

SWEET VIRGINIA

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FADE IN:

A luminous moon, shrouded by tree branches. The lulling sound of Patsy Cline's 'Walkin' After Midnight' fills the air. We pan down on a deserted two lane road, bordered by dense thickets and Virginia farmlands.

Headlights pierce through the darkness: an oncoming car.

CLOSE ON A BARN OWL

Perched on a tree limb: watching the vehicle attentively as it speeds past.

INT. CAR (MOVING) -- NIGHT

The country-ballad plays on the radio. Tom Burkell, late fifties and balding, perspires in the summer heat.

He tinkers with the air-conditioning flaps, then wipes his brow with a handkerchief. Loosens his tie.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

We are pulling into the graveled parking lot of the Fairvale Diner: its name lit in fading neon. The place appears to be closed for business. No other buildings surround the property. Two vehicles are parked outside.

EXT. FAIRVALE DINER -- NIGHT

The car's engine switches off, abruptly cutting out the radio. The headlights fade to black. We hear the distant sound of crickets.

Tom steps out from the driver's door, breathless. He removes his jacket and throws it into the backseat. His shirt is stained with sweat.

He saunters out of the frame, revealing, at the back of the lot, a beat-up Mustang parked suspiciously in the shadows. We hold for a beat.

INT. FAIRVALE DINER -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON A SHOPKEEPER'S BELL

Triggered by an opening door.

The diner's dated decor features a long marble counter, window-side booths and a vintage Wurlitzer jukebox by the entrance.

Two men sit alone at the far end of the room, playing cards in a cloud of cigar smoke.

One of them is the owner of this establishment: Lou Hopkis, a weathered old-man clad in a white smock. The other is Mitchell McBain, a pompous individual in his early thirties.

We track behind Tom as he approaches the men.

LOU

There he is. Didn't know if you were gonna show.

TOM

Will you get a load of this heat.

He removes his tie. Beads of sweat cover his face.

TOM (CONT'D)

Hotter than the hubs of Hades.

MITCHELL

(turning in his chair)

Jesus, you are sweatin' like a pig Burkell.

LOU

Goin' to reach 95 degrees tomorrow.

Lou pours whiskey into a third glass.

LOU (CONT'D)

So the radio says.

TOM

(leaning over the table)

What's the count boys?

MITCHELL

Seven card stud.

LOU

He's robbing me blind. Blind I tell ya.

MITCHELL

I'm up fifty bucks already, and there's no telling when I'm goin' to stop.

TOM

That right.

LOU

Don't turn your back on this McBain boy, Tom. I mean it now. He'd steal the britches off an orphan.

Mitchell laughs, giddily.

TOM

It just the three of us? Where's Carl and the others?

LOU

Carl's up in Shenandoah Valley. Won't be back for a fortnight. And Wade's got his son this week. What's that kid's name again?

MITCHELL

Jericho.

LOU

Knew it was somethin' biblical.

TOM

Where's ol' Desmond?

LOU

Not sure--

MITCHELL

--sick. Lila caught him in the pharmacy and he didn't look too sharp.

TOM

Jeez, I hope it ain't a virus.

He wanders over to a nearby payphone, searching his pockets for change.

TOM (CONT'D)

Last thing a man needs is a fever in this heat. It'll put him on his back for good.

LOU

Where you off to? We're dealing you in.

TOM

(calling over his shoulder)

Duty calls gentlemen. Duty calls.

MITCHELL

Not two minutes in the door and he's already callin' the wife.

Lou raises his glass. He throws the whiskey down his throat, then winces.

INT. BURKELL BEDROOM -- SAME

We track along a bookcase displaying an impressive collection of literature. Their sizes and conditions vary, though most appear tattered and well-read.

A framed University diploma hangs from a wall.

The continuing track reveals a red-headed woman in bed, sleeping. A paperback novel rests under her chin.

This is Bernadette "Bernie" Burkell. Still beautiful in her early fifties, she is slim in stature and her skin is a wondrous milky white.

A harsh jangle from the telephone. Bernie stirs.

The phone rings again. Bernie reaches for the receiver.
The novel crashes to the floor.

BERNIE

'lo.

TOM'S VOICE

Did I wake you?

BERNIE

No.

(clearing her throat)

No. I was up.

INT. FAIRVALE DINER -- CONTINUOUS

Tom leans by the payphone.

TOM

Liar. Doing what?

INT. BURKELL BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

BERNIE

Watching pornography.

A short burst of laughter crackles down the line.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

How was the sale's meet? Anderson
take the bait?

INT. FAIRVALE DINER -- CONTINUOUS

TOM

Like a Northern Pike. All that's
left now is the signatures.

BERNIE'S VOICE

Ah, I'm real proud of you hon.

TOM

Drive down from Lynchburg was a
stretch. Thought the air-con was
gonna up and die on me.

BERNIE'S VOICE

Where are you now?

TOM

Lou's.

INT. BURKELL BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie sighs.

BERNIE

Well, don't stay out too late. I
know you boys don't drink
milkshakes there.

TOM'S VOICE

Uh-huh.

BERNIE

I'm turning in.

TOM'S VOICE

Alright, then.

BERNIE

Night hon.

Bernie hangs up the receiver and collapses back onto her pillow. She stares up at the ceiling fan.

CLOSE ON FAN

We hear a rhythmic whir as it turns slowly.

Bernie closes her eyes.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

(softly)

Hotter than the hubs of Hades.

INT. FAIRVALE DINER -- NIGHT

Later.

CLOSE ON PHOTOGRAPHS

Black and white pictures of the diner, taken years ago, collect dust.

CLOSE ON JIMMY CARTER

A striking portrait hangs above a quotation that reads:

"We must adjust to changing times and still hold to unchanging principles."

MITCHELL (O.S.)

All I'm sayin' is you gotta have options. That's all.

We track in on the three men seated at the end of the counter. Fueled by alcohol, Lou and Mitchell are in the middle of a heated conversation. Tom muses over his poker-hand, completely indifferent to the unfolding argument.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

Without options--

LOU

--c'mon, you youngsters are only out to chase a buck. You don't know the meaning of the word *principle*. A man's got to have principles. Tell him Tom.

Tom studies his cards, deep in thought.

LOU (CONT'D)

Tom?

TOM

Hmm.

LOU

A man's got to have principles.

TOM

(glancing up)

Yes sir. Principles.

Mitchell drags on his cigar. Smoke billows in the air.

MITCHELL

(shaking his head)

You're goin' about this the wrong way. You got it all screwy. The seventies are over. These are exciting times.

(smugly)

Anything you want is there for the taking.

Lou smiles, wryly.

LOU

Jesus Mitchell, I'm sixty-eight years of age. I can barely wipe my own ass.

TOM

(studying his watch)

Are we gonna finish this game? It's now officially Thursday.

Mitchell breaks into a conceited grin.

MITCHELL

If you're not part of the solution Lou, you're part of the problem. That's all there is to it--

LOU

--problem? What problem?

(to Tom)

What is he talkin' 'bout?

Tom shakes his head as he buoyantly fills his glass with more whiskey.

MITCHELL

Real estate, equities and bonds. It's all about to boom. There's no future in retail.

LOU

This establishment here is all I own. No bank loans or nothin'.

MITCHELL

Well, selling could put you straight. You'd make more than a nickel, I can guarantee you that--

LOU

--forgive me if I'm mistaken, but people still need to eat and drink.

MITCHELL

Alright, but what about your competition? Huh?

Lou eyes him, curiously.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

There's franchises and chains to worry about now. Big corporations breathin' down your neck.

Lou grunts.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

We've got to move with the *times*. New political initiatives are upon us. Tax cuts. National defense. Take a look at the damage of that hostage crisis over in Iran, man. Folks are restless. Ol' Reagan is a shoe-in come November--

TOM

(protesting)

--whoa, hey now. Come on.

LOU

Christ, McBain.

MITCHELL

It's a new decade--

LOU

--ain't no damn actor goin' to get elected--

MITCHELL

--a new beginning. All I'm sayin'.

An awkward beat. The men stare idly at their cards, desperate to shake off their political dispute.

Further silence.

LOU

'Bedtime for Bonzo'.

Tom gives an acknowledging smile.

LOU (CONT'D)

Remember that picture?

The three men begin to chuckle. We slowly drift away from this trivial conversation and track in on a large window by a booth.

LOU (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Reagan and the chimp. Who was
the actress in that? Pretty gal.

As we approach the glass, we catch sight of the dimly-lit parking lot outside.

TOM (O.S.)
Gail Russell.

LOU (O.S.)
Nah, it was Diana Lynn. I know
it. She died young y'know.

EXT. FAIRVALE DINER -- CONTINUOUS

REVERSE ANGLE

We pull away from the window as the men continue to squabble amongst themselves.

TOM (O.S.)
So did Gail Russell.

LOU (O.S.)
That right?

Their dialogue fades as we pull further away.

MUSTANG

We now track in on this battered vehicle, parked dubiously at the back of the lot. As we approach the dark windshield, we detect that someone is sitting in the driver's seat.

There is no movement inside the car.

WING MIRROR

Again, the mysterious figure's identity is distorted by the glass and severe lack of light.

The diner stands out in the background. Inside, the three occupants can clearly be seen through the glass windows.

INT. FAIRVALE DINER -- LATER

CLOSE ON A WHISKEY BOTTLE

Almost empty. Lou's hand enters the frame and pours the remaining liquor into his glass.

The men are laughing: someone has told a successful joke. Mitchell leans across the table to stub out his cigar.

MITCHELL

Okay, here's one for ya. You're going to love this.

He clears his throat.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

I flew out to Kansas state a little while back--

LOU

--how come?

MITCHELL

Oh, work as usual. Had some meetings to attend. Anyways, I found myself sitting next to this beauty on the airplane. Silky blonde hair. Legs up to her ass--

CLOSE ON A SHOPKEEPER'S BELL

Triggered by an opening door.

The men turn to see who has entered the diner: a perplexing look plastered across each face.

We track behind a young man who advances steadily through the room. We only see the back of his black, well-combed hair and his worn-out boots. Each heavy footstep breaks the suspenseful silence.

Suddenly, he leaves the frame, and slides into a window-side booth halfway down the isle.

The men continue to stare, dumbfounded. Beyond them, in the background, we see this stranger taking his seat.

Note: we do not see his face.

Lou smiles, nervously.

LOU

...the hell?

Tom shrugs his shoulders. Mitchell remains twisted in his chair, eyeing the unknown newcomer. Lou rises from his stool.

LOU (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Hey! We're closed!

Beat. Eerily, the stranger does not turn around, only continues to face forward.

LOU (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Mister! You hear me?

Another beat. Lou is flabbergasted.

LOU (CONT'D)
(calling out)
Heck, it's--

Lou raises his wrist, but then realizes that it's bare. He turns to Tom who quickly glances at his own watch.

TOM
12.35 in the a.m.

LOU
(calling out)
12.35 in the a.m. Chrissakes,
we're closed!

An uneasy silence. No response.

LOU (CONT'D)
Damn kids. No respect for their
elders.

Mitchell pushes his stool aside and hops to his feet. He straightens his shirt.

LOU (CONT'D)
(protesting)
Mitchell, don't do a damn--

MITCHELL
--s'alright, now. Just sit back
down.

LOU
Christ, I don't think--

MITCHELL
--he'll listen to me. Don't you
worry about that.

He steps gingerly down the isle. Lost for words, Lou perches himself back on his stool.

Mitchell inches closer toward the stranger: the walk seemingly longer than one would expect. Finally, when he reaches the booth, we pan around to get a clear shot of the mysterious young man.

He is in his early twenties, with striking facial features: dark, sunken eyes, high cheekbones and an acute jaw-line. He studies a menu, oblivious to Mitchell's presence.

Beat.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)
Did you not hear--

YOUNG MAN
(still reading)
--I'll take the early bird special,
no eggs, extra bacon.

MITCHELL

(baffled)
What?

The young man looks up from the menu.

YOUNG MAN

Early bird special. It is early,
after all, dependin' on how you
look at it.

MITCHELL

Listen here--

YOUNG MAN

--I'll have a cool glass of water
too. Plenty of ice.
(laughing to himself)
I can't take this damn heat.

MITCHELL

Where do you think you are?

The young man cranes his neck and glances out the window.

YOUNG MAN

Ain't this the Heart of Appalachia?

MITCHELL

Some mouth. This is Fairvale,
and this diner is closed.

YOUNG MAN

That a fact, now?

Mitchell leans onto the table, domineeringly.

MITCHELL

That's a fact. So run along and
get yourself home.

YOUNG MAN

Well, that's gonna be a problem.
I don't live round these parts
and a drive like that is gonna
cost me a lot of gas. Plus, I
could really do with somethin' to
eat.

Mitchell is equally annoyed and intimidated.

MITCHELL

Maybe you're not hearin' me right?
Maybe I ought to call--

YOUNG MAN

--ain't you got a pretty young
wife to get on home to? Huh?

He peers over his shoulder.

YOUNG MAN POV

Lou and Tom are staring right at him, anxiously, from the far end of the counter.

The young man turns back to face Mitchell.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

She might not like you stayin'
out late and gamblin', Mitch.

Mitchell is astonished at the mention of his name. He frowns, disoriented.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

What I say? Did I say somethin'
wrong? I apologize if I was rude
just then--

MITCHELL

--do I know you?

YOUNG MAN

Well, I like to think everybody
knows everybody. Somehow or other.

Mitchell glares, agitated.

MITCHELL

Be straight with me.

YOUNG MAN

I'm straight as can be. You got
my word on that.

Beat. Mitchell looks back at his friends, pondering. Lou detects his apprehension and rises from his stool.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

So, how about that early bird--

MITCHELL

--get out. Now.

YOUNG MAN

Is something wrong--

MITCHELL

--do you want me to call the
authorities?

The young man peers back over his shoulder at the men, then looks back up at Mitchell. Unperturbed.

A tense beat.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

I'm going to count to three--

All of a sudden, the stranger springs out from the booth. Mitchell takes a step backwards. Another beat.

YOUNG MAN

You got no manners Mitch, you know that? Without manners, a man can look awfully stupid--

Mitchell slaps the young man hard across the face.

Tom stands up beside Lou. Both of them are obviously unsettled by what they have just witnessed.

LOU

(calling out)
What's going on Mitchell?

Mitchell stares at the young man as he waits for a retaliation. Nothing happens.

MITCHELL

(calling out)
Nothin'. S'alright.

An awkward silence passes, underlined with dread. The young man grins: somewhat sadistically.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

(calling out)
This gentlemen here was just leaving.

The stranger pats his ruffled hair back into place and, when satisfied, turns and heads toward the front door.

Tom sits back in his chair, relieved.

We track in front of Mitchell as he makes his way back towards the men. Over his shoulder, in the background, we notice that the young man has stopped by the Wurlitzer jukebox at the door. He appears to be selecting a track.

Mitchell shakes his head as he continues to walk. Lou and Tom study him with keen interest.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

I can't believe that just happened.

TOM

What went on?

LOU

Why'd you strike that boy?

MITCHELL

I'd a done a lot more given the chance. He weren't right at all.

LOU

Who the hell was he?

MITCHELL

He didn't look familiar.
(MORE)

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

Thought maybe he was from Abingdon,
or another neighboring town. He
was after some supper and--

CLOSE ON A SHOPKEEPER'S BELL

Triggered by a closing door.

The men turn around just in time to see the door swing
shut. Outside, through the glass, there is only darkness.

A suspenseful beat.

Then: we hear the haunting intro to 'California Dreamin'
by the Mamas & the Papas. The guitar-picking cuts through
the diner.

CLOSE ON WURLITZER JUKEBOX

A record spins on a dated turntable.

The men look at each other worriedly, not knowing what to
do. They are evidently frightened. Mitchell forces a
weary smile, but it is not returned. As the song builds,
we slowly track in on the front door.

Then, unexpectedly, the young man barges back into the
room, almost knocking the door off its hinges. He
brandishes a long barreled revolver: holding the weapon
out at arm's length.

The men stare. Confused. Transfixed. Terrified.

EXT. FAIRVALE DINER -- CONTINUOUS

We track along the large windows of the diner as the
massacre unfolds. Inside, the gun roars. The men scream
and wail, desperate to escape. Every gunshot is deafening.

Note: This horrific scene plays out to the jukebox tune
that now dominates the soundtrack.

Furniture crashes to the floor as the bodies are hit with
bullets. One window pane is sprayed with blood, while
another shatters from a ricochet.

The young man has fired six shots. As he reloads, we can
hear groaning coming from the victims. Without any
hesitation, he raises his gun again and continues to fire.

INT. FAIRVALE DINER -- CONTINUOUS**CLOSE ON A CASH REGISTER**

Opening. The young man stuffs his pockets with as many
bills as he can manage.

CLOSE ON LOU

Dead behind the counter. His white smock is now bathed
in blood red.

He has been shot twice: once in the chest and once in the stomach. His body lies close to the kitchen door from a failed escape attempt.

CLOSE ON TOM

Sprawled and twisted in a booth. He has been shot in the face, neck and legs. His lifeless eyes stare at nothing.

CLOSE ON JIMMY CARTER

The portrait is now stained with blood. We can still distinguish the president's cheerful smile.

CLOSE ON MITCHELL

Alive, barely. He crawls through the wreckage towards the front door. A trail of blood is left in his wake. He has been shot in the arm and back. We notice the young man appearing behind him, out of focus.

CLOSE ON YOUNG MAN'S BOOTS

Trudging slowly, and heavily, towards Mitchell.

