

THE LAYMAN'S TERMS

Original Screenplay by

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FADE IN:

EXT. HIGH PLAINS HIGHWAY - PREDAWN

TWO PINPRICK HEADLIGHTS spear the dark of night, rambling over flat, straight asphalt. On the horizon, a rim of PALE BLUE forecasting the rising sun.

The lamps grow wide as they near, blinding white.

EXT. CRANE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

A 1929 FLATBED PRODUCE TRUCK roars up a dirt lane. A CHAIN hangs from the chassis, dragging along the ground.

It skids to a stop at the steps of an old FARMHOUSE, held together by a hundred nails and a prayer. A FAINT LIGHT burns in one window.

An old man, ED FOWLER (70's), jumps out of the cab, leaves it running. Hurries up the steps to the door...

KNOCKS several times. Peeks in the window.

FOWLER

Crane? You up?

He KNOCKS a few more times. No response.

A LOUD CLANG turns his head toward the BARN.

INT. BARN - SAME

A HAND covered in OIL holds up a MANUAL in the dim glow of a lantern. On the pages are ILLUSTRATIONS OF ENGINE PARTS.

The hand belongs to CRANE MCNAMEE (30's), clear gaze and a dirty face. He puts down the manual, slides under the carriage of a TRACTOR.

The crank of a RATCHET as he struggles with the tool...

CLANG

CRANE

Son-of-a-bitch!

The ratchet FLIES out, slams against the wall. Crane follows covered in more grease, clutching his hand.

FOWLER (O.C.)
I've been called a lot worse. Never
this early in the morning.

Ed stands in the doorway, somber face.

FOWLER (cont'd)
There's been another. James Frank.
You able to make it?

Crane wipes his jaw. Looks at the tractor.

CRANE
Well, this ain't going anywhere.

EXT. CRANE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Fowler leans against his idling truck. Crane exits the house,
WALKING STICK in one hand and a BUCKET in the other.

FOWLER
Good to see a McNamee back in this
place. We all missed you.

CRANE
All or just you?

Fowler smiles. Crane walks down the lane.

FOWLER
Hop in. I'll give you a lift.

He stops.

CRANE
I'm going to walk it.

Fowler gives him a wave. Crane heads away from the coming
fire of morning into shadow country.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - LATER

A simple FARMHOUSE holds up under the weight of the fading
stars. TWO YOUNG BOYS, six and eight, chase each other
through the yard. Darting shadows.

Crane's footsteps sound as he nears. The boys suddenly stop.

EIGHT-YEAR OLD
You lost mister?

CRANE

Hard to say.

(then)

You one of the Franks?

The two boys eye the bucket and rags in his hand.

EIGHT-YEAR OLD

If you're looking for my pa, he's
in the house.

Kid points to the front door, slightly ajar.

INT. HOMESTEAD - MOMENTS LATER

A DARK ROOM. A KNOCK.

CRANE

Mrs. Frank?

The door opens and Crane steps inside. Hearing only a rhythmic CREAKING noise from the dark.

Crane turns up an OIL LANTERN splashing light on the impoverished interior.

And MRS. FRANK (40's) slowly seesawing in a rocking chair. Staring off at something. It surprises him.

CRANE (cont'd)

Callahan should have mentioned I
would be coming.

The tempo of her movement slows, barely.

CRANE (cont'd)

You can stay or you can go. Might
be best if you go.

She stops altogether. Turns her pale face to him.

MRS. FRANK

You don't have to ask me to leave
Crane. Everyone wants to get out of
this place. No one does.

She NODS at the thing she was staring at.

MRS. FRANK (cont'd)

Unless you go his way.

A LARGE SPLATTER OF BLOOD on the wall, directly behind an overturned ROCKING CHAIR, opposite her.

Her husband's BODY, fallen out. Left where he lay. Mortal wound mercifully hidden by the shadows. PISTOL untouched in his cold, dead fingers.

Crane crosses, grabs the chair and sets it upright. He unfolds a large COTTON SHEET and covers the dead man.

MRS. FRANK (cont'd)

If your parents could see you now.
Doing dirty work for a dolled-up
land baron.

CRANE

I'm getting back what they lost.

MRS. FRANK

What they lost was a son. Two,
really. You left when times were
good, came back now that it's all
gone to pot. What's that say?

He dips his RAGS into the bucket of water and starts wiping down the BLOOD. Mrs. Frank rocks in her chair.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - SUNRISE

The boys play in the yard. Arms held behind their backs, hopping around on one foot. They try to kick the other down without touching both feet to the ground. An old game.

MURKY BLOOD WATER dumps out onto the stoop. Crane wrings the rags with his bare hands. Blood and oil stains his fingers.

EIGHT-YEAR OLD

It true you let your own brother
get killed overseas?

CRANE

Didn't really have a say in it.

EIGHT-YEAR OLD

I'd never let that happen to mine.

CRANE

That's good.

The boy puts an arm around his little brother. Mrs. Frank appears in the doorway like a ghost.

CRANE (cont'd)

The mortician will be by later.

The dead man's BODY lies beside the house, draped in white cotton. Awaiting his last car ride.

MRS. FRANK

You want to wipe down his door step
too? Put Callahan on the mailbox?

He picks up his walking stick, prepares to leave.

CRANE

He'll want the mortgage same time
as always. Don't be late.

(then)

I'm sorry for your loss.

MRS. FRANK

My husband just went the way of
this town, Crane. There's nothing
you can do here to change that.

He tips his hat and walks away. Ignoring their vengeful gaze.

EXT. HIGH PLAINS HIGHWAY - LATER

Crane treks past sweeping mounds of fine pale soil, cresting like frozen waves. Buried wooden posts of a BARBED WIRE FENCE breach only a foot above the surface.

TITLE: DUSTBOWL, OKLAHOMA PANHANDLE, APRIL 1935

Hazy white sun and bleached earth bleeding together. This is the Great American Plains, drowning in dirt. Ahead...

The town of RED THISTLE. Buildings bundled together like circled settler's wagons. Even this far from it, he hears a commotion on the wind. MUSIC.

EXT. RED THISTLE - MAIN STREET - SAME

A CROSSROADS marks the center of town. A sign spikes a shadow through the intersection. It reads "WELCOME TO RED THISTLE." FADED LETTERING spells out far off points-of-interest.

CITY HALL looms over everything.

ADIS (V.O.)

Welcome, everyone. We couldn't be
more blessed with this weather!

The music fades to a stop. Townspeople gather in the City Hall COURTYARD which runs out into the greater plains beyond.

But there is something off... The men carry CLUBS or the wooden handles of broken HOES and RAKES. Stained BLOOD RED.

EXT. COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

SAMUEL ADIS (20's), in a sharp TAN SUIT with matching TRILBY HAT, squawks from the City Hall steps to a CROWD as the BAND packs it in. He has a politician's sheen.

ADIS

We've seen tough times. Water and soil may be in meager supply but we have one thing in great abundance: hope. We wouldn't be celebrating here today if it weren't for one man and so, as you fellas begin to assume your positions, it is my honor to present Mr. Callahan.

An enthusiastic OVATION erupts as men and their sons spread out over the courtyard in a loose shape of the letter "V". Clubs in hand, like Sunday churchgoers turned lynch mob.

Laboring up the steps...

"TWO BILLS" CALLAHAN (40's), persona larger than his swollen belly. Endangered wisps of hair on his balding head represent the only thing his money can't buy. He quiets them down.

TWO BILLS

Congress calls it a recession. That's what city folk say when times get tough. Out here, it's just a little dry spell. Fifty years ago your predecessors struck a claim here and you're still kicking. For that there should be a medal. But there isn't. Just the satisfaction of hard work. And this celebration, my gift to you. Today marks fifty more years of better prosperity. Enjoy.

He waves goodbye, steps down from the soapbox to more applause. Adis more so than anyone else.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

(to Adis, quiet)

Get the Rainmaker in today while their pockets are loose.

Adis nods and steps back into Callahan's shoes.

ADIS

I know I speak for everyone in
thanking Mr. Callahan. It is my
honor to kick-off Red Thistle's
special anniversary Rabbit Drive.

The mouth of the men's formation "V" faces the courtyard,
aimed at a LARGE GRAIN STORAGE FACILITY a half-mile away.

And for the first time, the field floor comes alive. The
ground TEEMS with RABBITS.

ADIS (cont'd)

Mind your neighbors. And let's get
rid of these little bastards!

Two Bills gives a final glance before entering City Hall,
leaving the coming spectacle behind. The men MARCH through
the courtyard, pushing the rabbits toward a dead end.

EXT. COURTYARD - GROUND LEVEL - SAME

A TRIO of RABBITS scrap over a tiny patch of grass and seed.
What the drought hasn't killed these guys have. Suddenly,
another RABBIT races past them.

Then a CRUSH of them stream by, dozens. One Cottontail in
particular stumbles end over end...

WHAM!

A BLUNT CLUB smashes the poor thing's skull. Worn WORK BOOTS
step over it, club swinging at still more rabbits.

INT. CITY HALL - 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY - SAME

The wide-eyed, beautiful face of a young girl, ANNA (8), is
pressed against a window. Watching the carnage below.

On COURTYARD:

The hunters kill at will, clubbing and chasing. Women follow,
rounding up carcasses. Anna turns away, disturbed.

EVELYN (O.C.)

Don't watch that.

She glances over her shoulder into...

INT. PRIVATE QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

EVELYN (30's) applies make-up to her handsome face in a vanity mirror. Wipes mascara stains around her wet eyes. Misses a smudge of LIPSTICK.

ANNA

Where's Uncle Crane? He promised
he'd come get me by now.

Anna can be seen in the mirror's reflection.

EVELYN

He had work come up this morning,
you know people can't pass it up.

Heavy FOOTFALLS suddenly echo through the hall, someone climbing wooden stairs. The girls PAUSE, suddenly tense.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Sometimes adults break small
promises to keep bigger promises.

Evelyn can't look at herself as she says this.

The sounds, CLOMP... CLOMP... snap her out of it.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Anna shrugs and turns to the window, curiosity getting the best of her. She PEEKS out through her small fingers.

CLOMP... CLOMP. Nearing her. Until they stop.

TWO BILLS (O.C.)

There she is. Princess Anna.

Two Bills, dripping with sweat and chest heaving, smiles genuinely. Still, Anna backpedals from him.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

(less cordial)

You can take your hands away from
your face. I'm no monster.

She doesn't. Instead, she finds a bench nearby and sits.

INT. CITY HALL - PRIVATE QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Evelyn takes a final glance in the mirror when Two Bills steps in, image reflected beside hers. He closes the door.

TWO BILLS

That scowl don't match the outfit.

He comes to her. Frame and face dwarfing Evelyn as he drinks in her visage. He FIXES the smudge of lipstick.

She FLIPS the mirror over.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

Just like your daughter, no matter
what I do I can't get any leeway.
She hardly pays me any attention.
God only knows what's in her head.

Two Bills removes his hat and jacket, loosens his tie and begins unbuttoning his shirt top to bottom. Barely sees...

Evelyn SLAPPING him. He catches her hand in time.

EVELYN

(furious)

There's nothing wrong with my
little girl.

TWO BILLS

Maybe not in her head, but that
pneumonia...

He SQUEEZES, hurting her. She wilts.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

Being a kid and staying indoors
almost every minute of every day.
Must be hard, no friends. No space.
No chance of getting away.

She knows he doesn't mean Anna. He slips a couple TWENTIES into her hand. Then falls into his favorite LOUNGE CHAIR.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

Half of that's your brother-in-law's. Tell him I've got better work for him if he's done repenting. He's wasting his time with this charity work on the side.

Evelyn grips the money so hard she may squeeze coins from the paper. Two Bills turns his thoughts from cash to her figure.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

Come earn your living.

Hesitating, Evelyn DROPS the dress from her shoulders. She avoids his gaze. All fat and sweating lechery.

EVELYN
I'm turning the lights off.

EXT. HALLWAY - SAME

Anna's on her knees, peeking through a LARGE VENT near the floorboards. Her mother's BARE FEET walk right past and the room goes dark. The door LOCKS.

She LEAPS back, embarrassed. Then pulls a DOLL from the pocket of her dress. Straightens the wheat-stalk limbs. And pads off into empty space of the long hallway.

EXT. GAS STATION - SAME

Crane steps off the highway, toward a petrol oasis. The outpost is stripped to the bone. A RADIO MOANS from within.

A SERVICE GARAGE is attached. A PRISTINE WHITE CADILLAC beside a broke-down CLUNKER. A BOY MECHANIC (16) has his hands in the auto's guts.

The boy sees him coming, grabs something and meets Crane in the drive. Hands behind his back. Big smile.

BOY MECHANIC
(offering him a wrench)
Let me venture a guess... It was
the wrench this time.

CRANE
Ratchet.

The boy hands extends his other hand. A RATCHET.

BOY MECHANIC
Buy two get the third free. That
means this one's on me.

Crane, humbled, pockets the ratchet.

CRANE
Tractor's coming along.

BOY MECHANIC
I bet.

The kid pats him on the shoulder, heads back into his garage. The PROPRIETOR, an old man, steps out. WHISTLING the tune on the radio.

Crane gives the man a wave before hitting the road.

EXT. HIGH PLAINS HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Crane walks, Red Thistle a little closer. A breeze whips up TINY CYCLONES in the fields on both sides. Something brews...

CRANE

Twenty-three.

He passes a TELEPHONE POLE, tapping the walking stick. Counting the steps between posts. An abandoned DUGOUT awaits, half-mile ahead, scorched dry and cracked by the sun. Then...

A POPPING NOISE and quick FLASH OF LIGHT.

He turns his head, a SPARK of static-electricity leaps off a barb on the fence with a POP. He stops walking.

A LOW RUMBLING over his shoulder. Crane reluctantly turns, moving fast on the horizon...

A DUST STORM eight stories high. Black as night and roiling, miles wide. He pulls a HANDKERCHIEF over his face, tied around his neck bandit-style. Makes a run for it.

EXT. HIGH PLAINS HIGHWAY - IN THE STORM - SAME

The driving winds whip dirt around in a confusing swirl. Shafts of sunlight reveal pieces of the long highway, then...

A 1936 PACKARD SCREAMS through the nightmare storm, toeing the narrow asphalt blindly at 70 miles an hour.

INT. PACKARD - CONTINUOUS

At the wheel is a WOMAN, hair tied and pinned beneath her hat. She pops a PIECE OF CANDY in her mouth.

Suddenly, the Packard LURCHES, slammed from behind by another car. The woman looks back...

CASSIDY (20's) is slight, beautiful and fragile; she could pass for fifteen in the right clothing. A southern belle or an ivy-league princess, maybe both or neither.

She SPITS the candy out, focusing harder on the road. The candy bounces around and rolls to a stop near...

The stone dead eyes of a man's CORPSE in the backseat.

INT. CHASE CAR - SAME

THREE MEN in stark BLACK HATS sit deathly silent. The driver, WASHINGTON (40's), grave face and dilated pupils, wrestles the car back under control and...

SLAMS Cassidy again. PRIMROSE (20's), con-man good looks and a short fuse hangs on in the passenger seat.

Back-seat rider, LONG SHOT (30's), bushy mutton chops and mustache, COCKS a rifle, rolls down the window pulling his hat snug and leans out.

He FIRES. A splintered BULLET HOLE decorates the Packard's back window. The car DRIFTS across lanes.

Long Shot shields his eyes when Washington swerves and DROPS the rifle. He slides back in empty-handed.

