pulls out a German *Luger*.

EXT. HARRIKIN - NIGHT

The snow is falling harder and the woods are full of pastoral drifts.

Granville leans against the trunk of a cedar; he is smoking a cigarette. His bloody and demolished hand lifts the filter to his equally demolished and bloody mouth.

Far off on the hillside, a long line of flashlights move in a slow curve around the face of the hill.

Granville puts out his cigarette in the snow and picks up the rifle; he pushes after Tyler.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Breece is still packing when somebody begins to POUND against the front door. He looks up half-expecting the visitor.

EXT. BREECE FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

A motley crew of TEN MEN are standing outside the front door, clutching rifles and baseball bats. Tyler's teacher Haggis is amongst them.

The oak door opens a scant two inches with the security chain held in place; Breece peeks out.

FENTON

I'll be right with you. I'm not dressed to receive company.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Breece SLAMS the door shut and locks the dead bolt. He rushes down the foyer with his suitcase. Behind him, the door begins to SHUTTER as the men pound against it - WHAM! Again - WHAM!

INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Breece pushes a red button mounted to the wall and the garage door rises; the snow is blowing slantwise outside. His silver *Cadillac* hearse sits like a shuttle ready for launch.

He quickly rushes to the rear and sets the suitcase inside. A pair of limpid eyes stare back at him; the horrific corpse of Ms. Cecil is entombed here and her bluish hair has become one nauseating beehive of dried blood. He slams the door closed.

He climbs behind the steering wheel and cranks the engine; he rolls forward a few feet and abruptly slams on the brakes.

FENTON

Sweet Jesus.

He climbs out of the hearse and hustles back through the door to the funeral home.

INT. EMBALMING PARLOR - MOMENTS LATER

Breece uncovers Corrie on the steel table; she is wearing his evening gown. He lifts her.

FENTON

Hurry, hurry.

INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Breece opens the passenger door and jostles Corrie inside. He slams the door and it bounces off of her ankle.

FENTON

(to Corrie)

Goddamn it! What the hell's the matter with you? Can't you see we're in a hurry here?

He moves her foot and shuts the door. He goes around the back of the hearse and climbs behind the wheel.

INT. HEARSE - CONTINUOUS

The hearse slews sickeningly sideways, but miraculously stops in the direction Breece intended. He steps on the accelerator and shoots down the snowy drive past the funeral home.

EXT. BREECE FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

The gang of men have practically battered the front door down and it hangs crazily on one hinge. Their heads turn as one as the hearse streaks past. They immediately run, yelling toward their parked cars.

INT. HEARSE - MOMENTS LATER

Coming off a hill, Breece is driving eighty miles an hour; he steers left-handed while holding Corrie with his right.

A wash of headlights trail him. He can barely see through the windshield as he flies through an intersection.

Breece fumbles with the wipers. He hits a dip in the road and Corrie suddenly folds forward into the steering wheel; Breece jerks her back and the wheel cocks dangerously.

EXT. MAPLE STREET - CONTINUOUS

The hearse slides on the road in a caterwauling of protesting rubber, then rockets over an embankment toward a utility pole in a sudden and eerie silence.

EXT. EMBANKMENT - CONTINUOUS

CRUNCH! A simultaneous uproar of SPLINTERING wood and WARPING steel and BREAKING glass as the hearse SLAMS into a telephone pole; the wires are pulled tight and the pole swings overhead until it separates.

WHAM! It COLLIDES with the engine in one final outraged burst of WRENCHING metal.

Breece crawls out and immediately falls onto the snowy ground with a broken leg twisting beneath him.

He slithers around the hearse to the passenger side and opens the door. He grabs Corrie and starts tugging her out.

EXT. MAPLE STREET - CONTINUOUS

The gang of men jump out of their cars and begin running down the embankment.

EXT. EMBANKMENT - CONTINUOUS

Above the hearse, two electrical wires snap together and send arcs of bright blue fire into the night. Breece has his right elbow locked around Corrie as he drags her into the field.

He makes it a few feet when the men reach him, shouting vague obscenities.

Breece releases Corrie and pulls the *Luger* out of his crimson robe. He sits holding it uncertainly. The men halt.

Holding the gun with both hands, Breece puts the acrid barrel into his mouth.

FENTON

You stop right there. You come any closer and I'll blow my head off.

The FOREMOST MAN leans forward with his hand on his knee; his face is florid with a weary rage in his eyes.

FOREMOST MAN

You go ahead, you worthless son of a bitch and save me the quarter it would cost me to do it myself.