MITCHELL

Attempts to heave himself forward with what little strength he can summon. He tugs desperately at his surroundings. However, the young man's boots soon catch up and stand before him, blocking his path.

Mitchell collapses and begins to sob. He looks up.

HIS POV

The young man raises his gun and points it right at us.

CLOSE ON MITCHELL

Trembling. Saliva hangs from his mouth. The barrel of the pistol aimed inches from his face.

EXT. FAIRVALE DINER -- CONTINUOUS

HIGH WIDE SHOT

On the building. A long, tense beat. Then--

--BANG! The flash of a gunshot lights up the diner.

FADE TO BLACK

INSERT TITLE:

SWEET VIRGINIA

CREDIT SEQUENCE

'California Dreamin' plays throughout.

END CREDIT SEQUENCE

OVER BLACK

We hear the distant noise of a tumultuous crowd.

FADE UP:

INT. RODEO ARENA -- EVENING

BLACK AND WHITE

A single slow-motion shot. We see a gallant young cowboy on top of a strapping bull: one hand grips the bull rope, the other waves free. His white hat hangs low, obscuring most of his face. Numerous cameras flash from the stands.

As the animal bucks back and forth, the crowd's reaction builds to hysteria. Two rodeo clowns stand nearby. Then, the bull kicks both its hind legs dangerously high into the air. The cowboy loses his balance.

The audience continues to scream. Pure pandemonium.

INT. LIPINSKI BEDROOM -- MORNING

CLOSE ON AN EYE

Suddenly opening. The pupil's diameter constricts.

Sam Lipinski, late fifties, wakes up with a start. Shaken by his memory, he wipes sweat from his forehead. Morning rays break through the room. We hear cars pass by outside.

Sam reaches across the bed to the nightstand and, with a metallic Zippo, lights himself a cigarette.

CLOSE ON NIGHTSTAND

A framed photograph sits upright. In the picture, a woman in a 1950s swimsuit holds a young girl in her arms on a beach. She does not smile. The child is waving.

Sam exhales with a sigh. Smoke surges above his head.

INT. LIPINSKI BATHROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON SINK

A razor shakes in the water. Dark shavings and white foam float across the surface.

CLOSE ON PENDANT

Of patron St. Jude that dangles from Sam's neck on a thin, silver chain.

Sam studies himself as he shaves. His face, once handsome in his youth, is now senescent and haggard. Wrinkles cover his brow, and his hair is almost completely grey.

He leans close to his reflection, carefully guiding the razor through the thick lather. As we pull away we notice that his bare back is heavily scarred.

SHOWER

Sam steps under the steaming water. He shuts his eyes, mollified.

INT. LIPINSKI BEDROOM -- LATER

CLOSE ON A COWBOY HAT

White and well-worn, hanging from a bed post. Sam's figure potters in the background, getting dressed. We hold until his hand grasps the hat and removes it from the frame.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE -- MORNING

A modest room which serves as both a reception area for guests and a parlor for employees. Behind the check-in desk is an armchair, a sofa, kitchen appliances and a small television unit.

Various memorabilia hang from the walls: rodeo photographs, trophies, certificates, some civil war artifacts, a large bull skull, and an old-fashioned rifle.

At the desk, with homework papers spread in front of her, sits sixteen-year-old Maggie Russell. She quietly sings along to a portable radio: 'River' by Joni Mitchell.

Sam emerges through a door at the back of the parlor, revealing a partial view of his bedroom. He walks with a slight, yet noticeable limp. Maggie turns.

MAGGIE

Oh, Sam.

She switches off the radio.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Did I wake you?

SAM

Not at all, sweetheart.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry. Was in a world of my own.

Sam opens the registration book and flips through the pages.

SAM

You keep on with the singin' and you'll be givin' that Toni Mitchell a run for her money.

Maggie blushes, smiles.

MAGGIE

Don't you mean Joni Mitchell?

Sam realizes his mistake. Winks.

SAM

Is that fresh coffee I smell?

MAGGIE

I just made some.

SAM

You're an angel, Maggie. Heaven sent. Do I ever tell you that?

MAGGIE

No.

SAM

Well, I ought to.

He gleefully fills a mug with hot coffee.

SAM (CONT'D)

Where's Rose? I could'a sworn this was her shift.

MAGGIE

It is. She's on cleaning duty.

SAM

Ain't you got school?

MAGGIE

Don't have class till nine-thirty.

Sam wanders over to the open door of the office, and then leans against the doorjamb. Sips his coffee.

SAM

Well, it's some weather we're havin'.

SAM POV

A clear view of the motel. Two dozen rooms stretched out in a U-shape. A porch runs the entire length of the single storey building.

The cabins have been purposely built around a diminutive swimming-pool. An adjacent car-park is situated in front of the office. A busy highway bustles in the background.

MAGGIE

Too hot for my liking. I can't sleep at night.

SAM

Me neither, angel.

He squints into the sunlight. Maggie smiles.

As Sam loads a cigarette into his mouth, he spots an obese man bathing on a lounger by the pool. Clad only in sunglasses and a speedo, the man's skin is seeping sweat.

MAGGIE

Hey Sam.

SAM

Hmm.

MAGGIE

I was wondering if I could pick up some extra shifts before the holidays? I'm thinkin' about taking a trip.

SAM

Sure. Where you goin' go?

MAGGIE

I haven't decided yet. Any ideas?

Sam stares at the fat man, repulsed.

SAM

The Alaskan Bush.

MAGGIE

The Alaskan Bush?

SAM

Some place cold. And quiet, too. Get outta the damn sun. Weather like this can make folks do the strangest things.

MAGGIE

Yeah, but, Alaska's a little drastic don't you think?

Sam saunters back into the room.

SAM

They've got towns up there filled with people. I hear the sun goes down in November and doesn't come back up till January.

MAGGIE

No...

SAM

All you can see are stars and snow. If I had a little time and money, that's where I'd go.

MAGGIE

Alright. I was thinkin' more like Florida.

SAM

That ain't a trip, that's a death sentence.

Maggie points a pen towards the coffee table.

MAGGIE

I brought the papers.

Sam glances down at a couple of folded newspapers.

CLOSE ON A FRONT PAGE

The heading reads:

FAIRVALE MASSACRE: HUNT CONTINUES

Underneath are three black and white photos of the victims. They smile in their portrait shots, unaware of their fate.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Are you going to Bernadette's tonight? For the wake I mean.

SAM

(still looking at
the newspapers)
We all should.

MAGGIE

It's nice of her to hold a service for those men. Considering there were no public burials.

SAM

Some things are just private I guess.

MAGGIE

I haven't seen her since. Nobody has.

Sam removes his hat and then peers through the window blinds, idly.

SAM

Well, she's had it tough. Each of those families have.

(pause)

Ain't that one of the Driscoll boys?

MAGGIE

Huh?

SAM POV

Through the window, we see a teenage boy peddle into the driveway on his bicycle, struggling in the summer heat. He grips a piece of paper in his hand.

SAM

Comin' up the drive. The youngest one I think.

(turning)

He your boyfriend?

Maggie stands, nervous.

MAGGIE

What? No!

The boy bursts into the room: out of breath and saturated with sweat. He is soft-spoken and hesitant.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Bobby Driscoll.

BOBBY

Hi Maggie. Hello Mr. Lipinski.

Sam nods, the cigarette between his lips pluming smoke.

MAGGIE

Is somethin' wrong?

BOBBY

You--you got in! The O'Mathy state finals! You got in! Everybody's talking about it.

He hands Maggie the soaked paper. Her face lights up with excitement.

MAGGIE

What? Nu-uh.

BOBBY

They posted it first thing this morning, on the board outside the gym.

SAM

Well, we've got the next Toni Mitchell workin' at this motel.

BOBBY

You sure do, sir. A couple of other girls got through too, but I figure they don't stand a chance.

MAGGIE

Stop.

BOBBY

None of 'em can sing like you can.

MAGGIE

You came all the way out here just to tell me about this? On your bicycle?

Bobby is disconcerted.

BOBBY

Well, yeah. I mean--I figured you'd want to know as soon as--

MAGGIE

--Bobby, it must be eighty-odd degrees out.

BOBBY

(bashfully)
I guess so.

MAGGIE

We're right on the edge of town.
It's dangerous for you to peddle up here on the highway.

Sam, smirking, fans himself with his hat.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

You could have got in an accident.

An awkward silence.

BOBBY

Well, I best head on back to school.

MAGGIE

Okay.

Bobby advances backwards.

BOBBY

Um, don't forget your paper on the Battle of Gettysburg for Mrs. Halleck.

MAGGIE

I won't.

Beat.

BOBBY

Well, see ya.

Maggie says nothing.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Goodbye, sir.

Sam nods farewell.

The boy turns, sheepishly, and leaves. Sam, still smiling, looks over at Maggie. She notices. Beat.

MAGGIE

He's not my boyfriend.

Sam raises both hands in defense. Then:

VOICE (O.S.)

Sam?

He turns to see Rose Miller, a matronly woman in her sixties, standing in the doorway with a cleaning cart.

ROSE

Some guests are complaining.

Beat. There is a concerned look on her face.

ROSE (CONT'D)

There's another disturbance. At number seven.

Sam sighs, then stubs out his cigarette.

EXT. MOTEL -- MOMENTS LATER

A DOOR: NO. 7

We can hear the muffled sounds of a man shouting and the crashing of furniture. Sam's hand enters to knock.

Silence. Sam knocks again.

The door swings open to reveal a shirtless, unshaven man. He uses his burly frame to block the view inside the room.

MAN

Yeah?

Sam takes off his hat.

SAM

Sorry for botherin' you so early. I'm the, uh, manager here at the motel. We've met before.

The man says nothing. Sam forces a congenial smile.

SAM (CONT'D)

Sure is hot out today. If the weather keeps up like this--

MAN

--what do you want?

SAM

It's Mr. Barnes, correct?

Beat.

MR. BARNES

Yeah.

SAM

Well, Mr. Barnes, I'm afraid we've been receivin' some complaints about your room.

MR. BARNES

(agitated)
What kind of complaints?

SAM

Noise, mostly.
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

Truth of the matter is this is the second time that people have come forward.

Mr. Barnes stares, unfazed.

SAM (CONT'D)

On account of all the noise and what have you.

MR. BARNES

Sounds to me like people are just playing their t.v.'s too loud.

SAM

Maybe.

INSIDE THE ROOM

It is dark. The shades are drawn. An empty suitcase and numerous items of clothing are scattered across the floor. A lamp has been knocked to the ground. The bed is unmade.

A woman, dressed only in her underwear, sits at the edge of the mattress. She is turned away from the door, with her face hidden under a mess of hair.

SAM (CONT'D)

But, the thing is, there's been reports of a woman *screaming*. From this room. Number seven.

MR. BARNES

Shit, the only woman here is my wife, and she certainly ain't been playin' up.

He creaks the door open a little further. Sunlight falls into the room, bathing the woman in light.

MR. BARNES (CONT'D)

Have you honey?

Beat. She snuffles.

WOMAN

(softly)

No.

MR. BARNES

The man can't hear you.

WOMAN

No.

Mr. Barnes wedges himself back into the doorframe and scratches his stubble.

MR. BARNES

Guess we can't help you there.

SAM

Guess not.

MR. BARNES

Sure it was number seven? You shouldn't go round blaming people. It's unmannerly and offensive.

SAM

Well, I mean no disrespect.

MR. BARNES

I just might have to register my own complaint. Against management.

Sam stares.

SAM

Should anything be broken in that room, you'll be held liable for the damages--

Mr. Barnes slams the door shut. Sam takes a step back.

After a moment's pause, he turns his head back towards the office and sees Maggie standing in the doorway with her schoolbooks placed under one arm. There is a solemn look on her face.

Sam offers a smile of encouragement, then rests his hat back on top of his head.

HIGH WIDE SHOT

We pull up and away from the motel, floating above the swimming pool and parking lot until we come to rest on a sign facing out to the highway. It reads:

SWEET VIRGINIA MOTEL

TV. Pool. Vacancy.

EXT. BURKELL HOUSE -- NIGHT

We move in on a two storey property on a quiet tree-lined street. The large, white house is of typical American colonial design. Numerous cars are parked in the driveway.

INT. BURKELL HOUSE -- NIGHT

A wake is in progress. Most of the mourners are dressed in black attire. Casual chatter and soft music fill the house. Flowers and food cover the tables. We work our way through the downstairs crowd and clamor.

INT. BURKELL KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Over-crowded: Rose Miller and some other women prepare and discuss dessert.

WOMAN 1

Aunt Tillie always prepared for eight.

WOMAN 2

Is that right?

ROSE

Each baking dish still needs that extra 1/4 cup of butter though.

WOMAN 2

You mean in the saucepan? Along with the filling?

WOMAN 1

Remember, that's on a medium heat.

WOMAN 3

So what about the bake? 30 to 35?

WOMAN 1

Well, with this particular kind of cobbler, you need to watch that gingerbread mixture.

ROSE

Don't want it too crisp, now.

INT. BURKELL LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

An old-man sleeps in an armchair: a napkin still tucked into his shirt. Half a dozen people are seated around him. They watch television, completely engrossed.

CLOSE ON T.V.

News coverage of Mount St. Helens catastrophic eruption in Washington state.

INT. BURKELL BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

We track along shelves and hangers that display a collection of men's clothes: shoes, shirts and suits.

A cabinet in an en-suite bathroom exposes aftershave and brylcreem. Two toothbrushes are held upright in a glass.

On a bedside cabinet, a man's watch and wedding ring are sealed inside a clear plastic evidence bag.

Bernie Burkell studies this bag from her bed. Spread around her, on the mattress, are copious business papers.

Music from downstairs drifts in faintly. There is a knock on the door. Bernie pays no attention. Beat.

Another knock.

A young woman with pretty features enters. This is Lila McBain: prim, naive, mid-twenties.

LILA

We were wonderin' where you got to. You alright?

Bernie continues to stare at her deceased husband's belongings.

LILA (CONT'D)

Big turn out down there. Josephine thinks someone ought to make a speech.

Beat.

LILA (CONT'D)

Well, I wanted to thank you for what you've done. Pulling all this together. I've gotta run, mother's waitin' and--

BERNIE

---what am I supposed to do with all his things?

LILA

What?

She eases the door shut behind her.

BERNIE

Socks and shirts. Ties. Books. His coat.

LILA

We had Daddy throw Mitchell's stuff out. Mother says it's part of the cleansing process. Start anew.

BERNIE

He was a man, Lila. There was blood in his veins and hairs on his back.

Lila sits beside Bernie and comforts her.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

He had his own smell. His own laugh.

LILA

I know what you say. I do. You're not alone.

Bernie takes Lila's hand, consolingly.

BERNIE

Just listen to me complain. You and Mitch didn't get three years of marriage.

LILA

That doesn't mean I've got it worse.

BERNIE

Christ, where's the reason? Where's the logic? Well, that's somethin' we've learned. Death has no logic.

Lila rests her head against Bernie's shoulder.

LILA

Maybe they're some place better. At peace, y'know?

BERNIE

Maybe.

LILA

They could be looking down and laughing at us now. Crying over spilt milk.

BERNIE

Crying? I still haven't shed a tear. Twenty-four years we were together and not a goddamn tear. Despicable.

LILA

Come on, now. Don't talk that way Bernie.

BERNIE

I wasn't the best wife Lila. I could of been better.

LILA

That's it, don't you say another word. We need to get you downstairs amongst family and friends. Get you a strong drink--

Bernie rises.

BERNIE

--I can't. Not now. I need to finish filing these damn papers.

Lila turns to look at the documents sprawled across the mattress.

LILA

You look organized.

BERNIE

Yeah, well, I've got Tom to thank for that. Insurances, records, bills. He's looking out for me now, even from beyond the grave.

Bernie starts to place some of the papers into a small, open safe in the wall.

CLOSE ON SAFE

Reveals its contents: files, jewelry boxes and several short stacks of money. Hundred dollar bills.

Lila notices.

LILA

Tom really didn't trust the banks, did he?

BERNIE

Nope.

LILA

Mitch always thought he was just avoiding taxes.

BERNIE

Most people did. But, he was right. Why pay someone an arm and a leg to keep what's yours?

Bernie closes the steel door and spins the dial. She then lifts and places a large-framed painting over the wall-safe.

CLOSE ON PAINTING

The Cardinal Grosbeak, state bird of Virginia, by John James Audubon.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Banks only care about profit. You think we would of learned from the Great Depression. But, all we got out of that was literature and debt.

LILA

(nonchalantly)

We read The Grapes of Wrath at school--

BERNIE

(continuing)

--we're none the wiser, Lila. Mankind will always make the same mistakes. Especially if money's involved. Judas taught us that.

Suddenly, Lila embraces Bernie.

LILA

I can't keep mother waitin'.

BERNIE

Go on, darlin'. You tell her I say hello.

Beat. They remain clasped in each other's arms.

LILA

I'm so sorry Bernie.

BERNIE

Don't you apologize to nobody for nothin'. Okay?

Lila nods.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Good girl.

Bernie gently strokes the young woman's hair. Lila looks up at the painting: into the black eyes of the Cardinal.

We hold for a beat.

EXT. BURKELL HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON A ZIPPO

Flicking open. A thumb strikes the flint-wheel ignition, and the end of a cigarette is lit by the flame.

Sam sits on the back porch steps, smoking. Marty Petrone, a gangly police officer with poor posture, stands nearby in uniform. He drinks whiskey from a tumbler.