LONG SHOT

That was one of my favorites.

WASHINGTON

Should have treated her like it.

Suddenly, Cassidy VEERS around a large OBJECT in the road ahead. Washington PLOWS directly in to...

A COW, wandering blindly. Now Grade-A carrion in the ditch.

The car SPINS wildly off the highway.

INT. PACKARD - CONTINUOUS

Cassidy glances back, sees nothing but blowing dirt.

CASSIDY

Bye-bye boys.

BLOOD blossoms through the fabric over her right shoulder where the bullet passed through.

Cassidy holds a hand there. Grits her teeth, pushing on.

EXT. HIGH PLAINS HIGHWAY - SAME

Crane runs in absolute futility. Storm chewing up ground behind him. Bringing indiscriminate ruin.

The barbed wire fence SPARKS and POPS, racing him against the storm toward Red Thistle. Crane loses.

He stops and absorbs the initial BLAST of wind and grit. Then slowly begins walking, TAPPING his stick in a steady rhythm from the closest telephone pole, number...

CRANE

Twenty-four... One... Two... Three.

Navigating the terrain, yet completely blind.

INT. PACKARD - SAME

Cassidy struggles. The blood keeps coming, the dust still blowing. Her eyes drooping, falling off into a dream.

CASSIDY

Please, just a little...

Suddenly a SILHOUETTE in the road, she YANKS the wheel.

OUTSIDE

The silhouette is Crane. He spins from the car, fender inches from a kiss. Walking stick KNOCKED from his hand. The Packard disappears. The wail of SCREECHING TIRES does not.

EXT. PACKARD - CONTINUOUS

Face down in the ditch. Back wheels spinning, car ROCKING back and forth. Out of control.

Crane rips open the door. Cassidy lolls onto his shoulder, weak. He reaches in and yanks the keys from the ignition, the car stops listing.

CRANE

(over the wind)

Miss, can you hear me?

He looks down, her eyes trying to focus. He feels his arm, something wet. Her blood.

Crane shoves her back in. Peeks his head inside, sees...

The CARNAGE in the back seat. Dead body, disjointed from the crash, blood congealed on the upholstery. Not exactly what he expected. He starts to close the door...

But Cassidy COUGHS. Hands reaching out for anything, she clings to consciousness by a thread. Absolutely helpless.

Crane TEARS a swath of fabric from her dress and ties it around her mouth and nose. Scoops her out of the car and onto his shoulder.

EXT. HIGH PLAINS HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Crane carries her up the embankment to the highway. He sets his feet firmly on the concrete, walking stick in hand.

Begins at a measured pace, TAPPING the stick with each step, fighting the urge to run.

CRANE

Eight... Nine... Ten. Twenty-Five.

On the count, he veers off the road and finds himself on a short path. Each tap directing him in the dark. A moment later he is at...

The DUGOUT's front door. He carries Cassidy inside.

EXT. COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

SQUEALS from the rabbits ring in the air, bloodcurdling to a visitor, commonplace to Red Thistle. Spectators visit and gossip like it's an ice cream social.

Adis chats up several attractive, young girls. Too young. The sky DARKENS. Cries of ALARM soon follow, racing through the crowd as Adis slinks off.

People scoop up their children and rush homeward, carrying rabbit carcasses by the handful. An orderly but desperate evacuation begins.

INT. CITY HALL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Anna WHISPERS a private mantra to herself as she DIGS into her pockets and withdraws a white Red Cross DUST MASK. She straps it over her face when...

Evelyn BURSTS out of Two Bills' office. Clothes half-adorned. She drags Anna by the hand down the stairs.

Two Bills' door swings closed on the darkened room.

EXT. CITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Evelyn and Adis COLLIDE as she exits the hall. He leers at her attire. Then extends a helping hand.

ADIS
(leaning in)
Save a little for me?

He sneers that same salesman smile. Evelyn yanks her arm free. SPITS in his face.

Anna leads her down the steps. Adis wipes it away.

ANNA
It's almost here.

The square is already empty. Occupied only by the echo of SLAMMING DOORS. They race through it.

INT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The girls rush inside a house of three rooms. No frills, a wood-burning stove. A few pieces of furniture.

Evelyn grabs a STEEL WASH BASIN and leaves again. Anna rounds up a stack of BEDSHEETS laid out to dry around the room.

Evelyn returns, water in the tub. Anna DUNKS the sheets one at a time in the basin. Evelyn wrings the water out and moves around the room. Hanging each sheet over a WINDOW.

EVELYN
Just remember what the doctor said
about breathing even.

ANNA
I know.

EVELYN
Concentrate on counting.

ANNA
I KNOW.

Evelyn looks at her daughter, her heart breaks a little. She throws the last sheet over the door.

EXT. RED THISTLE - SAME

The storm consumes Red Thistle. Nightfall in the middle of day. A disembodied WAGON WHEEL rolls down the street. Fine dirt thrown against clapboard houses at 50 miles per hour sounds like HIGH-PITCHED RAIN.

Pieces of Colorado, Nebraska, and Oklahoma; the skin of America blowing across the plains.

Seems like it may never end...

EXT. HIGH PLAINS HIGHWAY - DAY

But like all things, it does.

A FLYCATCHER alights atop a fence post. The plains are newly reformed, still hopeless. Clear gray sky and stale hot air.

Crane carries Cassidy over his shoulder, struggling with his load. Mummified in dirt. The bird FLIES off.

He turns down a lane leading to his farm. Plain as day, the ongoing restoration is obviously hopeless.

INT. CRANE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Cassidy is unresponsive on the bed. Crane carries his BUCKET of WATER into the dark room with a CLOTH. And wipes up the dried blood on her neck and arms.

Cassidy's eyes shift beneath her eyelids, she GRIPS his arm then relaxes. Crane stares at the hand touching him.

MOMENTS LATER

Crane reenters, removing the lid from a JUG of crystal clear fluid. Pushes Cassidy's dress away from the wound. Takes a breath to steady himself for what is to come...

He DOUSES her wound in the GRAIN ALCOHOL. Cassidy SCREAMS!

CRANE

Don't fight me.

Cassidy's eyes OPEN wide, scared. Like rising from the dead. He struggles to hold her down while compressing the wounds with two rags.

CRANE (cont'd)

Calm down. It's for your own good.

CASSIDY

Get your hands off...

The pain in her arm is intense, she SCREAMS out again and abruptly falls silent. He affixes the cloth there.

Waits for movement. Waits for a reason to make his decision much easier. Doesn't get it. He leaves the room.

EXT. RED THISTLE - MAIN STREET - AFTERNOON

Like a great spring cleaning, people sweep out their homes up and down the street. Judging by their casual attitude, this is a ritual that happens weekly.

Crane walks alone, amid clouds of dust kicked up by broom-sweepers on either side. No one gives him the time of day.

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Evelyn shakes out the bed sheets which are now caked in MUD. She could use a bath and wants one even worse. Anna walks outside, mask around her neck.

EVELYN

Honey, you know better.

ANNA

But I'm not sick anymore, mamma.

Evelyn shakes her head. Mouth opens to argue, but...

ANNA (cont'd)

Crane!

Coming up the road through the haze. Anna runs to greet him halfway and springs into his arms.

CRANE

How's my best pal?

EVELYN

(defensive)

Hey...

A genuine affection in her tone, she smiles to cover it. Crane carries Anna past Evelyn and inside.

INT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Evelyn puts the sheets back in their usual place to dry.

EVELYN

Stir the pot will you Crane?

Crane stirs a large POT at the stove. Stokes the flames with a few dried out CORN HUSKS. The iron door hangs slightly loose. He WEDGES it closed with a sliver of wood.

ANNA

I'm working on a drawing for you,
want to see?

The girl roots around for her art.

EVELYN

Anna, why don't you show him when
you finish. Wash up for dinner now.

Anna exits, disappointed. Crane picks up her doll.

EVELYN (cont'd)

She missed you today.

CRANE

I need to borrow the car, Ev.

His tone gives her pause, she notices the BLOOD on his shirt
and moves closer to look. Suddenly concerned.

EVELYN

Are you hurt?

CRANE

It's not mine. There was an
accident out on the highway.

EVELYN

Should we get the doctor?

He shakes his head. Offers nothing more, she turns away. He
sees BRUISES on her neck, just peeking out from the collar.

CRANE

What is this?

Crane places a gentle hand there, bruises in the shape of
fingers. She takes his hand in hers to stop the inquiry.

And she holds it, a great swell of emotion bubbling up. Anger
flashing behind Crane's eyes as if he knows. He begins
pulling his hand away, she won't let go...

Then she slips in the TWENTY DOLLAR BILL.

EVELYN

Callahan says it's for the month.

Crane crumples it up. Resumes messing with Anna's doll.

EVELYN (cont'd)
We're going to California. Soon.
There's still things to put in
order but her pneumonia's getting
worse. They say the air is cleaner.

Crane's quiet demeanor unnerves her. She stumbles.

EVELYN (cont'd)
I didn't ask you to come home, work
to buy back this house or yours.
There's nothing here anymore but
ghosts. Our ghost. Your brother, my
husband. I see him in your face.

CRANE
My brother built this for you.

That simple reminder nearly brings her to tears.

EVELYN
He built it for *us*, a family. He
didn't even meet her, Crane.

Anna reenters the house, holding up her clean hands. Evelyn
quickly covers. Crane, not as well.

EVELYN (cont'd)
Let me see those.

Evelyn inspects them, then GOBBLES up her fingers. Anna
laughs, the mood broken. The little girl pulls out a chair
for Crane. Sits down beside it.

CRANE
Thank you but I've got to go.

Anna pouts. Crane kneels to her, hands behind his back.

CRANE (cont'd)
It's Top Secret. But I have
something special. Only for you.

The girl, interest piqued. Closes her eyes, hands out. Crane
puts something in them. Anna slowly opens them to find her
doll; hair CRUDELY BRAIDED.

Anna LAUGHS. Evelyn can't help but do the same.

Crane grabs the car key from the counter and leaves.

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He hurries to Evelyn's car. Neighbors watch like hawks, forgetting their chores. He ignores them.

EVELYN (O.C.)
Crane, wait...

Evelyn carries a worn man's JACKET, indicating the blood on his arm. He puts the jacket on. Sleeves a little short, meant to fit another man. The significance is not lost.

CRANE
You're still my family.

He nods his thanks, gets in the car. She watches him go.

EXT. GAS STATION - SAME

A beat-up JALOPY pulls away from station, passing Washington. Walking with spring-loaded steps. The RADIO continues to croon from within.

Long Shot and Primrose trail behind. Drag ass tired.

PRIMROSE
Hey boss?

Washington ignores him. Long Shot warns him with a nudge.

PRIMROSE (cont'd)
Maybe we could lay up somewhere a bit? I'm a little thirsty.

Washington turns and meets Primrose half-way. He BACKHANDS him across the mouth.

WASHINGTON
That ought to water your mouth. Any other needs I can tend to?

Washington flings open the door, disappears inside. Primrose rubs his jaw and gets a smirk out of Long Shot. They keep an eye on the empty highway.

A LOUD CRASH from within, like a tornado let loose. The radio CUTS out. BURSTING through the front door...

The PROPRIETOR, toothless with a hobbled step.

They pull COLT PISTOLS from their belts and pump ROUNDS into him. The man's last moments on earth, in weightless flight.

Long Shot GENUFLECTS. Primrose DIGS through his pockets.

WASHINGTON (O.C.) (cont'd)
I tried asking nicely.

Washington drags out the BOY MECHANIC by the collar. Primrose takes the dead man's HARMONICA. Crudely blows into it.

A shot SOUNDS and the boy's THROAT is shredded, spraying the ground like bled cattle. The harmonica peters out.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)
We've got wheels. Hide these. You
can sleep in the car Primrose if
it's past your bed time.

PRIMROSE
Well, now I'm too wound up.

The two men drag the bodies behind the building. Washington heads to the garage. Jingling the keys.

EXT. HIGH PLAINS HIGHWAY - CASSIDY'S CAR - LATER

Crane, crouched in the road, stares dubiously at her car. Tail-end suspended off the road like it fell from the sky. After a beat, he approaches and opens the driver side door.

A simple HAT BOX lies on the floor. Crane sees a SPOT OF BLOOD on the window. He thoughtlessly wipes it clean with a rag. Old habits. Which leads him to...

The back seat and the dead man. Several bullet holes in the seat-back and the piece of candy. The LAPEL of his jacket is open, revealing a stitched silhouette of a large HOTEL.

Crane fixates on this detail in particular. When he opens the door, the body is yanked out by gravity.

This begins the clean-up procedure:

- Grabs the man, drags him down the street by his lapels.
- Crane removes the license plates.
- He digs through the glovebox, swipes a handful of PAPERS.
- Opens the trunk, takes one look and closes it again.

Crane regards the emptied out vehicle, four doors left open. As unremarkable as any abandoned car on this stretch of road. Minus the 10 pints of spilled blood.

INT. CITY HALL - CARD ROOM - AFTERNOON

Two Bills plays cards with Adis and a handful of other MEN. Several WHITE-COLLARS stand nervously in the back.

ED FOWLER is there, airing their complaints with Two Bills.

FOWLER

We're talking a temporary halt on the loan interest. Subsidies enrich the farmer but with nothing growing we can't stock. Can't turn profit.

The white-collars in back echo his sentiment. Adis deals.

TWO BILLS

Check.

FOWLER

People are desperate. Hell, James Frank put a gun in his mouth. It gets worse, they'll turn it on their neighbor before long.

This draws Two Bills' eye. He halts the game.

Then reaches into his breast coat pocket and pulls out a LEATHER NOTEBOOK, removes a SHINY GOLD PEN from the binding.

He opens it achingly slow. A DEBTOR'S LOG.

TWO BILLS

Ed, everyone in this town has a special place in my heart. I could remind you just how much.

He TAPS the notebook.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

You did things your way for years and here we are. Who's pulling the people together? I am.

FOWLER

And everyone's still poor but you. My God they'll be eating rabbit for weeks, it's not humane.

TWO BILLS

It's animal instinct... I raise.

Two Bills gestures to Adis and throws in chips. Ed realizes the conversation is over.

SUDDENLY THE DOOR OPENS

Crane enters. Every man turns, unfriendly stares.

Ed NODS hello. Two Bills waves the white-collars from the room. They BRUSH by Crane without so much as a hello.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)
(resumes dealing)
Where the hell have you been? You
get the widow's money?

CRANE
I told her you'd expect it soon.

TWO BILLS
I expect it now.

Adis SNIFFS the air, exaggerated.

ADIS
They teach you how to shower in the
Army, Private? Smell like death.

CRANE
(ignoring him)
The body's lying outside, I'd send
the undertaker.

TWO BILLS
Leave it. Maybe it'll inspire her
to find my money. Tomorrow, you
clean the courtyard. It's a mess.

Crane takes a few steps toward Two Bills, it doesn't go
unnoticed as the others play their hands.

CRANE
No more. I've done my share for
you. And don't go near Evelyn
again, either. If I see you...

The tone changes in the room as cards go face down.

TWO BILLS
I don't think you want to do that.

Two Bills, cucumber cool, flips through his notebook.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)
Not when you're getting so close to
being in the black. Isn't that why
you came back to this dump?
(MORE)

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

The hero's welcome that waited for
you couldn't do it. Your parents'
funeral neither. Why then?

Crane curls his hand into a fist, curbing a NERVOUS TIC.