FENTON

I'll do it in a second. I'll count to five and then I'll do it. *Ten--*

The man straightens up and KICKS the *Luger* viciously away; it TEARS out the left corner of Breece's mouth and pieces of his bloody teeth fling across the snow.

Breece whimpers softly as blood drips from his chin. The gang stands before him and Corrie in a perverse awe. A SQUATTY MAN stumbles closer.

SQUATTY MAN

Lord God. What are we goin to do with him?

FOREMOST MAN

Do any fuckin thing you want to as long as I don't have to touch him.

Haggis kneels before Corrie; he pulls the gown over her naked hips.

HAGGIS

Jesus.

Two other men haul Breece erect and carry him toward the road like some loathsome weight.

EXT. HOLLOW - NIGHT

Tyler trudges on. Two hills begin to rise. He hears a curious and familiar sound; it is a mournful and high pitched KEENING of one constant note.

He instantly knows where he is. A flood of relief courses his body as he continues up the hollow through the snow.

EXT. WHISTLING WELL - CONTINUOUS

Tyler passes the WHISTLING WELL and its barbed-wire fence; he descends upon the narrow man-made ARCH of stone.

Tyler kicks the snow off of the FLAT CIRCULAR STONE buried in the earth. He lifts it aside and pries the TOBACCO TIN out of the ground; he puts it into his back pocket.

He turns and moves toward the hollow, then stops abruptly and looks speculatively at the whistling well.

Some core of stubbornness hardens within him and he begins to dismantle the barbed-wire fence. He kicks the boards free and boots them into the bottomless hole.

Tyler removes the ARMY BLANKET from his shoulders and lays it across the fissure; he fastens each corner with a stone.

EXT. HILLSIDE - CONTINUOUS

He rushes down the hillside and begins to collect armloads of snowy leaves and brush.

EXT. WHISTLING WELL - CONTINUOUS

Tyler spreads them across the blanket. A thin skim of snow is beginning to form and it appears the hole does not exist; the ceaseless note grows fainter and fainter.

EXT. TREE LINE - CONTINUOUS

Tyler dashes to the line of trees. He pulls the HUNTING KNIFE out of his belt and cuts dozens of branches from their limbs.

He saws husks off of whiteoak trunks and stuffs them into his pockets. He returns the knife to his belt and gathers as many branches as he can carry.

EXT. HOLLOW - CONTINUOUS

Tyler pulls the husks out of his pockets and places them in a natural depression of stone. He sites several of the smallest branches on top and fumbles out the WORLD WAR II *ZIPPO*.

He snaps the wheel multiple times before it finally catches a flame; he sets it to the tinder.

The husks burn in bright fluxing wires. Tyler feeds them with more wood; the fire wavers in the wind, then begins to build.

His face is sharp and intent in the orange glare. He piles on the largest branches and flames rise. The fire roars and pops as the wind pumps billowing smoke up the hollow.

Tyler continues to dump wood into the flames and within a few minutes, an enormous bonfire is roaring full-throated; sparks cascade upward into the falling snow.

EXT. WHISTLING WELL - CONTINUOUS

Tyler returns to the narrow man-made arch of stone. He squats behind it and waits with drowsed exhaustion. The well appears to no longer exist, hidden by his trap.

EXT. HARRIKIN - LATER

Granville moves through shadowed bottomlands; the trudging is painfully slow. His body aches with every step, but an orange glow on a distant bluff beckons him forward.

EXT. HOLLOW - LATER

Granville climbs up the recess of stone and silently aims his rifle. The wind blows and the fire flares. He spins like some wild beast ready to catch whatever scent it might bring.

EXT. WHISTLING WELL - CONTINUOUS

Tyler peers out from behind the arch; his eyes intensely call Granville forward.

TYLER
(sotto)
Come on, goddamn you.

Granville glances around. He crouches down and aims his rifle as he steps toward the jury-rigged chasm, closer and closer.

His left foot hits the crude trap and the earth falls beneath him like the gallows. He flings his rifle and claws wildly at the stone.

Granville manages to grab a piece of wrought iron jutting out from inside the well. He dangles precariously above the abyss and his eyes are intent on the nearest lip of stone.

GRANVILLE
Boy!

Tyler walks to the edge of the hole and looks down. His fiery eyes lock on Granville, who is opening his mouth in big gulps of icy air as he desperately clings for his life.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)
Listen. There's money in my pocket.
Better than seven thousand dollars.
You can have it.

