



DREAMLAND

Written by

Nicolaas Zwart

THE MISSION

Corrine Aquino & Andrew Coles

424.320.3883

EXT. BISMARK, TEXAS - DAY (1934)

We float HIGH ABOVE a large Texan farm town. The perfect grid of its streets is bisected by a glittering river.

In the very recent past, this place was a shining example of pastoral America. Now, the farms that support the town are dying - the fields around it are dust-choked and gray.

We NOTICE a tiny FIGURE moving through a cornfield on the outskirts -

EXT. CORNFIELD - THAT MOMENT

ALLISON WELLS (24), limping from a bullet wound in her thigh as she pushes past the dry and disintegrating cornstalks.

We will come to know Allison better, but for now it is enough to say that she is the personification of a truly-American strain of wildness and passion - the Way of the Gun meets the Way of the Lover. Her light brown dress is covered in blood, only some of it hers.

Our NARRATOR is an old man, the years stretching behind him like ghosts:

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Allison Wells came to Bismark,
Texas on August 20th, 1934, after a
murder spree across five state
lines.

FLASHBACK: EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

AN HOUR PRIOR - a PACKARD DELUXE tears down a farm road, pursued by two TEXAS STATE POLICE CARS.

FLASHBACK: INT. PACKARD DELUXE - THAT MOMENT

Allison drives while PERRY MONTROY (25), the wayward son of a wealthy family, leans out of the Packard's window and empties his pistol in the direction of the cops.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
She entered Texas in a stolen
Packard Deluxe with her lover, a
young man by the name of Perry
Montroy, heir apparent of Montroy
Meats, -

INSERT - A stiff, formal portrait of Perry and his FAMILY.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 - Chicago's oldest and most-esteemed slaughterhouse dynasty.

FLASHBACK: INT. CITIZEN'S FIRST - MORNING

SOME HOURS PRIOR - A small-town bank.

In SLOW MOTION, Perry shoots a BANK TELLER in the chest as Allison stuffs money into a canvas bag. A shimmering haze of red fills the air - a mist of blood.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Perry had killed the guard and two tellers during his and Allison's robbery of Citizen's First in Guthrie, Oklahoma that morning, their third heist in four days.

MONTAGE

-- CORONER'S PHOTOGRAPH of Perry Montroy's head on a morgue slab. There is a small bullet hole above his open left eye. His face is slack and rubbery in death.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Not long after crossing the state line, Perry was shot dead by the Texas police.

-- IN THE PACKARD - Allison speeding, desperate. She glances frantically at Perry, who has just been shot in the head. Blood dribbles down his face.

ALLISON
 No, no, no, Baby! Look at me!

CHUNK CH-CHUNK - bullets pepper the car, shattering the driver's-side window. Allison screams in pain and looks down to see blood pooling out of a hole in the side of her thigh.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 And Allison was shot in the leg.

-- CRIME-SCENE PHOTOGRAPH of the crashed Packard, Perry's body in the passenger seat. A row of POLICEMEN pose triumphantly with the recovered cash bags of various banks.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 She lost control of the Packard and
 crashed it in a ditch on the
 outskirts of town.

-- CORONER'S PHOTOGRAPH - close-up of A LIPSTICK KISS on
 Perry's cheek.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 With the police approaching, she
 kissed Perry's corpse goodbye,
 stepped out of the car and
 vanished.

-- Allison limps through the cornfield: desperate, bleeding.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Later that day, she would enter
 into my life and stay there
 forever, even though I only knew
 her for all of a week.

FLASHFORWARD: INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

PUSHING IN on a weathered SPIRAL NOTEBOOK from the 1990s
 lying on a modern-day kitchen table.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 The day I write this is the 60th
 anniversary of Allison's death.
 Folks have been asking me questions
 about her for most of my life, and
 for most of them I don't have the
 answers. For the rest, I hope that
 this account settles the matter...
 With that in mind, I'd like to
 start at the beginning.

MONTAGE

-- PHOTOGRAPH of EUGENE EVANS, age 3.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 My name is Eugene Evans. I was born
 on February 2nd, 1919 in Amarillo,
 Texas -

-- PHOTOGRAPH of OLIVIA, a lovely woman of 22, holding the
 newborn Eugene. JOHN BAKER (30) poses unsmiling beside them.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 - to my mother, Olivia, and my
 father, John Baker.

-- OLD POSTCARD featuring an illustration of Bismark. An ear of corn marks the town's location in the state of Texas.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 When I was five, we moved to
 Bismark, a farm town in Childress
 County, on the east Panhandle.

-- PHOTOGRAPH of a grinning John Baker standing in front of the storefront office of "The Bismark Ledger".

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 My father, a journalist and
 alcoholic, had managed to get
 himself a job as the editor of the
 town gazette.

FLASHBACK: INT. VARIOUS - FARMHOUSE - DAY (1924)

Eugene, age five, wanders through the empty living room of an old, but well-maintained farmhouse.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Even though he had no interest in
 agriculture, my father insisted
 that we move onto the property of a
 former corn farm on Bismark's
 outskirts.

Eugene enters the dining room and looks out the window at the unused and semi-dilapidated BARN about 150 yards back from the house, across a weed-ridden field.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 He said he found something tranquil
 in the peace and quiet, and I can't
 say I found otherwise.

Eugene enters the kitchen to discover his mother and father leaning against the counter and kissing.

Caught, John looks sheepish, but Olivia laughs and covers up a smile. She is happy: they are a family at home at last.

FLASHBACK: EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT (1925)

WIDE of the farmhouse, lights shining. From within, we hear a crash followed by Olivia's cry of pain, then the slam of a screen door.

John moves off quickly into the darkness and drops an empty bottle of whiskey on the ground.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

When I was six, my father left us after drunkenly beating my mother senseless.

Once John is out of sight, we hear sobs from the house.

FLASHBACK: INT. KITCHEN - FARMHOUSE - DAY (1925)

Eugene, age six, sits at the kitchen table, studying a message on a postcard depicting a Mexican beach town.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

A few months later, he sent me a rambling postcard informing me that he was on the Gulf Coast of Mexico and that he hoped to find God there.

FLASHBACK: INT. BARN - DAY (1926)

Eugene, age seven, is sitting against one of the heavy wooden beams holding up the barn's roof, carefully writing a letter. A tattered dictionary serves as his writing surface.

Sunlight slants in through gaps in the boards, illuminating a maze of rusted old farm equipment. This barn is Eugene's sanctuary - where he comes to find solitude.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I would write him back many times over the next few years without receiving a reply, which my mother attributed to him being absorbed in his work on a book about the Mexican people.

CLOSE ON fragments of what Eugene is writing - *"How does the ocean look like?"* - *"Does Mexico smell different?"*

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I stopped writing in 1930, around the time I turned eleven.

FLASHBACK: EXT. EVANS FAMILY FARMHOUSE - DAY (1926)

A PHOTOGRAPHER issues directions to a WEDDING PARTY. Olivia, now 28, is beautiful in her simple Midwestern bride's dress. The groom is GEORGE EVANS (35) - a tall drink of water. He looks awkward in his suit, but happy.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Six months after my father left, Olivia remarried to a Childress county deputy by the name of George Evans, a thoughtful and generally decent man. We took George's last name and he moved with us into the house...

Olivia leans down and kisses Eugene. Another photograph is snapped.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Saving it, in the process, from the impending foreclosure brought on by my father's drinking habit.

INT. BARN - DAY (PRESENT - 1934)

EUGENE EVANS, age 15, is sitting against the barn's wall, absorbed in a *Black Mask* pulp magazine - a periodical of proto-noir stories written for teenage boys.

This will be "our" Eugene for the majority of the film. He is in the throes of adolescence - an arrow with no target, a bomb without a fuse.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Eight months later, my half-sister Phoebe Evans was born.

PHOEBE EVANS jumps out from behind a beam, "woo-woo-woo"ing like an Indian war chief on a radio serial.

Phoebe is nine-years-old and somewhere between a typical Texan girl of the 1930s and a card-carrying tomboy. Her dress is dirty from a day of playing outside.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And I had the good fortune to grow up with her.

Startled into laughter, Eugene throws the magazine at Phoebe and chases her out of the barn.

WE PUSH IN on the cover of *Black Mask* where it fell: a lurid illustration of a buxom blonde menaced by shadowy men in fedoras - "The Communist's Daughter".

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Other than seedy tales of
criminals, dames and gunfights, -

EXT. RIVERSIDE - DAY

Eugene and BEN FLETCHER - a 15-year-old shrimp and Eugene's best friend - jog down to the Wichita river in swim trunks and shirts. BISMARK'S YOUTH frolic in the water.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
- my fifteen-year-old self had only
one major preoccupation...

EXT. WICHITA RIVER - LATER

Eugene and Ben bob on the surface of the slow river. Eugene has his eyes on LAURA BOYD, a seventeen-year-old knockout. She is one in a group of gossiping TEENAGE GIRLS.

EUGENE
I'm gonna ask her.

BEN
Okay.

EUGENE
I'm gonna do it.

BEN
Well, do it then, Evans.

MOMENTS LATER:

Eugene treads water in front of Laura, having just asked her on a date. His expression is chagrined, however, due to the fact that she's laughing at him.

LAURA
Eugene Evans... Why, you're
fifteen.

EUGENE
And so what?

Laura gazes at him with blue eyes full of pity.

LAURA
I don't pluck fruit 'til it's ripe.

FREEZE FRAME on Laura.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Laura Boyd...

MONTAGE

-- WEDDING PICTURE of Laura (19 here) and JACK LOMAX.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
After the War, I'd visit Bismark to
find that she'd married Jack Lomax,
then become a widow when Jack was
shot down over Hamburg in '43.

-- WWII footage of a B-24 BOMBER going down in flames.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
She was left with two children, her
fading looks and a war gratuity.

-- PHOTOGRAPH of Laura (27 here) and her CHILDREN at Jack's
1943 military funeral.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
By that time, I had a wife and kids
of my own, but even now, on the
other side of the century, -

EXT. WICHITA RIVER - DAY

BACK TO FREEZE FRAME of Laura at the river in 1934.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
- I still catch myself wishing I'd
given Laura a ring and made her an
honest woman for the second time.

FREEZE FRAME ends - Laura smiles sadly at Eugene.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
What a beauty she was.

LAURA
You're a doll for asking, though.

She swims off to join her giggling friends. Eugene looks to
Ben, who shrugs nonchalantly - like a best friend should.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Anyway... The days flowed by.

Eugene continues to look in Ben's direction - at something behind him. Ben turns around to see the roiling head of a DUST STORM in the distance.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 And then the dust came.

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

BILLOWING DUST rips through the cornstalks.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 It was the Industrial Revolution
 revolving all the way back to zero.

EXT. MAIN STREET - BISMARCK - DAY

A dust storm rages... A MAN wearing goggles and holding a rag to his face slowly crosses Main Street.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 The farms failed. And so did the
 town.

INT. KITCHEN - FARMHOUSE - DAY

The storm is over. Eugene and Phoebe enter the kitchen to find every surface layered in dust, like the house has been abandoned for decades.

A floorboard creaks - behind them, Olivia is standing in the doorway, crying. She is 37 now.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 We'd been dreaming a dream
 together. And we had all woken up.

INT. DINER - DAY

A diner next to a two-lane highway on the outskirts of Bismark.

We PAN from the diner's window (through which we see OKIE CHILDREN playing around an overloaded jalopy) to Olivia, working as a waitress behind the counter. The COOK flips burgers in sizzling yellow grease.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 George's wages were cut in half and
 so my mother took a job as a
 waitress.

A TRUCK DRIVER enters, beating the dust from his cap.

OLIVIA
 (weary smile)
 Pull up a seat. You come a long
 way?

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

A BLACK CAR timidly rolls up the dirt drive and parks at the
 farmhouse. A well-dressed BANK MAN steps out, clutching
 papers. He goes to the front door and knocks.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 That still didn't make the
 mortgage, and so the bank delivered
 a warning.

George - 44 now - opens the door. He immediately understands
 why the bank man is there and his expression grows dark.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Pay us or bust.

INT. DINING ROOM - FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Eugene and his family sit around the dinner table. All are
 silent, eyeing George, their patriarch, as he mulls over
 something Eugene has just told him. Finally:

GEORGE
 I wanna hear you say - "Sir, I got
 that job you been asking me to get.
 Now you don't got to ask no more."

EUGENE
 Well, I can't.

GEORGE
 And why not?

EUGENE
 I went to Hal Ratliff and he said
 they're full up. What do you want
 me to do? He said he'll be in
 touch...

George shakes his head and addresses the whole table:

GEORGE

Somebody mind telling me why a man
can't keep his goddamn promises
anymore?

(to Olivia)

A day ago, Hal said he had a job
for the kid.

OLIVIA

It's a tough time for promises.

GEORGE

(to Eugene)

If someone says they got nothing,
you go to the fella next door, all
right? And if *he* says split, you go
to the guy after that...

Eugene nods, chewing.

GEORGE

You heard me?

EUGENE

Yessir.

As George says the following, Phoebe begins to pantomime him
for Eugene's amusement across the table -

GEORGE

You ain't gonna spend the rest of
the summer reading pulps in the
barn... Soon enough there won't be
a barn.

And Eugene can't help laughing. George glares at him, then
follows his gaze to Phoebe and realizes what's happening. A
tense beat as the table waits for his reaction, but instead
of blowing up, George chuckles and digs into his dinner.
Eugene makes a face at his sister and she grins back at him.

INT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

A BAPTIST PREACHER delivers his sermon to a packed house.
Eugene and his family are here in their Sunday best. Phoebe
fidgets and Eugene looks bored out of his mind.

PREACHER

Neighbors, it is a *sin* to presume
that tomorrow will be a better day.

(MORE)

PREACHER (CONT'D)

(weighty pause)

That's right, it is a sin. For we are Lambs of His flock, and though he leads us along a path of obscurity, we may not question it, however mysterious - uh, however mysterious it may appear -

The preacher falters as numerous POLICE SIRENS rise in the distance. The CONGREGATION perks up and begins to chatter. The sirens rush past outside and then diminish.

GEORGE

(to Olivia)

I'd better see about this.

George stands and moves along the pew, then exits the church along with a few others.

PREACHER

(waving for order)

Calm down, now. Calm down. Whatever's the matter, it's being dealt with by the authorities.

EXT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

The service lets out. Eugene, eagerly removing his tie, pushes through the crowd to reach Ben Fletcher.

EUGENE

Jesus Christ, what a yawn.

BEN

Sure was...

EUGENE

Hell do you think them sirens was about?

Ben shrugs. He seems preoccupied and distant. Eugene examines him, which Ben senses and becomes annoyed by -

BEN

What?

EUGENE

What's eating you?

Ben is about to respond when:

OLIVIA (O.C.)

Eugene...!

Olivia is waving to her son from a circle of WOMEN - old and young, Midwestern faces etched with worry. Eugene goes over.

OLIVIA
I want you at home today.

EUGENE
Why?

OLIVIA
It could be something happened. We don't know...

Phoebe takes Eugene's tie and starts trying to tie it around her neck as if she were wearing a man's collared shirt.

EUGENE
Well, I ain't going home right now.

OLIVIA
Excuse me?

EUGENE
Me and Ben Fletcher are going to Main... Gonna look for jobs.

Olivia regards her son with weary love - she knows that he's lying about his plans.

EUGENE
There ain't nothing to worry about, Mama. Something happens, Ben'll be there.

She considers, frowning. Then -

OLIVIA
Home by dark. And stick together.

EUGENE
Yes, ma'am.

Phoebe butts in eagerly -

PHOEBE
Can I come?

OLIVIA
No you can not.

Eugene heads back to Ben. Olivia calls after him:

OLIVIA
By dark...!

EUGENE

(to Ben)

You heard the lady. Let's go.

Olivia turns back to the other women, shaking her head.

FARMER'S WIFE

Boys will be boys.

Eugene and Ben head off. Phoebe watches sadly after her older brother.

FARMER'S WIFE (O.C.)

I'm sure George has a handle on things.