CRANE

When I get off your books, we're
all off. That includes Evelyn.

TWO BILLS

A man's word is his word.

Crane settles, turns his back on Two Bills and walks toward
the exit. The other men relax, take up the game.

ADIS

When you're done with the courtyard
tomorrow, my bathroom could use a
good scrubbing.

The other man CRACK UP. Two Bills watches Crane; he retraces
his steps, pulls a PISTOL from his waistband and throws it in
the center of the table. Adis squirms.

CRANE

Look familiar? That was James
Frank's. You sold it to him.

Adis' eyes never leave the gun, eyelid twitching. Crane
glances at his CARDS. Throws in his QUEEN to start.

CRANE (cont'd)

Bluffing suits you.

He gives Adis a quick pat on the back and leaves while the
other men have a LAUGH. But the door pushes open again, Adis
scoots his chair back...

It's just a YOUNG FARMER.

YOUNG FARMER

Rainmaker's here.

EXT. RED THISTLE - TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Red Thistle is draped in full civic regalia, STREAMERS and
BANNERS on every storefront. Two Bills and Adis shuffle
through a crowd dressed in their Sunday best. Best being
either hand-me-down or stitched together.

The two men part ways as a BAND on the Hall steps plays the
traditional Gospel tune "I'LL FLY AWAY."

MRS. FRANK (O.C.)
 You son-of-a-bitch!

The widow LUNGES at Two Bills from the masses.

MRS. FRANK (cont'd)
 He's still lying there, just
 rotting in the heat like a dog!

Mrs. Frank is quickly pulled off of him and swallowed by the crowd. Two Bills fixes his jacket...

Suddenly an EXPLOSION BOOMS over the square. Everyone stops, including the band, and look up to see a THICK BLACK CLOUD dissipating above the town.

Adis emerges on the Courthouse steps, APPLAUDING a peculiar man, a RAINMAKER. He fiddles with his collection of EXPLOSIVES in the Courtyard.

ADIS
 (addressing the crowd)
 I'd like to introduce you all to
 Josiah Featherbee. He's going to be
 spending some time with us... Well
 don't be rude, say hello.

The people respond with a half-hearted welcome.

ADIS (cont'd)
 This man's a Rainmaker. Been all
 over the country helping folks like
 you. With enough concussion, he can
 crack these clouds open and bring
 forth the rain.

Two Bills waits in the wings, an overly enthusiastic grin on his face. His eyes find...

EVELYN and ANNA

Moving through the crowd. She sees Fowler handing a BAG to Crane, away from the commotion, and moves toward them.

ANNA
 Momma, we're going too fast. I
 can't see the rainmaker.

EVELYN
 You mean the charlatan.

Back to Adis:

ADIS

We made a living out of this land
with our own hands. And we'll do
the same with the heavens. Mr.
Callahan will lead us. Josiah's
going to help.

Josiah takes a pendular bow. LIGHTS a fuse on his way down
and steps back like a circus show.

The explosive ROCKETS into the sky and EXPLODES.

Children take great joy in the pageantry. Their parents won
over. Two Bills accepts the attention with mock humility.

ADIS (cont'd)

There is the matter of his fee,
however. I know times are tight,
people are hurting. But you can't
wait for intervention!

He smirks at Two Bills and takes his hat off. Approaching the
people he is SWARMED by those ready to part with their
pittance. Placing it into his cap.

Back on Anna and Evelyn:

Nearly free of the masses. Evelyn makes eye contact with
Crane when a meaty hand CLAMPS down on her shoulder.

TWO BILLS

Just the girl I was looking for.

EVELYN

(startled, covering)
The heat caught me by surprise.

TWO BILLS

I was talking to her.

He kneels down to Anna's level. Implores her with a crooked
smile and pulls something from his pocket...

THREE WILDFLOWERS.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

I found these, out in the middle of
all this where nothing grows... I
wanted you to have them.

ANNA

Well, now they're dead too.

Anna puts them in her dress pocket anyway.

TWO BILLS
Can't win with her.

He stands and leans into Evelyn's ear.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)
I want to see you again.
(off her resistance)
At the church. Later.

CRANE (O.C.)
You have something to say aloud?

Two Bills pulls back, hands off.

TWO BILLS
Just making my rounds.

He goes on to shake the next man's hand. Evelyn notes the BAG Crane is carrying. Filled with FIRST-AID supplies.

CRANE
I've got to head back.

Crane shies away from Evelyn's curious look. They follow him while he walks. Anna throws her Wildflowers on the ground.

EXT. HIGH PLAINS HIGHWAY - CASSIDY'S CAR - SAME

A BOOT crushes the remnants of a desert weed. It belongs to Washington. He paces around Cassidy's empty car.

Long Shot inspects the area, paying special attention to FOOT TRACKS in the dirt.

LONG SHOT (O.C.)
Someone dragged Victor over there.

Long Shot points to the DUGOUT, down the street.

WASHINGTON
Pull him out and embarrass him.

Long Shot unsheathes a LARGE KNIFE from his belt. Walks off.

Washington opens the trunk, staring at a load full of WOMEN'S COSTUMES. Flamboyant, stage ensembles.

He flings them all over the highway, SPLASHES of offensive color on the muted landscape.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)
Fucking actresses.

Long Shot drags the body from the dugout, stiff with rigor mortis. Primrose stretches his limbs, watches him.

PRIMROSE

What do you mean embarrass him?

Long Shot strips Victor down in the field. Takes his shoes off, leaves the socks on. Rolls the body onto his back.

WASHINGTON (O.C.)

Meaning when someone finds him,
they should be embarrassed for his
family. Grab me some gas.

Long Shot begins an amateur autopsy. He cuts with a steel intensity. Making one final HACK, he comes up with a handful of human meat and tosses it aside. Wipes the blade.

Primrose returns with a CANISTER. Washington gestures for him to douse the car. Primrose abides.

Long Shot steps up as Primrose empties the canister. Washington motions for them both to get in the car. They do.

He pulls a pack of MATCHES from his jacket pocket. Strikes one and throws it on the Packard.

It catches FLAME. Primrose plays his harmonica. Atonal.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)

(sotto)

The girl would have been too weak
to move the body, too hurried to
strip the car. Someone knew better.

He looks down the road. Next stop, Red Thistle.

EXT. RED THISTLE - STREET - SAME

Crane swings Anna by the arm back and forth as she hangs on for dear life. Evelyn spends more time ignoring disapproving looks from passersby.

EVELYN

You know you should talk to these
people, get to know them again.
They used to be your neighbors.

CRANE

What's done is done. They've made
up their minds about me.

EVELYN

Sounds like you've done the same.

Crane eats his words.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Come to the recital. Put as much effort into making friends as you do fixing all the broken equipment lying around here; you might heal some wounds.

CRANE

I wonder which one is more work.

EVELYN

(indicating the first-aid)

Well, it's going to take more than what you have there.

Crane swings Anna around to a halt, the girl GROANS in disapproval. He wraps up the bag, tucks it away.

ANNA

Please come. Pretty please.

Crane shakes his head. Anna pulls a folded up piece of paper from her pocket dress. Gives it to him. He opens it.

ON DRAWING

Anna, holding hands with Evelyn on one side and Crane on the other. Above them all, an ANGEL type figure. DAD scrawled beneath, watching over.

Crane folds it back up. Anna innocently awaiting his verdict.

CRANE

It's great. Thank you.

Crane walks away from them, heavier in his step. Evelyn knows it, concerned, before Anna takes her by the hand and leads her elsewhere.

EXT. CHURCH - SAME

Evelyn and Anna hurry up the steps and through the church doors. Sounds of CHILDREN'S VOICES from within. Singing.

A line of people file in...

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The tiny church is filled to the brim, rickety pews jam-packed and spilling out in to the aisles. On the raised platform, a group of children sing a STEPHEN FOSTER tune.

The town carols along, some clap in time.

Anna and Evelyn slink along the back, joining other late-comers relegated to standing.

EXT. RED THISTLE - SAME

The FOSTER TUNE carries over.

Crane makes the long walk out of town. Red sun hanging in the West like a bull's-eye.

ANOTHER EXPLOSION, the Rainmaker's trade.

He quells a SHIVER running down his spine as the gunpowder smoke dissolves. Then a GLINT on the horizon...

The White Cadillac, kicking up a plume of dust.

Crane instinctively lowers his hat, low as usual over his eyes and walks on. Stick tapping the ground.

INT. CADILLAC - MOVING - SAME

Stephen Foster is cut off sharply by a Kansas City Jazz piece on the car radio. A Bennie Moten arrangement. Washington is at the wheel, the others sit in perfect posture.

The car PASSES Crane, who steps aside. Washington catches his eye. Crane's probing gaze raising the man's suspicions. The split-second passes.

He turns the radio OFF.

PRIMROSE
Something wrong?

WASHINGTON
Just seeing things.

The Cadillac hits the outskirts of town, houses on the left and right. Their eyes drift out the window...

RABBIT CARCASSES hang from clotheslines, skinned and drying. Bloody mud puddles beneath them.

EXT. RED THISTLE - TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Streamers flutter on the breeze, colorful paper SNAPPING in the wind. Rainmaker still hard at work by his lonesome.

The Cadillac pulls to a stop in the deserted square and they climb out to the sound of a haunting CHILDREN'S CHORUS.

WASHINGTON

Just play it peaceful, to start.
Girl like ours turns up in a place
like this, by sundown everyone
knows her birthday.

A lone EXPLOSIVE goes off like fireworks. The three men watch Josiah, an absolute mystery.

PRIMROSE

This is some welcome party.

Washington gets a bead on the VOICES and walks off.

INT. CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

Two Bills, seated at the front of the congregation, stares at Evelyn, devouring her. She can feel it but ignores him. Anna sways at her feet.

Nearly each face here sings along to the FINALE.

CHORUS

*Tis a sigh that is wafted across
the troubled wave...
Tis a wail that is heard upon the
shore...
Tis a dirge that is murmured around
the lowly grave...
Oh hard times come again no more.*

Every word ringing true, the rapt audience bursts into RABID APPLAUSE. But in the back, suddenly...

The double doors are YANKED WIDE OPEN. Yielding to three strangers caught in the afterglow.

The Black Hats stalk slowly down the center aisle, the applause going on like it was meant just for them. Searching each row for a familiar face. And as people take notice, the clapping slows...

To a GRINDING STOP. A long and painful silence.

Primrose walks past Evelyn and WINKS at Anna. Evelyn notices the PISTOL inside his jacket.

Two Bills struggles to his feet, drawing Washington's gaze.

TWO BILLS
Can we help you gentlemen?

WASHINGTON
I hope one of you can. You are?

TWO BILLS
I'm just a businessman.

He looks to his boys, Cassidy's not here.

WASHINGTON
We're looking for someone. A pretty girl. Young.

TWO BILLS
Aren't we all?

Two Bills sweats the bad joke.

Washington wags a finger at Two Bills. He turns to a FAMILY in the front row. A LITTLE BOY sits awestruck at his feet. He kneels down to him.

The boy's FATHER sticks an arm out to intervene. Washington CRACKS him on the wrist with an object. The man withdraws.

WASHINGTON
I'm just going to give the boy something. A little peace offering.

He OPENS his hand, in it is a KNIFE. Blade folded into the hilt. It's plain, with a leather handle. He OPENS the blade.

The family holds their breath, silently PLEADING with Two Bills. He lets the light GLEAM off it's edge. Then Washington slowly CLOSES it and extends it to the boy.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)
Take it. It's yours.

The boy reaches out but Washington closes his hand.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)
First, answer a question for me. If you woke up one morning, and you got out of bed but your family had left you.

(MORE)

WASHINGTON (cont'd)

Then you went out into the street
and all the people there had left
too. You were alone. Who would you
blame in this whole church for it?

The boy thinks long and hard. Then points at...

LITTLE BOY

Two Bills.

Washington smiles and gives the boy the knife.

WASHINGTON

Let's talk business, businessman.

Two Bills wipes the sweat from his brow.

TWO BILLS

Thank you children, you can go.
Enjoy the day people!

Parents round up their children and file out, can't get away
soon enough. Evelyn and Anna disappear among them.

Adis tries. Two Bills grabs him by the arm.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

I prefer to do my talking over
booze. You boys thirsty?

Primrose licks his dry lips. Of course he is.

INT. CITY HALL - PRIVATE QUARTERS - LATER

Adis pours five glasses of WHISKEY, drinks one in a nervous
gulp, then refills it for himself.

LONG SHOT

Getting a head start?

Adis LAUGHS a little too hard, hands him the drink. Passes
out the rest, offers one to Washington.

The man refuses. Adis is left holding two glasses. He drinks
the extra one down in another quick gulp.

Two Bills lowers himself into his lounge chair.

PRIMROSE

(off-handed)

Smells like fucking in here.

The locals wait to catch his meaning. He doesn't offer one.

TWO BILLS

What can we do for you?

WASHINGTON

The short of it... This girl was very *special*. To all of us. Now she is lost.

ADIS

What does she do?

Washington ignores him. Primrose cases the office.

WASHINGTON

Now we found her car, abandoned. Few miles outside of town.

TWO BILLS

She might have hitched a ride.

WASHINGTON

I doubt she would have made it beyond this place. What do you call this....?

Washington waves off the answer before anyone speaks it.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)

Anyway, there was the bullet wound and the bleeding. More than likely she ended up here.

Adis goes pale and scoots away.

TWO BILLS

I think a girl with those... specifications, would have raised a couple eyebrows.

WASHINGTON

She's got something that might keep people quiet.

Primrose kneels to the floor, pokes around in a garbage basket. Adis watches, disgusted.

ADIS

What's she got?

Washington has his shotgun beneath Adis' chin so quick he can't even swallow his drink. Glass parked on his lips.

WASHINGTON

When I ignored you the first time,
that should have been a clue. The
reason I don't drink is because it
loosens the tongue. And when that
happens, you wag it at the wrong
person, you're bound to lose it.

Adis spits his whiskey back into the glass.

Washington removes the gun.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)

We need a wash. Food.

PRIMROSE

And women.

TWO BILLS

We'll make arrangements.

WASHINGTON

We're willing to let your people do
the work for us. Find her, hand her
over. We leave quietly. Give the
lucky person a nice little bounty.

TWO BILLS

If you're talking money, good
money, we're your men.

WASHINGTON

I wouldn't want you to over do it.
Considering your condition. We'll
cut you a percentage. Just don't
think about calling the law.

PRIMROSE

(sniffs the air)

You're not gonna fuck us are you?

The message is clear. Two Bills gets up, gestures for Adis to
follow him out while Long Shot and Primrose make themselves
at home. One grabs a spot in the lounge chair.

Washington sees them to the door, then closes it behind.

EXT. CRANE'S HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Crane puts a bowl of FOOD SCRAPS down on the porch. Watches
the meager skyline of Red Thistle fade to night.

A STRAY DOG peeks around the corner, then hops up and digs into her meal.

INT. CRANE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Crane sifts through the supplies on the table: GAUZE, BANDAGES, OINTMENT. Leans his walking stick against the wall.

The hat box sits on the table. Ordinary. Crane's instincts tell him otherwise. He leaves it anyway.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cassidy's clothes are strewn on the floor, a sheet stained with blood from her naked shoulders. She has the pale look and quiver of a fever.

He methodically lays out the supplies and changes her bandages. Wipes her forehead. Throws the waste in a bucket.

He finds a CHAIR in the corner, clears away a stack of books and sits down. Picks up one. ADVANCED AGRICULTURE.