Tyler picks up the greatest stone he can find and clutches it over his head. Granville watches him urgently.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)
She ain't dead. When them doctors
come they brought her to. All she
was was knocked out.

TYLER
You're a goddamned liar. She was
dead before I left her and Fenton
Breece has got her somewhere.

GRANVILLE
This money's in my right front
pocket. I can feel it burnin my
leg. It's yourn if you want it. We
can get a lot more out of that
crazy undertaker.

Granville extends his hand. Tyler stands in a brief moment of indecision, then suddenly swings the stone.

It STRIKES the outstretched hand and Granville swings like an errant pendulum. As he comes back around, he claws feverishly at the stone.

Tyler is crying as he wields the stone once more and HITS him solid; the stone flies out of his hands. Granville slips down the length of wrought iron and bounces up and down.

Tyler hunkers down and begins to STOMP the end of the wrought iron dementedly. Granville reaches for Tyler in one Herculean effort and SNAGS the instep of his boot; he YANKS.

Tyler slips half way into the chasm and catches the pole with his armpits. Granville PULLS harder and Tyler slides down the wrought iron; hero and villain are apparently locked together forever as they wrestle to survive.

GRANVILLE (CONT'D)

The Gates of Hell are welcoming
both of us--

Tyler wrenches the HUNTING KNIFE out of his belt and tries to STAB Granville, but he grabs the serrated blade with his hand and it slices against his palm. They continue to fight.

But Granville can not withstand the pain. The blade JAMS into the base of his throat. A spittle of blood dislodges from his mouth and Granville releases his grip.

He plummets down the abyss as his far away eyes diminish into nothingness.

TYLER

Not today.

Tyler crawls up the lip of stone and onto steadier ground; he falls onto his back and studies the stars.

EXT. HOLLOW - LATER

Tyler sits dully before the dwindling flame. He takes out the tobacco tin and opens it. He eyes the pictures.

He feeds them to the fire; their edges curl and darken as the perverse images bubble and burn with little blue flames.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CREMATORY - THE NEXT MORNING

Corrie lies in a particleboard coffin; it sits on the sliding steel rollers of a retort.

Its door cranks upward as the warm orange glow of its burners hiss to life.

The box slowly glides into the fire and is enveloped whole as the flames cascade around Corrie's face.

EXT. HOLLOW - MORNING

The motley band of volunteers hunch red-eyed and weary before the smoldering mound of ash.

MAN 3

Son of a bitch.

MAN 1

Old man Bookbinder's place is right down the ridge. He might of seen somethin.

Bellwether studies the hollow; it's pristine with snow and he tries to decipher what unfolded over the course of the night.

BELLWETHER

Maybe.

MAN 1

Want to go down there and see? Bet it's warm. And it's just possible Bookbinder might offer us coffee.

BELLWETHER

It sounds better than bein poked in the eye with a stick.

The men stand; their breathing plumes palely as they climb up the hollow.

EXT. WHISTLING WELL - CONTINUOUS

As the men pass the whistling well, one stops and stares down the hole warily. Bellwether approaches.

MAN 4

Hell of a thing to be just out here open in the woods. Without a fence around it or nothin. A man could damn sure get his ticket punched he didn't watch where he was goin.

BELLWETHER
(knowingly)
Yes he could.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. PRISON - DAYS LATER

Breece sits in a cold cinder-blocked cell; both blue eyes are as hollow and lifeless as a doll's. Several days growth can't cover the wretched stitch-job administered to the gash on his face. He is totally unmoving.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

The weather has moderated and what snow remains lays in dirty melting pools; the blacktop is muddy. Tyler skirts the deeper areas of mud with a thought for the new shoes he wears.

He is carrying an old suitcase in one hand and a simple brass URN in the other.

A *Lincoln* drives past, but doesn't stop. Tyler steps onto the shoulder to avoid the tire-slung sluice of muddy water. A big sticker adorns the back of the car claiming *Jesus Is God*.

Tyler sets the suitcase in a dry spot and seats himself on it as he carefully places the urn aside. He takes off one of his shoes and rubs his heel contemplatively.

Far off down the highway, the sound of tires on macadam grabs his attention, then the car itself wavering and ephemeral.

Tyler slips his shoe back on; he stands and extends his thumb as the car gains solidity in a rush.

A black *Buick* stops next to him and sits waiting. Tyler picks up the urn and old suitcase. He looks through the glass and a curious play of light behind him renders it mirrored. He eyes his reflection.

In this altered light is a new Tyler, older and perhaps wiser and more versed in the reckless ways of a reckless world.

He opens the door and gets in.

FADE OUT.