INT. MAIN STREET GROCER'S - DAY

Eugene stands at a rack of PULPS, (*Weird Tales, Crime, Black Mask, Detective*) keeping a surreptitious eye on the skinny old GROCER, who is taking notes in a ledger.

In a nearby aisle, Ben Fletcher is carefully inspecting two cereal boxes - Spencer's All-Wheat and Raisin Bran.

When the grocer turns to place some cans on the shelf behind the counter, Eugene slides a copy of *Detective* into his shirt and quickly exits the store. Ben follows.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The two of them amble down the sidewalk, kicking up puffs of dust. Eugene is gazing at the cover of *Detective*, which depicts a hard-boiled gumshoe on a rainy city street.

EUGENE

You think there's really fellas like that?

Ben glances at the cover but says nothing.

EUGENE

You know, if he were real, I bet this fella'd have a different broad every night... I bet he knows exactly the right thing to say to a girl to make her crazy.

Eugene realizes Ben isn't paying attention. He whacks him lightly with the magazine.

EUGENE

What's the matter, Fletcher? You've been a toad since church.

BEN

It's nothing.

EUGENE

Three times you're gonna make me ask...

Ben weighs his words. Finally -

BEN

We're going to California, they told me this morning... We're giving up the house.

Eugene can't mask his surprise.

EUGENE

For how long?

BEN

Forever, I guess.

FLASHBACK: EXT. USED AUTO LOT - DAY

Ben and his FAMILY are at a sad used auto lot, dusty pennants fluttering in the wind... Ben's FATHER is skinny and bookish with heavy, round glasses, while Ben's MOTHER is obese due to a health issue, hobbling around on a cane.

Ben's OLDER BROTHER - a lady-slayer with pomaded hair - is the mechanically-minded one of the family and so he's looking over the guts of a HUDSON TRUCK while an impatient SALESMAN taps his feet nearby.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Ben's father had lost his job as an accountant and, unable to find work, the Fletchers had spent the majority of their savings on a truck to leave Bismark with.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY (PRESENT)

Eugene has been struck by this news.

BEN

Looks like you'll have to find someone else to boss around.

EUGENE

Ain't no one I'd rather boss around
than you, Fletch.

Suddenly, Eugene grabs Ben, trying to get him in a headlock.
The two of them wrestle around playfully for a moment -

BEN

Let go, you elephant! Leggo!

- but they quickly lose steam, disengaging and continuing
their ramble down Main Street. Their faces betray the
sobering reality of Ben's move, already setting in.

EXT. BISMARK TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Further down Main, the two of them find SHERIFF ROSS - a
good-ole-boy sonofagun - addressing a gathered crowd of
Bismark CITIZENS at the town square.

DEPUTIES move among them, displaying prints of Allison
Wells's MUGSHOT PHOTO.

SHERIFF ROSS

We'd like to head off any notion -
any *inkling* of panic.

UPSET WOMAN

But she's a killer...!

A murmur of assenting voices.

SHERIFF ROSS

Now, now... Yes, she is. But she's
also just one little lady with half
of Texas law enforcement trying to
find her. And find her we will.

A deputy shows the mugshot to Eugene - in it, Allison stares
defiantly at the camera with an intense gaze and the hint of
a smile. Eugene is enthralled. He mutters to Ben -

EUGENE

Christ, look at her...

MOMENTS LATER:

The announcement finished, the crowd disperses from the
square. With Ben in tow, Eugene approaches the sheriff,
interrupting him as he confers with a deputy.

EUGENE

Sheriff, we was wondering if there was any sort of reward for finding her...

SHERIFF ROSS

Damn near every municipality west of K.C. has a stake in putting that bitch underground, son. So yes: there is a reward.

And that's all the sheriff will give them - he turns his attention back to the deputy.

EUGENE

How much, sir?

Annoyed, the sheriff turns back. He examines them -

SHERIFF ROSS

Boys, I think you'd better leave the finding up to us.

EUGENE

She's just one little lady - that's what you said.

SHERIFF ROSS

(chuckles, then:)

You're Deputy Evans' boy, ain't you?

EUGENE

Yessir. He's my stepfather.

SHERIFF ROSS

Well, I appreciate the interest, son, but we already got all the help we need from the Evans family, so just run on home.

Eugene doesn't move.

EUGENE

How much, Sheriff?

BEN

(under his breath)

Eugene...

Flinty look from the sheriff now -

SHERIFF ROSS

Ten-thousand dollars.

Ben and Eugene exchange impressed glances.

SHERIFF ROSS

But believe me when I tell you,
she's a lot of woman to handle.
(smiles meanly)
Best to leave her to the men.

MONTAGE

-- A HOBO JUNGLE under a river bridge. Ben and Eugene talk to a TRAMP sitting at a firepit.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Ben and I looked all day.

-- An alley behind various FORECLOSED BUSINESSES. Eugene peers through a broken window while Ben keeps watch.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

We felt there was quite a bit we
could do with five-thousand dollars
apiece.

-- From afar, the boys observe OFFICERS and DEPUTIES as they fan out, looking for clues in a dead CORNFIELD.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Ben and his folks could stay in
Bismark.

-- A blood-red sunset over fallow, dry FARMLAND - Ben and Eugene are silhouettes against it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And I could save my family's house.

EXT. ROAD - DUSK

The boys approach the driveway of the FLETCHER RESIDENCE - a cottage close to the center of town. The Hudson truck from the used car lot is parked out front.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Needless to say, we returned empty-
handed.

Ben splits off and Eugene continues down the road.

BEN

'Night, Evans.

EUGENE

See ya.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Eugene ambles up the drive to his family's farmhouse. The lights are warm and inviting.

INT. KITCHEN - FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The screen door clatters as he enters. Olivia, preparing dinner, (and still wearing her waitress's outfit from work that afternoon) glances at him, then back to the food.

OLIVIA

I said before dark.

Eugene is about to answer when, from the other room:

GEORGE (O.C.)

Is that him? Tell the kid I wanna talk to him.

Eugene doesn't move. Olivia shoots him a look and he exits the kitchen.

INT. SITTING ROOM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He enters to find George in his easy chair, drinking whiskey and smoking a cigarette. The man is still wearing his deputies' uniform, tie undone. He indicates a chair.

GEORGE

Rest your dogs.

Eugene sits. George regards him neutrally, then:

GEORGE

This family is in a mess and a half right now. You're aware of that.

EUGENE

Yessir.

GEORGE

Now, if a boy's mother says to do something, that boy does it. Always. That's basic respect. And in the situation that we're in now, the family and the town, that goes double.

Phoebe is watching from the kitchen. Olivia shoos her away.

GEORGE
We understand each other?

EUGENE
Yeah... Yessir.

George eyes him through the smoke. The moment elongates.

EUGENE
Can I go, sir?

GEORGE
What do you got in your shirt?

EUGENE
(a beat, then:)
Ain't nothing in my shirt.

GEORGE
Do us both a favor and don't make
like you think I'm stupid.

Eugene hesitates, then slides out the stolen *Detective*. He hands it over to George, who looks at it with sour distaste.

GEORGE
With what money from what job did
you pay for this garbage with?

Eugene has no answer. George leans in -

GEORGE
Your mother may let you off easy,
but I won't... You contribute to
this family or there will be hell
to pay.

ESTABLISHING. WIDE OF THE FARMHOUSE AND BARN - NIGHT

A full moon shines.

INT. EUGENE'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Eugene sits against the door of his bedroom, sulking. He's been grounded and is missing dinner -

INT. DINING ROOM - FARMHOUSE - THAT MOMENT

Downstairs, his family eats in silence. Phoebe glances between her exhausted and worried parents.

INT. EUGENE'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Eugene is hunched over his desk, reading the weathered Mexican postcard that John Baker sent him nine years ago. His expression is yearning and lonesome.

Suddenly, the door opens. It's George. With a jolt, Eugene hides the postcard under his arm.

GEORGE

Lights out.

George hits the switch and the room goes dark. He shuts the door and plods away down the hall.

LATER:

With a *click*, a beam of light materializes in the darkness - Eugene is holding a dented Rayovac flashlight.

He switches it off, then appears in moonlit silhouette at the window. He slides it open and steps out onto the roof.

EXT. EVANS FAMILY PROPERTY - NIGHT

Eugene treads through the field toward the barn. He gets to the half-open barn doors and switches the Rayovac on.

INT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Eugene approaches a rusted old TILLER. We see that he's turned the vehicle's running board into a bookshelf where he keeps a decent-sized collection of pulp magazines.

He stops short when he notices that a few of the pulps are scattered on the barn's dirt floor and streaked with blood.

ALLISON (O.C.)

Those must be yours.

Eugene turns - Allison Wells is sitting against the deflated wheel of a tractor. She's very pale and her dark hair is matted to her forehead.

She's pressing a page from *Black Mask* to the gunshot wound on her left thigh in an attempt to stanch the bleeding. Her black stockings are ripped and in disarray.

Other torn-out and blood-soaked pages litter the ground around her. With her free hand she shades her eyes from the flashlight.

Eugene starts to back away.

ALLISON

Wait.

Eugene stops.

ALLISON

You hide them in here, right? From your mother and father?

EUGENE

Yeah.

ALLISON

What's your name, Handsome?

EUGENE

Eugene.

ALLISON

Eugene, I need your help.

A beat, as he watches her, his mind reeling.

INT. PANTRY - FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Eugene paws through a pantry cupboard, taking out medical supplies.

EXT. EVANS FAMILY PROPERTY - NIGHT

He crosses the field, his arms full. When he reaches the barn doors, he stops, unsure. He looks back to the farmhouse, in silhouette against the night sky.

After a moment, he makes up his mind and enters the barn.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Eugene drops the medical supplies next to Allison - a bottle of rubbing alcohol, gauze, tweezers, safety pins.

ALLISON
Good. That's good.

Eugene sets the Rayovac on the tiller's fender, casting a stark light. He crouches in front of her.

EUGENE
I know who you are.

ALLISON
You know what they said about me,
Eugene, but you don't know who I
am.

Eugene moves a little closer, as if he doesn't want to be overheard. He appears both frightened and electrified:

EUGENE
Are you really a killer?

ALLISON
Do I look like one?

EUGENE
(a beat, then:)
No.

ALLISON
Well, your eyes work at least. That
bodes well.

EUGENE
Why are they saying that, though?

ALLISON
I'm running out of time here,
Eugene. You help me, I'll tell you
everything you want to know.

Allison holds his gaze until Eugene nods, complying. Then, she gingerly removes the paper from her leg, revealing a small bullet hole surrounded by sticky, coagulated blood.

EUGENE
(cringing)
Jesus...

ALLISON
It looks worse than it is. You have
steady hands, Eugene?

EUGENE
I think you need a doctor or
something.

ALLISON
 You're my doctor, okay? You are.
 (off the rubbing alcohol)
 Clean your hands.

Eugene unscrews the cap and carefully pours the alcohol into his palm. Allison can sense his unease -

ALLISON
 Everything's gonna be fine.

He nods minutely, rubbing his hands.

ALLISON
 (the tweezers)
 Now, clean this.

Eugene pours the alcohol over the tweezers. He can't avoid asking the question:

EUGENE
 You really didn't kill nobody?

ALLISON
 Look at me, Eugene. Look at me.
 (he looks at her)
 I promise... I promise, everything
 will make sense. But right now, I
 need you to save my life.
 (off the alcohol)
 Pour the rest of that stuff on my
 leg.

EUGENE
 You sure?

ALLISON
 (shaking her head)
 Just do it.

He pours the rest of the alcohol on the wound. Allison bites down on her hand, trying not to scream.

And then it's done - the bottle drips, empty. Allison is panting, her face shining with sweat.

ALLISON
 Oh, God... Oh, God, that smarts...
 (beat)
 You see the bullet?

Eugene peers into the wound. A black shape glints dully, barely discernible.

EUGENE
I, uh - I think so.

ALLISON
Take it out.

He looks up at her. She nods. He positions the tweezers, his trembling hands touching the unexplored territory of her naked thigh. He takes a moment to collect himself, then -

CLOSE ON the tweezers as they move toward the open wound.

CLOSE ON Allison watching, panic mounting.

CLOSE ON the tweezers, moving into the wound.

INT. GEORGE AND OLIVIA'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Olivia wakes with a start in the brass bed she shares with George.

OLIVIA
What was that?

She listens. Hears nothing other than Panhandle crickets.

OLIVIA
(shaking him awake)
George - Honey.

GEORGE
Wh - Hmph - What?

OLIVIA
I - Maybe I heard something.

GEORGE
What?

OLIVIA
I don't know.

GEORGE
'S another nightmare.

George tugs her back down and wraps his arms around her.

GEORGE
Go back to sleep.

He starts dozing immediately. Olivia lies there, wide-awake.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

The bullet - a tiny slug of crushed metal dappled with blood - sits on a page torn out of *Black Mask*.

There's blood everywhere... Allison's legs, the floor, Eugene's clothes. He's wrapping her thigh in gauze. Both of them are exhausted and woozy from adrenaline.

ALLISON

Make it tighter... It's all right.
(Eugene adjusts the bandage)
Yeah, like that.

He finishes, safety-pinning the gauze... Allison brushes the hair away from her face, streaking her cheek with blood.

ALLISON

You did great, Handsome. You did good...
(a deep, weary sigh, then:)
You as thirsty as I am?

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Eugene levers a water pump outside the barn. He washes the blood off his hands, then begins filling a tin pail.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Allison holds the pail to her face and gulps the water desperately. Gasping, she sets the pail down.

ALLISON

Good Lord... Good Lord, what a day.

She goes distant for a moment, recalling something... But she wills herself back into focus - she has an audience.

ALLISON

How old are you, Handsome?

EUGENE

Fifteen.

ALLISON

Is that a fact? You look older.
(smiles)
You got a girlfriend?

EUGENE

No.

ALLISON
Are you shy?

EUGENE
Maybe... Not always.

ALLISON
Girls like it when you aren't, but
I'm sure you know that.
(pats the ground)
Sit. I ought to explain things.

Eugene remains standing. The reality (or surreality) of the situation is starting to dawn on him.

ALLISON
What did I just say about being
shy?

EUGENE
Miss, in all honesty, I ain't sure
what's going on.

ALLISON
Call me Allison... And sit down,
I'm harmless.

EUGENE
You sure about that?

ALLISON
(laughs, then:)
Eugene, right now, if you wanted
you could break me in two.

He sits. Nevertheless, he is guarded and uncomfortable.

ALLISON
Do you think I did those things?

EUGENE
I don't know...

ALLISON
Well, I didn't.

EUGENE
Then why are they saying something
different?

ALLISON
Because my father is a powerful
man.

MONTAGE

-- A HANDSOME MIDDLE-AGED MAN, presumably Allison's father, stands at a lectern in a large hall, addressing a meeting of AMERICAN COMMUNISTS. He falters when FBI AGENTS burst in and begin arresting people. He runs off the stage.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It was a conspiracy. Her father was the chairman of the Chicago chapter of American Communists, and he was wanted by the FBI for political subversion.

-- Allison's father hastily packs a suitcase in the bedroom of a nice apartment.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Miraculously, he had evaded their agents and fled to Mexico.

-- Allison sits at the counter of a BAR, getting chatted up by a YOUNG MAN. FBI AGENTS burst in and start looking for someone among the patrons. Allison slips away.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Subsequently, however, the Feds came after *her*... Their reasoning was that if they had the daughter, they could get the man.

-- Allison drives the Packard Deluxe through Illinois farmland. Behind her, the skyline of Chicago rises like a vast temple to capitalism.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But the daughter slipped through their fingers... So they framed her for multiple counts of bank robbery and first degree murder.

-- Numerous POLICE CARS pursue Allison in the Packard as it tears down a farm road. The scene is the same as depicted at the beginning of the film, except Perry is absent.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Their hope being that someone - some watchdog citizen or eagle-eyed deputy on a lonely road would spot Allison and bring her in...

FREEZE FRAME as the Packard Deluxe is peppered with bullets, shattering the driver's side window -

NARRATOR (V.O.)
And their plan had nearly worked.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Eugene sits there, listening to Allison intently. We can't hear what she's saying, but we can tell that she's holding his undivided attention.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
That was her story as she relayed it to me... There was no mention of Perry Montroy.