A PHOTOGRAPH tumbles out. NEWSPAPER PRINT on flimsy paper.

CRANE and another MAN, a few inches shorter than he, stand with arms around each other's shoulders. They are dressed in MILITARY UNIFORMS, young smiling soldiers.

He tucks it away and begins reading. A sliver of oil fuels a lantern beside him as it burns away to nothing.

FADE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The books lies on Crane's chest. Sun streaming in through ratty curtains onto Cassidy who STIRS in her sleep.

Outside, CAR WHEELS flatten the gravel lane.

EXT. CRANE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Evelyn and Fowler climb out of the car. Anna sleeping in the back seat. Both careful with their doors not to wake her.

Crane steps onto the porch. Sleep in his eye.

FOWLER

In time for breakfast?

CRANE
I wasn't expecting company.

FOWLER
We got company ourselves after you
left. Three men have the whole town
out looking for a girl.

Crane casts an angry glance at Evelyn.

EVELYN
They're carrying guns.

FOWLER
Do you know anything about her?
Because if you do, you might want
to reconsider.

Crane disappears inside the house, the door hanging open.

Fowler walks up the steps. Evelyn moves to grab Anna.

CRANE (O.C.)
Leave her in the car.

Evelyn stops, a rigid concern shooting through her.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Fowler and Crane stand in the doorway watching Cassidy
struggle through fever. In and out of consciousness.

Evelyn stares wide-eyed at Crane's BUCKET on the floor,
filled with BLOODY RAGS and BANDAGES. Torn packaging on the
table and the girl's hat box.

She passes them, moves into the room.

EVELYN
Crane, has she been shot? She needs
a doctor.

FOWLER
She's going to need more than that.

Evelyn lifts a rag by the bedside, leans in to wipe the
night's grime from her face when...

Cassidy GRABS the woman's wrist. Evelyn yelps and pulls back
but Cassidy's grip is firm.

CASSIDY
Who are you?

She looks around the room, sees more faces.

CASSIDY (cont'd)
Who are you people?

Immediately, she releases Evelyn's arm. Scared and self-conscious. She wraps the sheet around herself.

CASSIDY (cont'd)
Don't come a step nearer. I'll
scream. Just let me get my things.

She tries to get up, a fawn on new legs. She stumbles over the bedsheet, the room spinning.

Crane moves to help, she LASHES out at him. He takes it and gives it back. Overpowering her back into bed.

CRANE
No one in this room is trying to
kill you. Just lie still.

And like a painful memory, her shoulder wound wakes up. It makes her CRY OUT. Her voice melds into...

A CAR HORN. They all pause. Crane nods for them to stay.

EXT. PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Crane steps down off the porch to find Adis standing by the open door of his gleaming MERCURY. Anna stirs in Evelyn's car, waking up.

CRANE
You woke the girl asshole. What do
you want?

ADIS
Good morning to you too. We're
going door to door, seems there's a
runaway...

CRANE
Yeah, I heard.

ADIS
Well, I'm meaning to take a look
around anyway. You don't mind do
you? Seeing this is technically
Callahan's place.

Anna climbs out of car. Sees Crane, blooming smile. Then sees Adis. Bye-bye smile.

CRANE

Ninety percent of this is mine now
and you're standing on his ten. You
see anything from there?

Evelyn appears in the doorway behind Crane.

ADIS

Oh, the family's all here...
Callahan missed you last night. Be
sure to stop by later. Rent's due.

He smirks. Crane moves toward him, fists clenched.

EVELYN

Crane, don't.

Remembering Cassidy, he stops. Adis takes pleasure in this
small victory. Anna steps in front of the Mercury.

And SPITS on the hood.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Anna!

ADIS

You little heathen.

Anna laughs and runs toward the porch, behind Crane's
protective stance.

ADIS (cont'd)

I'll pass on your hospitality to
Callahan. If we have to come back,
next time it won't be so cordial.

Adis glares, then gets in his car and leaves.

EVELYN

(to Anna)

Don't do as I do, ok honey? At
least from now on.

She hugs the little girl, can't help but smile. Crane watches
Adis drive off. Concern etched into his face.

INT. CITY HALL - PRIVATE GUESTROOM

A dark room, an even darker bed. A thin, woman's WRIST is
tied to the bedpost. It's owner, MOANS.

Suddenly a body sits up, Primrose. On the ground beside the bed, hair disheveled. The girl has a PILLOW CASE over her head, asking to be released.

He stands, naked. Pulls on his pants.

INT. CITY HALL - PRIVATE QUARTERS - SAME

Long Shot has his feet up, READING a textbook and BRUSHING his teeth. On the book cover, we see only the word ANATOMY.

Washington is at the window, watching the townspeople below. They stalk through the streets in MOBS, entering businesses and looking around corners, under porches. Searching.

He pulls out a BENZEDRINE INHALER from his jacket, CRACKS open the container and pulls a thin strip of paper out. He ROLLS it into a ball and pops it into his mouth, swallows.

Waits for the drug to take effect. A thin line of BLOOD snakes down his forehead.

A KNOCK at the door. Primrose pokes his head in.

PRIMROSE

Work time yet?

WASHINGTON

(eyes stay on the road)

Soon.

PRIMROSE

I'm hungry.

WASHINGTON

So eat.

Another muted EXPLOSION booms over the town.

Washington pulls his hat off and rubs his head. There is a JAGGED STITCH running scalp to crown and a shaven patch revealing the fresh wound.

He wipes the blood away. Puts the hat back on.

INT. CRANE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Cassidy and Anna stare at one another. The stranger scowls, but it doesn't bother the little girl. She studies the dried, smeared MAKE-UP on Cassidy's face.

ANNA

My momma has that same color.

She points to her own eye and then at Cassidy's.

EVELYN (O.C.)

What are you thinking?

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Crane finishes putting together a breakfast plate. Evelyn and Fowler pace the kitchen. All gears turning.

EVELYN

You don't know anything about her
or what she's done. There's no
reason for her to be in your bed.

CRANE

I want you to go home, pack a
suitcase or two and take Anna. Just
for a few days at least.

EVELYN

Why? What are you planning?

Crane digs through the drawer for a FORK.

FOWLER

Don't make this some kind of
spiteful stand against Callahan. Or
the town for that matter. You think
you're punishing them but it'll
come back on you.

He picks up the plate and fork. Like a bellhop.

Evelyn realizes.

EVELYN

It's not about that. He's trying to
save her. It's the reason you came
back to us in the first place,
isn't it?

Crane can't meet her eye. He stares straight into the bedroom
at Cassidy. Still trading looks with Anna. Two little girls.

He carries the food in. Evelyn shakes her head at Fowler.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS :

He gives Cassidy the plate, then sits in the chair. Anna goes to him, plopping herself on his knee. Possessive.

Cassidy starts eating.

ANNA
You didn't say grace.

CASSIDY
(mouthful)
Grace.

Anna frowns. They watch her miss her mouth.

CRANE
What's your name?

CASSIDY
Cassidy.

Crane studies her.

CASSIDY (cont'd)
Anything else?

CRANE
Eat now. We'll talk later.

He lifts Anna up and out of the chair, the little girl giggles as they leave the room.

EXT. CRANE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Crane carries Anna over his head, her arms out like an airplane. Fowler and Evelyn follow, heading to the car.

Crane swings the door open, takes her in for a landing. Anna keeps an arm around his neck.

ANNA
You owe me a dollar.

Crane thinks...

ANNA (cont'd)
(whispers)
You said a-hole.

CRANE
Ok. Don't let your mother hear you.
I'll get myself grounded.

He takes a DOLLAR BILL from his pocket and gives it to her.

ANNA

Love you.

This casual show of affection catches him off-guard.

FOWLER

This could blow up in your face if
you're not careful. Still, I'll
back you. I don't like the picture
but I'll help hang it.

He puts a concerned hand on his shoulder, gets in. Evelyn and
Crane, left separated by the black gulf of the car roof.

CRANE

Please. Just go for a few days.

EVELYN

When we go, its going to be for
good Crane.

Evelyn looks back to the house. A sad, heavy sigh.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Nothing can bring him back. One of
these days, you're going to have to
save yourself.

She opens the door and gets in.

EXT. RED THISTLE - MAIN STREET - DAY

Two Bills oversees the search. Nearby, two NEIGHBORS argue.
One aims to search the other's house. He could arbitrate but
doing nothing is much easier.

Adis jogs across the street, meets Two Bills.

ADIS

I got the word out. No trace of the
girl yet. Went out to Crane's
place, got stonewalled.

TWO BILLS

Did you search it?

ADIS

Evelyn was there. He wouldn't give
me ground. Said you don't have
rights there anymore.

Two Bills nods, wry grin. A challenge. He leads them down the street toward houses further on.

Another EXPLOSION blooms over the skyline. Both men startle a bit. Undeniably on edge.

ADIS (cont'd)

How long are we going to keep this up? In about a week old man "boom boom" is going to start raising questions when the rain don't come.

TWO BILLS

We milk it. The cure's always around the corner. Remember that.

The same townspeople who were once celebrating are now out in zealous force. Even children hunt in unlikely places: crawl spaces outside the door, around corners between buildings.

ADIS

What kind of percentage did we say?

TWO BILLS

Fifty percent between you and I, fifty percent finder's fee.

ADIS

It'd be nice to collect one hundred percent then.

Both men nod in agreement.

TWO BILLS

You keep on. If they can walk and they can see, I want that money in my hand and these men out of my town by tomorrow.

Adis nods and moves off. Two Bills lingers in the street before making his way in another direction.

EXT. CRANE'S HOUSE - BARN - LATER

Crane washes Cassidy's blood from his hands at an outdoor faucet, powered by a WATER-PUMPING WINDMILL. Rinses and wrings his shirt clean. He fills a WATERING CAN.

INT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Crane moves past an old HORSE DRAWN PLOW behind the tractor, neatly arranged, to a series of wooden CLOSETS built into the wall. The craftsmanship worth noting. He opens one to find...

A RABBIT in a crude nest built into a hole in the bottom. She is nursing a LITTER. He puts down the new RATCHET, takes an old MEASURING TAPE from the shelf. Leaves the door open.

He turns, steps over a WOODEN CELLAR DOOR with a PADLOCK on the latch to a CURTAIN hanging near the corner.

Crane pulls back the curtain...

Several ROWS of vegetables are planted in the earth beside rows of WHEAT. A CRUDE SKYLIGHT above filters sunlight onto the garden.

He waters the plants until the can runs dry. Then he UNSPOOLS the tape to measure the stalks...

Finds a few vegetables tore up from the ground. Nibbled on.

CRANE
(glancing at the rabbits)
All you had to do was ask.

INT. CRANE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Cassidy gingerly moves through the kitchen, torn shirt back on, doesn't cover much. Eyes scouring the home.

CASSIDY
Hello?

On the table, Anna's DRAWING. She looks at it, then tosses it aside like trash when she sees the HAT BOX. She scoops it up and tries the latch, it's locked.

She withdraws a KEY on a string around her wrist and opens the box. We don't see the contents, but her eyes light up.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Everything here is old, older than the present times. Children's books and corncob toys, a slate chalkboard with the names WILLIAM and CRANE nearly faded.

Her fingers trace Crane's name.

CRANE (O.C.)
Lose something?

Cassidy quickly puts it back. Squeezes the hat box tight.

CASSIDY

Just a habit. I can't sit still.

CRANE

There's nothing in here for you.
Just... don't touch anything. If
you need something, ask.

CASSIDY

You have a hard drink? For the
pain. My arm is killing me.

CRANE

Grain alcohol is about it.

CASSIDY

Don't sell rum in these parts?

CRANE

Not to clean open wounds.

Cassidy shrugs one shoulder, better than nothing.

Crane leaves, he ROOTS around in the kitchen.

CASSIDY

So, I realize I should thank you,
for being kind enough to stop. And
taking care of this...

He returns with a glass and the JUG. He pours her one.

CASSIDY (cont'd)

Was that in my arm?

CRANE

It won't taste like rum.

She stares at the glass, suddenly not so willing.

Crane drinks it in one gulp. He pours another glass. She
takes it, down the hatch. In sips.

CRANE (cont'd)

Tell me about the body.

She nearly spits it out.

CASSIDY

You called the police?

CRANE

I just need to know who is sleeping
under my roof.

CASSIDY

(borderline angry)

I didn't kill him. He was a good
friend and I'd rather not explain
his death to some dirt-poor Okie
farmer if you don't mind.

Crane waves a hand toward the door.

CRANE

You don't have to explain. And you
don't have to stay neither, but I'm
guessing you don't want to walk.

He gives her space to go, she doesn't. The anger in her eyes
fades away, replaced by regret. Then tears.

CASSIDY

Truth is.... I loved him.

Crane's stone face offers no sympathy.

CASSIDY (cont'd)

I need to bathe. Dirt around here
seems to stick to me like glue. I
think I'd feel a little better.

EXT. BARN - LATER

On Cassidy's shocked expression.

CASSIDY

You must be putting me on.

Crane demonstrates the fine art of bathing at the outdoor
faucet and windmill pump. The YANK of a chain spews water
from the SHOWERHEAD.

He gestures, simple as that. Turns back to the house.

CASSIDY (cont'd)

Wait... Please.

Crane stops.

CASSIDY (cont'd)

Don't leave me here.

He stands guard. Cassidy struggles with her shirt.

CASSIDY (cont'd)

His name was Victor. He was charming, reminded me of my father. He was a driver in Chicago for the wrong people, out of that hotel... The famous one, what's it called?

Crane's glossy eyes snap back to focus.

CRANE

What makes you think I know it?

Finally, her shirt comes free. She throws it over his shoulder and washes herself down.

CASSIDY

I thought everyone did.

Crane stands stock still. The dipping sun casts her SHADOW on the barn wall. He watches it bathe in black water.

CASSIDY (cont'd)

I was picking him up, late night. And he comes screaming out of the back door. Next thing I know we're being shot at like ducks... He didn't make it out of the city.

She goes quiet. The wheels turning in Crane's head.

CRANE

They're here. In town.

CASSIDY

Do they know?

CRANE

No. Not yet.

EXT. RED THISTLE - MAIN STREET - DAY

Adis drags a YOUNG WOMAN by the arm, tattered dress and bare feet down the dirty street. Toward City Hall. She has black hair, malnourished.

People quit their hustling, stop to line the streets and watch. A few GREEDY citizens rush him from the wings.

CITIZENS

Is that her?... Hand her over!...
The money belongs to all of us!

Adis PUSHES the beggars away.

ADIS
 You're too late! Get back...
 (under his breath)
 Dogs.

They argue in PROTEST as he climbs the City Hall stairs.

INT. CITY HALL - 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Adis grips her arm tighter, his bravado gone. Replaced by cold sweat on his brow. He KNOCKS meekly at the door of Two Bills' private quarters.

Down the hall another opens...

PRIMROSE fills the doorway. Naked. Playing the harmonica.

Adis ignores him. Hears the CLICK of boots approaching.

WASHINGTON (O.C.)
 What is it?

ADIS
 We've got the girl.

The door opens just enough for Washington's face. He looks at the girl, then Adis.

WASHINGTON
 This is the girl?

ADIS
 No one knows who she is. No one
 speaks her language. She isn't one
 of ours.

Washington SIGHS heavily, disappointed.

WASHINGTON
 (to the girl)
 ¿Él te lastimó?

The girl shakes her head, Washington glares at Adis.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)
 Strike one palooka.

ADIS
 The people are still looking.