MARTY

I'm just on detail. Followin' orders.

SAM

Wouldn't want it no other way, I suppose?

MARTY

Goddamn mess. Cheryl's having nightmares. Girl's too. I mean, this is Southwest Virginia for Chrissakes. It ain't Los Angeles.

Sam nods.

MARTY (CONT'D)

City of Angels my ass. The wild west over there.

He takes a musing sip.

SAM

What's the Captain say?

MARTY

Well, it's his jurisdiction. Talkin' about bringing some boys down from upstate.

SAM

Where from? Richmond?

MARTY

Heck, it wouldn't surprise me if we got a call from Langley. Crime like this gets people talkin'.

Marty turns and looks through the screen door into the house: the mourners continue to mingle and gossip.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Last thing we need are city officials flashin' their badges and askin' questions.

SAM

People want answers Marty.

MARTY

(agreeing)

Well, what have we got? Some cartridge shells and a boot print. We had that five days ago.

He gulps down the last of his whiskey.

SAM

What kind of bullets were they?

MARTY

.357 Magnum. Reckon the, uh, perpetrator used that new Smith & Wesson. Model 686. You might of heard about it on the radio?

Sam shakes his head.

MARTY (CONT'D)

We're searching the local database for owners. All that killing. And what for? A little money.

Beat. Crickets chirp.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Bernie seems to be doing alright. Given the circumstances.

SAM

I guess so.

MARTY

She's as tough as ol' Mother Jones that woman.

Sam thinks:

SAM

"Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living".

MARTY

I'll drink to that.

Marty raises the glass to his lips, but then realizes it is empty. He slings the ice out onto the grass.

SAM

Say, how's that new dog of yours?
Shankly, right?

MARTY

You not hear? He ran off. Day before yesterday. It ain't good for the girls. First the murders, now this. Barbara keeps puttin' his food out. Like he might smell it and come home.

Sam takes a drag from his cigarette.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Ah, he'll turn up soon enough.
Bound to in this town. Damn border collie. Well, I better make--

Footsteps approach the porch. The back door squeaks open and Bernie emerges.

Sam rises and removes his hat. He tosses his cigarette into the dirt. Marty pulls his shirt straight.

BERNIE

At ease, gentlemen.

MARTY

'Lo Bernie.

An awkward silence.

BERNIE

Am I disrupting anything?

MARTY

Not at all. Fact is, I was just on my way. Barbara won't sleep unless I tuck her in, y'see.

Bernie takes a seat on the steps. Sam hesitates for a second, then sits down next to her.

Beat.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Will I catch either of you at Buck's retirement?

SAM

Sure. I'll be droppin' by.

MARTY

Bernie?

BERNIE

Maybe.

MARTY

Well, it'd be nice to see you there. I'll say good night then.

BERNIE

Night Marty.

They watch the officer shuffle across the lawn into the shadows. Sam loads two cigarettes into his mouth and lights them both. He hands one to Bernie.

A beat.

SAM

Christ, Bernie. I don't know what to say.

BERNIE

Then don't say anythin'.

An uncomfortable silence. They smoke.

Bernie then reaches out and runs her fingers through Sam's hair. She tucks some loose strands behind one ear.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

It's getting long again. I need to cut it.

Sam stares ahead only.

SAM

Yeah.

Her hand falls softly to his cheek. She keeps it there a moment before pulling away.

BERNIE

Maybe I could swing by later. If you want.

SAM

I'm not sure that's a good idea, Bernie.

BERNIE

I guess it isn't. Perhaps I'm being foolish.

Beat. They continue to smoke. Finally, Bernie stubs out her cigarette and stands. She wipes ash from her skirt.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Well, I'll see you Samuel. Thanks for coming. Means a lot to me.

She leaves. Sam turns.

SAM

I'm sorry Bernie--

The back door swings shut: Bernie is now lost amongst a sea of mourners. Her figure grows smaller as she makes her way through the room.

As we hold on Sam, alone under the porch light, we hear the honky-tonk intro to 'Cotton Fields' by Creedence Clearwater Revival.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

A seedy venue replete with male patrons. The song blares from a jukebox.

Lila, clad in black formal wear, enters. She is clearly discomfited by her surroundings. Her eyes scan the bar.

CLOSE ON BOOTS

Sticking out from a booth at the back of the room.

Lila approaches.

A lone occupant sits at this table: it is the young man from the diner. His head bobs to the beat of the music, as he ardently chomps on some chewing gum.

LILA

Are you Elwood?

The young man does not answer: instead he continues to enjoy the jukebox track. Lila stands uncomfortably.

LILA (CONT'D)

Is your name El--

ELWOOD

--you like Creedence?

LILA

What?

ELWOOD

Ain't nobody like 'em. They had that *thing* y'know? That *kick*. But, y'know what's crazy? They never had a number one hit single in this country. Came in second a couple of times, but they never got what was due. Mind you, they did reach the top of the charts over in, uh, England. That's in Europe.

LILA

I know where England is.

ELWOOD

And I could never figure out where they came from. My guess was Louisiana.

(MORE)

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

But, of all places, they were from *California*. El Cerrito or some-shit. A small city in Contra Costa County. Matter of fact, my mother was born near there. Nineteen thirty-three, in a house up on Albany Hill. Her grandfather was killed in that, uh, dynamite explosion. Nineteen o' five I think that was. You ever been to California?

LILA

No.

ELWOOD

Me neither. Always wanted to though.

Beat.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Don't you wanna sit down? You won't catch nothin'.

Lila sits. Another beat. Elwood chews.

LILA

(softly)

Why'd you go kill those men?

ELWOOD

I was only doin' my job, you know that--

LILA

--it was supposed to be just Mitchell. That's all. I mean, I-- I sent Miles that photo of him, the, uh, one taken from last Christmas. With the beige sweater. Didn't you get it? I remember him sayin'--

ELWOOD

--whoa, this ain't Miles' deal no more. Alright? I did what needed to be done. What *had* to be done--

A waitress arrives, collecting glasses. She snatches up Elwood's empty beer bottle and places it onto her tray.

WAITRESS

Another?

ELWOOD

Same again.

WAITRESS

(to Lila)

How about yourself?

Lila shakes her head.

ELWOOD

Naw, she'll have one too. And make sure they're cold. That last one was warm as piss.

He watches the waitress depart.

LILA

I didn't ask for this. Not at all. Those other men, they--they didn't deserve it.

ELWOOD

Well, that may be so. But there's nothin' we can do about that now? I can't turn back the clocks.

LILA

You had a choice though. Perhaps you should talk to Miles. I mean, couldn't you have waited till--

Elwood smacks the table-top with his fist. Lila is startled. Some men seated nearby glance over.

ELWOOD

(leaning forward)
--your husband weren't comin' out of that diner. It's that simple. Now, I was told he would have been finished up by midnight. So who's faults that? Christ, they think it was a robbery. You should be celebrating. Tellin' me when I'm gonna get my money--

The waitress returns and sets two beer bottles on the table. She waits: her hands resting idly on her hips.

Beat.

WAITRESS

They're cold.

ELWOOD

So?

WAITRESS

You not wanna test 'em?

ELWOOD

You not wanna tip?

She rolls her eyes and leaves.

LILA

Don't you worry about that. It's all taken care of.

ELWOOD

Alright. When?

Lila is somewhat confused.

LILA

Didn't Miles explain--

ELWOOD

--when?

LILA

This week. I thought you knew about the arrangement. I'm--I'm seeing Albert Farmsworth first thing Wednesday morning. He's our lawyer. Mitchell's lawyer.

ELWOOD

I'm owed fifty remember?

Lila nods.

LILA

Oh, there's plenty. Mitchell was good with finances. He had two bank accounts for Pete's sake. Life insurance. Some bonds too. Plus...

(contentedly)

...I'm the only one that's written in his will.

ELWOOD

That right?

LILA

Yes. I made sure of it. Right after our honeymoon in Phoenix. I'm not a dummy.

ELWOOD

Well, I hope not.

LILA

I was smarter than him.

ELWOOD

Won't hold that against you. He's the one that's dead.

Lila reaches for her beer and takes a self-conscious sip. Repulsed by the taste, she places the bottle back on the table and holds her fingers to her mouth.

She swallows with dismay.

After an awkward silence, through which Elwood continues to stare:

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

So. Why'd you kill him?

LILA

I didn't. You did.

ELWOOD

(sighs)

Why'd you want him dead?

Lila looks down into her lap, sheepishly.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

He beat you up or somethin'?

LILA

No.

ELWOOD

Well, what then?

He waits for a response. Finally:

LILA

He was always cheating on me.
Any chance he'd get. Girls used
to call the house. Anytime of
night.

(pause)

He went to a whorehouse in Dallas
once. It was called Pink...

(embarrassed)

...Pink Pussy.

Elwood tries to conceal a germinating grin.

LILA (CONT'D)

I had somebody follow him.
Undercover, y'know? A PI. Well,
Mitchell was a pig alright. One
time he...

Lila hesitates.

LILA (CONT'D)

...one time he gave me a venereal
disease.

She lowers her head to her chest, utterly ashamed. Elwood
stops his chewing: a hint of consideration.

LILA (CONT'D)

(softly)

It ain't right.

Suddenly, we hear:

DJ (O.S.)

Time's time Gentlemen. So reach
into those pockets--

DJ CUBICLE

A dour looking DJ speaks into a microphone: his voice a
barely audible monotone.

DJ (CONT'D)

--and show your appreciation.
 Vera's our first girl tonight, so
 remember: take out that green if
 you wanna be seen.

A scantily dressed young woman struts onto a small stage with a mirrored backdrop. 'Back Door Man' by the Doors erupts from the speakers.

The majority of the bar-folk gape and gawk at the girl's denuded flesh. Others pay no attention: they shoot pool and chatter amongst themselves.

Onstage, the stripper dances with minimal enthusiasm. The crowd cheers as she sways her ass in their direction.

BACK ON BOOTH

Lila is sliding Elwood a napkin across the table. She puts a fountain pen back into her purse.

ELWOOD

Look at that: a home number.
 This all works out I could take
 you to a movie. Dinner, too.

LILA

Um, well--

ELWOOD

--don't look so horrified. I'm
 just teasin'.

Lila forces a weak smile.

LILA

Where are you stayin'?

ELWOOD

Don't you worry about that. The
 less you know the better.

LILA

Okay. I guess that's it then.

Lila stands.

ELWOOD

You not wanna stay for the show?

Lila glances over at the stage. The young woman is now removing some articles of clothes.

LILA

No. No thank you.

She goes to leave.

ELWOOD

Lila.

She peeks back over her shoulder.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

I don't think I need to tell you
what'll happen if I don't get
what's owed.

Lila nods, timidly.

IN A SERIES OF SHOTS

Note: the remainder of this scene is played out in slow-motion, and is scored solely to the stripper's selected music.

We track in front of Lila as she makes her way through the bar. She clutches her purse to her stomach. Her eyes are then drawn back to the stage.

The young woman is crawling across the floor on all fours. She tosses her hair from side to side. The crowd grows tumultuous.

Elwood watches the performance from his booth. He swigs leisurely from his beer.

The stripper now arches her back, hoisting her backside high into the air.

Lila averts her eyes as she nears the exit.

INT. LIPINSKI BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Sam is in bed. He stares at the ceiling with an arm folded behind his head.

A pair of headlights break through the room as we hear a vehicle pull up outside.

Sam sits up: listening intently. We hear a car door open and shut, followed by the sound of footsteps on gravel.

He reaches over to the nightstand.

CLOSE ON FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH

Of the woman and child at the beach. Sam turns the picture face down.

DOOR

Muffled knocking. Sam opens it dressed only in his underwear.

Bernie stands before him on the porch. They stare at each other, uncertain what to say. Then:

BERNIE

(reaching into her
handbag)
I brought you a book.

Sam leans out of the doorway and twists his head toward the motel rooms: his eyes somewhat suspicious.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Nobody saw me, Samuel.

OPEN WINDOW

Curtains whisk gently in the summer night breeze. We pan across the room to reveal Sam and Bernie in bed: their bodies passionately entwined in white sheets.

They kiss tenderly. Sam pulls back and gazes amorously into Bernie's eyes. Slowly, his head inches down her body and out of the frame.

We hold on Bernie as she writhes in ecstasy. As the climax builds, she turns her face to one side and bites her bottom lip. Then --

-- she lets out a sharp, uncontrollable moan.

LATER

The couple are clasped in bed: their naked figures bathed in moonlight. Sam's head rests on Bernie's chest. She gently caresses his hair. Beat.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I really need to cut it soon.

SAM

Mm-hmm.

BERNIE

Too hot for you in this heat.

Bernie toys with Sam's necklace, then places the St. Jude pendant between her thumb and forefinger. She studies the artifact closely.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

You really think you're a lost cause, Samuel?

SAM

I'm not sure.

BERNIE

Well, I am. And you're not.

SAM

Yes ma'am.

BERNIE

Don't you *ma'am* me. There's no greys on my head. My teeth are still my own.

Sam chuckles. Bernie smiles. Beat.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I love you, y'know.

SAM

I don't see why. I'm just an ol' cowboy with a limp.

BERNIE

No. That isn't true. You're a good man Samuel. Good men are hard to find.

Beat.

SAM

Tom was a good man.

BERNIE

Yes. Yes, he was. Christ, he put a ring on my finger when no-one would have me. Even though he knew my ovaries were withered.

Sam runs his thumb around her navel.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

He didn't talk much, but when he did, people paid attention.

(pause)

Samuel?

SAM

Yeah.

BERNIE

Where do you reckon he is?

SAM

Somewhere. Heaven.

BERNIE

You really believe that?

SAM

(sadly)

No.

BERNIE

I still feel like he's here. In the shadows of our house. In the earth. In the soil.

Bernie traces a finger along the scars on Sam's back: over every groove, blemish and indentation.

SAM

Nobody can ever go away. Not really. You can't erase the past.

BERNIE

I loved him, it's just I--I wasn't
in love with him. There's a
difference, y'know? People forget.
They get weighed down by
convenience. We hadn't made love
in twelve years. You can't
overlook somethin' like that.

Bernie's finger continues to explore the enduring evidence
of Sam's injuries.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Intimacy. Flesh and blood.

Sam ponders.

SAM

Flesh and blood.

LATER

It is dawn. Bernie scoops her garments from the floor as
she dresses. Sam sleeps, peacefully.

Quietly, Bernie approaches the bed and pulls the sheets
up around his shoulders. He stirs, but only for a moment.

CLOSE ON NIGHTSTAND

Bernie's hand enters the frame and stands the photograph
upright. She then places a weathered copy of a novel
nearby: 'The Ballad of the Sad Cafe' by Carson McCullers.

EXT. ROAD -- MORNING

A boy, wearing summer shorts and a baseball cap, races
his bicycle down a country road. We track behind him as
he turns into the parking lot of the Fairvale Diner.

The dark building is encased with cautionary tape. It
stands silent, spectral. A window is boarded with wood.

INT. FAIRVALE DINER -- CONTINUOUS

THROUGH A WINDOW

The boy creeps up to the murky glass and peers inside.

HIS POV

Patches of sun rays and shadows. More police tape. Faded
chalk outlines on the floor. Possibly dried blood.

EXT. FAIRVALE DINER -- CONTINUOUS

Satisfied, the youngster scours the ground for a decent-
sized stone. He finally seizes one and, after hesitating,
hurls it at the diner.

An entire window shatters. Glass bursts everywhere. Panicked, the boy sprints to his bicycle and flees: unaware his baseball cap has fallen behind.

EXT. MOTEL -- MORNING

HIGH SHOT

An Osprey has perched on top of the motel sign, observing the cars on the highway.

We hold until the bird takes flight.

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

We track in on a frumpish woman doing a crossword puzzle in bed. As we do so, we hear sporadic banging over static.

REVERSE ANGLE

Shows a middle-aged man standing over a small television. The screen is scrambled. Occasionally, we glimpse a sports news channel.

The man pounds the top of the t.v. with his fist.

WOMAN

(Long Island accent)
Wilbert. Will you let me concentrate?

WILBERT

(Long Island accent)
Honey, don't get me started now--

WOMAN

--what did Dr. Schenck say? Huh?
About our individual spaces?

Wilbert tweaks the antennas, agitated.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Are you listening to me Wilbert?

No response.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Will you quit that racket! My mother can hear you back in Uniondale!

WILBERT

It's the Stanley Cup Playoffs. We talked about this. Dr. Schenck said--

WOMAN

--if it means that much to you, go listen to the summary on the radio. Car's parked just outside.

Wilbert breathes deeply: a desperate attempt to calm his nerves.

WILBERT

Nystrom scored in overtime, of game six. I wanna see the highlights.

WOMAN

You wanted to drive, Wilbert. Save on money. I don't know why I bothered coming along. Who wants to go to Memphis?

WILBERT

It's my cousin's wedding. He came to ours.

WOMAN

Look how that turned out. Your brother forgot the ring and your ex-wife showed up. Some family.

She proceeds with her crossword. Wilbert lowers his head, sighs. Beat.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

No wonder I've got piles.

EXT. MOTEL -- MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON DOOR

As it shuts.

Wilbert leaves his motel room and heads toward the parking lot: car keys in hand. Children play in the pool, nearby.

SAM

Stands in the office doorway, sipping coffee. He stares off-screen.

The obese man from earlier is once again sprawled across a lounge: blistering in the sun.

Wilbert approaches.

WILBERT

Some morning.