FLASHBACK: INT. BARN - AFTERNOON

EARLIER THAT DAY - Allison, her leg bleeding profusely, stumbles up to the half-open doors of the barn and peers in.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
It was all a lie, of course. Her tale was ludicrous.

LATER, DUSK:

Allison is holding a ripped-out page of *Black Mask* to her leg while reading the rest of the pulp in the fading light.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Allison was a murderer. She was a bank robber.

WE PUSH IN on the cover of *Black Mask*, which we saw near the beginning of the film: "The Communist's Daughter".

NARRATOR (V.O.)
And she played me like a piano.

INT. BARN - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Allison has finished her tale. Eugene is dumbstruck by what she's told him -

EUGENE
That's the worst thing I ever heard...

ALLISON

Now you can see why I need you.

A deep breath from Eugene. He shakes his head.

EUGENE

Yeah, well... But what can I do?

ALLISON

I'll give you twenty-thousand dollars to get me to Mexico.

This is like a punch to the face... Eugene stares at her.

EUGENE

That's double your bounty...

ALLISON

(smiles, then:)

That's right... Those bastards won't get me. And you know why?

EUGENE

Why?

ALLISON

Because I've got you... And you already saved me once.

Eugene shakes his head, deeply unsure.

EUGENE

Mexico's a long way from here...

ALLISON

All you need to do is get me a car. I'll drive myself when I'm feeling a little better.

EUGENE

I don't know how to get a car.

ALLISON

I'll need a few days to rest up... If you put your mind to it between now and then, I'm sure you'll figure something out.

Eugene says nothing, his face clouded with doubt. Allison can see she's losing him.

ALLISON

Twenty-thousand dollars... You could help your family out quite a bit with money like that... I know you're all in trouble.

He regards her with newfound wariness.

EUGENE

How'd you figure that?

ALLISON

The banks are running over everyone they can in a town like this... It follows that they're running over you too.

Eugene nods - his thoughts shifting to his family's plight.

ALLISON

The little girl I saw playing outside earlier... She's your sister, isn't she?

EUGENE

Yeah, that's Phoebe.

ALLISON

You gonna let Phoebe become homeless?

EUGENE

'Course I ain't! But it ain't that simple.

ALLISON

It *is* that simple... It is... If you help me, my father will send a courier with the money once I reach Mexico...

(beat)

What could be simpler than that?

Allison's big, dark eyes are pleading as Eugene mulls this over. Finally, he nods -

EUGENE

All right... Okay.

She grins and embraces him.

ALLISON

Eugene... Eugene, my hero...

She lets go and regards him affectionately, then her gaze takes in his bloodstained clothes -

ALLISON

Now, first order of business is getting rid of these.

INT. KITCHEN - FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Eugene enters the kitchen, carefully shutting the screen door behind him. He's wearing nothing but his underwear.

He stands there listening for a moment, then moves further into the house.

INT. HALLWAY - FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

He carefully opens the door to his room.

A creak from down the hall - Olivia is peering out from her and George's bedroom.

OLIVIA

What are you doing up at this hour?
And where are your bedclothes...?

EUGENE

I had to use the john.

OLIVIA

The one downstairs?

EUGENE

(a beat, then:)
Yeah.

OLIVIA

(suspicious, but:)
Get back to bed.

INT. EUGENE'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Eugene slips under the covers and stares up at the ceiling, wide-awake. Finally, he mutters quietly to himself -

EUGENE

Good Lord almighty...

INT. KITCHEN - FARMHOUSE - SUNRISE

George stands at the sink, staring absently out the window while drinking his first coffee of the day. The sun rises above the barn, prominently visible across the field.

INT. EUGENE'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

George enters to find Eugene asleep. He shakes him awake.

GEORGE

Hey, hey - snap to it. You're looking for work today and you're taking your sister.

EUGENE

(groggy)
Yessir.

LATER:

Eugene watches from his bedroom window as George and Olivia leave the house for their respective jobs.

INT. GEORGE AND OLIVIA'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - MORNING

Eugene paws through his mother's closet and takes out a pale blue dress patterned with birds. He holds it up to the light.

INT. BARN - MORNING

Allison sits leaning against the tractor. She looks better than the night before, less spectral. She holds Olivia's dress, admiring it as Eugene stands by.

ALLISON

It's perfect...

EUGENE

She won't notice it's gone. She don't wear it much.

ALLISON

Oh, she'll notice.

EUGENE

Well, maybe it blew off the line, then...

ALLISON

Maybe it did.

Allison lowers the dress into her lap, taking care to keep it off the ground. She looks at Eugene for a long, silent moment. Finally, he realizes:

EUGENE
Oh, sorry.

EXT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON an EYE - peering through a gap in the barn's wall.

THE EYE'S POV - inside, Allison is slowly removing her ripped stockings, minding her bandaged leg.

Once the stockings are off, she starts unbuttoning her bloodstained dress.

THE EYE - goes wide.

PHOEBE (O.C.)
What are you looking at?

REVEAL - the eye belongs to Eugene. He turns, caught.

Phoebe is standing there, watching him curiously.

EUGENE
Nothing.

PHOEBE
Mother said you've been acting strange...

EUGENE
What do you want?

PHOEBE
Who gets a job by puttering around like a hobo? You was supposed to take me to town.

Eugene starts heading back to the farmhouse. Phoebe follows.

EUGENE
I'm busy right now.

PHOEBE
You ain't.

EUGENE
I am.

PHOEBE
What were you looking at?

EUGENE
I was just seeing it how it looked.

PHOEBE
I ain't dumb. What's in there?

EUGENE
Ain't nothing in there. Christ.

Phoebe is silent. Eugene can feel her eyes on his back. Finally, he turns and grabs her, throwing her over his shoulder. She giggles, hitting him with her fists. He continues heading to the farmhouse.

EUGENE
If I tell you, you gotta promise
you won't go in there to see.

She stops hitting him.

PHOEBE
Okay.

Eugene keeps walking, not saying anything.

PHOEBE
What's in there?

EUGENE
You promise?

PHOEBE
Yeah! Tell me.

Eugene sets her down, looks very seriously into her eyes -

EUGENE
Two dead mutts with their guts out
in the dirt. And flies everywhere.

Phoebe looks at first confused and then disgusted.

PHOEBE
What killed 'em?

EUGENE
Coyotes or something. How should I
know?

PHOEBE
That's sad.

EUGENE
 (walking off)
 That's life.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Eugene goes straight to his bicycle, leaning against the back of the farmhouse.

PHOEBE
 Well, where you going now?

EUGENE
 I gotta talk to Ben Fletcher.

PHOEBE
 What about? Can I come?

EUGENE
 (getting on his bike)
 Nothing and no.

He pedals away.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

Ben and Eugene walk along an elevated train grade. The plains are vast around them and the day is beautiful - painterly cumulus clouds recede into the distance.

BEN
 You can't have it. We're going to California in it.

EUGENE
 I ain't "having" it. I'll pay you for it afterwards... You can buy a new one to go in.

Ben considers this. Meanwhile, in the distance, a train is coming toward them down the tracks.

BEN
 What do you want it for?

EUGENE
 I can't say, and you can't tell nobody about this, neither. We'll have to figure how to deal with your parents.

BEN
Why can't you say?

EUGENE
'Cause I can't...! I ain't trying
to cheat you, Fletcher. You just
gotta trust me.

BEN
What the hell kind of explanation
is that?

EUGENE
It's all I can say about it right
now.

Ben ruminates on this for a moment. The train gets closer.

BEN
I thought we was friends...

EUGENE
We are!

BEN
Well, where's this money gonna come
from after you do whatever it is
you do with the truck?

EUGENE
I can't say nothing, Fletch.

BEN
Then I ain't selling you my
family's truck. Friend or no.

EUGENE
Suit yourself, I guess.

The train is upon them and the boys clear the tracks -
Eugene to one side, Ben to the other.

They regard one another through the flashing gaps between
the cars - their mutual disappointment plain to see.

INT. SITTING ROOM - FARMHOUSE - DAY

Phoebe sits in George's armchair, alone in the silent house.
She's staring out the window as if in a spell.

PHOEBE
(under her breath)
Two dead dogs...

INT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Phoebe's silhouette is visible through the gaps in the boards as she passes along the outside of the barn.

She reaches the doors and peers into the dim interior -

Nothing out of place... No dead dogs... No guts.

She cautiously ventures in - this space nominally belongs to her older brother and it has an "off-limits" aura.

Something catches her eye - pulp magazines lie on the ground amid the maze of old farm equipment in the back of the barn.

Phoebe approaches to get a better look...

Bloody pages and discarded medical supplies litter that part of the barn's floor like the remainders of some strange ritual. Phoebe's eyes go wide in fright.

EXT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

She runs out of the barn and trips, falling to her knees in the dirt. She gets up and brushes herself off.

Now that she's outside, her nerve has returned - she regards the barn suspiciously, as if the building itself is an interloper on family land... Glaring, she kicks a clod of dirt, then turns and starts walking back to the farmhouse.

MONTAGE

-- DEPUTIES stand at a ROADBLOCK on a two-lane road. They wave down an OKIE FAMILY heading West in a packed jalopy.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I would spend a great deal of time
with Allison over the next few days
of that strange week.

-- A scrum of REPORTERS surrounds sheriff Ross on the steps of the Childress County Courthouse as he apprises them of the search for Allison Wells.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She told me all about her life as a
young girl in Chicago - her
communist father... Her beautiful,
lonely mother...

-- Phoebe sits alone at the kitchen table resting her chin on her hands, bored. She watches through the window at the barn in the distance.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And I told her about my own father.
How badly I missed him even though
I could barely remember the man...

-- Eugene and Allison talk in the barn. Blankets and pillows taken from the farmhouse form a "bed" where Allison lies, recovering.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She reassured me that I would one
day see him again.

CLOSE ON Allison as Eugene speaks. At first she is listening closely, but soon becomes distant and sad - some ghost surfacing and reminding her of its presence.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And in a way, she was right.

ESTABLISHING. BISMARCK, TEXAS - MORNING

HIGH ABOVE Bismark and the surrounding fields.

EXT. CORNFIELD - MORNING

Alone, in uniform - George pushes through the dead cornstalks. He keeps his eyes on the ground, searching.

The stalks thin out as he gets closer to the fallow adjacent field. Suddenly, he stops -

A piece of fabric jitters in the wind, caught on one of the stalks.

George leans down to inspect it - a shred from a ladies' black stocking. He unhooks it, then looks around.

A couple miles distant, a BARN can be seen - the barn on the Evans family property.

George stares at it, then down at the fabric in his hand.

EXT. CRASHED PACKARD - DAY

He emerges from the cornfield into the crime scene which has been established around the crashed Packard.

An FBI AGENT - a disdainful city man - sips a cup of coffee as OFFICERS supervise the diesel tow-truck which has come to remove the Packard from the ditch.

George approaches the agent and shows him the thread.

GEORGE

Found this about a mile distant.
Western edge of the field.

The agent takes the thread from George and examines it dispassionately. He sips his coffee. He hands the thread back.

FBI AGENT

It's nothing.

George regards the agent with confusion.

GEORGE

This is hers.

FBI AGENT

So what if it is? She isn't in
Bismark, Evans.

GEORGE

Well, if she ain't, she's certainly
nearby, with an injury like the one
she's got.

Bored, the agent checks the time on his watch.

FBI AGENT

Deputy, one of the truisms of
criminal behavior is that a
desperate person is capable of
extraordinary things... That woman
ran her heart out north to the
river and either drowned there or
crossed it.

GEORGE

Sir, with all due respect, you
ought to have a search team go over
the town. Top-to-bottom.

FBI AGENT

We've already performed a search.

GEORGE

You just went from door-to-door,
asking. I'm talking about -

FBI AGENT

If you feel that the citizens of
your county aren't trustworthy,
Evans, you should let me know.

George's temper is sparked -

GEORGE

Don't be a shitheel. That ain't
what I'm saying.

The agent stares at George, a man unfit to challenge him.
Nevertheless, George continues, though with a softer tone -

GEORGE

That weren't really a search -
that's all I'm trying to say. You
ought to get more personnel out
here so we can mount something
methodical in the town itself.

FBI AGENT

I know you're tired, Deputy, and I
know you wanted your picture in the
papers, but I suggest you go home
and get some sleep before you make
yourself look even more like a son
of a bitch.

The agent pours the rest of his coffee out on the ground.

FBI AGENT

As for me, I'm going back to
Dallas.

INT. BARN - DAY

Allison is alone, sobbing quietly. She hears the sound of
someone entering the barn and attempts to hide.

EUGENE (O.C.)

It's me.

Eugene comes around the tiller and sees her.

EUGENE

What's wrong?

ALLISON

(wiping her eyes)
It's nothing. It's all right.

EUGENE
No, it ain't.

She looks up at him.

ALLISON
It's nothing.

EUGENE
Tell me.

MOMENTS LATER:

CLOSE ON Allison, wiping her eyes. Eugene is sitting next to her. A weight seems to have been lifted from her shoulders.

EUGENE
Why didn't you mention him before?

ALLISON
(shrugs, then:)
I don't know...
(beat)
Perry was a good man... And they
just-- They killed him... Like
that.
(snaps fingers)
It's hard to talk about.

EUGENE
Did you love him?

Allison nods. Seeing something in Eugene's face, she smiles, though not meanly -

ALLISON
Are you jealous?

EUGENE
(exaggerated aloofness)
'Course not. He's dead.

Allison's smile fades. Eugene immediately realizes that he's said the wrong thing.

EUGENE
I'm sorry.

ALLISON
You know, you've got some growing
up to do.

EUGENE

That weren't right for me to say,
Allison.

More tears come. Allison wipes them away. Eugene tries to move past his blunder -

EUGENE

Do you have anything of his to
remember him by?

Allison shakes her head.

ALLISON

He had this watch...

FLASHBACK: INT. PACKARD DELUXE - DAY

POV FROM PASSENGER SEAT: Perry - smiling, handsome - drives the Packard down some beautiful country road.

ALLISON (V.O.)

I'd seen it in a store window and
it made me think of him, the way it
looked... He was so *sharp*, so
perfect.

CLOSE ON Perry's WRISTWATCH - Elgin brand. The glass face reflects the passing oak trees - a dappled river of green.

ALLISON (V.O.)

Like you could shine him up and put
him in a museum. One-of-a-kind...

The watch face moves minutely with the adjustment of Perry's wrist and now we see Allison reflected in the glass, riding in the passenger seat - happy and free.

ALLISON (V.O.)

So I bought it for him... And he
was wearing it when he died.

INT. BARN - DAY (PRESENT)

Back to Allison, sobbing now. At first, Eugene doesn't know what to do.

ALLISON

And I left it there. I left it...

(beat)

He was gonna come with me to
Mexico...

Finally, Eugene puts his arm around her. Not a romantic gesture, but one of consolation. Allison puts her hand in his and they sit there - two lonely people stumbling into a brief moment of solace.

INT. FORD TRUCK - NIGHT

The Evans family rides together on the bench seat of George's '28 Ford as he drives it through town. Olivia smiles at her husband and runs her hand through his hair.

OLIVIA
You tired, Papa?

GEORGE
Yep.

OLIVIA
Well, the dance'll cheer you up.

George nods and gives her a brief smile back.

OLIVIA
By the way, anyone seen my blue dress? The one with the birds?

Eugene shifts a little. Phoebe glances sidelong at him.

EUGENE
No, ma'am.

PHOEBE
I haven't seen it, Mama.

OLIVIA
We're out some food from the pantry too.

At this, George looks concerned.

GEORGE
That a fact?

OLIVIA
Yes, indeed... A number of things coulda happened to the dress, but the pantry I can't account for.

George thinks, brows knitted. Olivia looks to her children.

OLIVIA
Ain't one of you, is it? Eating more food than you're allowed?

EUGENE

No, ma'am.

PHOEBE

Not me, Mama.

EXT. DANCE HALL LOT - NIGHT

The Ford is parked side by side with farm trucks and jalopies. The Evans family threads through the lot toward the SQUARE DANCE HALL, where a hoedown is audibly underway.