WASHINGTON
 Not hard enough.

He SLAMS the door in Adis' face.

PRIMROSE
I'll take her.

Adis looks back at him. But the girl is already running off.

INT. PRIVATE QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Washington moves across the room and opens the curtain.

His POV, the people below, many awaiting word from Adis who steps out of the building empty-handed.

The man GESTURES WILDLY for them to resume their work.

WASHINGTON
One of you is hiding something.

Long Shot wipes down his RIFLE.

INT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Evelyn sifts through dressers in a hurry, grabbing what clothes they have. Stuffing them in a large SUITCASE.

Anna plays with her doll, kicking her feet. She's breathing heavily and uneven.

ANNA
Where are we going?

EVELYN
Away.

ANNA
Like vacation? I want to help.

Evelyn closes up the suitcase and looks around. Anna COUGHS.

EVELYN
Just sit tight, honey.

Evelyn digs into a large JAR and withdraws a ROLL OF BILLS. Anna wheezes, sounding emphysemic.

But she fights it and begins rounding up her toys.

EVELYN (cont'd)
What did I say?

Anna ignores her, struggling. On the verge of a full blown asthma attack. Evelyn SNATCHES her by the wrist.

Then sees the redness in Anna's face. Evelyn softens.

EVELYN (cont'd)
Come here, I'm sorry.

Anna resists. Shoulders heaving.

EVELYN (cont'd)
You can help. I promise, you can help. Just look at me a second.

She faces her mother, big watery eyes. Evelyn hurries across the room to a MEDICINE CABINET. Withdraws a CROCK and returns to her daughter's side.

She scrapes out the last of a JELLY like substance on her fingertips. Begins rubbing it into Anna's chest.

EVELYN (cont'd)
Ok. Count to thirty for me, do your breathing. Then you can help.

Evelyn smiles, kisses her daughter's head.

Anna nods, concentrates on deep measured breaths and begins counting to herself. She gestures to the empty crock.

EVELYN (cont'd)
I'll be right back.

She leaves the house.

INT. CRANE'S HOUSE - BARN - CONTINUOUS

Crane pulls open the heavy barn doors. In contrast to the ramshackle exterior, the low light GLEAMS off the plow and other farming equipment.

He moves to the work bench, digs around beneath.

CASSIDY
So tell me a story about this place. How you like it here.

Cassidy gives herself the ten-cent tour. A vision in wet hair. She runs a hand along the plow, spit-shine clean.

CRANE
Some other time.

She steps on something HOLLOW and notices the door in the floor with a lock.

CASSIDY

Well, this is interesting.

She kneels down, takes the lock in her hand.

CRANE

There's nothing in there.

CASSIDY

Then why lock it?

CRANE

My niece is eight. She's nosey too.

Crane finds what he's looking for, turns to her. He's holding a HAND SCYTHE, menacing curved blade at his side.

Cassidy takes a defensive step back. He folds the blade into the handle, closing it.

CRANE (cont'd)

Here's a story for you. The drought started about five years ago. Every time you put crop in the ground, the wind would just carry it off. Like it was waiting to bleed you dry. So I built this cellar, for when the crop hit. Keep it hidden.

CASSIDY

But it never hit.

Crane shakes his head. Cassidy stares at him a long time, reading him. He holds her gaze.

CRANE

The hotel, in Chicago, is the Drake. Your car was stolen and the dead man in the backseat, you certainly didn't love him.

If Cassidy's surprised, it doesn't show.

CRANE (cont'd)

Don't lie to me again. I'll be back. Black car, four doors.

CASSIDY

Flash the lamps. So I know it's you.

He nods, walks out of the barn. Scythe hanging at his side.

She notices the curtain draped in the corner and moves to it. Draws back the fabric to find the garden. A tiny oasis.

Runs her hand through the knee-high WHEAT.

EXT. CITY HALL - FRONT DOOR - SAME

Long Shot takes exaggerated, deep breaths of air. Absorbing Red Thistle, ingesting it. Washington stares at Josiah, who works diligently in the courtyard.

The front door SWINGS open, Primrose. Late to the party.

WASHINGTON

No stone unturned. And if they look guilty, turn them too.

His men move into the stale air of the remaining day. Some of the townspeople crowd around them like beggars.

They shove their way through. Washington looks at Josiah one last time before following his men.

A EXPLOSIVE ROCKETS into the sky.

EXT. SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Long Shot KICKS in the door.

He enters a CLOTHING STORE, a CLOSED SIGN in the window along with OUTFITTED MANNEQUINS.

INT. SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Inside...

A COMPLETELY EMPTY SHOW FLOOR. He steps into the room, the only thing there besides the window dressing is an old mirror hanging on the wall in the back.

INT. FARMER'S THRIFT STORE - SAME

Primrose has a similar experience, SEVERAL BAGS OF FEED line the wall and TWO pieces of old FARMING EQUIPMENT collect dust in the large windows. The rest abandoned.

PRIMROSE

What the hell?

His voice ECHOES in the cavernous hall.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Washington ambles at his own pace, his twin terriers making a mess up and down the street. He has a peculiar smile on his face, the noise of destruction his own personal aria.

LONG SHOT

These shops are fake. Ain't nothing
behind the signs.

They convene in the street.

PRIMROSE

Most of the houses are empty.

WASHINGTON

Then there should be less
resistance. Continue.

His men do and track off to create more havoc. Washington moves on, seeing a new Red Thistle beneath the skin.

INT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Anna's breathing is under control, an even color returning to her face. The door OPENS, she turns expecting her mother...

It is Two Bills instead. He looks around, Anna freezes up.

TWO BILLS

You lose your flowers?

ANNA

I'm not supposed to talk to you.

TWO BILLS

If your mother was here you
wouldn't have to. Going somewhere?

She ignores him. He takes a seat at the table.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

Fine. You ask the questions.

Puts his hands up in truce. Anna knits her brow, then gets a twinkle in her eye. Pure childish mischief.

ANNA

Why do they call you Two Bills?

TWO BILLS

You must know that already.

ANNA

Yeah, but I don't believe it. Mom says there's some real devils in the world. You must worry.

He reaches into his jacket pocket, produces the ONE and ONE HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS. Holds them up in the light.

TWO BILLS

There is a distinct difference between all men of the world. To one man, this means something.

He slides her the One Hundred Dollar bill.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

And to the other this means everything.

He slides her the One Dollar bill. She carefully picks them both up with a child's curiosity.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

Something like that would get you all the medicine you need.

Her wonderment turns to an angry sneer. Suddenly the front door SWINGS open and Evelyn is there. Crock in hand.

At that moment, Anna SNEEZES, drops the money.

EVELYN

What are you doing in here?

Anna quickly scoops up his two bills and gives them back. He counts them with his hands, reading Evelyn's expression as he puts them back in his jacket.

EVELYN (cont'd)

Honey, go wait in the car.

Anna grabs her little BAG and LEAVES.

TWO BILLS

You flying the coop?

EVELYN

That's none of your business.

He SLAMS her against the wall and puts a meaty paw around her mouth, squeezing. Has his lips right up to her ear.

TWO BILLS

Everything in Red Thistle is my business.

He continues to squeeze, Evelyn's trembling now.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

I'm just thinking out loud. Couple men show up, looking for a girl they say has something real valuable on her and now, you're itching to get out of town.

Two Bills removes his hand. Evelyn sucks in a few deep breaths. Tries to get away but he keeps her pinned.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

Your brother doesn't show up for work today while the rest of the town is getting out on the hunt.

EVELYN

It's Anna, she's worse. I can't keep her here, I'm afraid she's going to get beyond help.

Two Bills pushes his heavy girth into her.

TWO BILLS

(patting her face)

I find that so hard to believe. You could have left any time, you just needed motivation. The only reason you wouldn't be looking... is because you know where she is.

She reacts, a catch in her breath. He goes in for the kill.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

They're willing to pay a nice ransom to the person who hands her over. We're not talking the allowance you get from me, but something substantial.

He eases up, giving her the space to leave but she doesn't.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

This turning any wheels?

Evelyn quietly starts CRYING.

EXT. RED THISTLE - HOUSE - EVENING

TEARS. Down a YOUNG GIRL'S face, she cries on the porch. A COMMOTION inside, the noise of things breaking: wood, ceramic, glass - all sounds the same.

A MAN runs toward the house, the girl clings to him. Her father, eyes burning...

Primrose emerges, loose clothes trailing in his wake.

FATHER

What rights do you have!?

The man raises a CLUB to strike. Primrose pulls back the flap of his coat... Two gleaming pistols. Rights-makers.

The father withdraws. Primrose moves on to the next house, the next family, the next feeble defense.

EXT. RED THISTLE - OUTSKIRTS - SAME

Crane feels the Rainmaker's BLAST before he sees it. The FLASH lights him up, surprising him. A sound with dark associations. The raid has stretched even to the homes here. A festive air giving way to fear. Paranoia.

He passes the house with hanging RABBIT CARCASSES, a young boy CUTS down two and runs off. Stealing the game. He considers giving chase but similar acts go on all around him.

INT. MARKET - SAME

Ed Fowler mans the register in his produce market, overwhelmed. Survival purchases, if duct tape had been invented it would be sold out. A BELL rings atop the door.

Long Shot reaches up, TEARS the bell down.

LONG SHOT

I see you.

Fowler freezes, his hand on something below the counter.

LONG SHOT (cont'd)

Slowly. Let's take a peek.

The cashier brings his hands up, holding a GLASS OF WATER.

FOWLER

Been fighting a sore throat.

Long Shot slides the bell across the counter. Gestures to him, "by all means." Fowler drinks, his hand spilling it.

LONG SHOT
(to the others)
Everyone else, on your knees.

They stare back, confused.

LONG SHOT (cont'd)
Like you're praying.

They obey, falling to their knees. He scans the aisles, picks up an APPLE. Bites into it. Continues his tour, looking each person over. Comes back to Ed.

CRANE (O.C.)
I hope you're paying for that.

Crane is there. Silent door swinging closed, minus the bell. Long Shot gives him the once over, then the apple.

LONG SHOT
Adam's apple. We're all paying.

CRANE
You can settle up with the Lord at church. But here, that one costs a nickel.

Long Shot's hand goes to the strap of the rifle, over his shoulder. Crane SNAPS open the hand scythe...

SWIPES at Long Shot. Severing the strap.

The gun swings untethered into Crane's hand. Fowler can't believe that just happened. Even Long Shot is stunned.

CRANE (cont'd)
There's nothing for you in this place. If you're not back in the city by tomorrow, I'll take something else.

Long Shot regains some composure, hands clear and visible, he slides a FIVE DOLLAR BILL from his pocket.

LONG SHOT
But we just got here.

He throws it on the counter. He tips his black hat goodbye and leaves the way he came. Crane holding the man's gun.

CRANE
Everyone fine?

Slowly, the people get to their feet. Suddenly grateful to see him. Muttering "thank you's."

CRANE (cont'd)
Did Evelyn leave?

FOWLER
Her car was still there.

CRANE
Damn it, I told her...

Crane rushes back out the door. Fowler picks up the five dollar bill. The others come out of hiding.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Two Bills pulls Evelyn along by the arm, smug smile fading fast as distraught citizens CLAMOR to him for answers.

Homestead viscera litters the ground along the street, spilling out of open doorways.

TWO BILLS
You just tell them what you know,
take the money and get going just
like Crane said. He'll understand.
Do it for Anna.

EVELYN
Go to hell.

She's on the verge of breaking. Adis saddles up, nervous.

ADIS
I hope this is waterproof, if they
don't kill us the people will!

Through the swirl of bodies, Washington sticks out like a spectre of all that's gone wrong in the panhandle.

TWO BILLS
This is an overreaction, they were
doing all they could.

WASHINGTON
This place is peculiar, I have to
admit. We find ourselves in some
kind of living ghost town. Why the
big show?

(MORE)

WASHINGTON (cont'd)

Where are all the people to fill
the space, I wonder.

(changing tact)

Who's the legs?

TWO BILLS

She knows something.

Evelyn yanks free. Washington enjoys her spark.

WASHINGTON

Let's hear it.

TWO BILLS

Let's see the money first.

A SHOVEL PUNCH in the man's gut, drops him to his knees.
Washington SLAPS Two Bills' hat off his head and taps his
fingers on the man's skull.

Evelyn GASPS. Long Shot and Primrose join him, three empty
souls staring back at her as the entire town gathers. She at
the center of a hundred people. Alone.

EVELYN

I've seen her.

And as the words come out, so do the tears.

She falls to her knees, beside Two Bills. Like kneeling at
communion. Washington leading the Eucharist.

EVELYN (cont'd)

She's alive. He's keeping her
alive. It's not his fault, it was
chance he found her.

WASHINGTON

Where is she?

TWO BILLS

I'll take you.

EVELYN

Please, don't hurt him. He's all we
have left.

Adis helps Two Bills to his feet. Leaves Evelyn.

WASHINGTON

You lead the way.

(to Evelyn)

If the claim is good, the money is
yours darling.

The townspeople LOUDLY protest as the men disperse. Long Shot pulls Washington aside...

WASHINGTON (cont'd)
Where's your rifle?

Long Shot leans in, speaks in confidence. Washington REACTS.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)
Drop a line to Chicago. Bring in a dozen men just in case. We may be looking at a clean-up.

Evelyn is lost in her own remorse. Face buried in her hands, two tiny ARMS wrap around her... Anna.

ON CRANE

In the shadows of City Hall, watching the entire scene play out. Torn by Evelyn's betrayal and a mother's decision.

He retreats back into darkness.

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

A BLACK CAR chased by the white Cadillac blows past Evelyn's house. Heading out into the inky dark of the plains.

Crane SPRINTS across the street. Just missing them.

Evelyn's car, half-packed by the door. Crane flips over the welcome MAT. There's no key. He opens the car door, fondles the ignition. Nothing.

INT. CRANE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cassidy sits at the table. Hat box in front of her. Several CANDLES lit around the room. She nods off a bit. Then at the door, a SCRATCHING noise wakes her.

On edge, she withdraws her key. Unlocks the hat box and sneaks her hand inside, brandishing a PISTOL. She checks the LOADED barrel and gets out of her seat. Moves to the door...

The STRAY DOG paws to get inside. Cassidy scares her off as she steps out onto the:

PORCH

Night has swallowed Oklahoma, a low moon barely finds the highway. A brisk breeze envelopes her like a bad feeling and she retreats indoors.

INT. KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She emerges from the bedroom in an over-sized jacket, shoes on. One hand clutching the pistol, glass jug hanging in the other. She drinks HARD.

Leans in the doorway, watching with unblinking eyes.

INT. CADILLAC - MOVING

Primrose loads up his two Colt pistols in the passenger seat, spins the barrels and locks them into place.

LONG SHOT

How many times do you have to load
those shooters? You haven't fired
them once all day.

PRIMROSE

I don't let them set in the chamber
long. The bullets get lazy.

Primrose LAUGHS, Long Shot doesn't.

WASHINGTON

If we don't get satisfaction, be
ready to bury everyone.

Washington's men nod in agreement, Primrose spins his barrels a final time as Two Bills' car leads the way.

EXT. RED THISTLE - EVELYN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Crane goes door to door, pleading with Evelyn's neighbors.

CRANE

Please, can you give me a ride? Or
let me borrow your car...

They turn their backs on him as more people follow the commotion, the whirlwind left from Washington's hunt.

Among them, Evelyn and Anna.

EVELYN

Crane, thank God.

CRANE

I need the car.