SAM

You leavin' us Mr. Behrman?

Wilbert glances at his watch.

WILBERT

Oh, we'll make tracks just before lunch. You've got us for a couple of hours yet.

SAM

Well, take your time.

WILBERT

We'll be back in a couple of days
though. Break up the journey.
That's if you've got room for us.

As Wilbert leaves:

SAM

There's always room Mr. Behrman.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Sam shuffles in and pours himself some more coffee. He loads a cigarette into his mouth and searches his trouser pockets for the Zippo.

VOICE (O.S.)

Shouldn't smoke y'know.

Sam turns to see a young man with well-combed hair standing behind the reception desk. It is Elwood: chewing gum.

ELWOOD

Those white sticks are killers.
Do more damage than good.

SAM

So people keep tellin' me.

Elwood nods his head forward.

ELWOOD

I like your hat.

SAM

Thank you...

Sam runs his fingers across the rim, bashfully.

SAM (CONT'D)

...been keepin' my head dry over
the years.

Elwood stares. Silence.

ELWOOD

Do we know each other?

SAM

(pause)

Have you stayed here before?

ELWOOD

No, sir. This is my first visit
to the Old Dominion. But, I like
to think everybody knows everybody.
Somehow or other.

Elwood continues to gape.

Sam musters a nervous laugh, then retrieves the Zippo from his shirt-breast pocket.

SAM

Well, mister, what can I do for you?

He lights his cigarette.

ELWOOD

Where are my manners? The name is Elwood.

He offers his hand: Sam shakes it.

SAM

Sam.

ELWOOD

Pleasure to meet you, Sam. I'm in room fourteen. A pretty girl checked me in a few nights back. Now, I said I'd be out of your hair by this evenin', but...

Sam scans through the registration book: the cigarette dangling from his mouth.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

...there's been a slight change in plan, unfortunately--

SAM

--cabin fourteen, you say?

ELWOOD

Yes, sir. One and four. Y'see, I was hopin' I could hold on to it for just a couple more days. I'm aware of your policies--

Sam raises his head from the registration book.

SAM

--sure. Room's yours. We've got no further bookings.

ELWOOD

You don't need an extra deposit?

SAM

We got your first payment. There's no reason for another retainer.

Elwood grins: almost sadistically.

ELWOOD

Well. I appreciate that, Sam.

SAM

Just doin' my job is all--

ELWOOD

--whoa! Will you look at that.

Sam turns to see what has caught the man's attention: it is the old-fashioned rifle that hangs on the wall behind.

Elwood whistles.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Boy, that is somethin'.

SAM

It's German. That usually puts most people off.

CLOSE ON RIFLE

The emblem of Nazi Germany, an eagle with a swastika, is imprinted on the weapon.

SAM (CONT'D)

The Karabiner 98k Kurz they called it. Manufactured by Mauser in thirty-five. Nazi infantry rifle.

ELWOOD

No kiddin'?

SAM

My uncle Conrad seized it off a paratrooper in Northern France. Used it, too. Said he wouldn't of made it home otherwise.
(looks at cupboards)
Hell, he even kept some cartridges. I got 'em in a box someplace.

Elwood is interested:

ELWOOD

What happened to the man it belonged to? The German.

SAM

His name was, uh, Gustav Witz. So his wallet said anyways.

ELWOOD

Your uncle shoot him?

SAM

Said he didn't. Claimed he found him slumped under a tree, just holdin' a photograph of his wife.

ELWOOD

So how'd he die?

SAM

Broken heart I guess.

ELWOOD

Better than a bullet.

SAM

Maybe. Maybe not.

An uncomfortable beat. Both men smile: amused by their conduct and conversation.

Elwood runs his eyes over the additional relics displayed on the wall. Sam dallies with his hat.

SAM (CONT'D)

Well, I'm glad we got your room sorted. Truth is, we don't get--

Elwood, in sheer revelry, smacks the desk with his palm.

ELWOOD

Jesus Christ!

Sam is alarmed, confused.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ!

Elwood paces back and forth: unable to contain his excitement. He shakes a finger at the rodeo photographs.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

You're him! That rodeo champ?
The bull rider? It's you, right?

Sam is equally enamored and embarrassed.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Fuck me. I knew I recognized you from someplace!

(remembering)

Shit, it's, uh, Lib--Libinski, right? Libinski?

SAM

Lipinski.

ELWOOD

Lipinski! Hell, my father would have a heart attack if he were here now. He's a Tennessee man, like yourself, huh?

SAM

Born and bred.

Sam's hand is held steady: the cigarette placed between his fingers now forms a large amount of ash.

ELWOOD

He raised me in Oak Ridge. Christ, I remember it now. He used to drive to all your shows.

(MORE)

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Outta state, too. Wyoming. Texas.
Even took me as a boy. He was a
bronc rider, y'know. In his youth.
Worshipped the ground you walked
on. Kept pictures of you from
the papers and everythin'.

Elwood shakes his head in utter disbelief.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Shit, he even followed you out to
the NFR's in Nevada. Remember?
That year when you...

Elwood suddenly hesitates. Sam studies him with interest:
his cigarette, untouched, molding into a stick of ash.

Beat.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

...well, you know what happened.
You were there after all.

SAM

That I was.

ELWOOD

You don't need me spittin' it
out.

Another beat.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

You must get recognized all the
time. Probably gets on your
nerves.

SAM

People, they don't remember. Or
they forget. I'm happy either
way.

Elwood is convinced. Beat.

ELWOOD

Well, I'll catch you around Sam.
And thanks once again...

Sam smiles, feebly.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

...I appreciate your help.

As he leaves:

SAM

Mind how you go. Pass my regards
on to your father.

Elwood pauses by the office doorway: the sun now beating
at his face.

ELWOOD

Will do. But, I won't see him
for awhile. He's dead and buried.

Sam stares after the young man as he vanishes into the
harsh brightness of daylight.

CLOSE ON CIGARETTE

Now just a strand of burnt ash. We hold until it crumbles
and falls apart.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING -- DAY**ESTABLISHING SHOT**

An antiquated building in the center of town. Lettering
stenciled on a large window reads:

A. K. FARMSWORTH**LAWYER, ACCOUNTS & CATERING****INT. RECEPTION -- DAY**

A staid waiting room. We track in on Lila sitting upright
in a chair: knees together and hands resting in her lap.
Seated nearby are two women: both read a magazine.

A young receptionist giggles on the telephone: her dialogue
faint and indistinct. A fan squeaks as it slowly turns.

Lila notices the other women peeking at her behind their
periodicals. Disquieted, she reaches for a magazine and
begins to flip through its pages.

CLOSE ON MAGAZINE

Show a variety of stories. One headline reads: 'Pac-Man:
The Social Phenomenon Uncovered'.

Lila stops on a photograph of a young woman who looks
strikingly similar to herself.

A caption below states: 'True Confessions: I Hired A Killer
to Murder My Husband...Now He's After Me'.

VOICE (O.S.)

Ms. McBain?

Lila stares in absolute horror.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Excuse me, Ms. McBain?

She looks up, disoriented. The receptionist stands with
a solicitous look upon her face. The two women with
magazines also share the same expression.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Farmsworth will see you now.

We hold on the wide-eyed Lila.

INT. FARMSWORTH OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Albert K. Farmsworth, a corpulent man with a receding hairline, struggles to open a window: his plump fingers squeezed between the sash and sill.

Lila waits patiently at his desk: listening to the man grunt. Eventually, after a considerable amount of commotion, he gives up.

FARMSWORTH

Hotter than a honeymoon hotel.

He wheezes back over to his desk, defeated.

FARMSWORTH (CONT'D)

Sorry about that. Window must be jammed.

Farmsworth collapses into his chair, which, due to its design, causes him to roll away and spin around.

He struggles to pull himself back: his heels scraping wildly at the ground. Lila watches, motionless.

FARMSWORTH (CONT'D)

There we go. That does it.
(writhing)
Unfortunately, the fan doesn't work either.

He slaps a portable fan on the desktop. The device makes an unhealthy buzzing sound: its blades barely move.

FARMSWORTH (CONT'D)

Circuits gone or somethin'. Say, you want a root-beer?

LILA

What?

Farmsworth bends down and reaches into a bulky cooler loaded with ice and soft drink cans. He takes out the mentioned beverage.

FARMSWORTH

Cool you down a little?

Lila shakes her head.

LILA

Oh, no. No thank you.

FARMSWORTH

I can't survive the heat-wave without a cold refreshment.

Farmsworth opens the can, causing foam to spray everywhere. He quickly gulps on the drink to stop the spillage, then lets out a slight belch.

FARMSWORTH (CONT'D)

Pardon me. It's the damn foam. Upsets my stomach. Ain't good for the IBS. My wife says it makes my breath smell, too. But I always say "Rita, darlin', bad breath is better than no breath at all."

Farmsworth chuckles. Lila forces a smile. Beat.

FARMSWORTH (CONT'D)

So Ms. McBain--

LILA

--Lila. Please.

FARMSWORTH

Lila. I don't really know if it's my place to discuss such formidable matters.

(pause)

Ms. McBain, were you aware of your husband's financial difficulties?

LILA

Difficulties?

FARMSWORTH

His troubles? As you're probably aware, I hadn't seen Mitchell in a number of years. So, this is all relatively new information. For the both of us. Anyways, I ran some credit checks and called the taxation depart--

LILA

--taxation? Wait--what? I don't understand.

Beat. Farmsworth breathes deeply, then sighs.

FARMSWORTH

Your husband was bankrupt Ms. McBain. I'm sorry to be the one to lay that--

Lila shakes her head: refusing to believe such allegations.

LILA

--no, no. There must be some mistake. Mitchell was an entrepreneur. A business man. He had thousands of dollars.

Farmsworth leans back into his chair, then swabs his clammy forehead with a tissue.

FARMSWORTH

How much did you really know about your husband's businesses? Two former partners were suing him. Did you know that? He's had run-ins with the IRS since '75--

Lila starts to panic.

LILA

--but what about the will? And the insurances? He showed me the papers. I've got bills. Expenses.

FARMSWORTH

I'm sorry Ms. McBain, but none of that carries any weight. It's of no consequence. Now, the bank owns your house--

LILA

--I'm a widow for Chrissakes!
(beginning to cry)
I-I still need to make payments on his casket. Solid mahogany it was.

Farmsworth lowers his head.

LILA (CONT'D)

I can't give that back. If I had known all this I would have thrown that...*monster* out with the trash--

Lila breaks into an uncontrollable sob. Farmsworth, ill at ease, slides a box of tissues across the desktop.

After a moment of indecision, he takes a much-needed swig from his root-beer. Lila continues to cry.

INT. TOWN HALL -- EVENING

A bustling party.

A large banner reads: 'Happy Retirement!'. A live band plays honky-tonk music as couples whirl on the dance floor.

Sam watches the celebrations unfold. Marty Petrone, out of uniform, stands nearby: a small girl dozes in his arms.

MARTY

Damn dignitaries. Captain can't do a thing.

Sam lights a cigarette and gazes across the room.

Bernie sits with a group of women at a table decked with food. She catches Sam's eye: her fixed look broken by the swaying bodies on the dance floor.

MARTY (CONT'D)

This is a murder investigation.
Capital offence. No place for
geographical dispute--

The young girl squirms in his arms. Marty lifts her to
the ground.

MARTY (CONT'D)

--okay, okay. There you go. Go
see mom.

She runs to join some other children popping balloons.
Sam observes: cigarette in mouth. A thin smile.

SAM

Did your dog turn up? Shankly?

MARTY

(shakes head)
Cheryl's been puttin' up flyers,
but it hasn't done any good.

SAM

Sorry, Marty.

MARTY

Oh, we'll find him. Mark my words.

Cigarette smoke clouds the air around them.

MARTY (CONT'D)

We ain't caught our gunman, but
we'll catch that canine.

Sam looks back over at Bernie: her chair now empty.

MARTY (CONT'D)

If not, what hope is there?

MAGGIE RUSSELL

Stands with two friends by a punch bowl, laughing. Over
her shoulder we see Bobby Driscoll approaching: a tense
look plastered across his face.

BOBBY

'Lo, Maggie.

The girls hush up.

MAGGIE

Hi Bobby.

An uncomfortable silence. Bobby fidgets.

BOBBY

I was wonder--

MAGGIE

--your shirt's nice.

BOBBY

Thanks. Reminded me of Travolta.
Y'know, like 'Urban Cowboy'?

Beat. Maggie is confused.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Well, I was wonderin' if you'd
like to dance. With me, I mean.

MAGGIE

Oh. Bobby, that's kind, but I--I
can't dance with you.

BOBBY

Okay.
(pause)
I'll see you, then.

He turns: now desperate to leave.

MAGGIE

It's not you. I have two left
feet. I'd make an idiot of myself.

BOBBY

It's alright.

Bobby hurries away, humiliated. Maggie watches with
remorse as her friends start to snigger.

STAGE

Empty. We hear the partygoers cheer and applaud as Buck
Boyd, a short fellow with a thick moustache, steps up to
the microphone. He is clearly affected by the reception.

The ovation then fades. Beat.

BUCK

Now I forgot what I was going to
say.

MAN (O.S.)

(shouting)
Welcome to retirement Buck!

Laughter.

BUCK

Who's that? That you, Earl?
Sonofabitch.

Further laughter.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Well, here it is. The end of
another road. Forty-four years
of work. Boy, did it go fast.
(MORE)

BUCK (CONT'D)

(pause)

I still feel like the young man I always was. Full of adventure. Wonder. Just now my bones ache. My muscles get tired. But, I do not regret gettin' older. It is a privilege denied to many. This, of course, brings me to the three gentlemen that are not here with us tonight.

Silence. Buck muses.

CLOSE ON VARIOUS FACES

Listening intently.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Lou Hopkis. I've been eating at Lou's for over thirty years. Like a lot of you. Nobody needed a shrink when Lou was around. Just head over to that diner. An hour and a bottle of whiskey later, you were as good as new.

(pause)

Mitchell McBain. He was a good boy. Lovin' husband. Big earner, too. A young man in his prime gone too soon.

(pause)

And Tom Burkell.

CLOSE ON SAM

Hat in hand: his attention held.

BUCK (CONT'D)

He never had a bad word to say about anybody. And if he did, well, hell they probably deserved it. So, I'd like you to raise those glasses in a toast.

Buck lifts a shot-glass high into the air.

BUCK (CONT'D)

"To die completely, a person must not only forget but be forgotten. And those who are not forgotten, are not dead."

He slings the liquor into his mouth. We hear some of the mob yell: 'Amen!'

LATER

The band plays a soul ballad: 'My Lover's Prayer' by Otis Redding. Sam stands at the back of the hall, listening to an intoxicated individual blather and belch.

DRUNKEN MAN

He used to be a democrat for Pete's sake. Only switched over in '62.

The man burps. Sam observes him, curiously.

DRUNKEN MAN (CONT'D)

I mean, sure, he was defeated twice in the nominations.

Another belch.

DRUNKEN MAN (CONT'D)

But we're givin' him the short end of the stick. Carter's bitten off more than he can chew. Christ, he pardoned that damn Cuban.

SAM

Puerto Rican.

DRUNKEN MAN

Puerto Rican! Truman's turnin' in his grave--

A hand is laid on Sam's shoulder: it is Bernie.

BERNIE

Care to dance?

SAM

(perturbed)
Pardon me?

BERNIE

I danced to this song once. When I was young.

Sam glances at the drunken man, who now observes him with prying eyes.

SAM

(quietly)
Bernie, I--

BERNIE

--it's just a dance, Samuel. If you don't want to, I'm sure this man will accept my invitation--

The drunkard smiles and pats his hair.

SAM

--no, no, it's alright.
(pause)
I'll dance with you.

DANCE FLOOR

They embrace. Bernie folds her arms around Sam's neck: his hands placed low at her hips.

Faces in the crowd watch them with concern and deprecation.
Sam notices:

SAM (CONT'D)

They're watchin' us.

BERNIE

I know.

The music sweeps across the room like a hypnotic spell.
Other couples, teens and children included, dance as well.

As the song nears its end, Bernie rests her forehead
against Sam's chest: her hands fall to his shoulders.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

(softly)

Thank you, Samuel.

She then turns, rather hastily, and leaves. We hold on
Sam, alone and wistful, surrounded by dancers.

The band plays on.

EXT. MOTEL -- NIGHT

A window. Through the tawdry curtains we glimpse two
naked bodies: accompanied by a heavy grunting sound.

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood fucks a prostitute. The girl has stringy blonde
hair and wears tattered high-heels. She is on all fours.

Elwood is shirtless: his pants lowered to his thighs. He
thrusts with vigor and sustain.

CLOSE ON ELWOOD'S CHEST

Reveals a striking tattoo of an open-winged bird: its
frame and feathers inked black.

Elwood grits his teeth as his speed increases. Beads of
sweat trickle into his eyes.

The girl, showing no emotion, throws a hand against the
headboard to steady herself. She then checks her watch.

LATER

The girl stands by the open door. She adjusts her skirt
as Elwood counts money from his wallet. No eye contact.

LATER

A towel is spread across the mattress. Elwood dismantles
his revolver, then carefully cleans each component.

MIRROR

Elwood studies his reflection: pistol in hand. We hold
as he skillfully spins the firearm back and forth.

LATER

Elwood exercises. He grips a chair with each hand: his feet propped up on the bed. Pushes himself up and down.