George lingers back with Eugene while Olivia and Phoebe walk ahead. He waits until his wife and daughter are out of earshot -

GEORGE

Your sister said you ain't been going to town like you told me you would.

EUGENE

(a beat, then:)

I been working on something.

GEORGE

And what's that?

Eugene says nothing...

GEORGE

I'll ask again -

EUGENE

It's a magazine sweepstakes... I'm trying to win us some money.

George shakes his head, bewildered.

GEORGE

Jesus Christ, Kid... Jesus God damn Christ. I'm *telling* you, find some work and stop messing around like a goon... You've gone foolish, spending all that time by yourself.

EUGENE

I ain't a goon... And I ain't foolish. Don't speak to me that way.

George stops short and roughly turns Eugene around. He gets in the teenager's face -

GEORGE

I put food on the table you sit at,
so I'll talk to you any way I
want... And if you got a problem
with that, I suggest you do
something about it.

Eugene says nothing, but his stare makes it clear that if he could flatten George right now, he would.

INT. DANCE HALL - NIGHT

Eugene sits alone in the stands, brooding, as the square dance progresses, noisy and cheerful.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

The dance is over. George's truck pulls up to the farmhouse.

INT. ENTRYWAY - FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Eugene enters the house first and is halfway up the stairs by the time the rest of his family reach the front door.

INT. GEORGE AND OLIVIA'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He enters his parent's bedroom and goes directly to the end table on George's side of the bed.

A set of KEYS rests next to George's spectacles and a copy of the *Bismark Ledger* with Allison's mugshot on the front.

Eugene pockets the keys and exits the bedroom.

INT. STAIRWELL - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He comes down the stairs, passing his mother on the way up.

OLIVIA

Where you going?

EUGENE

Ben Fletcher's.

OLIVIA

It's past ten...

Eugene ignores her and goes out the front door.

Olivia looks to George, who is already in his easy chair, lighting a cigarette. He shrugs in weary apathy.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Eugene rides his bicycle past the closed-for-the-night shops and busy pool halls of Main Street.

EXT. CHILDRESS COUNTY COURTHOUSE - NIGHT

He dismounts in front of the darkened county Courthouse and wheels the bike around back.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - CHILDRESS COUNTY COURTHOUSE - NIGHT

A narrow concrete hallway ending at a closed metal door.

On the other side, the sound of jangling keys. The door is unlocked and swings open, revealing Eugene.

MOMENTS LATER:

Eugene prowls down the hallway and stops in front of a door:

Childress Co. Sheriff
Investigations

He tries the knob. Locked. He tries one of the keys.

INT. EVIDENCE LOCKER - MOMENTS LATER

Eugene enters, quietly shutting the door behind him. He flicks on the light.

WE PAN to reveal a wire cage protecting shelf after shelf of metal evidence boxes.

MOMENTS LATER:

Having unlocked the cage door, Eugene is digging through a box hand-labeled with the words "Wells Murders".

He removes an oily paper bag and looks inside:

Perry Montroy's Elgin watch.

Eugene removes it from the bag and inspects it closely. The watch face is spotted with dried blood.

The metal back has an inscription carved into it with the tip of a knife, the cuts glinting in the light:

Love Forever,
A

Suddenly, the door opens and a SHERIFF'S DEPUTY enters. He has the look of a desk jockey - uniform too neat, hair too shiny.

The deputy is startled upon seeing Eugene, who is hard to discern in the shadows -

DEPUTY
Woah, now...

Eugene shoves the watch in his pocket as the deputy approaches the cage.

DEPUTY
You ain't supposed to be in here.

Eugene takes a random sheaf of papers and photographs from the box before pushing it back onto the shelf. He stands.

EUGENE
These are for my old man. He wanted to look 'em over at home.

DEPUTY
Who's your old man?

EUGENE
Deputy Evans.
(shows him...)
He gave me his keys.

The deputy stands there, not sure what to make of this. Finally:

DEPUTY
You're Eugene Evans, ain't you?

EUGENE
Yessir.

DEPUTY
(holds up his hand)
Last time I saw you, you was about yea-high... Time sure as hell does a trick on people.

EUGENE
Yessir, I guess it does.

DEPUTY

George knows better, but I understand he's got a bug up his ass about this little situation we got... Take him what he needs, but let him know that next time he's gotta come here hisself.

EUGENE

I will, sir.

DEPUTY

All right.

Eugene passes the deputy and exits. The deputy closes the cage door, shaking his head.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Allison is hugging Eugene tightly. He has just given her the watch and she's ecstatic.

ALLISON

Handsome...

She surprises him with a kiss on the cheek.

ALLISON

You're wonderful... Oh, you didn't have to do this.

EUGENE

Are you happy?

She takes his head in her hands and kisses him on the lips. They separate - Eugene blinks, a little dazed.

ALLISON

I'm happy.

EXT. EVANS FAMILY PROPERTY - NIGHT

Eugene stands at an empty oil drum behind the farmhouse. He throws in the sheaf of evidence papers and photographs.

He lights a match and throws that in too. He watches the documents burn.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Allison lies on her blankets, running her finger over the inscription on the back of the watch. Her expression is sad.

EXT. EVANS FAMILY PROPERTY - NIGHT

Eugene turns away from the oil drum and flinches when he sees Phoebe flickering ghost-like at the edge of the firelight, a blanket around her shoulder -

EUGENE

Why ain't you in bed?

Phoebe's feet are sticking out of the bottom of her pajama gown. She regards him groggily -

PHOEBE

Why ain't you?

MOMENTS LATER:

Eugene carries her on his shoulder, aimlessly walking deeper into the fields of their property.

PHOEBE

What sort of ridiculousness are you up to, brother?

EUGENE

(a long pause, then:)
It's a complicated thing.

PHOEBE

Sure looks that way...

Eugene stops walking. They stare at the incredible sweep of the MILKY WAY above, undiminished by ambient light. Finally:

PHOEBE

You know, I been thinking - I ain't left the county once my whole life.

Eugene tries to work out why she would say this. Finally -

EUGENE

That's 'cause you're a nine-year-old little girl. You don't have no reason to leave the county.

PHOEBE

I guess...

But we can tell by her face that Phoebe doesn't agree... She keeps her eyes on the stars. Finally -

PHOEBE
How far is California?

EUGENE
Not sure exactly... I gather it's pretty far.

PHOEBE
You think we'll go there like the Fletchers?

Eugene's resolve is clear. He knows this as he says it -

EUGENE
No. We're gonna stay here.

PHOEBE
(a beat, then carefully:)
If we had to leave, maybe it wouldn't be so bad...

EUGENE
(thrown by this)
'Course it'd be bad. The hell kinda thinking is that?

PHOEBE
'Cause even if we left, we'd still be together... You, me, Mama and George... It'd be all right.

EUGENE
But this is where we live.

PHOEBE
But that's what I'm sayin'...
What's it matter where we live,
long as we're together?

Eugene doesn't respond. Phoebe is insistent -

PHOEBE
Right?

Still nothing... Phoebe pinches his cheek playfully -

PHOEBE
Ah, don't be a grump.

But Eugene jerks his head away, his expression troubled.

INT. BATHROOM - FARMHOUSE - MORNING

Morning sun slants in, hitting a weary George as he stands at the mirror, knotting his deputy's tie.

INT. GEORGE AND OLIVIA'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

He enters and crosses the room to the end table, taking care to be quiet since Olivia is still asleep.

He gets to the table and stands there, confused - his keys are missing.

INT. KITCHEN - FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

George hustles in, looking around - and sees: his keys are sitting on the kitchen table. He mutters to himself -

GEORGE
Damn it, George...

He grabs them and exits.

INT. OFFICES - CHILDRESS COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

It's hot as hell in the offices of Childress County law enforcement when George enters. A desk fan blows paper streamers and DEPUTIES fan themselves with their Stetsons.

Unsurprisingly, the desk jockey who caught Eugene the night before is at his desk. He regards George -

DEPUTY
Evans, Sheriff wants a word.

George nods and heads to the sheriff's office in back. The other deputies watch him go.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CHILDRESS COUNTY COURTHOUSE - CONT.

The sheriff is immersed in paperwork as George enters. He indicates a chair. George sits.

SHERIFF ROSS
You're out. I'll need your badge
and gun.

George was expecting a reprimand, but not this -

GEORGE

I'm out? Why?

SHERIFF ROSS

One: you called an FBI agent a shitheel -

GEORGE

He was a shitheel. He mishandled the search...!

SHERIFF ROSS

Maybe. But it don't make my life any easier for you say so... Now, if that were all you did, I could let it slide, but having your own stepson come and pick up evidence for you to go over at home is a bridge too far. A God damn bridge too far.

Confusion starts to overtake George's anger...

GEORGE

The hell are you talking about?

SHERIFF ROSS

Last night. Your stepson. He came with your keys and took material evidence for the Wells case. Said you asked him to.

GEORGE

I never asked him any such thing.

SHERIFF ROSS

(stares at George, then:)
So you're saying he's a thief of county property?

GEORGE

No, I ain't, but -

SHERIFF ROSS

I think whatever difficulties you may be having at home - with your family, your house - they's seeping into your greater life... You need to take care of you and yours before anything else, and perhaps when times is a little less lean, we can have you back. Sorry to say, but that's the way it is.

George sits there, boiling. Then:

GEORGE
She's still in Bismark, Sheriff.
She didn't go nowhere.

SHERIFF ROSS
Not according to the God damn FBI.

George has nothing to say to this. He looks ready to kill somebody.

SHERIFF ROSS
Badge, gun, and the evidence your
stepson took: I want 'em all on my
desk by this afternoon.

INT. FORD TRUCK - DAY

George drives home past dead farms. In the distance, a DUST STORM looms.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Eugene walks through the field to the barn. The storm roils apocalyptically in the distance.

ALLISON (PRE-LAP)
Today's the day, Handsome...

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Allison sits on the tiller's fender, massaging her leg. Eugene stands by, arms crossed, shaking his head -

EUGENE
You can barely walk.

ALLISON
Barely's better than not at all.

He clearly doesn't like the idea of her leaving, his voice rises in pitch -

EUGENE
The storm'll be here in an hour...

ALLISON
And it'll be perfect cover.
(MORE)

ALLISON (CONT'D)

(beat)

I'd stay forever if I could, but we both know I can't.

Eugene sighs. Allison's expression turns cold as she watches him pout - she doesn't have time right now to indulge him.

ALLISON

So what about the car...? You haven't said much on the subject.

EUGENE

I couldn't get one.

Any remaining tenderness disappears -

ALLISON

You *couldn't*? Why the hell not?

Eugene regards her with surprise, like she's slapped him.

ALLISON

You've had fucking days! I thought you were actually gonna do this. I thought you were competent.

EUGENE

I - Jesus - I tried!

ALLISON

Well, you didn't try hard enough.

EUGENE

Yeah, I was stealing that God damn watch! Christ almighty... How'd you expect me to get a car without money?!

Allison can tell she went too far... With a softer tone -

ALLISON

All right, all right... I'm sorry... Relax...

EUGENE

I ain't incompetent.

ALLISON

I know... Let's think about things... We have an option or two.

EUGENE

And I ain't gonna steal my
stepfather's truck, if that's
crossing your mind. I'll do
anything except that.

ALLISON

No... I have a different idea.

EUGENE

(still smarting)
Yeah? And what's that?

ALLISON

You ever hotwired a car before?

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Eugene jogs back to the farmhouse. He jumps on his bicycle
and starts pedaling toward the road.

Meanwhile, George's truck is approaching down the drive.
When he spots Eugene, he swerves to block him, skidding to a
stop and almost colliding with his stepson.

EUGENE

Look out!

George furiously barrels out of the truck. He pulls Eugene
from his bicycle and starts dragging him to the farmhouse.

EUGENE

(trying to free himself)
The hell?! Let - Let go!

INT. KITCHEN - FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

George slams open the kitchen door and pushes Eugene inside.

GEORGE

You know what happened?

Eugene just stares at him, terrified.

GEORGE

Do you know what happened?

EUGENE

No.

GEORGE
I was laid off. Now, do you know
why?

They watch each other... George nods -

GEORGE
Yeah, you know why...
(beat)
I have so many questions for you,
you slippery bastard.

Phoebe appears at the kitchen door to see what the commotion
is. George points at her.

GEORGE
Get upstairs!

She doesn't move, looking to Eugene for a signal that he'll
be okay. He nods at her, and at that she disappears.

GEORGE
The evidence you took: where is it?

Eugene says nothing. George shakes him.

GEORGE
Say something!

EUGENE
It's gone.

GEORGE
Gone where?!

EUGENE
I lost it.

George suddenly gets very calm, but his eyes are fire.
Eugene senses danger, but instead of getting meek, he
acquires a sort of self-righteous anger -

EUGENE
Hell, she was innocent! That stuff
was all lies and made up nonsense.

GEORGE
Innocent?! Where in God's creation
do you get the idea of calling that
woman "innocent"?

EUGENE
I know things.

A beat. George scrutinizes Eugene.

GEORGE

Apple don't fall far from the tree,
does it? Full of delusions and
fantasies like your old man... I
may have raised you, but you sure
as shit ain't my son.

EUGENE

You only raised me 'cause you had
to, George.

BOOM - George slugs Eugene in the stomach, sending him to
the floor.

George immediately regrets it, but what's done is done.
Eugene is curled up, moaning.

INT. EUGENE'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

George pushes Eugene into his bedroom. The boy stumbles to
the bed and sits down, clutching his stomach.

GEORGE

You're gonna break your mother's
heart when you end up dead like
your old man...

Eugene peers up at his stepfather.

EUGENE

He ain't dead... He's in Mexico.

GEORGE

(smiling meanly)
Sure. Mexico.

George exits, slamming the door.

INT. SITTING ROOM - FARMHOUSE - DAY

George sits in his chair, smoking. The storm looms closer -
the light through the windows is murky and brown.

In the kitchen, Olivia enters through the back door. She's
wearing her waitress's outfit. Upon seeing George:

OLIVIA

Hey there, I'm glad you're home...
We closed up 'cause the storm.

(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
 (noticing his demeanor)
 What's the matter now?

ESTABLISHING. WIDE OF THE FARMHOUSE AND BARN - DAY

The storm - a huge, billowing wall of dust - is only a few hundred yards from the Evans property.

INT. BARN - DAY

Allison huddles amid the blankets of her makeshift bed. Curls of dust waft in through gaps in the beams.

INT. STAIRWELL - FARMHOUSE - DAY

Olivia creeps up the stairs. The wind howls.

INT. EUGENE'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

She opens the door to find Eugene lying on his bed, his back to her. She shuts the door and sits next to her son. The house rattles.

OLIVIA
 George... He's sorry what happened.
 (no response)
 But he told me what you did...
 (still nothing...)
 We both of us want to know exactly
 why.

Eugene rolls over. His eyes are dry. His gaze, intent.

EUGENE
 I been trying to help.

OLIVIA
 Help who?

EUGENE
 The family. Us.

Olivia looks up at the ceiling, trying not to cry. She looks back at her son.

OLIVIA
 How is what you did a help? George was dismissed. We're less than a month away from being homeless.

Eugene puts a hand on her arm to comfort her, but she brushes him off...

...as the storm finally reaches the house. The room grows dim and there is a sound on the roof like a rain of pebbles. In the murk, Eugene regards his mother.

EUGENE

George said Papa was dead.

A beat. Olivia musters her courage - she nods.

OLIVIA

And he was right.

Eugene stares at her.

EUGENE

How do you know?

She says nothing, having dreaded this moment for years.

EUGENE

He's in Mexico, Mama.

OLIVIA

Do you remember that postcard he wrote you, when you was six?

EUGENE

'Course I do.

OLIVIA

Well, he sent more. But I burned every one of them after the first.

Eugene watches her - gauging for truth.

FLASHBACK: INT. KITCHEN - FARMHOUSE - DAY (1929)

Olivia, thirty-two here, flips through a stack of mail. Something catches her eye and she picks it out: a postcard from Mexico. Her expression becomes sad as she reads it.