EVELYN

No... Just let them do what they came to do.

CRANE

You made your choice.

Evelyn realizes, he knows.

CRANE (cont'd)

This is mine.

EVELYN

I'm sorry...

FOWLER (O.C.)

Leave it be.

Fowler emerges from the growing crowd, as more arrive.

FOWLER (cont'd)

Let them take what they came for and move along. You've done a good deed helping her out. But you can't erase whatever she did.

CRANE

Will no one help me?

Not a single offer. All eyes on the dirt. Crane's gaze burning into each and every one of them.

CRANE (cont'd)

If you can't help a stranger and you can't help one of your own, what good are you to anyone?

He turns on his heel and runs off. Chasing shrinking taillights. All but gone from view.

INT. CRANE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM

Cassidy hears the faint first sounds of a car engine and cautiously moves toward the door until finally...

One set of HEADLIGHTS crests an unseen slope. A BLACK CAR, just like Crane told her, meets the driveway.

CASSIDY

Come on. Flash the lights.

Any hope she had is dashed when the WHITE CADILLAC appears. She springs into action, blowing out the lit candles.

She scoops up the hatbox and disappears to the back.

EXT. CRANE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Two sets of headlights burn up the house.

Washington is out first. He moves to the trunk as Primrose and Long Shot take positions on either side of the homestead.

Two Bills lumbers up to Washington as the man pulls a LARGE CANISTER from the trunk.

WASHINGTON
Doesn't look like anyone's home,
business man.

TWO BILLS
Why don't I talk to her? Maybe a
fresh face will ease her out.

WASHINGTON
You've done your part.

He slams the trunk closed.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)
We'd just as soon do ours and get
back to the real world.

Two Bills steps back, tail between his legs. Washington walks into the glare of the car's head lamps.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)
Sister Cass! The road's come to an
end darling. You made a run at it.
But you chose the wrong horse. It's
time to put her down.

Silence from within.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)
GIVE ME BACK WHAT'S MINE!

The boys know their cue and rush in. Long Shot storms through the front. Primrose from somewhere in back.

Washington's boots CLICK up the porch steps.

INT. KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - SAME

They rip through his house. Guns leading the way, hair-trigger nerves. Trashing his place in seconds.

Primrose emerges from the bedroom, holding BLOODY SHEETS.

PRIMROSE

She was here.

Long Shot DIPS his finger in fresh CANDLE WAX, still melted.

LONG SHOT

A few minutes late.

Primrose heads back outside. Long Shot takes one final look, his foot kicking the CHALKBOARD. The name CRANE in chalk.

EXT. PORCH - SAME

Washington SLOSHES the container's contents all over the porch, the steps and the dog food bowls.

WASHINGTON

I don't hear any dying in there.

The boys emerge recoiling at the stench and his maverick technique. Careful not to get doused.

PRIMROSE

We're close.

WASHINGTON

Keep looking.

The men rush off leaving Washington alone. He steps back, still half a canister left.

He slips out a book of matches and grabs one, strikes it to flame... the wind KILLS it.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)

Shit.

He notices a waft of gray SMOKE snaking out the driver's side window of Two Bills' car.

INT. BARN - SAME

Primrose pulls open the heavy barn door, begins a sweep inside. Unsettled by the CREAKING floorboards.

PRIMROSE

How do you want it Cassidy? It's going to hurt either way.

He finds the old equipment amusing. Kicks the tractor tires.

Then the door SWINGS CLOSED behind, plunging him into darkness. He spins GUNS drawn...

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

Three holes in the wall.

PRIMROSE (cont'd)

Fuck you.

He creeps toward the door, his boots just missing the wooden TRAP DOOR in the floor. There is NO LOCK on the latch.

But Primrose doesn't see it. He yanks open the barn door, revealing only the empty space. He walks out.

INT. TWO BILLS' CAR - SAME

Two Bills drags on a newly lit cigarette, looks out at Washington watching them.

ADIS

What's so damn special about this girl anyway? She better look like Katharine Hepburn for my money.

Washington walks toward them.

ADIS (cont'd)

Not to mention we haven't seen a single red cent.

TWO BILLS

(under his breath)

Shut it Adis.

Two Bills rolls down the window the rest of the way. Washington reaches in and STEALS the man's cigarette.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

I didn't know you smoked, I could offer you one.

WASHINGTON

I don't. We had a deal. Your people aren't making good on that. This samaritan you've got running around is bad. He doesn't take our needs seriously.

Washington turns and walks back toward the house.

TWO BILLS
(leaning out)
Well she couldn't be far, he
doesn't have a car.

EXT. CRANE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Holding the cigarette tight in his fingers, Washington scoops up the canister in his free hand and walks by the porch...

WASHINGTON
He doesn't have a house neither.

And FLICKS the cigarette into a puddle of gasoline. It catches fire and spreads along the wood in both directions climbing up the walls.

Within seconds the house's facade is AFLAME.

INT. TWO BILLS' CAR - SAME

The two men shit themselves as the SPREADING FIRE brings light and warmth to their terrified faces.

Two Bills turns over the ignition and with the fire rising, he backs the car BLINDLY down the drive. Hops the car over the ditch and peels out in the street.

EXT. CRANE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Washington meets Primrose at the barn. The boy has his pistol drawn, aimed at Two Bills' car as it goes by.

WASHINGTON
Save it. We'll see them soon
enough. Grab me some fire.

Washington splashes the barn with what remains of the gas.

Long Shot appears from the darkness.

LONG SHOT
Not a trace in the fields, if they
left it was by road or they're
still here.

WASHINGTON
Or we're being marked.

Primrose returns with a partially BURNING BOARD from Crane's house. Washington flings the canister into the barn.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)

Light it up.

Primrose tosses the wood in after it and the barn catches. Flames work their way inside then out.

The Black Hats stand between two burning buildings, like effigies of the town itself. The wood HISSES and CRACKS, fed by the unimpeded wind and dry lumber.

PRIMROSE

Dumb son-of-a-bitch. Didn't know
what he got himself into.

Washington holds up the CHALKBOARD toward the flame. He reads the name Crane. Breaks it over his knee.

WASHINGTON

He knows full well what he's in to.
Question is, what are the odds she
winds up here on *his* doorstep? Sure
as hell isn't chance.

Suddenly, MOVEMENT from the barn...

Long Shot draws up his rifle in a BLINK and FIRES.

The three men step closer and find the MOTHER RABBIT shot dead in the dirt. Her BABIES, lost in confusion, dance circles around her.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)

Seems we can't make it a day
without gunning something down.

Their SQUEALS have the men on edge. Washington pulls the shotgun from his jacket and aims to silence them...

EXT. RED THISTLE - OUTSKIRTS - SAME

Reacting to the GUNSHOT, the RESIDENTS who stand corralled at the town's edge twitter with anxiety.

Several more GUNSHOTS and someone pushing through their ranks, ahead to the front of the line...

Evelyn, with a fearful look, the towering inferno that was Crane's property dances on the horizon like tiny setting suns. She nearly falls, FOWLER is there to steady her.

EVELYN

What have I done?

EXT. FIELD - SAME

Crane, the roar of gunfire echoing out over the plains, stops in his tracks as the two bright flames light up the flat, Oklahoma desert.

He knows right away what it is.

EXT. RED THISTLE - MAIN STREET

Anna walks alone down the empty street. She wipes the sleep from her eyes and carries her doll.

EXT. RED THISTLE - OUTSKIRTS - SAME

Evelyn's cries devolve to anger. She fights Fowler's protective grip.

Two HEADLIGHTS head straight at the mob.

FOWLER

Everyone back!

The car doesn't slow as the people part.

EXT. RED THISTLE - MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Anna hears the commotion and watches as the crowd of people ahead begin to split down the middle, a BRIGHT LIGHT shining through, into the little girl's eyes.

She barely has time to make out the GIANT CHROME BUMPER bearing down on her.

INT. TWO BILLS' CAR - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

TWO BILLS

Out of the way!

(to Adis)

These fucking people.

Then he sees Anna, scared stiff...

He JERKS the wheel and SLAMS the brakes.

EXT. RED THISTLE - MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

The car SPINS out, then catches traction, narrowly missing Anna. It SHOOTs off-course crashing HEAD FIRST into a TELEPHONE POLE.

The pole SNAPS and falls mere feet from the girl.

EVELYN (O.C.)

Anna!

Evelyn pushes away from the crowd and scoops up her daughter, hands groping for injuries.

ANNA

Mom...

EVELYN

Just breathe baby.

Still frantic and fussing.

ANNA

Mom. I'm in one piece.

People cautiously approach the wreck. The driver side door swings open and Two Bills spills out.

BLOOD dripping down his face from cuts on his bald head. Adis climbs out, shaken but unbroken.

EVELYN

(tenderly to Anna)

Stay right here, don't move.

Anna nods and Evelyn turns on a dime, sprints toward Two Bills who is still wiping the blood from his eyes.

EVELYN (cont'd)

What did you do!? You son-of-a-bitch!

She ATTACKS him, knocking the man on his ass. Adis pulls her away before she can do worse.

EVELYN (cont'd)

This is your fault!

Two Bills staggers to his feet, straightens his suit.

TWO BILLS

You opened your mouth wide as I did. Hell, that's all I ever did for you people.

(MORE)

TWO BILLS (cont'd)
Give you an inch, you expect a
yard. It doesn't matter. No one is
safe anymore.

Their once revered leader, falling apart. Adis slinks away
unnoticed through the crowd.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)
Pack it in. This place has been
farmed, spent, bled, blown and
drank dry. Go. Now.

The people look on, disgusted. Then slowly begin making their
way home. Evelyn scoops up Anna and does the same.

Two Bills, holds a pristine HANDKERCHIEF to the GASH above
the bridge of his nose, white linen stained blood red.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)
Adis. Let's go.

He looks for Adis, his stooge is gone.

FOWLER
Can't scheme your way out of this
one. If we take a fall, so do you.

Two Bills drops his bloody handkerchief to the ground and
hurries toward City Hall. Fowler watches him go.

EXT. FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Crane, alone in the field, runs like he were dodging mortar
rounds in no-man's land. Exhausted.

Several hundred yards off, the rumble of a motor. Moon giving
away the gleam of the Cadillac.

EXT. RED THISTLE - CITY HALL - MOMENTS LATER

In the courtyard, the Rainmaker has dozed off.

Two Bills stumbles up the City Hall steps, hat listing to one
side, blood running down his face. Lungs exploding.

A pair of headlamps finds him, white hot like the blinding
light of judgement. He throws the door open.

INT. CADILLAC - CONTINUOUS

Washington's eyes never leave City Hall, intense.

WASHINGTON

I want everyone rounded up by morning in the square. Start with the woman and her daughter. After tomorrow this place doesn't exist.

Long Shot follows orders, gets out of the car.

PRIMROSE

You want me to embarrass the fat man?

Washington shakes his head. Primrose leaves.

He kills the engine, revels in the silence. Pops another INHALER open. Consumes the Benzedrine. This is his Zen.

EXT. CRANE'S HOUSE - BARN - LATER

Flames devour his house. The barn STRAINS to stay upright but IMPLODES with a cross wind and collapses.

Crane dodges falling timber shrapnel.

CRANE

Cassidy!?

He races to his house, KICKS at the front door which is an intense cradle of fire. It's beyond help. The smoke and heat drive him back, stumbling to the ground.

Nothing to do but watch it burn. The inferno that was his farm, seared into his eyes forever... Morphing to:

EXT. HIGH PLAINS - DAWN

An unnaturally bright sun cracking the horizon. Nothing moves on the flat terrain.

Just the unsettling calm before...

EXT. CRANE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Crane's sleeping face half buried. A TONGUE licks the man's cheek. The stray dog paces, then licks him again until he finally sits up.

His house and barn are just ash foundations, the husks of his FARMING EQUIPMENT remain, charred and emaciated like Giacometti sculptures.

The dog trots over to the water pump, licks at the spout and Crane gets the idea. He turns on the water, takes a drink. Leaves it running.

EXT. CRANE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Crane kicks through the remains of his living room, nothing of value left. He finds the faintest scrap of Anna's DRAWING.

The paper crumbles in his hand.

He overturns collapsed sections of wall, expecting the worst. Not yet finding it.

EXT. BARN - LATER

Crane shoves his COMBINE out next to the TRACTOR. Both are destroyed. He wades through the remnants of his garden and steps on something, his foot falls through...

The cellar door.

Picking himself up, he sweeps aside the mess and yanks what remains of the hatch. It breaks free of the hinge.

INT. CELLAR - CONTINUOUS

Crane lowers himself into the space, a dark stone-lined room with very little light. He inches forward...

Along the wall, a MILITARY UNIFORM hangs on a hook. A HALF-DOZEN framed photographs and MEDALS. A modest GUN RACK.

This place, a shrine to his family. And his past.

In the corner, a Chauffeur's black OVERCOAT from an empty hanger, drapes a soot-covered Cassidy. And there on the lapel is the same STITCHED SILHOUETTE of the large HOTEL.

CRANE

Wake up.

She startles awake, REVOLVER poised, the hammer CLICKS back.

Crane TEARS it out of her hands, shoves it in his waistband.

CRANE (cont'd)

Get out.

She tries to get her wits.

CASSIDY

This is no grain cellar.

Crane snatches her by the arm, Cassidy YELPS. He doesn't mind her wound. Shoves her toward the ladder.

He moves to the gun rack. Grabs an ENFIELD RIFLE, a military issued piece. Stocks up on a handful of 5-ROUND CLIPS.

A FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH of Crane and his brother WILLIAM, standing in front of the farm in uniform. His parents, stand on either side. Not so much smiling, just proud.

Crane turns the photo face down. Loads the FIRST CLIP in to the rifle and turns...

Cassidy is still there. Watching him.

EXT. CRANE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Cassidy stumbles out into the brown haze of dawn, blackened, cradling her hat box.

Crane follows, piss and vinegar. Cassidy hears the running water and rushes over, gulping heavily.

Finally, she takes in the view. A snapshot of ruination.

CASSIDY

Oh my God.

Nearly moved to tears, she seeks out Crane...

Finds his Enfield levelled at her. Crane SNAPS the bolt.

CASSIDY (cont'd)

Wait. I didn't know this would happen... Please.

CRANE

Why shouldn't I kill you?

CASSIDY

Because I know you.

CRANE

Why didn't you run?

CASSIDY

I couldn't. I came here for you. I meant to find you.

Crane pauses. Surprised.

CASSIDY (cont'd)
Madeline Chambers. She was my
mother.

His expression changes, like the wind was knocked from him.

CASSIDY (cont'd)
She told me about you. Wouldn't
stop talking about it up until she
died last year. Sometimes she'd
take me to work at the Palm Court.
Drake Hotel. Then one day, she
stopped going. One day she got some
money and the next we were living
in the country.

Crane leans against his gun, memories flooding back.

CRANE
She really gone?

CASSIDY
The doctor said it was her liver,
the lying bastard. It was the men
she worked for. We lived without a
care for three years. But she ended
up back there. So did I. Still, she
never forgot what you did for her
before you vanished.

Crane paces, rifle passing back and forth.

CASSIDY (cont'd)
I came to thank you. And let you
know she tried.

Finally, he raises the rifle once more. Determined, he steps
closer. Finger hovering on the trigger.

CRANE
Why them?

At this, Cassidy breaks. Everything spilling over. A flicker
of hesitation in his aim.

CASSIDY
Because they owe me.

She looks up at him. Tears of anger.