LATER

CLOSE ON ELWOOD'S FACE

Bathed in blue light as he flicks through various t.v. channels. Disgruntled, he switches off the television.

EXT. MOTEL -- MOMENTS LATER

Elwood leaves his motel room. As he walks along the porch he spots a vehicle pulling into the parking lot.

ANGLE ON SAM

Stepping out from his car. We hold as he locks the door.

ELWOOD (O.S.)

You sure look smart.

Sam turns to see Elwood standing outside the brightly-lit office. The young man observes his spruce outfit.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Been on a date?

SAM

(smiling)

Retirement party.

ELWOOD

Well, I hope it weren't your own.

Sam chuckles.

SAM

What are you up to at this hour?
Causing mischief?

ELWOOD

Not at all, Sam. Was gonna head
on over to that roadside cafe...

Elwood nods his head:

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

...up the highway. Say, you fancy
joinin' me?

SAM

Uh, well, I don't know--

Sam squints at his watch in the darkness.

ELWOOD

--c'mon. Two boys from Tennessee.
How about it?

SAM

My shift starts at midnight.

ELWOOD

I'll have you back before both
hands reach twelve.

Sam considers the young man's request: glances at his
watch again.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Coffee and pie. My treat.

INT. ROADSIDE CAFE -- NIGHT

A quiet cafe with outmoded furnishings. Truck-drivers
stoop over the counter. The radio plays a country tune.

We track behind a wandering waitress until she arrives at
a table where Sam and Elwood are seated.

WAITRESS

Fill ya up some?

She holds out a pot of coffee in one hand.

SAM

Sure.

Elwood pays no attention: he is devouring a chocolate
sundae. Used plates clutter his side of the table.

Sam smokes and watches.

ELWOOD

(mouthful)

You sure you don't want nothin'
to eat?

Sam shakes his head: raises a hand.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Suit yourself.

SAM

You'll be bouncin' off the walls
with all that sugar.

ELWOOD

Sugar don't bother me.

He wipes his mouth with a napkin:

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

I got real steady hands. Like a
surgeon, y'know?

He then slurps from his soda.

SAM

You mind if I ask you a question,
kid?

ELWOOD

I don't see why not.

SAM

What brings you up here...across the border?

ELWOOD

Well...

Elwood mulls over his answer.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

...mostly I, uh, came here to hunt.

Sam frowns.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Pheasants, quails. Geese, even. There's a big shootin' preserve just north of here. 2,000 acres they got. Came highly recommended.

SAM

I know the place. Used to be a ranch some years back--

ELWOOD

--that's the one. But, the problem with those private properties are the lodgings. Too damn expensive.

Sam nods: cigarette in mouth. Smoke billows in the air.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

You mind if I ask you a question, Sam?

SAM

(smiling)
Shoot.

ELWOOD

You miss ridin'? Be honest now.

Beat.

SAM

No.

ELWOOD

I suppose an accident like that is bound to put off a rider. King of the rodeo had to fall sometime, right?

SAM

It got me outta the draft.

He extinguishes his cigarette.

SAM (CONT'D)

I got no complaints.

ELWOOD

So now you're in the motel business.

SAM

Yeah. Buddy a'mine used to run the place. He kinda passed it on to me.

ELWOOD

How's that?

SAM

Well, he died. And he had no siblings. No kids.

Elwood leans across the table: eager to voice his own anecdote.

ELWOOD

When my mother passed she left me nothin'. *Nothin'*. Her only son. Believe that? She had it tough, though. Full-blown tuberculosis. Spread like wildfire. She was just a skeleton by the end.

SAM

I'm sorry to hear--

ELWOOD

--my father weren't around to take care of her, see. He was servin' time in a penitentiary. Out in El Reno, Oklahoma. Shot a federal judge over a previous conviction. Grand theft auto, I think that was.

Sam sits silent: uncertain what to say.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Sonofabitch got his comeuppance though. He was stabbed in a prison riot. Christmas Eve, 1976. They say he was dead before he even hit the ground.

Elwood gulps the last of his soda. Sam studies the young man, curiously.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

What goes around comes around, huh?

EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

A car travels through the darkness.

INT. CAR (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie drives. Lila sits in the passenger seat.

Silence.

BERNIE

I appreciate you keeping me
company, darlin'.

She reaches across and pats Lila's knee.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Didn't know if you'd be up.

LILA

It's alright. I haven't been
sleepin' much lately.

BERNIE

Me neither. I get nightmares
every time I close my eyes.

LILA

Perhaps it's the heat.

BERNIE

Perhaps.

LILA

Mother says I used to get bad
dreams as a girl. Every summer,
without fail. She had to read me
stories about Eskimos and igloos.

BERNIE

Did it work?

LILA

I guess.

She gazes solemnly out the window.

LILA (CONT'D)

All I ever seem to dream about
now is snow.

EXT. ROADSIDE CAFE -- MOMENTS LATER

Bernie's car pulls up outside. The engine is left running.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Lila climbs out of the vehicle, then peers in through her
open door.

LILA

What flavor?

Bernie scours through her handbag.

BERNIE

Vanilla. No, chocolate. What do you feel like?

Lila shrugs. Bernie holds out some crumpled bills.

LILA

Put that away. I brought a little money.

BERNIE

You sure? I feel bad draggin' you outta bed--

LILA

--it's fine. Honestly. I was supposed to go with you to Buck's tonight, remember?

Bernie peers into her handbag, again.

BERNIE

How about we split it? Fifty fif--

Lila slams her door shut. Bernie, startled, watches the woman scuttle into the building.

INT. ROADSIDE CAFE -- CONTINUOUS

Lila enters and approaches the counter.

ANGLE ON ELWOOD

Roaring with laughter. Sam chortles.

ELWOOD

He had his pants on back to front...the whole damn time.

We see Lila pass in the background.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Creases me up, man. Every time I tell it.

Elwood's guffawing subsides. A lengthy beat.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

So, you got a woman?

SAM

What?

ELWOOD

Must be lonely in that motel. You don't do taxidermy do ya?

Sam smirks:

SAM

No. Afraid not.

ELWOOD

So, c'mon then. There's gotta be a woman.

SAM

Well...

He lowers his voice:

SAM (CONT'D)

...there...there is somebody. But I don't talk about it much.

ELWOOD

Somebody special then I bet?

Beat.

SAM

Yeah.

He seems surprised by his answer.

SAM (CONT'D)

Yeah. I'd say so.

ELWOOD

Well, you make sure you hold on to her...

Sam turns his head as something catches his eye. It is Lila: leaving the cashier.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

...my parent's marriage was built on damn mind games--

SAM

(calling out)
--Lila! Hey Lila!

Elwood suddenly freezes.

ANGLE ON LILA

Glancing around the room. She then spots Sam sitting with another man whose back is turned to her.

We track behind Lila as she walks over to their table.

LILA

Hiya Sam.

Sam rises and removes his hat.

SAM

How are ya?

LILA

Okay, I guess. Surviving--

The other man now stands as well. Lila sees his face.

LILA (CONT'D)

(shocked)

--oh.

SAM

Lila, this is Elwood. A guest at the motel. Hails from Tennessee, like myself.

Lila lowers her head, timorously.

ELWOOD

Pleasure to meet you.

SAM

It's a surprise seein' you down here. What brings you out so late?

Lila raises a hand which holds a plastic bag:

LILA

Ice-cream. We're watching a movie tonight. Over at Bern--

ELWOOD

--which one?

LILA

What?

ELWOOD

Which movie?

LILA

I'm not sure. It's an oldie. With Rock Hudson.

Elwood frowns:

ELWOOD

Ain't he queer?

Beat.

SAM

Still, I hope you enjoy it anyways. Ice-cream, too.

LILA

Thanks. I best be on my way. Bernie's waitin' in the car and I don't want this to melt.

SAM

(intrigued)

Bernie?

LILA

Nice to see you, Sam.

She turns: desperate to leave.

ELWOOD

Bye, now.

Elwood settles back into his chair. Sam continues to stand as he watches the girl scurry away.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

She could be a looker that one, huh? A little make-up. Nice dress.

Sam is unresponsive: lost in thought.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

You alright there?

Beat.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Sam?

SAM

Sorry. I, uh, need to use the restroom.

He tosses his hat onto the table as he leaves.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Lila clambers back into the vehicle and shuts the door.

BERNIE

So, what'd you go for?

No answer. Then...

LILA

(distracted)

...what? Oh, right. I--I got both. Both kinds.

Bernie starts the engine.

BERNIE

You okay? You're as pale as a ghost.

Lila nods, then smiles unconvincingly.

LILA

Just hungry is all.

INT. ROADSIDE CAFE -- MOMENTS LATER

We slowly track in on Elwood sitting alone. His meandering eyes come to rest on an object on the table: Sam's hat.

Elwood tries on the headpiece. He raises a table knife to catch sight of his reflection. Dissatisfied, he rotates his chair...

...to face the closest window pane. We hold on Elwood as he studies his mirror image: shifting his head into various poses.

INT. BURKELL BEDROOM -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON TELEVISION

Shows a romantic encounter between Jane Wyman and Rock Hudson from the film 'All That Heaven Allows' (1955).

Bernie sits in bed with a spoon in one hand and an ice-cream tub in the other.

BERNIE

Did you know the title of this
comes from a poem by John Wilmot?

The door to the bathroom is slightly ajar. It is evident that someone is fidgeting around inside.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

He was one of the world's most
famous libertines, y'know? Hell,
he died of syphilis.

Tom Burkell steps out from the bathroom with a toothbrush in his mouth. He is dressed in striped-pyjamas.

TOM

(brushing teeth)
Syphilis? When was this...the
60's?

BERNIE

No. Seventeenth century, hon.

Tom shrugs his shoulders and steps back into the bathroom. Bernie sighs. We can hear the faucet start to run.

Something then draws Bernie's attention to the window. There seems to be a glimmer of movement just outside.

Bernie stares. A long, tense beat.

Suddenly, a bird smacks straight into the glass. It is a raven: squawking and flapping its wings. Bernie jumps.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Jesus! A goddamn raven just flew
into our window, Tom! Tom?

She turns to face the bathroom, only to discover that the light is off inside. The door is slightly ajar.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Tom?

We hear a strange whining noise. The only source of light now comes from the television. Bernie steps out of bed to investigate. The moaning builds, steadily.

Bernie inches closer to the bathroom door, then nudges it open. Tom is standing against the back wall: masked in shadow. His body shakes in the darkness.

We cannot tell whether he's crying or cackling.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Tom?

He falls silent. Beat.

TOM

How long you been fucking him?

BERNIE

What?

Bernie fumbles for the light-switch. We then see Tom's bullet-ridden corpse: eyes bulging in their sockets and blood gushing from the mouth. The sight is horrifying.

Bernie goes to scream --

-- then wakes up in a sweat, gasping for air.

The amorous scene with Jane Wyman and Rock Hudson still plays on television. The window curtains are drawn shut and the bathroom door is closed.

Bernie turns to see Lila sitting next to her in bed: a spoon in one hand and an ice-cream tub in the other.

Beat.

LILA

You want to hear about the Eskimos,
huh?

INT. MUSTANG (MOVING) -- DAY

Elwood drives. He gnaws on some chewing gum. The radio blares 'Do You Remember Rock N Roll Radio?' by the Ramones.

A flyer has been fastened under one of the windshield wipers: it features a photograph of a lost border collie.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

We turn off a busy street and pull into the parking lot of a squalid saloon.

EXT. MUSTANG -- MOMENTS LATER

Elwood shuts his car-door. He rips the flyer out from under the wiper, crunches it into a ball, then slings it to the ground.

We track behind Elwood as he makes his way into the dimly-lit bar. He shapes a phone with his hand, and a bartender points to an open door at the end of the room.

Elwood then steps through the doorway and out into a back parking lot. He spots a single payphone located near the sidewalk.

We hear vociferous laughter. Three men, drinking liquor, lean against a pick-up truck. They speak in hushed tones as Elwood passes. Then:

MAN 1

(shouting)

Timber nigger!

Elwood stops in his tracks. He turns around, slowly.

Beat.

ELWOOD

I look Indian to you?

The drunks continue to laugh. Elwood walks on.

PAYPHONE

Elwood removes a napkin from his shirt-pocket. He peers over at the men as he dials a number.

INT. MCBAIN KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

A telephone lurches as it rings.

EXT. PAYPHONE -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood listens, waits.

INT. MCBAIN KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

A tabby cat sits beside the telephone. The ringing persists. The animal then turns to look at its owner.

Lila McBain stands silently by the kitchen counter: a bag of groceries held in each arm.

The answer machine clicks in:

MITCHELL'S VOICE

Hello, you've reached the McBain residence. Please leave your name and, uh, number after the beep, and we'll get back to you when we can.

EXT. PAYPHONE -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood hears the beep.

INT. MCBAIN KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Lila stares at the telephone, flustered. Silence.

ELWOOD'S VOICE

...cunt.

EXT. PAYPHONE -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood hangs up.

INT. MCBAIN KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Further silence. Lila rests the groceries on the counter. She starts to shelve the items, but notices the tabby cat gaping at her. Lila returns the gaze.

EXT. PAYPHONE -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood is still. He then pulls out a knuckle-duster from one of his back pockets.

Elwood slides the steel onto his right fist as he marches over to the pick-up truck.

THE MEN

Observe Elwood as he approaches. The heckler steps forward with arms outstretched:

MAN 1

Blanket ass looking for fun?
Injuns and their squaws can fuck---

The man is struck across the nose. His legs buckle, but Elwood holds him by the shirt and continues to brutally pummel his face. He spits teeth.

The second man grabs Elwood from behind and locks his arms tight across his neck. He pulls Elwood off the first man whose body has now fallen limp.

Elwood lashes out with his legs to keep the third man at bay. He then throws his body backwards and crushes the second man into the truck. They both tumble to the ground.

Elwood gasps for air. He uses a car to hoist himself up. The second man is still on his back. Elwood raises his boot and begins to stomp him, repeatedly.

The third man fetches a baseball bat from the cab of the truck. He swings at Elwood, but cracks a car window instead. Glass shatters everywhere.

The two fighters then pant in the heat as they circle each other. A tense beat.

The man then swings again and misses. Elwood springs forward and slugs him twice. The man drops his bat and crashes to the floor. As he scrambles to his feet...

...Elwood plucks up the bat and cracks him hard across the head. The man slumps to the ground. There is no movement from his body.

Elwood paces and then rests against a car bonnet. The sun beats at his face. He spits. Blood stains the bat.

We hear the distant noise of a tumultuous crowd.

INT. RODEO ARENA -- EVENING**BLACK AND WHITE**

A continuation of Sam's flashback.

In a single slow-motion shot we see the bull kick both its hind legs into the air. The cowboy loses his balance. Numerous cameras flash. The crowd is wild, hysteric.

Two rodeo clowns charge towards the animal. The cowboy is tossed up into the night sky like a rag-doll. His limbs flail as he plummets head first toward the ground.

VOICE (V.O.)

Sam...

The audience continues to scream. Pure pandemonium.

INT. LIPINSKI BEDROOM -- DAY**CLOSE ON AN EYE**

Suddenly opening. The pupil's diameter constricts.

Sam is sprawled across the mattress: fully dressed. Rose stands above him with a concerned look on her face.

ROSE

...Sam?

SAM

Yeah?

ROSE

Bernadette's here.

SAM

Oh. Okay.

Sam sits up, disoriented.

ROSE

You alright?

SAM

Sure. Yeah.

Rose takes in her surroundings. She spots the framed photograph on the nightstand.

ROSE

Well, take your time. I'll tell her you're in the shower. Getting cleaned up.

She goes to leave.

SAM

That a hint?

Rose shrugs. Sam lifts an arm and smells his armpit.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Sam enters: buttoning up a fresh shirt. Bernie is admiring the rodeo pictures on the wall. Rose knits on the sofa.

SAM

'Lo Bernie.

BERNIE

Sorry to drop in unannounced. I thought I'd wait. Rose said you were showering.

Sam and Rose exchange glances.

SAM

Gets muggy in the afternoons.

BERNIE

It does. Supposed to rain tonight though. So the t.v. says.

Sam nods. Beat.

SAM

So, uh, what brings you out here? Just passin' through are you--

BERNIE

--well, actually, I was hoping you might like to join me for dinner. Tomorrow night that is.

Sam stares. Rose listens in on their conversation.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

It's a new recipe I'm tryin' out. For a beef and barley stew. Need a test-dummy for the first batch.

SAM

Well, uh--

BERNIE

--you don't have to, I mean, I was only askin'--

SAM

--no, sure. That sounds great. It's just...I have plans.

Bernie is clearly devastated. Rose continues to observe the couple.

BERNIE

Oh. Alright. Well--

SAM

--it's Maggie. She got into the O'Mathy state finals. The singing contest. It's held up in Lynchburg and I promised to take her.

BERNIE

Oh, right. State finals, huh?

SAM

But, y'know, I--I can swing by later. After the show. Save me some of that stew.

Bernie smiles.

BERNIE

I'd like that.

An awkward silence. Rose knits.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I'll see you then, Samuel.

SAM

Goodbye.

He watches Bernie as she disappears outside. Beat. Rose continues to thread her knitting needles.

ROSE

That Old Spice I smell?

SAM

(sheepishly)

It is.

Rose tries to conceal a growing grin.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

A car cruises through a suburban neighborhood.

INT. CAR (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

Lila sits at the wheel. She listens to an evangelist's sermon on the radio: the voice dull and monotonous.