Through the window, Eugene, age ten, can be seen having a mock gunfight in the field with Ben, age nine.

OLIVIA (V.O.)

Every month, he would write and every month each card was worse than the last... They'd be full of talk about God and people and strange things he had seen.

(MORE)

OLIVIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 But it was all jumbled up... It was
 crazy. He was drinking himself to
 death and his mind was falling
 apart.

FLASHBACK: EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Behind the farmhouse, Olivia takes a match to the postcard
 and drops it in a tin pail. She watches it burn.

OLIVIA (V.O.)
 I couldn't let a little boy read
 what he wrote. You wouldn't have
 known what to make of it... So I
 told you he was busy writing a
 book.

INT. EUGENE'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - DAY (PRESENT)

The storm beats outside the window. Olivia has been crying,
 but holds herself up with dignity.

OLIVIA
 I only lied 'cause I love you... I
 can't claim to be a perfect mother.

EUGENE
 You're lying to me now, Mama.

OLIVIA
 No, Eugene, I am not.
 (beat)
 After five years, the cards
 stopped... And I believe that was
 because he had died.

A long pause from Eugene. Finally:

EUGENE
 That ain't for sure.

OLIVIA
 I know it's hard to hear, Love. It
 was hard to say.

Eugene lies down and turns away from his mother.

OLIVIA
 Eugene...

EUGENE
 It ain't for sure.

A beat. Olivia stands. She looks one last time at her son and then exits, shutting the door behind her.

INT. HALLWAY - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She finds George sitting in a chair placed directly outside Eugene's door. She shoots her husband a reproachful look.

GEORGE
He ain't leaving that room.

OLIVIA
Where could he go in a storm like this?

GEORGE
He say anything meaningful about what he did?

OLIVIA
No.
(beat)
This isn't like him. This behavior.

GEORGE
I wonder if maybe it was coming the whole time... Maybe we just didn't see it...

Olivia says nothing, overwhelmed by it all and wanting to defend her son, but being incapable. The moment elongates...

OLIVIA
I'm gonna seal up what I can.

GEORGE
What good will it do?

Olivia ignores this and starts down the stairs, then pauses.

OLIVIA
I need your help with it, George.
He ain't going nowhere.

A beat, then George stands and follows her downstairs.

INT. BARN - AFTERNOON

The storm rages outside. Allison clutches the blankets to her. Inside the barn is a whirlwind of dust.

INT. EUGENE'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Eugene wakes to utter silence... He looks out the window: the storm is gone and a crystal-clear night has taken its place.

He gets up and puts on his clothes. He opens the window and steps out onto the roof.

INT. PHOEBE'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The austere bedroom of a girl uninterested in "girlish" things. Eugene slides the window open and crawls in, pushing accumulated dust off the sill.

He shakes Phoebe awake. She jerks, scared, but calms when she sees it's him.

EUGENE

I'm leaving. I wanted to tell you
goodbye.

PHOEBE

You're *leaving*? To where?

EUGENE

Mexico.

PHOEBE

Mexico?!

EUGENE

Shh!

Eugene listens... The house is silent.

EUGENE

Yeah.

Phoebe stares at him bleakly, something dawning on her.

PHOEBE

It's her.

EUGENE

Who?

PHOEBE

The fugitive. The Wells lady...
That's who you're going with.

EUGENE

What...? You've gone crazy.

PHOEBE
(nodding)
Now I know why you been acting so
strange.

EUGENE
You don't know anything about it.

Eugene is becoming visibly nervous. He tries to stand but
Phoebe holds onto him.

PHOEBE
Lemme come. I wanna meet her.

EUGENE
There ain't no "her".

Phoebe just stares at him. Finally:

EUGENE
You can't come.

PHOEBE
Why not?

EUGENE
'Cause you can't.
(beat)
They need you here.

PHOEBE
How long you gonna be there for?

EUGENE
I don't know, but listen, I'm gonna
send you money.

PHOEBE
What?

EUGENE
Use it to help Mama and George. But
don't say where you got it from.
Tell 'em you found it or something.

Phoebe seems bewildered by all of this... She lies down and
hides her face under a pillow.

EUGENE
Phoebe.

PHOEBE

You talked up and down about staying here... So why all of a sudden are you going to Mexico?

Eugene thinks about this. Finally:

EUGENE

I guess I'm kinda in love.

PHOEBE

You don't know anything about "love".

EUGENE

Well, you don't neither.

Phoebe starts to cry.

PHOEBE

I know that if you loved us you'd stay. If you loved me...

EUGENE

I do love you.

PHOEBE

Then stay.

Eugene's silence says it all. Phoebe looks crestfallen.

EUGENE

Don't cry, Phoebe.
(nothing from her...)
Phoebe.

PHOEBE

Go... Quit drawing it out

Eugene regards her sadly, then stands and goes to the window. With one last look, he climbs out and onto the roof.

MOMENTS LATER:

Phoebe rolls over. She sits up and watches longingly out the window as her brother moves off through the moonlit field.

EXT. FLETCHER RESIDENCE - DAWN

A vivid dawn fills the sky... Eugene approaches the Fletcher residence. The Hudson truck is parked on the drive.

INT. KITCHEN - FARMHOUSE - MORNING

Olivia prepares breakfast with Phoebe's help, but her daughter is distracted, almost dropping a bowl of pancake batter. Olivia notices this but doesn't comment.

George is visible in the sitting room, smoking a cigarette while sweeping up dust from the floor.

OLIVIA

We're almost ready. You wanna wake the boy?

George hesitates - of course he doesn't. Nevertheless, he leaves the broom and goes upstairs.

INT. HALLWAY - FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

George knocks on Eugene's door.

GEORGE

There's breakfast.

He waits. Knocks again.

GEORGE

Let's hop to it.

Nothing. George opens the door - Eugene is gone.

INT. KITCHEN - FLETCHER RESIDENCE - MORNING

Ben Fletcher eats breakfast with his family. His mother, Josie, notices that William - Ben's older brother - is hunched moodily over his food, pecking at it.

JOSIE FLETCHER

Them eggs is eating you, Will.

BEN

He's crying 'cause Ruth McKinley's gonna take up with someone else soon as we leave town, if she ain't done it already.

William flicks a piece of egg at Ben -

WILLIAM FLETCHER

Hell do you know about it?

JOSIE FLETCHER
 Profanity! And it's a shameful sin
 to waste that food.

Ben's Father, Ed, doesn't look up from his newspaper:

ED FLETCHER
 That's enough, fellas.

JOSIE FLETCHER
 Now, when you boys is finished, you
 gonna help your father load the
 bureau onto the truck. We're
 sellin' it in town today.

William flicks another piece of egg at Ben, which hits him
 in the face and sticks there. Ben plays it up for laughs -
 he remains still as if he's unaware he's been hit.

BEN
 Yes, ma'am.

Ed sees this over the top of his newspaper and chuckles, as
 does William. Josie is not amused -

JOSIE
 Ya'll make me wish I had daughters.

EXT. FLETCHER RESIDENCE - MORNING

Ben, Ed and William carry a fine wooden bureau out of the
 front door and around the house.

Suddenly, Ed notices something in the driveway and stops
 short, forcing Ben and his brother to stop too. Before we
 see what's drawing Ed's attention, we CUT TO -

EXT. DEAD CORNFIELD - MORNING

Eugene helps Allison through the cornstalks. She is uneasy
 on her feet, but able to walk with relative ease. She
 carries an old army knapsack.

ALLISON
 You aren't gonna tell me, are you?

EUGENE
 You'll see...

ALLISON
 What make is it, at least?

EUGENE

You'll see in a minute.

MOMENTS LATER:

They emerge from the cornfield onto a dirt farm road. The Fletcher's Hudson truck is parked on the shoulder.

Allison looks impressed. She smiles approvingly at Eugene.

INT. KITCHEN - FARMHOUSE - MORNING

Breakfast is finished and plates piled high with pancake and sausage are waiting. However, Phoebe sits crying at the kitchen table, Olivia hovering over her -

OLIVIA

Why are you saying that?

PHOEBE

It's *true*...!

George bursts in through the back door, startling them.

GEORGE

He ain't in the barn -

OLIVIA

Papa, Phoebe here's been saying strange things about her brother and I want you to tell her they isn't true.

George looks keenly at Phoebe -

GEORGE

What's she been saying?

OLIVIA

She says Eugene's been helping Allison Wells, the fugitive, and that - that he's *eloped* with her, or some such... But that just isn't possible. It's a little girl's fantasy.

(to Phoebe)

Isn't it?

Phoebe sniffles, remaining silent.

The phone rings. Everyone looks at it. It rings again. George answers -

GEORGE (ON PHONE)

Hello.

(listens)

This is he.

(listens)

Is that a fact...? That's - Ah -
That's quite the speculation, Ed.

George listens to the person on the other line, then is silent for a moment, looking through the window at the barn in the distance. Finally -

GEORGE (ON PHONE)

Truthfully, I don't know. I ain't seen him.

(listens)

Now, Ed. You don't know for sure -

(other end hangs up)

Shit!

George sets the phone down and looks to Olivia, her panic growing.

OLIVIA

Oh, George, what now?

GEORGE

That was Ed Fletcher. They think Eugene's stolen their truck.

OLIVIA

Nonsense... Nonsense... Call them back.

EXT. HUDSON TRUCK/TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - MORNING

The Hudson flies south through the outskirts of Bismark.

INT. HUDSON TRUCK - THAT MOMENT

Eugene drives and Allison sits shotgun. She watches the passing landscape with unease.

ALLISON

You did good, Handsome...

Eugene grins -

EUGENE

I know it.

ALLISON

But I hate goodbyes and this one's getting tougher by the mile.

EUGENE

There ain't gonna be any goodbyes. You don't got to fret about it.

Allison watches him, not sure what he means, but his expression makes her understand -

ALLISON

Oh, no. Uh-uh... I'm going to Mexico by myself.

EUGENE

'Fraid not.

ALLISON

Afraid so... Eugene... What about the money?

EUGENE

Your old man can't pay me in person?

ALLISON

I mean for your *family*...

Eugene loses his smile. "Family" is a touchy subject for him right now.

EUGENE

I'll get it to them somehow.

ALLISON

You can't just leave them.

A sullen, guilty look from Eugene at this -

EUGENE

They're better off without me... Besides, I got family in Mexico.

Allison is at first unsure what he's talking about. Then she remembers -

ALLISON

Your father...

EUGENE

That's right. I'm gonna track him down.

ALLISON
I don't think you understand what
that entails.

EUGENE
Let's cut the bullshit. What's it
matter to you if I come or not?

Allison is silent, regarding him coldly. Finally:

ALLISON
It matters 'cause you're in love
with me.

Forced laughter from Eugene...

EUGENE
No I ain't.
(Allison gives him a look)
I ain't...

She isn't swayed. Finally -

EUGENE
Well what of it?! You know, this
morning I woke up, I said to myself
"there isn't no way in hell Allison
is going to Mexico without me..."
And there ain't. Whether you love
me back or not is besides the
point...
(he smiles)
We're both of us just gonna have to
live with it.

And with this, the tension breaks. Allison smiles too,
shaking her head in mystification.

ALLISON
What happened to you, Eugene,
between yesterday and today?

EUGENE
What didn't happen, is the better
question.

ALLISON
(a beat, then:)
Nothing funny, you hear me? Once we
get to Mexico, you'll go your way
and I'll go mine.

EUGENE
We'll see... You could come around.

Allison shoots him a look, anger reigniting briefly only to dissipate again...

ALLISON
Just drive, all right...? And keep
your smart mouth shut for a while.

INT. KITCHEN - FARMHOUSE - DAY

Olivia is crying, head in hands. Phoebe watches her mother with dread while George dials a number on the telephone.

OLIVIA
God... God, what did I do wrong?
(beat)
George, how'd they come across one
another?

GEORGE
I don't know.

OLIVIA
Well, what's gonna happen to him?

George finishes dialing and listens to it ring.

GEORGE
I'm calling Tade and I'm calling
Lomax. We'll find them before
someone else does.

The other line picks up. George smiles, despite everything, and turns away from his wife and daughter.

GEORGE (ON PHONE)
Tade. Dust off that buckshooter. I
got us a bounty.

EXT. BACK ROAD - MORNING

The stolen Hudson roars through the Texan plains.

INT. HUDSON TRUCK - THAT MOMENT

Allison is watching Eugene with curiosity: she thought she had the full measure of this teenage boy and she wound up being wrong.

When he notices her gaze, she looks away and turns on the radio, filling the truck with gospel music.

She changes the station. "Whispering" by the Benny Goodman Quartet starts playing - a pleasant jazz song.

ALLISON
There we go...

Allison absently taps the rhythm and hums fragments of the melody.

EUGENE
Who's this?

ALLISON
Benny Goodman. You like it?

Eugene shrugs.

ALLISON
I met him once, you know.

EUGENE
Huh.

ALLISON
He picked me out of a crowd. Said I was pretty.

This gets Eugene's attention.

EUGENE
What crowd was that?

FLASHBACK: EXT. RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL - EVENING

Allison, 20 here, is among a crush of NEW YORKERS on the sidewalk.

ALLISON (V.O.)
Outside Radio City Music Hall...
Four years ago.

BENNY GOODMAN, attended by HANDLERS, steps out of a car and waves. He begins heading into the Hall but arrests his pace when he spots Allison.

He wades into the crowd, which is shouting for him, and takes Allison's outstretched hand. He says something to her which we can't hear, but can see - "What's your name, beautiful?"

INT. HUDSON TRUCK - MORNING (PRESENT)

The Hudson speeds along.

ALLISON

People like him just have this...
grace. They move through the world
like it's theirs. You know what I
mean?

EUGENE

Sure... That's like you.

Allison is flattered by this.

ALLISON

Yeah?

Eugene nods.

ALLISON

Well, that's going to be you too.

Eugene chuckles, shaking his head.

EUGENE

Yeah, I have my doubts about that.

ALLISON

No, you're going to have a special
life.

Eugene stares out the windshield, thinking about this.

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

An intersection of two farm roads, the outline of a small
town in the flat, hazy distance.

Adjacent to the intersection is a hedge, and behind that
hedge - an idling POLICE CAR.

INT. POLICE CAR - THAT MOMENT

Inside it, a COP - 25-years-old with blonde hair and a
babyface - eats a ham sandwich while reading a "Doc Savage"
pulp magazine, his feet up on the dash. Just killing time...

He is chewing and chuckling to himself when the Hudson roars
by. There is a moment of surprise, then Babyface drops the
sandwich and magazine onto the passenger seat.

EXT. INTERSECTION - THAT MOMENT

The siren comes on and the police car pulls onto the road.

INT. HUDSON TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Allison watches behind them at the gaining cop.

ALLISON

Shit.

EUGENE

What should I do?

ALLISON

Put distance on him.

EUGENE

In *this*?

Allison looks chagrined - of course, the Hudson isn't nearly fast enough.

ALLISON

Do you have a gun?

Eugene works to keep his cool -

EUGENE

No, I don't have a gun.

Allison glances back over her shoulder.

ALLISON

Stop, then.

MOMENTS LATER:

The Hudson has pulled over. Babyface saunters to the driver's side window.

BABYFACE COP

How ya'll doin'?

EUGENE

Fine, sir.

Babyface takes a long look at Allison. She smiles at him. He smiles back. He looks at Eugene and his smile fades.

EUGENE

What's the problem?

BABYFACE COP

Problem is, you ignored a clearly-placed stop sign, not to mention you was going forty-five plus while doing it. You leave your good sense at home, son?

Laughter from Allison at this... Eugene's embarrassment deepens.

ALLISON

Officer, this is my nephew. I've been teaching him how to drive and I was chattering away like I tend to do and I guess I must have distracted him.

Babyface leans in the window to address Allison better. Eugene has to lean back to maintain his personal space.

BABYFACE COP

Nephew? How old are you, miss? You don't look a day past twenty.

ALLISON

(with a lovely smile)
Guess again, Handsome.

Eugene shoots her a look, his jealousy palpable.

EXT. BACK ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Whistling, Babyface strolls back to the police car.