CASSIDY (cont'd)
They owe me. Every day she's gone
is going to cost them.

She holds his gaze, fire and brimstone. He can't bring himself to do it. He storms off in anger. Slings the rifle over his shoulder and picks up his walking stick...

Heads down the lane toward the highway.

Cassidy wipes the tears away.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Crane walks down the highway, Red Thistle not far ahead. Ammunition RATTLING in his pockets. The stone fury of revenge in his bones...

Cassidy runs to catch up.

He keeps her at bay with a glance. But says nothing.

She follows at a distance.

INT. CITY HALL - PRIVATE QUARTERS - SAME

Evelyn sleeps sitting up in Two Bills' office, Anna's head in her lap. A blanket thrown over her. The CLICK of boots approaching the door...

Washington throws it open. Bold sun streaming in.

WASHINGTON

It's time.

She smooths a hair on Anna's waking head.

EVELYN

What are you going to do to us?

WASHINGTON

You should think of the things we won't do as long as you obey.

He steps back out into the hallway.

ANNA

Mom?

EVELYN

Let's go.

INT. MAIN LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Washington leads the girl's down the STAIRS.

WASHINGTON

I haven't had the pleasure of
meeting your brother-in-law. He's
well remembered where I'm from.

Two Bills leans against the front door, waiting. Nearly
unrecognizable. Blood on top of bruises.

EVELYN

I wouldn't know.

WASHINGTON

He didn't mention it? I don't blame
him. His line of work was like
mine. Death and taxes.

Through the doors, outside a commotion can be heard.
Washington leads the way, opening the door to...

EXT. CITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

The square bristling with people. Long Shot and Primrose
corral them like cattle, guns drawn. Men shield their wives;
children cry. A whole town of confused and frightened people.

Washington takes center stage.

PRIMROSE

They're here!

Primrose points with his pistol to the edge of town.

A CARAVAN of 3 CARS snakes into Red Thistle. ILLINOIS PLATES,
they slow to a stop. Doors open and...

A DOZEN MEN, black hats all, fill the streets.

A DOZEN GUNS on the people of Red Thistle.

EXT. RED THISTLE - OUTSKIRTS - SAME

Crane climbs atop an abandoned DUGOUT, slanted roof built
toward the ground. He minds his step, gets to the apex and
takes up lookout over the town.

Cassidy struggles behind him, her foot FALLING through the
ancient roof. He looks back, annoyed.

CRANE

Keep to the cross beams.

She bites her tongue and gets her footing. Manages to find a spot beside him. Crane takes aim with his rifle...

POV - THE SQUARE

Looking for Washington, he finds him atop the steps. Continuing on, he tracks the Black Hats one and all as they circle the population.

Cassidy watches him, notes a SERIES OF GOUGES in the butt of the gun. At least 3 DOZEN.

CASSIDY

What are those marks?

CRANE

Take a guess.

CASSIDY

I thought you were just a driver. I saw the coat, same as Victor's.

CRANE

(pointing to the gouges)

These were the war.

(then)

Besides, I was a bagman, it's not the same.

He pulls his eye off the sight, sits up.

CASSIDY

How many bad guys?

He ignores her, instead focusing on the smallest detail. Some change in the air. His eyes find the horizon.

CASSIDY (cont'd)

I can help. I just need the gun.

A SHADOW falls over them, something moving. They both look up to see a SMALL CLUTCH of BIRDS flying overhead. Cassidy marvels at the sight.

CASSIDY (cont'd)

Beautiful...

Then she sees what he's watching. A second FLOCK of birds so dense it nearly BLOTS out the sky. Coming their way.

EXT. CITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Anna clings tight to Evelyn's side while the Black Hats try to bring things to order. Like herding cats.

WASHINGTON

Listen up!

But no one responds, the chatter overwhelming.

Suddenly, another EXPLOSION erupts over Red Thistle and people SCATTER. A stampede threatens to break loose. Men with guns beating fathers and forcing back wives.

Washington spots the Rainmaker. The man innocently resumes his work. Exasperated, Washington leaves his perch and crosses the vast courtyard toward Josiah.

Everyone watches. It takes forever. No one says a word.

Josiah bundles the next round of explosives. Bends down and LIGHTS the fuse. He steps back, bumps into...

Washington. Then Washington's double-barrel.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)

Boom.

BOOM! The shot TEARS through his chest erupting in a CRIMSON SPRAY. The old man falls, landing atop his explosives.

The fuse reaches the payload, a quick WHISTLE then...

KABOOM!

The old man's body is WRACKED by the explosion, thrown several feet into the air. Parts and blood sprayed over the courtyard and on Washington.

The only rain he brought to Red Thistle.

The WHIMPERING crowd await Washington's address now with open ears. Like nothing happened, he holsters his shotgun and spits a few bits of Josiah from his mouth.

And reclaims his place atop the steps.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)

Come here.

He offers a hand but Evelyn doesn't take, he yanks her by her hair to her feet. Anna protests...

EVELYN
Don't, Anna.

EXT. DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

Crane sees Evelyn, suddenly tense. He picks up his rifle again and lines up a shot. Evelyn obstructing Washington.

CASSIDY
What is it?

She registers the situation, the woman.

CASSIDY (cont'd)
I saw the picture a child drew, I
knew you had to have a girl. Is
that your wife?

CRANE
She's not mine.

But it's not convincing.

EXT. CITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Evelyn recoils from the gore on Washington's face.

WASHINGTON
(to the crowd)
We've fallen on a misunderstanding.
Your community leader has failed,
the girl we are looking for is
still among you. This woman's
family has given her shelter.

He drags Evelyn down the steps, to the front row, where an
ELDERLY MAN stares back at him through glassy eyes.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)
(raising his gun)
I've been in this mirage far too
long. This swindler here...
(re: Two Bills)
Is selling you dreams, squeezing
the last penny out of you before he
goes. I'm very, very real. Bring
them to me or many of you will die.

A MURMUR rising...

BLAM! He kills the elderly man. The people SHRIEK in horror.

EVELYN:

Why are you doing this?

WASHINGTON

You may be willing to die for him
but are you willing to let others?

ADIS

Give him up Evelyn!

His voice spurs on others, shouts of protest course through the crowd. Evelyn wilts under the scrutiny.

EXT. DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

Crane steels himself against what is about to come, Cassidy looks on in horror.

CASSIDY

Why aren't you doing anything?

He ignores her, gazing anxiously over his shoulder.

CASSIDY (cont'd)

He's killing innocent people. You
could walk me right up there.

CRANE

Would he stop? Or just shoot you
first and move on?

She knows the truth. Crane takes aim for a last time.

CRANE (cont'd)

We wait. A little longer.

Suddenly the MASSIVE FLOCK OF BIRDS bursts overhead. Too numerous to count, too loud to hear anything else...

And behind it, a solid BLACK WALL OF DUST. Another storm.

Biblical in size. The first was a shadow by comparison.

EXT. CITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Washington moves to the next person, an older FARMER.

WASHINGTON

Maybe this hero's just the only one
with sense enough to leave. Maybe
he's left you all to die. In which
case I'll move on down the line...

EVELYN

I don't know where he is!

BLAM! The farmer dies.

Then, the MASSIVE FLOCK OF BIRDS shoots out over the square. SWIRLING around the gunshot, they reconvene and continue south, casting a pall over the town.

A CHILL blows through the air, HATS TORN from heads, as the people buzz like the Apocalypse is upon them.

LONG SHOT

We've got a problem!

The DUSTER drapes like a curtain across the plains, towering high above the town. Washington stares at it, curious...

WASHINGTON

What the hell is that?

TWO BILLS

Welcome to the panhandle.

Two Bills smiles up at him through bloody teeth. Washington gazes back at a particular house and something else. Maybe a person, no, two people. He sees Crane but not before...

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The REPORT of a RIFLE and in the square, THREE MEN, BLACK HATS popped off their heads by some force. Their bodies falling to the ground. Dead. Head shots.

Their hats FLUTTER to the ground...

When the CROWD SCATTERS!

WASHINGTON

Clean it up!

Primrose and Long Shot OPEN FIRE, mowing down people as they run. The Black Hats wield their guns like roman candles, stalking down the weak and aged like mercy hunters. Bodies begin to litter the streets.

It looks like a RABBIT HUNT.

Washington turns his gun to Two Bills. The stairs are empty. He looks back to the dugout where Crane stands atop the roof eyes boring into Washington from a distance.

EXT. DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

Crane takes up his rifle and hurries down off the roof, pulling the handkerchief over his mouth.

Cassidy stumbles, almost falls off. He catches her, hands her a rag as well. She ties it around her face.

CRANE

Stay on my hip.

He takes her hand, affixes it to the tail of his shirt.

Just as they are ENGULFED.

EXT. CITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Evelyn huddles on the steps with Anna, the only witnesses to a complete annihilation. Anna grabs a Red Cross MASK from her dress pocket and puts it on.

And before anyone is quite ready...

DARKNESS.

A complete ASSAULT ON THE SENSES. Somehow Evelyn is leading Anna down the City Hall steps and out into the square. Her hand out to guide her, suddenly...

Someone DARTS by, blindly.

A CONCERT OF GUNSHOTS, muted muzzle flashes like fireflies.

Evelyn steers away, the dirt already cakes her tear-streaked face. It's relentless, then she STUMBLES over something...

A BODY. Someone face down, absolutely dead. The girls scabble to another set of STAIRS. There are more people there, clamoring up beside her and into...

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Inside, visibility is a little better, she can make out scared silhouettes seeking cover. Then someone GRABS her...

Ed Fowler.

FOWLER

To the back, keep moving.

He leads them on, as the rest continue down the aisles and past the pews into...

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Gusts of wind pound the only GLASS WINDOW in the room as Evelyn finds a corner to sit. Anna concentrates on breathing, gives her the THUMBS UP that all is well.

Evelyn sees BLOOD on her daughter's hands, wipes them clean with her dress.

Fowler closes the door behind a few final people. He finds a simple HOE hanging on the wall and wields it, standing guard.

FOWLER
Everyone holding up?

He gets nods from the frightened. Another MAN sets his loved ones aside and takes up arms with a ornamental CANDLE HOLDER.

Two SHADOWS, blurred by the storm, stalk by the window.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Crane shields his eyes, rifle shouldered. Wraithlike figures dart in and out of the gusting winds.

Cassidy hangs tight to his coattail.

A MAN BURSTS FORWARD!

Desperate and lost, Crane lets the innocent pass, but finds another man chasing him. RIFLE leading the way...

He shoves Cassidy down as the man FIRES. Bullets whizzing by. Crane weaves through the storm masked street, TAPPING his stick. The man on his heels. He CLICKS something METAL, at knee-height and leaps over as...

The Black Hat runs directly into the THRESHER. His legs mangled in the blades. Crane POPS a bullet in him.

He finds Cassidy, moving on. Ahead...

A VOLLEY OF GUNFIRE.

Steady shots, 3 GUNMEN standing back to back, spinning and firing, like a pinwheel. Obscured by the storm.

Fleeing PEOPLE die in the street.

Crane ducks behind a WALL. Raises his rifle in one practiced motion, waiting for them to be revealed by a...

MUZZLE FLASH! He pulls the trigger and a man dies.

Again, he waits. TWO MORE FLASHES from the illuminated gunmen and he reacts with TWO ROUNDS. Bodies hit the dirt.

And there are no more flashes.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Crane and Cassidy tread carefully, his TAPPING stick leading them on as he COUNTS under his breath.

SLAM! Out of nowhere, a MAN runs headlong into them, hat box falling from Cassidy's hand. The guy is on top of her...

A BLACK HAT. Tall and heavy, Italian.

ITALIAN

Look who just got lucky.

He PUNCHES her square in the face. Cassidy reaches out for the box, hand groping blindly.

He PUNCHES her again. Cassidy coughs, her mask mangled.

ITALIAN (cont'd)

Where is it?

Crane suddenly YANKS the man off of her. They struggle on the ground, the Italian CRACKS him with the butt of his pistol.

ITALIAN (cont'd)

I'll just kill you first if you're so anxious...

The man's voice STICKS in his throat, a WET GURGLE. Blood STREAMS from his mouth.

The Italian's hand goes from his belt, and an empty sheath, to a KNIFE buried in his neck. He pulls it out, losing blood at 120 beats per minute.

Cassidy kicks him over, desperate to find the box...

CASSIDY

(pleading)

No, no... Where is it, please...

She fumbles through the dirt. The box is gone.

Crane gently grabs her arm, she jerks it free.

CASSIDY (cont'd)

Let me go! This can't be happening!

CRANE

You're going to die out here.

She gives in and he pulls her along, her eyes frantically scanning the ground as they pass. Shelter looms ahead of them, a DARK MONOLITH through the storm.

CASSIDY

Stop!

Crane does. Blood flecks Cassidy's wild-eyed face.

CASSIDY (cont'd)

I'm not going a step further
without the pistol.

He reluctantly hands it over. Then leads her on.

Two Bills emerges, watching them go. Greedy glint in his eyes as he begins scouring the ground for her box.

INT. CHURCH - OFFICE - SAME

Evelyn and Anna huddle together.

ANNA

We should have left mom.

EVELYN

(nodding)

We will baby. I'm sorry

Evelyn kisses her forehead.

Fowler nervously watches the door, garden hoe feebly trembling. Then...

A MUFFLED SHOUT. Coming loud and quick. Screams and knocks in all directions.

Followed by a sudden silence.

Fowler inches forward, white knuckles around the hoe. He listens closely... His ear to the door.

Nothing at first, then the familiar CLICK of a boot, faint and far away. Then another, getting closer.

CLICK... CLICK... CLICK.

Fowler backs away.

FOWLER

(whispers to other man)

Get your guard up.

And then, THREE POLITE KNOCKS on the door. The strangest thing. A tense beat, breath holding, when...

A SHOT rips through it, shotgun pellets destroy the old dry wood and the farmer is DEAD within seconds.

The man's lifeless eyes staring back at Anna. The door creaks open. Fowler puts himself between the girls and death.

Washington steps in.

Fowler SWINGS the hoe, blade cleaving through the air. Washington clips it with his shotgun but gets caught, SLASHING down his face. Losing his hat.

In the blink of an eye he BREAKS Fowler's arm. The old man drops to his knees.

Washington picks up the hoe and goes to work. The BLADE chopping down, unrelenting. Evelyn hangs on desperately to her daughter, in complete terror.

Fowler's final words are just SCREAMS.

Washington catches his breath. He reloads the shotgun. Picks up his hat, new jagged gash to join the first.

Walks around the room. Evelyn inches Anna toward the door.

EVELYN

Go!

He turns, BLASTS!

Evelyn and Anna sneak through the doorway, inches from exploding buckshot. Washington follows...

INT. CHURCH - MAIN HALL - CONTINUOUS

The girls speed down the aisle.

EVELYN

Keep going!

Anna runs ahead of Evelyn when Washington suddenly YANKS her mother back by the hair.

Both girls tumble. Evelyn turns, scratches at Washington, he CLOCKS her with the shotgun.

ANNA

No! Let her go!

Washington swings, barrel aimed...

Evelyn KICKS off one of the pews as it FIRES, knocking the shot wide. It SPLINTERS a pew near Anna. The little girl falls and loses her MASK. Swept away by the wind.

EVELYN

Hide, Anna!

Washington drags Evelyn out of the church.

Anna peeks her head out. Nothing there but open double doors and a never-ending swirl of dust. Alone, in the one place you're not supposed to feel that way.