Lila takes a right turn. We notice that the car behind her does as well. The preacher drones on.

Lila then makes a left turn. Again, the car behind her does as well. Lila notices. She studies the headlights...

...through the rear view mirror. Nervous, she makes another left turn. The car behind disappears. Beat.

Lila relaxes. Then, suddenly, the headlights reappear: piercing brightly through the darkness.

Lila, watching her mirrors with bated breath, takes a right turn. The vehicle follows:

LILA

(terrified)

...no.

Lila accelerates, but the headlights gain closer until the car rides dangerously close to her bumper.

A tense beat.

Then, without indicating, Lila throws a sharp left. The headlights behind miss the corner and shoot past.

Lila stops her vehicle. Shaking, she twists around in her seat. The car has vanished.

EXT. MCBAIN HOUSE -- NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT

A single storey property. Lila's car sits in the driveway.

INT. MCBAIN BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Lila folds an array of clothes into two large suitcases. She talks on the telephone as she packs:

LILA

Uh-huh. Just for a little while.
I'm rattlin' around in this house
with nobody to talk to.

(sighing)

Tell him to be quiet. Does he
want me to bring Mitchell's cat?

Lila fastens one case: the phone held between her ear and shoulder.

LILA (CONT'D)

Okay, then. Well, y'know I love
you more, mother.

(laughing)

Yes...

EXT. MCBAIN HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON FRONT DOOR

Opening. The tabby cat darts inside.

Lila drags a suitcase out to her car. We hear distant thunder. She studies the night sky, briefly, then...

...loads and shuts the boot. Beat.

Lila notices a car parked across the street. She then spots another vehicle sat under a line of trees.

She stares, perplexed. The dark bushes in her yard quiver in the wind. Shadows sway. Another roll of thunder.

Lila hurries back towards the house.

INT. MCBAIN HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Lila lifts the second suitcase. Suddenly, we hear the front door bang shut. Lila turns to see...

...Elwood charging towards her. She quickly drops the luggage and tries to run.

Elwood catches her hair and throws her into a nearby table. Ornaments crash to the ground. Chairs topple over.

ELWOOD

...fuck you goin', huh?

Elwood grabs Lila's feet and begins to drag her down the hallway. The cat follows, curious.

LILA

No! Please! No!

Lila clutches at each piece of furniture she passes. Her nails scratch the floorboards and walls.

Elwood hauls her into the bathroom. She screams.

INT. MCBAIN BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood wrestles Lila into the empty tub. He draws a revolver from his waistband and holds up a single bullet.

ELWOOD

See this! See this!

Lila struggles, cries. Elwood loads the bullet and spins the chamber. He points the gun at Lila's head, then cocks the hammer.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Where's the money? Huh? Where the fuck is it?

He pulls the trigger. Click. Nothing. Lila shrieks. Elwood cocks the hammer, again.

The cat, dormant, watches from the doorway.

LILA

(weeping)

...I...don't have it...

He pulls the trigger. Click.

Lila wails.

Elwood shoves the barrel into her cheek, then yanks the shower curtain across his body for protection. He turns his head away and cocks the hammer.

LILA (CONT'D)

I can get it! I can get it!

The revolver is gradually lowered. Lila keeps repeating herself as she bawls and blubbers.

Elwood opens his other hand to reveal the bullet. He slings it at Lila. She flinches and continues to cry.

INT. MCBAIN KITCHEN -- LATER

Both sit at the breakfast table drinking coffee. Elwood slurps. Lila's cup is untouched.

A lengthy beat. Then:

ELWOOD

What is this? Walnut?

LILA

(weakly)

Almond.

Elwood nods in approval. Another beat.

ELWOOD

I got a lot of late payments. In debt, just like yourself.

(pause)

To be honest, this has really held me back. I feel like I'm owed extra. A compensation.

LILA

You know I haven't got anything. A little put by for groceries and gas. That's all.

ELWOOD

Well, maybe we can work out *another* arrangement.

Lila stares, frightened.

LILA

What?

Heavy rain begins to fall. Elwood looks up at the ceiling.

INT. BURKELL HOUSE -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON TELEVISION

Shows Barbara Stanwyck from the film 'My Reputation' (1946). The telecast is interfered with static.

Bernie sits on the sofa, watching. She turns to face a window. Rain starts to lash against the glass.

EXT. MOTEL -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON SWIMMING POOL

Pelted with rain.

CLOSE ON OFFICE WINDOW

Sam stares out at the storm, smoking.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

The lights dim, momentarily, as we hear a crash of thunder. Sam goes to tamper with the radio, but only finds static.

A middle-aged woman enters the office. Sam turns.

SAM

'Lo there.

WOMAN

Dirty night.

SAM

Yes, though I can't say we don't need the rain.

The woman gives an acknowledging smile.

WOMAN

The name's Hannie. Hannie Ward. I'm stayin' in room six. Checked in this morning.

SAM

Oh sure. Sure. Everythin' alright I hope?

The woman stares.

HANNIE

There seems to be some kind of fight.

SAM

Fight?

HANNIE

Next door. In number seven. A woman was...screaming.

Beat. Sam broods.

HANNIE (CONT'D)

Shall we call the police? I wasn't sure--

SAM

--no. No, it's alright.

He extinguishes his cigarette.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'll take care of it.

EXT. MOTEL -- MOMENTS LATER

A DOOR: NO. 7

We can hear faint sounds of a man yelling. Sam's hand enters to knock. The shouting persists. A woman sobs.

Sam knocks again. Silence. Mr. Barnes, exasperated, throws the door open. Sam removes his hat. Beat.

MR. BARNES

Yeah?

SAM

Mr. Barnes. I'm the manager here at the--

MR. BARNES

--yeah, I remember. What's the problem?

Sam's eyes survey the unkempt room. The bed is unmade and various belongings are scattered across the floor.

The bathroom door is shut: a shadow moves across the light that pools underneath.

SAM

You know what the problem is.

Mr. Barnes leans against the doorjamb.

MR. BARNES

Really?

SAM

Listen, somethin' needs--

MR. BARNES

--y'know, I saw you walkin' about the other day. Around this porch.
(pause)
Noticed you got a gimp leg on yer.

Sam stares.

MR. BARNES (CONT'D)

You come knockin' on this door again, I'll put you on your backside for good.

The man slams the door. Beat. Sam fixes his hat back on his head: contemplating his next move. He knocks again.

Mr. Barnes throws the door open. Sam suddenly grabs his shirt and hurls him off the porch ledge into the rain.

The man quickly scrambles to his feet, but Sam tackles him at the waist. The two men wrestle in the mud until...

...Sam pins his opponent to the ground. Then, he pummels the man's face to a bloody pulp.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Stop! Stop it!

A woman dressed in a nightgown charges out of the room. She pushes Sam aside and throws herself over Mr. Barnes.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Leave him alone! Leave him alone!

The man, badly beaten, begins to whine. The woman cradles him in her arms. Then:

GIRL (O.S.)

Mommy...

A little girl stands in the doorway, watching. Sam stares in disbelief.

WOMAN

Get inside, Jenny! Get back inside! Now dammit!

The woman tosses a slipper at her daughter. The girl scurries away from view.

Sam reaches for his fallen hat: soaked and encased in mud. The rain continues to hammer down.

EXT. FAIRVALE DINER -- NIGHT

We slowly track in on a Mustang parked at the back of the lot. Its windshield wipers beat frantically in the rain.

INT. MUSTANG -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood stares at the dark building through his windshield. The radio plays, low.

SPORTS BROADCASTER 1 (V.O.)

The Indianapolis 500 is as big as they come.

SPORTS BROADCASTER 2 (V.O.)

Don't forget, this is the third win for the Lone Star J.R.

SPORTS BROADCASTER 1 (V.O.)

What is that Rutherford eatin' for breakfast? Maybe Jim Hall--

Elwood turns off the engine. He then opens the driver's door and steps out of his vehicle.

EXT. FAIRVALE DINER -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood runs toward the diner. He steps in a large puddle: narrowly missing a young boy's forgotten baseball cap.

INT. FAIRVALE DINER -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood, drenched, tears at the police tape that obstructs the front door. He then steps inside the building.

The diner is silent, eerie. Elwood looks down at his boots and spots the chalk outline of a corpse. Beat.

Suddenly, we hear a loud squawking sound.

A large Peregrine Falcon perches on a stool at the far end of the counter: half-hidden in shadow.

Elwood stares. Another beat. He hesitates, then makes his way through the crime scene towards the wild bird.

As he draws near, the Falcon suddenly screeches and spreads its wings out wide. Startled, Elwood stops in his tracks.

We then hear a car engine roar into life. Elwood turns his head at the sound.

WINDOW

Elwood approaches the glass and peers outside into the darkness. The headlights to his Mustang switch on.

EXT. FAIRVALE DINER -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood throws open the front door and rushes out into the rain-swept lot.

ELWOOD

Hey!

His car nudges forward as the engine revs up: its wheels spinning in the wet gravel.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Stop!

Suddenly, Elwood freezes. Through the windshield we see three men sitting inside the vehicle. They appear to be his murdered victims.

The headlights then flick to high-beam. Elwood shields his eyes, stumbles backwards, and slips. He crashes to the ground with a thud.

The car races towards him at full speed, tires squealing. Elwood crawls away, terrified, but the Mustang gains closer and closer.

He raises both arms, screams --

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- MORNING

-- then wakes up in a cold sweat. Beat. Strong sunlight breaks into the room through the half-opened drapes.

Elwood turns his head towards the dresser to see a stuffed Peregrine Falcon staring at him. He returns the gaze.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE -- MORNING

CLOSE ON WINDOWSILL

A white cowboy hat, turned upside down on its crown, dries in the sun.

Sam sits in an armchair, reading a weathered copy of 'The Ballad of the Sad Cafe'. Rose sits on the sofa, knitting.

A lengthy beat.

ROSE

Rain didn't last.

SAM

Mm.

Sam turns a page.

ROSE

Country fair tomorrow. Seems just like yesterday we had that last one.

SAM

(indifferent)

Yeah.

ROSE

You should go. Take Bernadette.

Beat. He looks up.

SAM

Huh?

There is a knock at the office door: Elwood leans against the doorjamb.

ELWOOD

Sam the man.

SAM

(stands up)

Hey. What you up to?

ELWOOD

There ain't a payphone round here by any chance is there?

Sam nods his head:

SAM

Just outside. By the pool. Need change?

ELWOOD

(pats his pocket)

I got plenty, thanks.

He smiles and leaves. Sam continues to stare at the empty doorway. Beat.

ROSE

Who was that?

EXT. MOTEL -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood hops down from the porch and treks over to the payphone: the ground wet beneath his boots.

He spots a lonesome figure sunbathing by the pool. It is the obese man: dressed in a speedo.

PAYPHONE

Elwood, apprehensive, slots some coins into the machine and dials a number. A telephone rings down the line.

A long beat.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Hello?

ELWOOD

(spirits raised)

Ma? Ma?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Hello? Who is this--

ELWOOD

--ma, it's me. It's your boy.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(confused)

My boy?

Elwood, nervous, pats his hair.

ELWOOD

Your son. Your son, ma.

WOMAN'S VOICE

My son?

(pause)

Who is this--

ELWOOD

--ma, listen. I'm outta state. Workin'. Making big money. I know I haven't called in awhile--

WOMAN'S VOICE

--why are you calling here? Who is this?

Elwood lowers his head, saddened.

ELWOOD

Ma. Please, ma.

WOMAN'S VOICE

My son is dead.

ELWOOD

Please. Don't.

WOMAN'S VOICE

My son died.

Elwood breaks down and begins to sob.

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

He's dead to me. You hear? He died with his father--

ELWOOD

(protesting)

--no. No, he didn't.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Yes. There was an accident. At the abattoir. Who is this?

(calling off)

Marie? Somebody's calling here--

ELWOOD

--Please, just--just listen--

WOMAN'S VOICE

(calling off)

Marie? There's a stranger on the telephone...

Elwood cries silently. His body trembles as tears roll down his face.

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

(calling off)

...says he's my son. I buried my son.

Elwood lifts the receiver from his ear and rests it against his forehead: his sadness now building to anger.

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Who is this? Stop calling here--

Elwood smashes the receiver repeatedly against the phone base. The line goes dead.

PORTLY SUNBATHER

Sits up, alarmed. He raises his sunglasses to watch the young vandal walk back to the motel.

Elwood notices:

ELWOOD

Fuck you lookin' at fat man?

The rotund guest says nothing. He lies flat and turns his attention to the scorching sun: his skin seeping sweat.

EXT. BUTCHER -- DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT

A single-storey building with large windows. A hand-painted sign reads:

BLOCH BUTCHER

FRESH MEATS & POULTRY

INT. BUTCHER -- CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON TAKE-A-NUMBER

Display board. The electronic digits switch from thirty-five to thirty-six.

A mother leaves the store with her child. The butcher, a young man with baby-face features, wipes the counter top.

BUTCHER

Thirty-six.

We slowly pull back to reveal a hand clutching a ticket stub. This solitary customer approaches the counter.

BUTCHER (CONT'D)

What'll it be?

The butcher lifts his head to see Elwood, staring. Beat.

ELWOOD

Uh, gimme some of that Italian sausage.

BUTCHER

Genoa salami. Sliced?

ELWOOD

Yeah.

The butcher reaches for the sausage and begins to cut the meat into thin slices. Elwood notices that the young man is missing half of his right index finger.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Your name Lee? Lee Fowl?

BUTCHER

(still cutting)
Who wants to know?

ELWOOD

I'm an acquaintance of a friend of yours.

BUTCHER

(still cutting)
Friend?

ELWOOD

Miles.

The butcher stops his actions and looks up.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Said you were dependable.

EXT. BUTCHER -- LATER

The back of the store. Elwood sits on an empty crate, eating his salami. Lee Fowl lights a cigarette.

Silence. Then:

LEE FOWL

Fairvale, huh?

ELWOOD

Yeah.

LEE FOWL

Small town.

He brushes cigarette ash from his white apron.

LEE FOWL (CONT'D)

When's the job?

ELWOOD

(mouthful)

Tonight.

LEE FOWL

Tonight, tonight? Shit. That's not going to work, man.

Elwood stops chewing.

LEE FOWL (CONT'D)

I got a date with Tanya Sauls. Reserved a table at a fancy restaurant. French food.

ELWOOD

Pussy's pussy. We're talkin' serious green here. You wanna earn or dont'cha?

Lee ponders as he smokes.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

You got a gun?

LEE FOWL

I ain't shootin' anybody.

ELWOOD

You need protection is all. If not a pistol then somethin' sharp.

Lee takes a drag from his cigarette, then coughs violently.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

(disapprovingly)

Those white sticks are killers.

LEE FOWL

(protesting)

My grandfather still smokes. He's eighty-three. Healthy as a horse.

Elwood stares.

LEE FOWL (CONT'D)

Well, he wears a diaper. Soils himself all the time.

EXT. AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

We hear the faint sound of applause. A large sign on an easel reads:

O'MATHY SINGING FINALS

LYNCHBURG AUDITORIUM

INT. AUDITORIUM -- CONTINUOUS

A teenage girl leaves the stage as Maggie Russell, dressed in a frock, shuffles toward the single microphone stand.

The house band plays 'Return of the Grievous Angel' by Gram Parsons. Maggie, clearly nervous, begins to sing.

We track up the rows of students and parents, many of whom fan themselves with programs, and rest on Sam.

Maggie sings heartily. Another track across the attentive audience reveals Bobby Driscoll: he watches, doe-eyed.

EXT. AUDITORIUM -- LATER

Sam spills out with the rest of the crowd into the summer night. He spots Maggie standing with a group of girls in the parking lot. She steps toward him as he approaches.

SAM

That was somethin', alright.

MAGGIE

(smiling)
You liked it?

SAM

You kiddin'? You'll be singing at the Grand Ole Opry in no time.

Maggie lets out a light chuckle.

SAM (CONT'D)

You should have won, Maggie. Those judges don't know--

MAGGIE

(shrugging)
--it's okay. I was happy just to be up there.

SAM

Well, your father missed one hell of a show.

(pause)
You need a ride home?

Maggie motions the group behind her:

MAGGIE

I'll go with the girls. We're gonna stop and get ice-cream.

Sam nods.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I appreciate you taking me. Showing your support.

Maggie smiles. She goes to leave...

SAM

(hesitant)

I had a daughter once.

...then stops.

SAM (CONT'D)

Some years back.

MAGGIE

(sympathetic)

I know, Sam.

SAM

She was an angel...just like you.

Maggie then steps forward and kisses Sam softly on the cheek. We hold as he watches the girl rejoin her friends.

INT. CAR (MOVING) -- NIGHT

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

We turn off a quiet tree-lined street and pull into the driveway of the Burkell residence.

EXT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

The car's engine switches off. Sam stares up at the house from behind the steering wheel. Beat. He then opens the driver's door.

EXT. BURKELL HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Sam approaches the front door and knocks. He quickly removes his hat as Bernie opens the door.

The lovers stare at each other with faint smiles. Then, Sam turns his head to study the neighboring houses.

BERNIE

(eyes on Sam)

Nobody saw you, Samuel.

INT. BURKELL DINING ROOM -- LATER

CLOSE SHOTS ON...

Dirty plates and cutlery. An empty wine bottle and two used glasses. The leftovers of a beef and barley stew.

INT. BURKELL STAIRCASE -- CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON SAM'S HAT

Hanging at the bottom of the banister. A slow pan reveals Bernie's clothes strewn across the stairs.