INT. POLICE CAR - CONTINUOUS

He gets in and waves out of his window in the Hudson's direction. The truck drives off. Babyface shakes his head.

BABYFACE COP

God damn... God damn.

INT. GEORGE AND OLIVIA'S BEDROOM - FARMHOUSE - MORNING

Shotgun in hand, George pockets rounds from a box of ammunition in the closet. Olivia sits on the bed behind him.

OLIVIA

Don't shoot my son, George.

GEORGE

Olivia, we ain't gonna shoot nobody until the kid's free and clear. I told you that.

George finishes and turns to his wife.

GEORGE

I get a third of that bounty as it currently stands and we're set... We can stay.

Olivia says nothing, regarding her husband with dread. He moves in to say this quietly:

GEORGE

And another thing: if word gets out about where that bitch was hiding, and I'm not the one to bring her in...? Makes me sick to even think about it.

Olivia glares at him.

OLIVIA

You think I care right now about *any of that?*

(beat)

You bring my son back to me, or you don't bother coming back.

George watches her, the weight of this clear to him.

INT. LOBBY - MATADOR POLICE STATION - MORNING

Babyface enters, still finishing the last of his sandwich. He grins at the POLICE DISPATCHER - a cranky woman of 50.

DISPATCHER

You're early.

BABYFACE COP

I'm in love.

DISPATCHER

With what? Your mirror?

Babyface forces a guffaw of laughter. He goes behind the desk to the notice board.

BABYFACE COP

That's rich. You oughta go into showbiz. It would suit your looks.

The dispatcher rolls her eyes and Babyface scans the board. Wanted posters are tacked up next to typed announcements.

BABYFACE COP
(muttering)
Anything new in dishwasher-ville?

He notices, half-buried - a picture of Allison's face. He squints and uncovers it, revealing her wanted poster.

Surprised, he lets go of the remainder of his ham sandwich. It splats onto the floor.

INT. KITCHEN - FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

George enters, trailed by Olivia. BILL TADE and CARL LOMAX, unemployed middle-aged farmers, wait respectfully near the back door. Both are holding rifles.

BILL TADE
Mornin', Mrs. Evans.

Olivia coolly ignores Bill and sits next to her daughter at the kitchen table.

BILL TADE
Eugene's gonna be a-okay.

Still nothing from Olivia. She puts her arm around Phoebe and draws her close.

The phone rings. George answers it immediately.

GEORGE (ON PHONE)
This is Evans.
(listens)
Uh-huh.
(listens)
All right. I appreciate it.

George hangs up, addresses the room:

GEORGE
They're near Matador, heading south.

INT. HUDSON TRUCK - DAY

Allison wakes with a start - sitting upright in her seat. Eugene is staring intently out the windshield.

ALLISON
Why are we slowing down?

EUGENE
Look.

Two miles down the highway - a ROADBLOCK: three police cars creating a pinch point and numerous OFFICERS. Allison glares - she doesn't like the way this looks at all...

Just beyond the roadblock is a small town - one-story buildings and a water tower.

Between the Hudson and the roadblock - an intersection with a dirt farm road, quickly getting closer.

ALLISON
Here, here - take a right.

EXT. FARM ROAD INTERSECTION - THAT MOMENT

The Hudson slows and turns onto the road.

After a moment of hard-to-discern activity at the roadblock, one of the police cars breaks off and heads up the highway after them - not in a hurry, but clearly suspicious.

INT. HUDSON TRUCK - THAT MOMENT

Allison watches the distant car get closer.

ALLISON
Turn back, you bastards...
(beat, then to Eugene:)
Speed up.

EXT. FARM ROAD - THAT MOMENT

The Hudson accelerates, kicking up dust. A mile off now, the police car turns on its siren and speeds up too.

MOMENTS LATER:

The Hudson is further down the farm road, which crosses a dry river on a rickety bridge.

Just before that, a less-traveled dirt road spurs off and runs along the riverbank amid clusters of elm trees.

The Hudson makes a sharp turn onto this road, fishtailing -

INT. HUDSON TRUCK - THAT MOMENT

- and nearly spinning out. Eugene wrenches the wheel side-to-side and succeeds in straightening the truck. Allison laughs gleefully, as if this were a ride at the state fair. Eugene shoots her a wary glance.

INT. HUDSON TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

The Hudson sits idling in the shade of some elms. Allison and Eugene stare out the window behind them - they have a clear view of the riverside road back to the bridge.

EUGENE

Maybe they didn't see us turn...

ALLISON

Of course they did.

Lo and behold - the police car, sirens wailing, slows down and stops at the intersection, as if considering. Then, it makes a left turn and comes after them.

EXT. HUDSON TRUCK - THAT MOMENT

Eugene and Allison open their doors and jump out. Allison makes a break down the riverbank, limping. Eugene hesitates, watching the fast-approaching police car.

ALLISON

What are you waiting for?!

Eugene follows down the bank. Allison throws an arm around his shoulder and they move off together along the dry riverbed.

EXT. DEAD WHEAT FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

Some hours later, the sun lower in the sky. Allison and Eugene lie amid crumbling stalks of wheat, watching a FARMHOUSE. They're both sweating in the late-day heat.

A moment passes. Suddenly, Allison is laughing. Eugene glares at her.

ALLISON

Isn't this fun...? I'm having fun.

He shakes his head moodily. Allison's gaze lingers on him and then she nods at the farmhouse.

ALLISON
You think it's empty, or what?

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Eugene stands at a window, peering into the farmhouse through his cupped hands.

Allison lingers by the new-looking Chevy truck parked on the dirt driveway.

She's looking back in the direction they came from - shouts of police and the barks of search dogs can be heard echoing from the distant grove of riverbank elms.

Eugene steps away from the window.

EUGENE
Stay here.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Eugene pads quietly into the living room, where an octogenarian FARMER snores loudly in an easy chair.

A half-full pitcher of water and an empty glass sit on the side-table next to the farmer, along with a set of keys.

Eugene hears a faint tapping - Allison is peering in the window at him. She makes a "hurry-up" motion.

INT. CHEVY TRUCK - EVENING

The farmer's keys dangle from the ignition as the stolen Chevy purrs down the highway. Eugene drives and Allison rides shotgun, holding the pitcher of water.

Allison drinks, then offers some water to Eugene.

He takes it with his free hand and tips it over his open mouth. Water goes everywhere and the truck swerves a little. Allison laughs.

EUGENE
Darn it.

ALLISON
Here.

She reaches out and helps him put the jug to his lips. He drinks.

EXT. TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The last glow of dusk leaving the sky... Two trucks push along the highway. The one in the lead is George's Ford.

INT. FORD TRUCK - THAT MOMENT

George grips the steering wheel, utterly intent. An un-ashed cigarette dangles from his lips.

Carl Lomax sits next to him, staring pensively out the window. They drive in tense silence.

EXT. NIGHT'S REST MOTOR COURT - NIGHT

A neon "Vacancy" blinks beneath the sign for the Night's Rest Motor Court - a collection of small bungalows, each with its own parking space.

Eugene and Allison's stolen Chevy pulls off the road and parks in front of the office.

INT. CHEVY TRUCK - THAT MOMENT

Eugene starts to get out, as does Allison -

EUGENE

You ought to wait here.

ALLISON

Uh-uh. I wanna stretch my legs.

Eugene indicates the DESK CLERK (20s), visible in the office.

EUGENE

He'll see you.

ALLISON

So? Let him see.

INT. MOTOR COURT OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The radio is playing an episode of the Lone Ranger. The bored clerk - attractive, tall - sits up as they enter.

DESK CLERK

Evenin'.

Allison leans on the desk. She is still magnetic despite her day on the run in the Texas summer.

ALLISON
Evening yourself, Handsome.

Eugene grinds his teeth. The clerk glances between him and Allison, trying to discern their relationship.

ALLISON
How you doing on this lonesome night?

DESK CLERK
Well, I can't complain.

ALLISON
The sign says you have vacancies.

DESK CLERK
That's right.
(the hint of a smile)
One room or two?

Before Allison can answer -

EUGENE
One.

INT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT'S REST MOTOR COURT - NIGHT

They enter the bland room. Allison continues into the bathroom and shuts the door. She turns the shower on.

Eugene follows to the closed bathroom door and stands there. Almost knocks. Decides not to...

ALLISON (THROUGH DOOR)
I can see your shadow.

Caught, Eugene has to say something. But he doesn't.

ALLISON (THROUGH DOOR)
What is it?

Eugene wrestles with himself for a moment and then says it -

EUGENE
You trying to get a rise out of me,
talking to fellas like that?

ALLISON (THROUGH DOOR)
What fellas?

EUGENE

(a beat, then:)

The cop this morning and - and the fella at the desk. You was calling them "Handsome".

He cringes, embarrassed by what he's saying.

ALLISON (THROUGH DOOR)

You know, you're all the same. You all think with your dicks.

Even in Eugene's pulp magazines, no one's ever said anything like that. He doesn't know how to respond.

The bathroom door opens, emitting a cloud of steam. It dissipates a little to reveal Allison, who is naked except for a towel. Eugene averts his eyes.

ALLISON

Did it occur to you that I was chatting them up for a reason?

EUGENE

Take your shower... We can talk about this later.

ALLISON

No, if it bothers you - if you care - do something about it... What's the use of being shy anymore?

He stares at her with a formidable mixture of lust and nerves. She looks back serenely, almost coldly...

MOMENTS LATER:

Eugene and Allison are kissing in the shower, naked but obscured by steam. We slowly PUSH IN on them.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In the decades since, whether recounting the story to troopers in a Honolulu bar, middle-aged insurance men at a steak dinner, or fellow grandfathers playing blackjack in someone's rec room, that's pretty much how I'd tell them my night with the famous Allison Wells came about.

(beat)

But that isn't really how it went.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT'S REST MOTOR COURT - NIGHT

Allison sits on the lid of the toilet, crying. She is fully clothed and the bathroom is devoid of steam... Some or all of the previous scene was a fantasy.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The reality was more desperate and sad, as reality tends to be.

INT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT'S REST MOTOR COURT - THAT MOMENT

Eugene listens at the bathroom door. He looks worried.

EUGENE

Can I do something for you?

No response...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I won't recount every detail of how we wound up in bed together because, quite honestly, I can hardly remember.

The door opens and Allison is standing there with red eyes and wet cheeks. She takes Eugene's hand.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But I remember what happened after.

LATER:

Eugene and Allison lie in bed in a post-coital haze. Allison is smoking a cigarette, staring off. The radio is on, quietly playing a Glenn Miller tune.

Eugene taps her and gestures for the cigarette. She hands it to him and watches his face as he takes an unpracticed drag.

There is a vulnerability and need in her eyes that is new to us. She tentatively caresses his cheek, then takes the cigarette back.

ESTABLISHING. NIGHT'S REST MOTOR COURT - MORNING

The sun rises over the motor court.

INT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT'S REST MOTOR COURT - MORNING

Morning light silhouettes Allison at the window as she peers out through the flimsy curtains.

MOMENTS LATER:

She's in bed with Eugene, watching him sleep with genuine affection. After a moment, he wakes and sees her. He smiles.

ALLISON
Morning, Handsome.

EUGENE
Morning.

ALLISON
I've got a surprise for you.

EUGENE
Oh yeah...?

He paws at her, but Allison pulls away.

ALLISON
Not like that. Close your eyes.

Eugene smirks, but closes them. Allison takes something out of her knapsack and presses it into his hand.

He opens his eyes - she's given him the Elgin wristwatch. The blood has been cleaned off and the watch is gleaming.

She watches him expectantly, but he doesn't know what to say. She senses his unease.

ALLISON
You don't like it?

EUGENE
No, I do... I do. It's swell.

Eugene holds the watch to his wrist. He tries to muster a big smile, but his heart isn't in it.

EUGENE
It'll look real sharp.

ALLISON
What's the matter with it?

EUGENE
Nothing. No, it's nicer than anything I ever had.

Allison simply stares at him. Finally, Eugene admits what's on his mind:

EUGENE

This was Perry's watch. You gave it to *him*.

ALLISON

(suddenly angry)
So what? You want a brand new one?

EUGENE

No, that's not -

ALLISON

You want me to hop in the car and go to Dillard's? I'll pick up a new watch for you at the watch counter.

EUGENE

That's not what I meant.

ALLISON

Then say what you mean!

EUGENE

Doesn't it remind you of him?

A beat. Allison gets off the bed and crosses the room. She pauses at the bathroom door.

ALLISON

Wherever Perry is, the last thing he needs is a watch.

(beat)

Do you want it, or not?

EUGENE

I want it.

Allison enters the bathroom and shuts the door.

LATER:

The sound of the running shower. Eugene is in bed, reading the inscription carved on the back of the watch:

Love Forever,

A

He studies this, his expression unreadable.

INT. CHEVY TRUCK - MORNING

Eugene drives, wearing the wristwatch. Allison stares out the window at the endless dormant fields.

ALLISON

I'm sorry... I get all mixed up sometimes.

EUGENE

I'm keen on it. I shouldn't've said nothing.

She turns to him, smiling.

ALLISON

It makes you look like a million bucks.

Eugene smiles back.

EXT. GRAPEFRUIT STAND - DAY

Allison and Eugene sit at a picnic table, peeling huge grapefruits and eating them, their hands glistening.

In the background - the VENDOR, a middle-aged woman in glasses and a checkered dress, lounges on a chair in the shade of the stand, fanning herself.

ALLISON

People are strange...

EUGENE

How's that?

ALLISON

I'm so happy you came with me. I am... But yesterday morning, when you wouldn't get out of that truck...

(beat)

I was wondering what the hell I was gonna do with you.

EUGENE

I know it.

ALLISON

You showed me a side of you I hadn't seen.

(smiles at him)

I like that side.

EUGENE
Music to my ears.

ALLISON
I guess it's funny to me how you
can so easily change your mind
about a person.

EUGENE
It is funny... But I ain't gonna
change my mind about you.

Allison returns Eugene's affectionate gaze with the same
open vulnerability that she had in bed the night prior -

ALLISON
Do you think I'm a good person?

The question catches him off guard.

EUGENE
Sure I do... You asking just 'cause
you was mad at me?

ALLISON
I don't know...
(beat)
I suppose I just feel like in some
ways that you're a good person and
I'm not.

EUGENE
Why would you think that?

ALLISON
(shrugs, then:)
Because I'm from the city and I do
things for myself... And you do
things for other people.

EUGENE
Not always... Not usually.

ALLISON
I want to be more like Eugene
Evans...

Eugene grabs her and pulls her close, a gesture she
appreciates.

EUGENE
You don't have to worry about who
you are, or what I think of you...
I'm over the moon for you.

ALLISON

I am too.

They kiss.

LATER:

The trees behind the grapefruit vendor sway gently in the wind, sunlight glimmering through their leaves.

WIDE SHOT of Allison and Eugene walking back to the truck, both happy. Smiling and talking, though we can't hear them -

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It was the sort of perfect morning that echoes through the rest of your life - the details blurrier every year, but with a positive resonance that never fades. I half-remember us going on to discuss a dream she'd had the night before -

CLOSE ON the two of them - we hear Allison now:

ALLISON

It was me and you and we were in swim clothes...

(reverently)

And we were on a black-sand Mexican beach.

EUGENE

How'd you know it was Mexico?

ALLISON

I just *did*... It was a dream.

(beat)

There was this darling little girl with us. But she wasn't our child.

Eugene chuckles nervously -

EUGENE

But she coulda been?

Allison shrugs, looking off to the distance.

EUGENE

If she wasn't ours, whose was she then?

ALLISON

I don't know.

DREAM: EXT. MEXICAN BEACH - DAY

Eugene and Allison, in swim clothes, sit in the sand with a FIVE-YEAR-OLD GIRL.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
I have a theory.

CLOSE ON the five-year-old girl, who has the same complexion and dark hair as Allison.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
I think the little girl in Allison's dream was *her* - side-by-side with the adult.

EXT. GRAPEFRUIT STAND - DAY

Eugene and Allison get in the truck and drive off. The grapefruit vendor watches them go.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
For the world who didn't know her, Allison went on to become a woman of legend, perfect and inscrutable.

INT. CHEVY TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Sailing down the road - Allison has her hand out the open window and the wind coming into the truck blows her hair around. Eugene glances at her admiringly.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
But to me she was a human being - with fears and desires and a longing for her past, and that's how I like to remember her.

LATER:

The truck idles at a crossroads. Eugene has a road map spread out on the dash. Allison watches as he traces a path of rural roads leading to the Mexican border.

EUGENE
If we're gonna bypass the rest of the main roads, we ought to go east.

Allison shakes her head and indicates a small town that Eugene avoided - Round Rock.

ALLISON

South. We're making a stop in Round Rock.

EUGENE

Why?

ALLISON

To pick up some supplies from some friends of mine.

Eugene thinks about this.

EUGENE

Round Rock's in the middle of nowhere. How do you got friends there?

ALLISON

They're part-time nomads... Sometimes they find themselves in the middle of nowhere.

Allison takes the map from him and starts folding it up.

ALLISON

So, let's me and you do what nomads do and move.

Eugene considers, then shifts the truck into first.

EXT. TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - DAY

George's Ford and the other posse truck move along the two-lane highway, approaching the Night's Rest Motor Court.

INT. FORD TRUCK - THAT MOMENT

George is still behind the wheel. He looks bleary-eyed and exhausted - they've been driving around this part of Texas since last night. Carl dozes in the passenger seat.

George watches the motor court pass by on the left and then returns his gaze to the road. However, something about the place has piqued his interest.

He slows and makes a u-turn. Carl jerks awake and looks around, grumbling -

CARL LOMAX

Time is it?

EXT. NIGHT'S REST MOTOR COURT - THAT MOMENT

The two trucks pull onto the motor court blacktop and come to a stop. George, Carl and Bill step out.

BILL TADE

What are we doin' here, George?

George scans the motor court suspiciously.

GEORGE

I don't know.

Abruptly, he heads into the office. Bill and Carl exchange a look and then follow.

EXT. TWO-STORY VICTORIAN - DAY

The stolen Chevy stops across the road from a two-story Victorian house on the outskirts of Round Rock. Rusted-out vehicles and garbage litter the weed-choked front yard.

On the property behind the house, a vast grapefruit orchard extends, still thriving despite the drought.

INT. CHEVY TRUCK - THAT MOMENT

Eugene regards the house uneasily while Allison fixes her hair in the rear-view mirror.

A WOMAN in her early-30s, wearing a dress and flapper hat, is watching from the window next to the front door. When she sees Eugene looking at her, she disappears inside.

EUGENE

You know these friends well?

ALLISON

Are you worried about me?

EUGENE

Should I be?

ALLISON

They're harmless... Just some tired old hounds.

EUGENE

They got money to give you?

ALLISON

That's right...

(MORE)

ALLISON (CONT'D)
 (briefly puckers her lips)
 And some lipstick if I'm lucky.

Satisfied that she looks acceptable, Allison opens her door and steps out, as does Eugene.

ALLISON
 Stay in the truck. We don't have
 the time.

EUGENE
 Won't take any longer than you
 going in there by yourself. I wanna
 meet 'em.

ALLISON
 Well, who's gonna keep a lookout?

She meets his suspicious gaze with equanimity. She smiles.

ALLISON
 I'll be five minutes... Lay on the
 horn if things get gloomy.

She winks and closes her door. Eugene climbs back in the truck and pensively watches her go up to the house.

LATER:

Some time has passed. A warbling country tune plays quietly on the radio. Eugene taps on the truck door impatiently.

The woman in the flapper hat is peering out the window again. Eugene squints, noticing her.

EXT. TWO-STORY VICTORIAN - THAT MOMENT

Eugene steps out of the truck. Seeing this, the woman again disappears. He crosses the road to the house.

MOMENTS LATER:

He's standing at the front door, having just knocked. It opens to reveal CLAYTON HARVEY, a roughly handsome man with slicked back hair. His fashionable clothes (suit vest over a tailored white shirt) are dirty and sweat-stained.

EUGENE
 Sorry to bother you, sir. There's a
 lady I'm traveling with -

CLAYTON

Yeah, she's occupied at the moment.
Whyn't you come in and sit down?

INT. KITCHEN - TWO-STORY VICTORIAN - MOMENTS LATER

The home has the shabby quality of a flophouse. Eugene stands at the kitchen window, looking out onto the backyard where Allison is arguing with a MIDDLE-AGED MAN, dressed similarly to Clayton in a suit vest and shirt.

CLAYTON (O.C.)

See? Just settling old business.
Nothing to write home about.

Clayton is pouring himself a cup of coffee. ADELAIDE, the woman in the hat, sits at the kitchen table, smoking and watching Eugene with sphinx-like placidity.

CLAYTON

(to Eugene)
You want a cup?

Eugene shakes his head and sits at the table. He is nervous.

EUGENE

So where ya'll from?

Clayton chuckles phlegmatically. His teeth are badly cigarette-stained.

CLAYTON

"Ya'll"... Listen to that. Well, I
know where you're from, Texas.
(beat)
Clayton Harvey, pleased to make
your acquaintance.

Clayton offers his hand. They shake.

CLAYTON

I hail from Chicago and Adelaide's
from K.C., but this is her house.
(indicating the backyard)
Teddy out there's from Chi-Town
also. Me and him's been here about
three weeks now, laying low.

Eugene ponders this, not sure what exactly Clayton means by "laying low". He half-turns and points to the backyard.

EUGENE

What are they arguing about?

CLAYTON

Don't worry about it, kid... Don't worry. You're making me nervous. Let 'em talk it out.

(changing the subject)

How old are you? Twenty?

EUGENE

Uh, fifteen.

CLAYTON

Fifteen? Shit. I'd say you look old enough to fight a war.

Clayton polishes his teeth with a finger.

CLAYTON

Where you and the girl headed? The border?

EUGENE

(surprised)

She told you?

Clayton gives him a look -

CLAYTON

She didn't tell me a thing, but where else'd you be going other'n Canada? She snuffed seven God damn people and it's all over the papers...

Eugene is silent, his confusion growing.

CLAYTON

Too bad about Perry Montroy, though... I kinda liked the guy.

(grins)

Are you and her, uh...?

EUGENE

Sir, those are lies about her killing people. They ain't true.

CLAYTON

(to Adelaide)

He thinks I'm stupid. He thinks I don't know.

(to Eugene)

Kid, we're on your side. Shit... You don't have to pretend around us. We know what she's done. Hell, I saw her kill her first man...

(MORE)

CLAYTON (CONT'D)
 Some bookie in a basement in
 Garfield Park. Bullet to the back
 of the head... Establishing her
bona-fides.

Clayton chuckles, but his smile fades when he realizes that Eugene's fear and confusion are real.

He looks to Adelaide, who finally speaks, her voice incongruously wizened and tired -

ADELAIDE
 Clay, Eugene here's a civilian.

EXT. BACKYARD - THAT MOMENT

Allison and TEDDY GREENE, the middle-aged man, argue in the backyard. Teddy is pacing:

TEDDY
 Let me just - I just gotta repeat
 this because it's so far-fetched...
 Allison Wells is gonna move to
 Mexico and go straight... No more
 heists, no more business. Just...
Done.

ALLISON
 That's right.

TEDDY
 You don't have it in you, sugar.
 That ain't who you are.

ALLISON
 If that's what you think, then you
 don't know me at all, Teddy.

TEDDY
 Please, you're the only broad who
 broke my heart... I know you better
 than you think I do. This is
 another one of your *passing*
fancies...

Allison rubs her temples -

ALLISON
 Can you just tell me straight,
 without any more hee-hawing
 bullshit? Are you gonna help me or
 not?

TEDDY

Give me a reason... *One good reason*
why I should, and I will. But
sentiment ain't a reason.

MOMENTS LATER:

Allison is walking up the steps to the kitchen's back door.
Teddy watches her go with his arms crossed.

INT. KITCHEN - TWO-STORY VICTORIAN - CONTINUOUS

Allison enters to find Clayton hastily loading a revolver
from a loose pool of bullets on the table as he shouts in
the direction of the open front door, through which Eugene
can be seen running across the road. Adelaide is nowhere in
sight.

CLAYTON

Kid! Kid, don't do nothing stupid!

ALLISON

The hell is going on?!

Clayton whirls around.

CLAYTON

Coulda warned us he wasn't in on
it!

ALLISON

He came in here? You talked to him?

CLAYTON

What do you think?

Allison stands there in a deep panic, her mind racing. After
a beat, she approaches Clayton. He thinks she's coming to
stop him from loading the pistol, so he explains himself -

CLAYTON

Has to be done, Wells... He'll rat
us out if he gets the chance.

ALLISON

Let me do it.

Clayton stares at her in surprise... He sees something in
her face and hands her the revolver.

CLAYTON

Kid's on a tear. Better be quick.

EXT./INT. TWO-STORY VICTORIAN/CHEVY TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Eugene is in the Chevy when Allison runs out of the house. He fires up the engine and shifts into first.

The truck starts moving as she reaches the driver's side window. She points the gun at him.

ALLISON

Let me in!

He accelerates past her. She aims at the truck and fires, shattering the rear window.

Eugene ducks, covering his head and taking his foot off the gas, stalling the engine. He slides to the passenger-side door in order to get out on the opposite side from Allison.

He scrambles to open it... Gets it open... Only to find her standing there, revolver aimed at his chest.

INT. CHEVY TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

She pushes in, gun ahead of her. Eugene slides back behind the wheel and Allison slams the passenger door shut.

ALLISON

C'mon.

Eugene doesn't move.

ALLISON

Drive!

EUGENE

Where?!

In spite of everything, Allison smiles.

ALLISON

Where do you think?

EXT. TWO-STORY VICTORIAN - THAT MOMENT

Clayton runs out of the house, followed by Teddy and Adelaide, who is carrying a shotgun. They watch the Chevy disappear down the road.

ADELAIDE

Did she do it or not?

CLAYTON
Don't matter now.

Teddy turns and looks down the road behind them. In the distance, two trucks are coming their way - George and his posse. Teddy shakes his head -

TEDDY
What a dog of a day...
(to Clayton)
Let's go.

INT. CHEVY TRUCK - THAT MOMENT

The Chevy speeds through the Grapefruit orchard. Allison opens the glovebox and puts the gun in. She leaves it open.

Eugene's fury and sense of betrayal are mixed with a deep, gut-level fear. He's crying a little. He wipes his eyes.

ALLISON
(off the gun)
This was just for show, Handsome...
I wouldn't hurt you.

He pulls away when she tries to touch his face. She eyes him for a moment then turns her attention to her leg, hiking up her dress -

Blood soaks the bandage around her thigh - her gunshot wound has reopened from her sprint. She winces and smooths her dress back down. Finally, Eugene speaks:

EUGENE
There ain't any money, is there?

A long pause from Allison... Perhaps she hoped that this would just blow over. She shakes her head, ashamed.

EUGENE
And there sure as hell ain't no
father in Mexico, neither.

ALLISON
No, there isn't.

They ride in silence, Eugene staring in fury out the windshield.

ALLISON
Handsome, please... Look at me.

EUGENE

Don't call me that no more! That was your way of stringing me along...

ALLISON

I know...

EUGENE

It didn't mean nothing to you.

ALLISON

It does now. I swear to God.

EUGENE

(shaking his head)
You're a piece of work, you know that...? You're crazy.

ALLISON

(a beat, then:)
That isn't true.

EUGENE

It's the only true thing about you.

Her tears come easily. She looks out the window and tries to hide them, to no avail.

Eugene has no pity for her... He eyes the revolver in the glovebox. Noticing this, she puts it in her lap and keeps her hand on it. She looks at him with sad eyes -

FREEZE FRAME on Allison.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The human tendency to ruminate on the path not taken is a tantalizing fantasy, but it makes for a painful way of going through life. Nevertheless, I have always been a man of my vices and I often find myself thinking back to that day in the orchard and wondering what shape my existence would have taken had I simply stayed in the truck.

FREEZE FRAME ends.

SUDDENLY, the truck is skidding to a stop on the dirt road - Eugene has slammed the brakes. Allison is pitched forward and the gun goes flying to the truck's floor.

Eugene opens his door and jumps out, running full tilt into the orchard.

ALLISON

Eugene!

Allison scrambles for the gun and gets out of the truck.

EXT. GRAPEFRUIT ORCHARD - CONTINUOUS

Eugene quickly disappears among the grapefruit trees.

ALLISON

Eugene Evans!

FREEZE FRAME on Allison, in a panic.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I can't imagine a life more different.

FREEZE FRAME ends.

Allison runs after him. She passes the first line of trees and looks around - he's nowhere in sight, though he can be heard running through the dry grass.

She keeps going - the orchard has a disorienting geometry, the trees line up and then divide and then line up again.

She steps on a grapefruit and stumbles, almost falling... Panting, she leans against a tree to catch her breath.

A moment passes. She looks up at the clear blue sky...

And then Eugene darts into view. She raises the gun.

ALLISON

Stop! I've got a bead on you!

He stops short and turns. Their eyes meet.

ALLISON

You take one more step, I swear to God, I'll shoot you dead.

EUGENE

(a beat, then:)
Just let me go home.

She points at the watch on his wrist -

ALLISON
Do you know what that says on the back?

EUGENE
Yeah.

ALLISON
It says "forever".

EUGENE
I know... You wrote that for Perry.

ALLISON
But then I gave it to you.
(beat)
Come to Mexico.

Eugene shakes his head... Allison moves a few feet closer. He backs up.

ALLISON
Please...

EUGENE
Allison... I - I know what you did...

ALLISON
(through tears)
But that was the past... And the past doesn't repeat itself.
(beat)
You make me a better person - you make me good - and if you could just understand that...

His expression makes it clear: he's leaving and there's nothing she can do about it except shoot him.

ALLISON
(pleading)
What about your father? You're gonna give up on him, too?

A long beat from Eugene. He realizes this as it comes out of his mouth:

EUGENE
He's dead... He's gone.

Her face sinks. The fire goes out of her eyes and is replaced by a cold reckoning.

ALLISON
How do you know?

EUGENE
I just do.
(backing up)
Don't shoot me.

Eugene turns and runs for it. Allison aims the gun with both hands and pulls the trigger.

EXT. ORCHARD ROAD - DAY

The posse has finally caught up - their two trucks are parked behind the stolen Chevy.

Bill and Carl search the Chevy while George scans the orchard for some sign of Allison and Eugene.

Abruptly, the *crack* of a gunshot echoes from the trees. Startled, the men look in that direction. A flock of birds fly up from the orchard, cawing.

INT. GRAPEFRUIT ORCHARD - THAT MOMENT

Eugene lies face down in the grass, unmoving. Allison looks on, trembling, gun still aimed.

ALLISON
Get up!
(nothing...)
It went wide! Don't pretend.

Still no movement. Allison notices blood pooling on the ground beneath Eugene's body. She drops the gun and runs to him.

She kneels next to Eugene and turns him over. He regards her blankly, gasping. He was hit in the right arm - a wound that isn't immediately fatal.

Her terror turns to joy. She takes his face in her hands -

ALLISON
Baby, you're all right. It's over... It's okay...
(beat)
You're gonna be just fine.

Suddenly - men shouting, coming closer.

Allison looks up. It's George, Bill and Carl, approaching through the orchard, guns at the ready... Her deliverance.

She looks back down at Eugene, he's blinking, coming to.

EUGENE

It hurts.

Allison's expression becomes sad - she is lucid now and back in the human realm, and what she has to do is clear.

ALLISON

That's a good sign...

She leans down and kisses him.

The posse crashes closer. With one last look at Eugene, Allison stands, and runs.

BILL TADE

There she is!

GEORGE

(upon noticing Eugene)

Oh my God.

Bill picks up Allison's revolver from where she dropped it and waves it at Eugene.

BILL TADE

Son, is this it? Is this all she had?

Eugene just blinks, too dazed or in too much pain to answer. George crouches next to him and snaps his fingers.

GEORGE

Look at me, look at my eyes. Focus.

Eugene looks at George and when he does so, the weight of everything that's happened hits him fully -

EUGENE

(near tears)

I'm sorry.