INT. BURKELL BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie wakes in bed. She turns to find Sam sitting at the end of the mattress, dressing. Beat.

BERNIE

What time is it?

Sam turns: surprised to hear her.

SAM

Late.

He struggles to pull on his boots. Bernie watches.

SAM (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to wake you.

BERNIE

You don't have to leave y'know?

No answer.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Aren't you gettin' tired of all this sneakin' around in the night?

Sam stands and puts on his shirt. He forces a smile.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I know I am.

(pause)

Why don't you stay till morning?

We can have breakfast in bed.

SAM

I can't.

BERNIE

Can't or won't?

SAM

Bernie, don't--

BERNIE

--don't what? Huh? Speak the truth? One of us has to.

Sam continues to dress: alarmed at where the conversation could be heading.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Look at me. Samuel, look at me.

He doesn't.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

(saddened)

Why won't you fight for this?
Don't I...mean anythin' to you?

Sam stops fastening his shirt buttons. He looks up into Bernie's somber eyes. Beat.

SAM

(heartfelt)

Of course you mean--

BERNIE

(pleading)

--your family's dead.

Sam stares: clearly taken back by this sudden statement.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

...they're dead, sweetheart.

A heavy silence. Sam lowers his head, turns and leaves the room.

INT. BURKELL STAIRCASE -- CONTINUOUS

Sam hurries down the stairs. Bernie soon follows: pulling a dressing robe tight around her naked figure.

BERNIE

Samuel...

Sam reaches the front door, but Bernie pushes herself in front of him.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

...Samuel?

No response. Dispirited, he cannot bring himself to look at her. A lengthy beat.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

They've been gone nearly thirty
years. Tom's been dead six days.

She lifts a hand and gently strokes his face.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Let them go, Samuel...

He stares mournfully at the ground. Breathes heavy.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

...let them go.

Sam, contemplating his next move, opens the front door and leaves. Bernie now stands alone, devastated.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Sam climbs into his vehicle. He looks up at the dark house and broods. We hold for a beat.

INT. BURKELL HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie still stands by the closed front door.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Another beat. Sam then turns the keys in the ignition.

INT. BURKELL HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie hears the engine of the car. She presses the palm of a hand wistfully against the door. Lowers her head.

EXT. BURKELL HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Sam's car reverses out of the driveway and then disappears up the street.

INT. BURKELL HALLWAY -- LATER

We track, slowly, towards the kitchen doorway. Bernie stands at the sink cleaning dishes. Beat.

INT. BURKELL KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

PROFILE SHOT

On Bernie as she carries out her domestic chore. She appears sad, despondent. Her mind elsewhere. Then...

...we hear a short, scraping sound outside. Bernie looks up though the window behind the sink. Listens again.

FIXED SHOT

On the window pane. Bernie can only see her reflection in the brightly lit room. She studies her mirror image.

Silence. The sound does not return.

Bernie dries her hands and unplugs the sink. We observe her counterpart through the glass as she leaves...

...the kitchen and turns off the light. Darkness.

Suddenly: outside we see a figure staring in. He wears a clear-plastic, bird-like mask. The sight is horrifying.

EXT. BURKELL HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

We pull away from this stationary figure as he gazes into the window. He tilts his head, slightly, to one side.

An eerie image.

INT. CAR (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

A black, endless highway. No other vehicles in sight.

Sam drives. The car radio plays 'I'll Come Running Back to You' by Sam Cooke. We hold for a beat.

INT. BURKELL BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie enters the en suite. She sits on the edge of the tub and runs herself a bath.

CLOSE ON TAPS

Ejecting water. We hear the clangor of worn-out pipes.

INT. CAR (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

Sam continues to drive. Perturbed, he reaches across and turns off the radio.

INT. BURKELL BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie runs her fingers under the flowing water to test the temperature. She then stands to remove her robe...

...but suddenly hears a noisy disturbance from downstairs: the breaking of glass, perhaps.

Startled, Bernie turns off the bath taps, only to find an uneasy silence. She listens again. A tense beat.

INT. BURKELL LANDING -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie edges out of her bedroom and creeps, slowly, down the corridor. She reaches the top of the stairs.

INT. BURKELL STAIRCASE -- CONTINUOUS

We look up at Bernie, deathly still, on the landing.

INT. BURKELL LANDING -- CONTINUOUS

BERNIE POV

The dark staircase. Light spills below from the dining room into the hallway, creating sinister shadows.

BACK ON BERNIE

Attentive. Doubting the noise she thought she heard.

INT. BURKELL STAIRCASE -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie steps cautiously down the stairs. Her hand runs the length of the banister.

The wooden boards creek under her bare feet.

INT. BURKELL HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie reaches the ground floor. Beat. She peers down the long hallway towards the kitchen. Her eyes alert.

BERNIE POV

The room sits in darkness. No movement from inside. All is still. Strangely quiet. Another beat.

BACK ON BERNIE

Still staring into the blackened kitchen. After a moment of hesitation, she ambles forward, but stops when...

...a low, crunching noise emanates from inside the room. The sound of footsteps on glass.

BERNIE POV

Suddenly: the masked figure steps out of the shadows like a nightmarish vision. He stares straight ahead at Bernie.

BACK ON BERNIE

She gasps, then turns and runs into...

...a second intruder. He wears a similar, harrowing mask: his face distorted behind the plastic material.

CLOSE ON MEAT CLEAVER

Gripped tightly in his hand.

Bernie lets out a short scream, then races towards the staircase. Both assailants follow in quick pursuit.

INT. BURKELL STAIRCASE -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie scrambles up the stairs as fast as she can manage: the intruders dangerously close behind her.

INT. BURKELL LANDING -- CONTINUOUS

The chase continues. Bernie rushes down the corridor and yanks open a door that leads to a set of narrow stairs.

The first invader has paused on the landing: he stares at a large-framed painting that hangs in the master bedroom...

...the Cardinal Grosbeak.

The second invader has stopped as well: as though waiting for instructions. He pants as he clutches his hefty knife.

The first intruder points after Bernie, then turns and hurries into the bedroom. His partner follows orders...

...and charges after the woman. He reaches the hidden staircase in time to see the door above slam shut.

INT. BURKELL STUDY -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie double locks the door and steps back into the room. This small, converted loft contains a desk and a bookcase.

We hear the second intruder stomp, sluggishly, up the stairs. Bernie, frightened, forces open the only window.

She peers out.

BERNIE POV

A long, three-storey drop to the dark yard below.

BACK ON BERNIE

Glancing behind her as we hear the door-handle rattle.

CLOSE ON HANDLE

As it shakes, violently.

Bernie whimpers. She grabs a sharp, letter-opener from the desk and backs herself into a corner. Slides down to the ground as the door is kicked vigorously from outside.

The wooden frame jerks with each increasing impact. The sound is deafening. We hold on Bernie: terrified.

INT. LIPINSKI BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The room is dark. We hear a key sliding into the door-lock outside. Sam enters and fumbles for a light switch.

He shuffles into the room and tosses his car-keys onto the nightstand. Then: sits on the bed and sighs. Beat.

INT. LIPINSKI BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Sam splashes cold, running water onto his face. He turns off the tap and studies his reflection. Another beat.

Sam notices the St. Jude pendant that is now hanging over his shirt. He suddenly rips the thin chain from his neck.

CLOSE ON SINK

As the religious artifact is dropped into the empty basin.

INT. LIPINSKI BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Sam marches over to the telephone. He dials a number and waits for the connection. Beat.

INT. BURKELL KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON TELEPHONE

Lurching as it rings.

INT. BURKELL SECOND STAIRCASE -- CONTINUOUS

The second intruder stops kicking the study door. He turns and peers down the narrow stairs as...

...the telephone rings again.

INT. BURKELL STUDY -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie, crouched in the corner, hears the sound of the telephone in the house: a glimmer of hope in her eyes.

INT. LIPINSKI BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Sam listens, waits.

INT. BURKELL KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON TELEPHONE

The ringing persists.

INT. BURKELL BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The first intruder, crowbar in hand, stares out into the landing. He waits for the harsh jangling sound to stop.

We notice the Cardinal Grosbeak painting on the floor by his feet. The closed door of the safe has been vandalized.

INT. LIPINSKI BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Sam, perplexed, hangs up the telephone. We hold on him for a beat.

INT. BURKELL STUDY -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie listens to the silence. Hung in suspense. She stares at the door. Suddenly: the heavy kicking returns.

CLOSE ON HANDLE

The locks weaken as the door shifts in its frame.

INT. BURKELL BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The first intruder has his crowbar jammed into the steel door of the wall-safe. He struggles to pry it open.

INT. BURKELL SECOND STAIRCASE -- CONTINUOUS

The second intruder continues to kick at the study door: meat cleaver in hand.

INT. BURKELL STUDY -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie cowers. Both locks on the door are now dangerously close to breaking.

INT. BURKELL BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The first intruder, unable to open the safe, flings his crowbar to the floor. He opens up a small duffel bag...

...and pulls out a grand revolver.

INT. BURKELL SECOND STAIRCASE -- CONTINUOUS

The second intruder boots the study door.

INT. BURKELL BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The first intruder aims the long barrel of his gun at the dial-lock of the safe.

INT. BURKELL SECOND STAIRCASE -- CONTINUOUS

The second intruder boots the study door.

INT. BURKELL BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The first intruder cocks the hammer of his pistol. He listens to the kicking sound. Prepares for the shot.

INT. BURKELL SECOND STAIRCASE -- CONTINUOUS

The second intruder boots the study door when--

INT. BURKELL BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

--BANG! The first intruder fires his revolver.

INT. BURKELL STUDY -- CONTINUOUS

The door flies open. Crashes against the wall. Two busted locks hang from the frame. Splintered wood everywhere.

Suddenly, and unexpectedly, the second intruder is stabbed in the heart. Bernie grips the handle of the letter-opener as dark blood oozes out onto her hand. A tense beat.

The meat cleaver drops to the floor as the assailant begins to choke. Blood splutters from his mouth and stains his mask. Bernie stares in shock. She lets go of the handle.

The intruder falls backwards. His lifeless body tumbles down the steep staircase. Limbs smacking into the walls.

INT. BURKELL BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The first intruder unloads the contents of the open safe into his bag: short stacks of money and jewelry boxes.

Behind him, through the doorway, we see the corpse crash onto the landing. The thief quickly turns around, alarmed.

HIS POV

The body is twisted on the floor. Letter-opener sticking out of his chest. A broken mask reveals Lee Fowl's face.

Elwood stares at the corpse. Then: he returns, hastily, to the robbery. Moves as fast as he can manage.

INT. BURKELL LANDING -- CONTINUOUS

Bernie steps, cautiously, onto the landing. She stares at the young man's broken body: unable to avert her eyes.

Beat.

She then looks up the corridor.

HER POV

We see Elwood in the bedroom: zipping up his small, duffel bag. The wall-safe is now empty.

INT. BURKELL BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood stands, then turns to see Bernie watching him. A quick, suspenseful beat passes before...

...Bernie rushes towards the main stairs. Elwood sprints after her: bag in tow.

INT. BURKELL HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

The chase reaches the downstairs hallway. Bernie runs for the front door, but Elwood soon grabs hold of her. She struggles to break free from the intruder's grasp.

As the grapple escalates, Elwood's shirt is ripped: his striking tattoo of an open-winged bird now revealed to Bernie. Suddenly, the scuffle causes both figures to...

...crash onto a glass coffee table. The surface shatters from the brutal impact. Broken glass scatters everywhere.

Elwood does not move. We notice a large shard of glass has been embedded into his abdomen. A lengthy beat.

Bernie stirs. She starts to crawl, slowly, out from the wreckage. Deep cuts cover her face and arms. She winces with agony as she pulls herself forward. Inch by inch.

Behind her, we see Elwood gradually sit up. One hand is held firmly to his stomach wound. He sees Bernie escaping, and reaches into the open duffel bag. Pulls out his gun.

Bernie then turns to his Elwood hoisting himself to his feet. She moans as she drags herself across the floor. Desperate to escape. Elwood, pistol in hand, staggers...

...after her: labored by his injury. He thrusts his boot on Bernie's neck and pushes her face to the ground. Then: sticks the barrel of his revolver to the back of her head.

BERNIE

(pleading)

No...please...

Elwood cocks the hammer to his gun. Beat.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

...no...no.

Suddenly: something catches Elwood's attention off-screen.

HIS POV

We slowly push in on a white, well-worn hat that hangs at the bottom the banister. The head-piece looks familiar.

Elwood stares in disbelief: his eyes now glaring through the holes of his mask. We hear Bernie's sobs increase.

A suspenseful beat.

INT. CAR (MOVING) -- LATER

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

We are pulling up to Bernie's house. Ambulances and police cars now cover the street. Bright lights flash in the dark. Neighbors observe the scene from their front yards.

Sam, driving, slows his vehicle.

EXT. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

The car grinds to a halt. Sam climbs out and stares at the commotion before him: his eyes wide.

HIS POV

We see a body-bag being carried out from the house on a stretcher. Police officers talk quietly with a coroner.

Sam suddenly rushes forward...

SAM
(shouting)
Bernie! Bernie!

...limping as he runs.

ANGLE ON AMBULANCE

Bernie, draped in a blanket, turns at the sound of her name being called. Two uniformed medics treat her wounds.

ANGLE ON SAM

As he continues to run.

SAM (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Bernie!

ANGLE ON AMBULANCE

Bernie rises from the back of the vehicle.

BERNIE
Sam?

She walks further out into the street and sees her lover hurrying forward.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
Sam!

They run into each other's arms. Sam holds Bernie tightly: her face buried into his neck. An emotional embrace.

SAM

I've gotcha.

Both of them fall to their knees.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm not goin' anywhere. You understand?

Bernie sobs. Beat.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm not goin' anywhere.

We hold.

EXT. MOTEL -- NIGHT

HIGH SHOT

On the "Sweet Virginia Motel" sign. Lit in buzzing neon.

PARKING LOT

We track, low, across the lined vehicles until we rest on a battered Mustang. Beat.

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON MASK

Clear-plastic. Bird-like. Face-up on the mattress. We hear a bath running off-screen.

INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON CLOTHES

Blood-stained. Heaped on the floor.

CLOSE ON SINK

Shows torn fabric, used forceps, and a large shard of broken glass. Then: we hear the bath-taps turn off.

BATH

Elwood, pale, lowers himself into the tub. A dark, red gash in his stomach pulses blood. The water turns pink.

Beat. Elwood grits his teeth, then leans over and vomits on the tiled, bathroom floor.

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- LATER

CLOSE ON NIGHTSTAND

Reveals an open first-aid kit, scissors, sterile pads, antiseptic ointments, and an open packet of painkillers.

Elwood, dressed only in a towel, sits on the edge of the bed. He is wrapping a bandage tightly around his waist.

ANGLE ON HIS FACE

As he falls back onto the mattress. His weary eyes slowly close. We hold.

EXT. SKY -- DAWN

VARIOUS SHOTS

On morning twilight. Sun still below the horizon. The "blue hour".

EXT. MOTEL -- CONTINUOUS

Rose Miller pushes a cleaning cart along the wooden porch that runs the length of the motel. The rusted, worn-out wheels squeak.

She shuffles past room number fourteen.

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON ELWOOD

Slowly opening his eyes. We hear the noisy cart outside. He suddenly sits up. Registers his situation. Beat.

Then: Elwood frantically starts to pack his belongings. He quickly zips up the small, duffel bag loaded with loot.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Rose enters through the office door: the cleaning cart rattles. She then looks up and sees Sam stepping out from his bedroom.

ROSE

(surprised)

Sam. I thought you were still at the hospital.

SAM

Needed a hot shower. Clean clothes. Besides...

He walks over to the kitchen counter: tucking his loose shirt into his jeans.

SAM (CONT'D)

...I can't have my favorite employee workin' a double now, can I?

ROSE

(protesting)

Sam, I don't mind--

SAM

--go on. Get yerself home.

He starts to pour himself a mug of hot coffee.

SAM (CONT'D)

Eat breakfast with your husband.

Rose offers a smile and fetches her handbag from the parlor. Then: she stops and turns to face Sam.

ROSE

How she doing?

SAM

Better.

Sam smiles, faintly.

SAM (CONT'D)

Doctors are gonna let her home this afternoon.

He sips his coffee. Beat.

SAM (CONT'D)

It's mostly the shock, y'know. Psychological trauma.

ROSE

(sympathetic)

That poor woman. So much troubles.

SAM

She's a fighter, though. Tougher than most.

ROSE

Did she...identify those men?

SAM

(shakes head)

The one that fled, he was cut up pretty bad. Bernie said she seen a tattoo on his chest--

ROSE

--tattoo?

SAM

Some sort of bird of prey.

He loads a cigarette into his mouth...

SAM (CONT'D)

A hawk or somethin'.

...then lights it with his zippo.

SAM (CONT'D)

As for the other one, the deceased. He was just a kid.

Sam sighs, exhales smoke.

SAM (CONT'D)

Twenty-one years old.

Rose stares with equal measures of sadness and horror. A quick beat.

SAM (CONT'D)

Police found a cartridge shell.
By the safe? *Same* bullet type
from the diner.

Rose mulls this information over.

SAM (CONT'D)

I don't understand it, Rose. I
just don't.

ROSE

How can you? It's a new world
out there. Nothing but greed.

She pulls the straps of her handbag over one shoulder.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Violence.