GEORGE

I know...

BILL TADE

George, me and Carl are going ahead. What about you?

GEORGE
Just hold on a minute.

BILL TADE
No, sir. She's a slick kitty.

GEORGE
She's on foot! Where's she gonna go?

BILL TADE
Well, that's been said before,
Evans...
(kneels next to George)
Listen, me and Carl talked about
this - we can't share the bounty
with you if you ain't there.

GEORGE
Come again?

BILL TADE
She's likely armed, and you ain't
put yourself through no risk to get
this far... If you ain't gonna
help, by rights it ain't your
bounty.

George glares in disbelief. Eugene looks between them anxiously.

GEORGE
You son of a bitch... You think I'm
just gonna let him bleed out?

BILL TADE
He ain't gonna bleed out very quick
from a wound like that. Least
that's the way I see it... Up to
you, Evans.

Bill stands. A moment passes. George shakes his head.

GEORGE
Fuck you, Tade... Both of you.

BILL TADE
Suit yourself.

And with that, Bill and Carl set off. George stares after them, then helps Eugene up.

GEORGE
C'mon.

INT. FORD TRUCK - DAY

Eugene, pale and spectral, bounces in the passenger seat as George tears down a rural road. Blood soaks the right side of Eugene's shirt.

GEORGE
You with me...? Hey!

EUGENE
I'm here...

EXT. SMALL-TOWN HOSPITAL - DAY

The truck screeches to a halt in front of a one-story, clapboard hospital.

INT. LOBBY - SMALL-TOWN HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

George pushes in, carrying Eugene. WE NOTICE, but George does not - Eugene is still wearing the Elgin wristwatch.

GEORGE
Help! We need help!

INT. HALLWAY - SMALL-TOWN HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

A near-unconscious Eugene is being wheeled away on a gurney by a female NURSE and ORDERLY. (Both of them pushing sixty and semi-unprepared for this emergency.)

George stands at the hallway doors, receding away from them.

NURSE
(to Eugene)
Who is that man?

EUGENE
My father.

INT. WARD - SMALL-TOWN HOSPITAL - DAY

Perhaps a day later. Eugene is dozing in bed, arm bandaged.

Two SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES, here to both guard Eugene and prevent him from leaving, sit at a table near the entrance to the ward, reading newspapers.

George sits at his stepson's bedside, holding the Elgin wristwatch and reading the inscription on back.

He regards Eugene with curiosity - and perhaps some admiration - then sets the watch on the bedside table.

EXT. BACK OF SMALL-TOWN HOSPITAL - DAY

Some days later. Deputies escort Eugene out of a back door, his arm in a sling. George follows, concerned but powerless.

They walk Eugene to a waiting police car and handcuff him, the cuffs clicking on the wristwatch. They help him get in the backseat and then shut the door.

Eugene and George exchange a nod through the window and then the car starts moving - lights spinning, but siren off.

EXT. SMALL-TOWN HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

The police car pulls around the hospital to get to the road.

On the hospital's dead lawn, a number of REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS have assembled, evidently waiting for Eugene.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Here he comes!

The photographers rush over and start snapping photos. Eugene turns away, hiding his face until the car reaches the street and speeds off.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CHILDRESS COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Eugene, not wearing the wristwatch, sits across from Sheriff Ross at his desk. The sheriff is practically twiddling his thumbs. They've been at this for a while. Finally:

SHERIFF ROSS

What was it, son...? Her figure?

Eugene just stares back at him.

SHERIFF ROSS

Was it the way she looked at you...?

(leans in, grinning)

Was it her pussy?

Eugene says nothing. The sheriff leans back and regains some composure.

SHERIFF ROSS

You better think of something plausible, 'cause so far I don't trust a God damn word you've been saying.

EUGENE

When can I see my family?

The sheriff glares.

SHERIFF ROSS

You have gotten yourself into an enormous pile of shit. I'm worried you don't realize that.

Abruptly, the door opens and the young, city-boy DISTRICT ATTORNEY enters. He sports a nice suit and a high-status disposition. He sets a thick file folder on the table.

SHERIFF ROSS

(getting up)

Mr. D.A.

They shake hands. The D.A. sits in the sheriff's chair.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

(to the Sheriff)

You can leave us.

SHERIFF ROSS

He may be a boy, sir, but he's been in some pretty rough company.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Thank you, Ross. I'll holler if I need you.

A beat - and then the cowed sheriff leaves his own office. The D.A. takes some papers from the folder and calmly looks them over. Finally, he addresses Eugene:

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

I'm just gonna get straight to it, as I imagine you're worn out... Son, why did you let this woman lead you astray?

EUGENE

I already gave them my statement, sir.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Oh, I've read it. A few times...
It's got everything except *why*. And
that's what I sincerely would like
to be informed of.

Eugene shakes his head, deep in thought. Then:

EUGENE

I don't know exactly...

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

You don't know *exactly*, or you
don't know at all?

EUGENE

I don't know at all.

The D.A. watches him, deep skepticism evident.

EUGENE

It don't make much sense to me
either, sir.

The D.A. considers this. A moment passes... Finally, he
reaches into the folder and produces the Elgin watch. He
reads the inscription, allowing himself a slight smile.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It's been many decades since I've
cracked open the Good Book, but in
'44 I read something in one of
those little army Bibles that's
stuck with me through all the years
since...

Finally, the D.A. sets the watch on the table. He takes his
file folder and, with a nod, leaves the office.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I can't remember the passage
exactly, but it goes something like
this: "what are our lives? They are
but vapors that appeareth for a
little time and then vanisheth."

Eugene sits, alone with the watch. The seconds tick by.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I don't quite know why that
occurred to me just now, but I'm
sure someone could find a reason.

He takes the watch and puts it in his pocket.

INT. CHILDRESS COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Eugene embraces his mother in the marble courthouse lobby. She is sobbing, overjoyed to see her son alive.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They let me go with a charge of mischief and lying to an officer of the law. It helped that both of the vehicles I stole were returned to their owners soon after, if somewhat the worse for wear.

The hug ends. Eugene notices Phoebe watching sullenly nearby. Her expression is hurt and disappointed, but when Eugene smiles at her, she can't help but smile back.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

As punishment for my crimes, I was fined five-hundred dollars.

EXT. CHILDRESS COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Eugene and his family push through the crowd of REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS on the courthouse steps. An unintelligible jumble of questions are being shouted at him.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The court of public opinion was less lenient.

MONTAGE

-- IMAGE of a newspaper article with a photograph of Eugene on the courthouse steps.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

"Boy-love of the Killer Dame" was my favorite headline of the many that were printed. Most others were not so lyrical.

-- IMAGE of a newspaper article about Allison. Her enigmatic mugshot photo is prominent.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Additionally, Allison's past was exposed in careless detail.

-- IMAGE of a newspaper article with a photograph of Allison as a little girl.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Born "Gretchen Powell", she was the
 daughter of an Indiana oil man, the
 millionaire Tobin Powell.

-- PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPH of Allison as a little girl with her
 FATHER and MOTHER.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Her childhood had been a difficult
 and unhappy one.

CLOSE ON Allison's mother - she has sad, haunted eyes.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Her mother died in an asylum when
 Allison was ten.

FLASHBACK: INT. MORGUE - CHILDRESS COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Just after Eugene's interrogation - Eugene, his arm
 bandaged, is ushered past cadaver drawers by the CORONER,
 Sheriff Ross and a number of deputies.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 And her father, a very particular
 and demanding man, had committed
 suicide in 1927 with a bullet to
 the temple.

MOMENTS LATER:

All have assembled around a BODY under a sheet. The coroner
 lifts the sheet and we see Allison lying on the morgue slab,
 her face peaceful in death.

All look to Eugene for a positive ID. He nods, barely
 holding it together.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 As for Allison herself, -

FLASHBACK: EXT. GRAPEFRUIT ORCHARD - DAY

Allison is running, terrified. Her leg has bled all over her
 light blue, bird-patterned dress.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 - she was cut adrift from our
 material world on Monday, August
 27th, 1934. Seven days after we
 met.

Behind Allison, Bill Tade stops running and aims his rifle. He pulls the trigger. *CRACK*

Without a sound, Allison falls - her long hair flying... She lands on her back.

The exit wound is in the center of her chest and blood flows out freely. She blinks, looking up at the empty blue sky.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Sometimes, when I'm feeling lonesome, I like to imagine that she made it to Mexico and nine months later gave birth to a little girl in a fishing town on the Gulf.

Bill and Carl approach, guns raised protectively.

But Allison is powerless. Both men lower their weapons and regard her with a sort of reverence, aware that they're witness to something beautiful and terrible - the death of a rare bird.

Allison closes her eyes.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And I like to imagine that girl, sixty by now, would be a smart and lovely human being, and that she would embody the best aspects of Allison and myself.

EXT. EVANS FAMILY PROPERTY - SUNSET (PRESENT)

Eugene looks over his family's property for the last time - the barn, the farmhouse, the land... The sun sets gloriously over all of it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Despite what was said about Allison after she was gone, I do believe and will maintain that there was good in her.

Phoebe walks up and hugs him. They watch the sunset together.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It may sound like irony to some, but I can say unequivocally that my experiences with the so-called "Killer Dame" made me a better person, in a number of ways...

INT. BARN - THAT MOMENT

Inside the barn during the sunset - pink, orange and purple glow through the gaps in the slats as we PUSH IN on one of the wooden beams holding up the roof.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Not the least of which was coming to understand the preciousness of life and the importance of using it well, before it disappears as easily as it breezed in.

We get closer and closer to the beam until we can see something carved into it with the tip of a knife:

AW
1934

FLASHBACK: EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Earlier that same day - Eugene and his family pack their things onto George's truck.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

As for my family and I, we gave up the house and moved to Dallas.

INT. DALLAS GROCERS - DAY (PRESENT)

A year later - 1935. Wearing an apron, Eugene sweeps the floor of a well-stocked grocery store.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I took a job and spent the next two years paying off Childress county, not to mention my parents for the recovery of the Fletcher's truck.

FLASHBACK: EXT. FLETCHER RESIDENCE - DAY

A few weeks after Eugene's adventure - the Fetters are finally packing up their Hudson in order to leave Texas.

They regard Eugene suspiciously as he speaks to Ben in the driveway. Eugene's arm is still in a sling.

EUGENE

(to Ben)

California... How do you feel, Fletcher?

BEN

You know, when you took the truck,
I was halfway hoping we'd get to
stay, you wanna hear the truth of
it.

EUGENE

Well, I guess maybe I shoulda
wrecked it.

BEN

(chuckles, then:)
Yeah, I guess.

A silence descends... Despite their bonhomie in this moment,
their friendship is a shadow of what it was at the beginning
of the summer. So they shake, Eugene using his left hand.

EUGENE

Been nice knowing you, Fletcher.

BEN

'Course it has... Stay in touch.

EUGENE

Same to you. Write me a postcard or
something.

BEN

Sure. You bet.

EUGENE

Like I said, I'm sorry. Wish I
could take back what I did.

BEN

Forget it. Everything turned out
peachy in the end, right?

Eugene smiles, though it is tinged with heartache.

EUGENE

Yeah, I guess so.

MOMENTS LATER:

Eugene is meandering down the road. He turns and waves, but
Ben isn't looking as he heads back to his family. Eugene
turns around and continues.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I never spoke to Ben Fletcher
again.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I heard through the grapevine that
 he joined the navy for the War,
 made it through the Pacific theater
 and took a job as a taxi dispatcher
 in San Francisco. He died in 1981.

EXT. TEXAS CEMETERY - DAY (PRESENT - 1945)

A BAPTIST PRIEST reads a eulogy in front of a closed CASKET,
 upon which is sitting a framed photograph of George as a
 young deputy. The hills of Texas stretch into the distance.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 George Evans died of a heart attack
 at the age of 54, a week before
 V.E. Day.

Eugene, 26 now, sits in the front row, wearing his U.S. Army
 dress uniform. Pinned on it are Purple Heart, Parachutist
 Badge and 101st Airborne decorations.

Sitting next to Eugene are his WIFE (20s) and two young
 SONS, both toddlers. They are looking up at their father,
 nearly a stranger to them.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 They delayed his funeral until I
 returned, for which I was grateful.

Phoebe, 19 now, and Olivia, 48, are also in the front row.
 Olivia is bereft, but Phoebe has only toughened as she's
 grown older, and she holds her mother up with dignity.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 After the events of the summer of
 '34, George and I had finally
 reached an equilibrium... I
 considered him my father and he
 considered me his son.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Olivia, 72 now, lies in a hospital bed. Eugene, 50, and
 Phoebe, 43, sit at her bedside.

Eugene holds his mother's hand as they talk - inaudibly to
 us, though their expressions communicate the fact that the
 subject of discussion is something heavy and difficult.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 It took much longer for my mother
 and I to reach that same balance.

Their conversation fades in. Olivia is addressing her son -

OLIVIA

It's okay... I want you to know:
it's okay what you did...

(beat)

I've forgiven you.

Eugene nods, accepting it and fighting for composure. His mother smiles sadly at him.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Olivia passed away in 1969, having lived long enough to see men land on the moon and her grandsons turn into dope-smoking hippies.

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

Eugene, 50, in his U.S. Army dress uniform, marches with thousands of ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATORS down Washington D.C.'s Pennsylvania Ave, toward the WHITE HOUSE.

He is linked arm-in-arm with his SONS - hippies in their 20s who bear a distinct resemblance to their father. The three of them CHANT as they march down the avenue.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In a surprise to everyone in my family, but most-especially to my sons, who I had thought knew me better, I marched with them against the War in Vietnam.

INSERT - A photo of Eugene (65 here), his wife, sons, two DAUGHTER-IN-LAWS, and GRANDCHILDREN, taken in the mid-'80s at a barbecue in a Texas park. Eugene is smiling proudly.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Eventually, of course, they grew up... They cut their hair, got jobs and raised children of their own. Now, they're far more sedate and conservative than I ever was, which I find quite amusing.

CLOSE ON Phoebe, at the barbecue as well, beautiful in her late-50s. Her arm is around a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Phoebe stayed Phoebe. Afflicted
 with wanderlust, she traveled
 widely in the late '40s and the
 '50s, eventually settling back in
 Texas to teach grade school. She
 never married, and that's all I'll
 say about that.

ESTABLISHING. AMERICAN AIRLINES JET - DAY (PRESENT)

The year is 1995. An American Airlines PASSENGER JET flies
 through the sky.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Anyway, time performed its parlor
 trick and made the years disappear.

EXT. MEXICAN AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

EUGENE EVANS, mid-70s now, white-haired and rangy, exits the
 terminal with a backpack and small suitcase. He's wearing a
 101st Airborne baseball cap. He hails a taxi.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 And in 1995, I finally made it to
 Mexico.

EXT. BEACHSIDE CEMETERY - SUNSET

Eugene stands at a gravestone in a Mexican cemetery with a
 beautiful view of the Gulf. The sun sets behind him.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 This is a place of ghosts...
 Benevolent ones, but ghosts all the
 same...

The weathered gravestone says:

John Baker
 1889-1929
 Q.E.P.D.

Eugene kneels with some difficulty and touches the inscribed
 words - as if by doing so they could tell him something.

EXT. BEACH - DUSK

He walks along the beach.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
I'm looking forward to coming home.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Eugene sits at the desk and writes in a SPIRAL NOTEBOOK - the same one we saw near the beginning of the film, though at this point it is new.

Through the window, we can hear waves crashing on a nearby beach and the murmur of voices from beachside cantinas.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
One last thing: I'd like to
dedicate this account to Phoebe.
While I initially did not believe
my sister's claim that it would
make me lighter to write it, I have
to admit that perhaps it has...

Eugene sets down his pen and scrutinizes what he's written. He closes the notebook and looks out the window.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Perhaps it has.

MEANWHILE, the Elgin watch is still on Eugene's wrist.
Tick - Tick - Ticking away...

WE'LL MEET AGAIN,
DON'T KNOW WHERE,
DON'T KNOW WHEN,
BUT I KNOW WE'LL MEET AGAIN,
SOME SUNNY DAY.