Beat.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Give my love to her, won't you?

Sam nods, smiles. Rose makes her way towards the open door of the office.

ROSE (CONT'D)

(optimistic)
The sun's on it's way, Sam.
Today's gonna be a good one.

She turns around, briefly:

ROSE (CONT'D)

You'll see.

We hold on Sam as he watches the woman leave.

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood, wearing a white A-shirt, sits on the edge of the bed. Frantic, he struggles to pull on both his boots.

CLOSE ON DRESSER

Reveals the long barreled revolver. A scribbled telephone number on a napkin sits nearby.

ELWOOD

Stands and seizes the gun. He tucks the weapon into the back of his jeans, conceals it with his shirt, then marches across the room and pulls open the door.

Elwood shuffles back to grab his luggage. One hand grasps the duffel bag; the other a ragged suitcase. He turns around to leave....

...but freezes, suddenly.

SAM

Now stands in the doorway. He holds his hat in his hands.

SAM

Hey, kid.

ELWOOD

(surprised)

Sam.

Quick beat.

SAM

I, uh, saw your light was on.
Wondered if you'd be up.

ELWOOD

Oh. Right...

Elwood does not move. His luggage still suspended in the air by his knees.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

...right. It is early, huh?

Sam nods his head at the young man's baggage.

SAM

You're finally leavin' us then?
Back to Tennessee I suspect?

Elwood nods, nervously.

ELWOOD

Yes. Yes, sir...
(feigning a smile)
...back to the Blue Ridge.

SAM

(warm-hearted)
Well, it's gonna be awfully quiet
around these parts without you.

He is somewhat embarrassed by this confession.

SAM (CONT'D)

Been nice having you here, I must
admit.

Elwood says nothing. Only stares. Sam registers this unusual behavior. An awkward beat passes.

SAM (CONT'D)

I can take your key now if you'd
like to take your bags to the car--

Sam stops, suddenly. Something has caught his attention.

SAM (CONT'D)

(confused)
You're bleeding.

ELWOOD

What?

Elwood glances down at his stomach and sees, much to his horror, dark blood seeping through his cotton shirt.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Oh. Yes. I--I had an accident.
Yesterday.

He is clearly agitated. Struggles to find the right words.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

A car accident. Yesterday.

Note: we notice the gun masked in the back of his jeans.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

I--I'm fine, though. It's nothing.

Then: Sam spots two black wings on the young man's chest: sticking out from under his white vest.

A partially concealed bird tattoo.

Suddenly: Sam's hat slips through his fingers. It hits the floor and topples to one side.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Sam?

No response. Elwood realizes something is wrong.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Sam?

A haunting realization washes over Sam. He slowly looks up into Elwood's eyes. A suspenseful beat. Then...

...Elwood drops his luggage. *Thud.*

Sam turns and runs.

EXT. MOTEL -- CONTINUOUS

Sam, limping, moves as fast as he can manage. He turns the corner of the porch and rushes toward the office.

ANGLE ON ELWOOD

Approaching from behind. He marches forward with long strides. Eyes fixed solely ahead on Sam.

One hand is held firmly to his stomach wound; the other grips the long barreled revolver.

ELWOOD

(shouting)

Sam!

BACK ON SAM

As he continues to run. He pants, heavily.

HIS POV

A man walks out from the office towards him. It is Wilbert Behrman.

WILBERT

(calling out)

Mr. Lipinski...there you are--

SAM

(shouting)

--get back!

ANGLE ON ELWOOD

As he suddenly raises his pistol into the air. His arm outstretched before him.

ELWOOD

(shouting)

Sam!

BACK ON SAM

Still running. Limping.

SAM

(to Wilbert)

Get back!

Wilbert, oblivious to what is actually happening, continues to walk forward. He frowns, confused. Sam gains closer.

WILBERT

Mr. Lipinski? What's going on--

SAM

(shouting)

--run!

--BANG! Blood explodes from Wilbert's face and splatters Sam. Both men collapse to the floor in a heap.

ANGLE ON ELWOOD

Marching forward. Gun still raised.

BACK ON SAM

As he stares at Wilbert's body beside him. Shocked, he pushes himself back against a motel door. Gasps.

The corpse's face is horribly disfigured from the bullet wound. We see only blood, flesh and bone.

ANGLE ON ELWOOD

As his boots tread noisily along the wooden porch.

BACK ON SAM

Now grasping the doorknob behind his head. Terrified, he shakes the handle violently. The door is locked.

--BANG! A bullet hits the door mere inches from Sam's shoulder. He quickly scurries forward, on hands and knees, past Wilbert's bloodied body.

ANGLE ON ELWOOD

Gaining closer.

BACK ON SAM

Panic-stricken. He reaches another door and twists the handle. It swings open. Sam immediately crawls inside...

...and kicks the door shut with the soles of his boots.

ANGLE ON ELWOOD

Now slowing his pace as he walks past the corpse sprawled out on the porch. A pool of blood forms around its head.

Elwood then turns his attention to the closed door as he stands before it. A brief beat.

CLOSE ON DOOR**NO. 6****INT. MOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS**

A deafening sound is heard as the door is violently kicked open. The security chain is torn from the wall. Elwood enters: one hand on his pistol; the other to his wound.

HIS POV

An empty room. Dark. Tranquil.

Elwood's eyes scan his surroundings. We see a neatly made bed, a sizeable wardrobe and a closed bathroom door.

ANGLE ON ELWOOD

As he suddenly bends down to peer under the double-bed.

HIS POV

Nothing. Bare floorboards.

Elwood stands, dissatisfied. He looks from the bathroom door to the wardrobe. Beat. Then: raises his pistol and--

--BANG! A bullet shatters through the wardrobe at chest height: a gaping, dark hole now left in its wake.

INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Sam, staring at the closed door before him, flinches at the sound of the gunshot. Sweat trickles past his temple.

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood lowers his weapon, then slowly looks over at the bathroom. Beat.

INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Sam, terrified, listens to the eerie silence that is now suddenly disrupted by the sound of heavy boot steps.

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood approaches the bathroom, steadily. He reaches the closed door, then studies the floor at his feet.

HIS POV

A thin bar of soft light under the door. No shadow.

Elwood turns his head close to the door: ears alert. We hear a faint scraping sound, followed by sustained silence.

Beat. Elwood quickly stands back. He grips the revolver tightly in his hand and suddenly...

INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

...kicks the door open. Splintered wood hits the tiled floor. Elwood enters and instantly raises his weapon.

HIS POV

An empty room. A stained shower curtain has been pulled across to conceal the bathtub.

Elwood marches forward. He quickly yanks back the curtain to find...

...a high, narrow window that sits open. The square has barely enough space for a grown man to crawl through.

Elwood, shocked, stares at his unwanted discovery.

EXT. MOTEL -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood rushes out of room number six and hurries back along the wooden porch: his wound slowing his actions.

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Elwood barges into his room. He quickly snatches the luggage up from the floor.

EXT. MOTEL -- MOMENTS LATER

The parking lot. Elwood, panting, scurries past numerous vehicles.

One hand grasps his ragged suitcase; the other holds both the duffel bag and revolver.

MUSTANG

Elwood throws open the trunk, tosses in the luggage, then slams the door shut. Suddenly: he stops. Turns his head.

HIS POV

Sam stands up on the porch with the Nazi infantry rifle in his hands. The long barrel is aimed at Elwood.

A tense beat. Elwood laughs, silently, to himself. He then turns his body to face Sam. Shakes his head.

ELWOOD

How'd you shimmy through that window with a lame leg? Huh?
(amused)
You are full of surprises, Sam.
You really are--

Sam pulls back the bolt on his rifle. A harsh, piercing noise. Elwood's smile vanishes. He nods his head forward.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

See you found those bullets?

No answer.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

(remembering)
Gustav Witz.

The men continue to stare at each other. Elwood still holds his pistol down by his side. A lengthy beat passes.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

I've got three shots left. But you know that already dont'cha?

Sam, perspiring, stays silent. Elwood then looks over at the bloodied corpse on the porch. Frowns.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to kill that man.
(turns head back)
I didn't mean for a lot of things.
When I was a baby, my mother used--

SAM

--drop the gun.

ELWOOD

I can't do that.

SAM

I will shoot you dead.

ELWOOD

No. You won't. You ain't got the grit, Sam. Sorry to say that, but it's just the way it is.

He takes a slow, step forward. Sam tenses and tightens his grip on the rifle.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

You never served on account of your handicap. No tour of duty.

Another step forward. Sam backs up. Stumbles, slightly.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

No reason to kill. You're an old man with too much to lose--

SAM

--stop!

Elwood stands still. Hint of a thin smile. He then, very slowly, starts to raise his pistol.

SAM (CONT'D)

(pleading)
Don't.

ELWOOD

S'alright...

SAM

Don't.

Suddenly: the first rays of morning sunlight break out over the horizon. A warm orange glow immerses both men.

ELWOOD

...s'alright, Sam.

Elwood's pistol continues to rise, higher and higher, till it points at Sam.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

Life sure is peculiar--

--BANG! A bright flash bursts from the nozzle of the rifle. Elwood is thrown, violently, back against the Mustang. He drops behind another vehicle: out of view.

Beat. Sam, stunned, gradually lowers his weapon.

MOMENTS LATER

Low angle. We track behind Sam's boots, on gravel, as they step in between two parked cars to reveal...

...Elwood: flat on his back. His hands are pressed tightly to his stomach where the gunshot wound gushes dark blood.

He whines: high and childlike. His face now ghostly white.

Sam approaches and drops his rifle. He sits on the floor behind Elwood: lifting his body up against his. Elwood, now cradled in Sam's arms, begins to cry. Winces in pain.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

(struggles to talk)

My...mother...

Blood fills his mouth and seeps through his teeth.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

...my mother--

SAM

(whispering)

--shhh.

Some tears roll down Elwood's pale cheek. Then:

ELWOOD POV

Up on the porch we can see three men: their identities partially hidden by the morning sun rays. They appear to be the murdered victims from the diner massacre.

Elwood studies this vision. Then, suddenly, he panics. Starts to moan. His body squirms, shakes.

ELWOOD

(frightened)

It's dark...it's dark...

One of Elwood's blood-stained hands reaches up and touches Sam's face.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

(crying)

I don't...see a light...

Sam, upset, continues to hold the dying young man in his arms. His chin gently rests on the top of Elwood's head.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

I don't...

Elwood's voice softens as his body begins to slow. The sporadic shuddering now draws to a stop. No movement.

ELWOOD (CONT'D)

(barely audible)

...see...

Sam still cradles Elwood's lifeless body: an unexpected and mournful reluctance to let go. We hold.

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- LATER

Dark. We face an open door that reveals, out on the porch, Wilbert Behrman's body. The sky outside is now brighter.

Mrs. Behrman clutches on to her deceased husband. She sobs and wails uncontrollably. Looks up to the heavens.

Police officers and medics console this hysterical woman as they try, unsuccessfully, to pull her away.

We slowly track forward.

SAM (V.O.)

Time catches up with the best of us. Whether you want it to or not, don't matter...

EXT. MOTEL -- CONTINUOUS

A strewn of emergency vehicles and bright, flashing lights. Motel guests observe this commotion from their doorways.

SAM (V.O.)

...can't argue with death. No sir. Can't change what's comin'.

ANGLE ON SAM

Being questioned by a police officer. His attention is fixed on the distraught Mrs. Behrman.

HIS POV

The widow still clings to the corpse. Her dress and hands are stained with blood.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Some of us forget the frailty. A thin thread on which we hang. Others choose to ignore it...

BACK ON SAM

His eyes now raise to see...

...various police representatives entering and exiting room number fourteen.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...like unwanted bills. Missed telephone calls.

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Elwood's room. A gloved officer shows a detective his discovery: a scribbled telephone number on a napkin.

SAM (V.O.)

I figured the boy was right, y'know. Life is peculiar.

EXT. MOTEL -- CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON ELWOOD

A body-bag is quickly zipped to mask his lifeless face.

SAM (V.O.)

Least it is for most folk.

ANGLE ON AMBULANCE

As coroners load the stretcher, carrying Elwood's corpse, into the back of the vehicle. The doors are slammed shut.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Full of moments. Chances. Riddles
to a puzzle we'll never solve.

EXT. AMBULANCE -- LATER

Close shot on the ambulance as it travels through morning traffic.

SAM (V.O.)

I tell myself there's a nice spot
up there for him.

INT. AMBULANCE -- CONTINUOUS

The body-bag rocks gently with the sway of the vehicle.

SAM (V.O.)

Repentance...forgiveness...

EXT. HOSPITAL -- LATER

The doors of the ambulance are thrown open. Hospital staff drag out the stretcher. Their movements methodical.

SAM (V.O.)

...redemption. But, I do not
believe my own words.

INT. HOSPITAL -- MOMENTS LATER

A coroner and a nurse wheel the stretcher through a white corridor lit with fluorescent lights.

SAM (V.O.)

A man makes a choice and must
attend to the consequence.

INT. MORGUE -- MOMENTS LATER

Morgue attendants lift the body-bag off the stretcher and onto a sliding table.

SAM (V.O.)

It is his and his alone.

INT. VAULT -- CONTINUOUS

Close shot on the body-bag as it slides into an open wall vault. The door suddenly closes. Darkness.

SAM (V.O.)

A cross to bear.

EXT. POLICE CAR (MOVING) -- NIGHT

Officer Marty Petrone sits at the wheel. Behind him we see another police car. Both vehicles flash their lights.

SAM (V.O.)

Tell your friends, neighbors...

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON DOOR

A hand enters to knock.

SAM (V.O.)

...wives and mothers.

An elderly couple, in nightwear, open their front door to see Marty Petrone and two other officers standing outside.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

They understand it too.

Inside the house...

LILA MCBAIN

...stands halfway up the stairwell. She wears a knee-length nightgown and holds an aged teddy-bear in her arms.

Her parents and the officers turn to face her.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Deep in their hearts. Tips of their tongues.

INT. POLICE CAR (MOVING) -- MOMENTS LATER

Lila McBain, handcuffed, sits in the back of the vehicle. She faces forward and sobs, uncontrollably.

Through the back windshield we see her mother chasing the car. She bangs the trunk with her fists and screams.

SAM (V.O.)

One span...

The father tries to restrain his wife as the vehicle pulls further away. Both of them are bathed in flashing lights.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...no second go-around's.

INT. BURKELL HOUSE -- NIGHT

We pan across the lounge to reveal Bernie sitting in front of an open box on the floor. Her face still badly scarred.

SAM (V.O.)

So take heed in the pleasures.
The small details.

She studies old photographs. One picture shows her and a handsome Tom, laughing, in their youth. Memories of life.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And laugh.

Bernie chuckles, softly. Cries.

EXT. COUNTRY FAIR -- NIGHT

A band plays in a marquee. We push through the crowd to find Maggie Russell and Bobby Driscoll slow-dancing together. The girl rests her head on the boy's shoulder.

SAM (V.O.)

Dance.

Outside, fireworks erupt in the night sky.

INT. RODEO ARENA -- EVENING

BLACK AND WHITE

A continuation of Sam's flashback.

In a single slow-motion shot we see the cowboy, finally, crash to the ground. The bull tramples the man's back and crushes his body down into the dirt.

SAM (V.O.)

Remember the triumphs...

Numerous cameras flash from the stands. The crowd is wild. Two rodeo clowns charge towards the unruly animal.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...the failures...

The audience continues to scream. Pure pandemonium.

EXT. FAIRVALE -- MORNING

A scorching summer's day. We are looking down on a Red-Tailed Hawk as it soars over houses, trees and streets.

SAM (V.O.)

...and that everyday above ground's a good one.

EXT. BURKELL HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

FIXED SHOT

We can see two figures up on the front porch. Next door, some children in swimsuits play frivolously with a lawn sprinkler. Another neighbor sweats as he mows his yard.

EXT. BURKELL PORCH -- CONTINUOUS

Sam sits in a wicker chair. He is naked from the waist up. Bernie, her scars still healing, cuts his hair with a pair of barber scissors.

An old portable radio plays in the background.

SAM

I didn't take to Cousin Lymon.

BERNIE

Well, why not?

She trims the hair at the back of Sam's neck.

SAM

He ruined that woman.

Bernie chuckles, slightly.

BERNIE

That's the beauty of the book,
Samuel. The hardships of love.
Loneliness. Empathy.

She moves across to the porch banister and...

BERNIE (CONT'D)

McCullers was a genius.

...picks up a cool glass of ice tea. Takes a refreshing sip to quench her thirst.

SAM

(playful)
Well, if you say so.

BERNIE

I do.

Suddenly: we hear a dog barking. The couple turn to see an elated border collie run down the street.

Seconds later, officer Marty Petrone, in uniform, follows in hot pursuit. He pants as he runs in the torrid heat.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I'll be...

CLOSE ON SAM

As he smiles to himself. Amused by the sight.

BERNIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Oh, I do like this song.

Bernie turns up the antiquated radio. We hear a country-blues track: 'Sweet Virginia' by the Rolling Stones.

Possessed by the music, Bernie begins to sway her body to its rhythm. She dances, carefully, around a radiant Sam as she continues to trim his hair.

We hear her hum the melody.

Then, as the song nears its rousing chorus, Bernie bends down and whispers something softly into her lover's ear.

CLOSE ON SAM

His smile suddenly widens. Ear to ear. He laughs and, surprisingly, looks up at us, his audience.

'Sweet Virginia' still plays as we--

--CUT TO BLACK.