She creeps toward the exit, hand shielding her mouth. And before she can second guess, steps into her worst nightmare.

INT. CITY HALL - MAIN LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Cassidy and Crane burst through the front door into the open lobby, mostly empty save the choice furniture...

And FOUR BLACK HATS, guns on the upswing. Crane SHOVES Cassidy aside, summons his rifle and BLASTS the closest MAN point blank in the FACE.

SHOTS RATTLE OFF! Splintered wood and fractured furnishings.

Crane overturns several pieces of FURNITURE and ducks down. A veritable trench for shelter.

He BLASTS off a couple shots, keeps them at bay. Reloads.

CASSIDY (O.C.)

Crane! I can't see!

CRANE

Don't say anything!

A BULLET punches through the COUCH inches from his head, he slides down the line. And somehow he looks comfortable here.

He rolls over, gently pushes aside the sofa, creating the smallest GAP between the furniture.

A Black Hat slides over, in Cassidy's direction, Crane puts a BULLET through the side of his head and ROLLS...

BOOM! BOOM!

Bullets puncture the spot where he just laid.

Crane POPS up, gun on his cheek and in TWO QUICK BURSTS he puts them both down.

CRANE (cont'd)
It's all clear.

He steps over FOUR MORE NOTCHES in his rifle.

Cassidy is huddled in the corner. Gun CLENCHED in her hand, he kneels down to her.

CRANE (cont'd)
We've got to go.

She nods, but her eyes are wild, heartless. No longer the scared debutante we thought she was.

CRANE (cont'd)
This way.

He ushers her down the row of offices, sticking close to the wall. Somewhere in the building, more GUNSHOTS.

They duck into an open door...

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Where a man SCRAMBLES over a desk in terror. Chair tumbling and papers flying, it is Adis.

ADIS
Please, don't. Please.

He finally recognizes Crane. Goes to him, pleading.

ADIS (cont'd)
Crane, we're all dying... They won't stop shooting. Oh God, my wife. She's out there.

The desperation shakes him.

ADIS (cont'd)
All they wanted was the girl.
That's all they wanted. This is your goddamn fault.

Cassidy steps out from behind Crane, Adis stares at her like some apparition. He starts LAUGHING as the sounds of gunshots ECHO from down the hallway.

ADIS (cont'd)
She's gorgeous.

BAM!

A bullet TEARS through Adis' forehead, his smile fading. He falls to the floor.

The gun smokes in Cassidy's hand.

CRANE
He was unarmed.

She turns the pistol on him. No wavering this time.

CASSIDY
No one's keeping me from getting out of here. Guns or no guns, complete strangers. You gave me a chance, just like my mother said you would.

A GUN SHOT rips off, splinters a chunk of the DOOR FRAME by Cassidy's head. She ducks down...

CASSIDY (cont'd)
I appreciate what you've done for me. I hope someone can do the same for you. But I'm not sorry.

CRANE
You won't survive.

CASSIDY
I've gotten this far. Take care of what's yours Crane.

PRIMROSE (O.C.)
Is that you Cass!? I thought I heard that sweet voice. Come say hello to an old friend.

Another GUN SHOT, but this one further away.

PRIMROSE (O.C.) (cont'd)
Now you play hard to get.

Cassidy looks at him a last time, the slightest hesitation, then moves quietly in to the hallway.

Leaving Crane with his thoughts. He looks at his hands, they TREMBLE. He clenches his fists, when suddenly...

A FIGURE passes in front of him. It is PRIMROSE. Barely a foot away and Crane holds his breath.

INT. MAIN LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Oblivious, Primrose stalks through the dense air of the spacious lobby. Each BANG of a swinging door or CREAK in the wood structure draws the aim of his pistol. He BLOWS into his harmonica, on the verge of an actual melody, but...

He bumps into a LOW HEAVY TABLE. It SCRAPES across the floor and he stops, grimacing.

Then, in the corner of his eye, FLEETING MOVEMENT.

Primrose turns toward it, making out a...

CROUCHING FIGURE ahead. He creeps, firming up his backbone and trigger-finger. Then, he sees it clearly...

And FIRES.

His smirk fades when the figure doesn't fall, doesn't even flinch. He rushes forward to find...

A WALL SIZED MIRROR, ornate wood-carved frame and a perfectly round bullet hole in the plate of glass and wall beneath.

He puts a finger to the splintered surface and laughs at his mistake. But he doesn't see the reflection of Crane's WALKING STICK slashing down...

CRACK!

It SHATTERS across the man's skull. Primrose falls to a knee, brings a hand to his head as a CARMINE STREAM OF BLOOD spills into his eyes.

He stumbles against the mirror, confused, shooter lost somewhere on the floor. He fumbles around his belt, hands clasping another PISTOL.

He wrestles it from the waistband and drops it as well. His eyes find Crane, watching him.

PRIMROSE

Do I know you?

He can hardly keep his feet.

PRIMROSE (cont'd)

Hand me my guns, friend. I can't seem to reach them.

Crane bends down, picks up the man's handgun.

PRIMROSE (cont'd)

Boss gets mad if we lose our guns.

BAM. A second bullet hole ERUPTS in the mirror beside the first as Primrose's blood SPRAYS the glass. The man's body slides to the floor revealing...

Crane. Aiming the gun at his own reflection.

CRANE

Anna...

EXT. MAIN STREET - SAME

Anna shields her eyes, stumbling across the killing fields. Each corpse more difficult to overcome. Her breathing growing labored like a panic attack.

She's getting her bearings, then hears...

WASHINGTON

Crane! It's over!

She tries to pinpoint the voice.

INT. CITY HALL - MAIN LOBBY - SAME

Crane stops in his tracks, listens. He turns and heads for the doors. Then from the darkened corner...

Cassidy EMERGES. She silently watches him go.

EXT. CITY HALL - STEPS - CONTINUOUS

Washington digs his shotgun into Evelyn's ribs as she struggles against him on the City Hall stairs.

WASHINGTON

We can end this now, Crane!

EVELYN

Please! My daughter...

WASHINGTON

It takes a village. She'll manage.

INSIDE MAIN LOBBY

CRANE

Evelyn!

Crane creeps toward the front, A SHOT rips through the doorway, he steps aside. Stays close to the walls.

OUTSIDE

WASHINGTON

Is that you Shakey?! Still got the unsteady hand? Put the gun down. Bring the girl.

INSIDE MAIN LOBBY

Crane can make out Evelyn in the doorway and the shotgun held to her neck. Washington behind the door frame.

He aims, rifle pointed just beyond the shotgun at the door. But his hands TREMBLE ever so slightly, he pauses.

OUTSIDE

WASHINGTON (cont'd)

It's worse under pressure, we all heard the legend. Still, the rising star in Chicago and you walk away. Come to this shit stain and do the same job for someone else.

CRANE (O.C.)

That was then. I'm not a mercenary, I'm a farmer. Your girl's gone.

Then, Crane steps through the door, lays his gun down. Washington whips around Evelyn. He puts the gun to her back.

CRANE (cont'd)

She's no part of our life. Let her go. You can do what you will to me.

WASHINGTON

You had one chance.

EXT. RED THISTLE - MAIN STREET - SAME

Anna, adrift in the maelstrom surrounding her, is losing her self-control. Breathing more sporadic.

Another pneumonia attack, oncoming.

Then a familiar voice, closer now.

EVELYN (O.C.)

Take care of my little girl. You're going to be a good father to her.

Anna summons what wits she has left.

EXT. CITY HALL - STEPS - CONTINUOUS

Evelyn, forgiveness in her eyes, is saying goodbye.

EVELYN

I didn't mean for this to happen, I'm sorry. I'm sorry for saying we were leaving, we'd never go without you. I hated you Crane for coming back instead of him... but I always loved you. You should know that.

Crane wants respond, can't find the words.

WASHINGTON

I'd have held on to the girl if I were you though. Might have saved at least one of you.

Washington raises his shotgun over Evelyn's shoulder at Crane a sitting duck...

Evelyn YANKS his arm down, shot EXPLODING near Crane's feet.

CRANE

Get down!

Crane whips up the rifle and FIRES.

The shot ERUPTS through Washington's free shoulder, nearly tearing his arm off. But Evelyn does not stand down, she goes for his throat...

BOOM! HUNDREDS OF PELLETS erupt from Washington's gun through Evelyn's stomach. She drops from his grip.

WASHINGTON

(in pain)

Fuck!

Unable to reload, Washington darts away in the storm.

Evelyn falls down, life escaping her by the breath. SLIDING on her back, leaving a trail of blood to the base of the steps and a pair of TINY FEET.

She blinks, as if she's unsure whether Anna is real or some kind of dream. Reaches up to her face.

EVELYN

Where is your mask?

ANNA

Mom, what's wrong? Get up, can't you get up?

Anna's in the throes of an all out ATTACK. Gasping.

Blood GURGLES in Evelyn's throat, silencing her. TEARS stream down her face. Unable to do what mothers do best.

Crane bounds down the stairs, following the trail of blood. He finds Anna beside her mother. As Crane kneels, Anna sees him and the gun.

Confused, she begins backing away.

CRANE

Ev, stay with me. Look at me.

She tries.

CRANE (cont'd)

We're going to get you help.

But Evelyn SHAKES her head. Tries to push him away as she looks for Anna. And Crane knows he faces a choice.

EVELYN

(whispered)

Anna.

Crane nods. He KISSES her forehead. Anna can't face it. Overwhelmed, she BOLTS off into the storm.

CRANE

I'm sorry.

He chases the girl, leaving Evelyn alone. She looks up at the sky and there is none. Just a SWIRLING BLACK MASS.

The light goes out in her eyes.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Anna stumbles onward, hands clutching at her throat as she gasps for air.

ON CRANE

Searching in the storm. Just handfuls of dirty air.

CRANE

Anna! Wait!

Suddenly, TWO BLACK HATS materialize from the darkness, on opposite sides. One has his gun raised, Crane rolls...

BLAM!

The Black Hat SHOOTs his partner, killing him. Crane meets the shooter in the street. They fight it out, brutal. Blind punches raining down.

And then, the shooter is alone.

Surrounded by only the wailing winds, he seizes up, looking in all directions. Afraid. When...

A STRAP slips over his head, pulling TIGHT against his neck. Crane drags him to the ground, SPINS the rifle cinching the strap. Strangling him to death.

ON ANNA

Finding her way along a row of parked CARS. She tries the door handle of the first, finds it LOCKED. Moves on to the next. Also LOCKED. She passes by the trunk, doesn't see...

TWO BILLS crouching against the bumper, waiting out the storm. He struggles to his feet and follows.

ON CRANE

SLAPS another clip into his rifle's chamber.

And pauses in the street. Sounds echoing all around. Like he's been in this situation before. After one last bit of orientation, he MARCHES...

Ignoring bodies and debris, like a battlefield.

And emerging from the storm ahead, more BLACK HATS. Their unmistakable caps and coats like uniforms.

BOOM! BOOM!

Crane kills TWO more before they even break formation. He chases one who DARTS behind a HARVESTER.

The man FIRES at him, narrowly missing head on. Crane leaps toward the UPTURNED HARVESTER BLADES and rides the mechanism down as it...

CLEAVES into the Black Hat.

More SHOTS destroy shop windows, Crane DIVES into...

INT. SHOP - CONTINUOUS

The empty clothing store. He leans against the wall, back to the door, catching a breath. In front of him, the MIRROR.

Where two REFLECTIONS appear, one nearing the door, the other the broken window. He waits...

And KICKS the door closed, swings around and SHOOTs the Black Hat at the window CLOSE RANGE and leaps back out...

EXT. RED THISTLE - STREET - CONTINUOUS

To find LONG SHOT waiting for him.

The man FIRES as Crane ducks under the barrel, then WHIPS him with the pistol butt. They ROLL out into the street. Guns lost in the melee...

Long Shot unsheathes his KNIFE, slashes a GASH across Crane's chest pushing him further into the street. Crane whips open the HAND SCYTHE.

The LOW RUMBLING of something fast approaching...

Long Shot moves first, STABBING down. Crane swings the SCYTHE burying it in the man's arm. Long Shot DROPS his knife, tendons severed in his useless wrist.

Crane catches it mid-air and JAMS the knife into his chest.

The RUMBLE even closer, right on top of them. As Long Shot pulls the scythe out with his other hand, Crane swings the man around and...

A CAR SLAMS into them.

The Black Hat's head IMPALED through windshield as Crane is thrown off the hood.

The car disappears down the street, taking Long Shot with it. Crane barely lifts himself off the ground. He restrings his rifle and stumbles forward...

CRANE

Anna!

Through the winds, something, small and moving. He pushes on, it could be her. But it's not. It's unconsciousness.

Crane BLACKS OUT, falls down beside...

Cassidy's HAT BOX.

A pair of WHITE WINGTIPS steps up. Two Bills. He picks up the hat box, leaves Crane in the street.

ANNA

Further down, another row of cars, parked in a line she desperately tries one door...

Finally pulls it open. Hurries inside.

ANNA

Calm breaths. Just like she said,
count to thirty. Count to thirty.

A picture of determination she manages to get herself under control. But as soon as the breathing eases, the tears come.

Then, the passenger DOOR SLINGS OPEN.

Two Bills ducks his head inside, dirty face, he cuts a terrifying figure.

TWO BILLS

My little princess.

He smiles a bloody smile and squeezes into the car. Slams the door closed. Anna reaches for the handle...

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

You don't want to go back out
there, believe me.

Outside, the storm blows as if propelled by the very rotation of the earth. A black and unending force.

Unholy conditions.

She removes her hand from the handle.

EXT. RED THISTLE - MAIN STREET - EVENING

Then, all is silent. Peaceful.

A distant GUNSHOT echoes.

Crane's face, half-buried and shoved beneath a parked car, his eyes BLINK open. A ray of SUNLIGHT glaring over his face. The color of late afternoon.

ANOTHER GUNSHOT.

It brings him out of it. He blows the dust from his mouth and pushes himself up. The storm has passed.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Crane stumbles into the square...

And finds a MASSACRE.

Dead bodies under small mounds of dirt, laid out at awkward angles. At least FOUR DOZEN dead.

Red muddy swatches of dirt frozen to building walls in the pattern of blood spray. Streamers and decorations hang tattered in the aftermath.

Crane is frozen to the spot. The vulgar scene made more shocking by the returned clarity of day.

Again, a GUNSHOT.

Crane doesn't even flinch. His eyes on Evelyn's body, he scoops her up. Her face, peaceful and beautiful in death.

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Stepping over dead Black Hats, he carries her body. A one man funeral procession.

Beyond the bullet-marked vacant storefronts and shattered windows of homes, only half of them occupied. Everything broken but the rifle hanging from his shoulder.

He kicks in the front door. Carries her across the threshold.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Washington leans into a back doorway of City Hall. His chest covered with blood, the Black Hat, off his head revealing the NASTY GASH in his scalp.

He raises his pistol. Points and fires...

At a CHAIR LEG. It splinter's the side, totters but doesn't snap. A pair of women's BARE FEET, keeps it barely upright, on her tip-toes atop the chair.

Cassidy. Hanging by her neck on a noose, strung over a telephone pole and tied off.

WASHINGTON

You made a killing off that body of yours back home. I'm going to love watching it return the favor. How many more bullets you going to last Cass? Only a matter of time.

CASSIDY

I've got nothing to say to you.

WASHINGTON

(pointing at the gash)

You don't like the haircut you gave me? Showgirls aren't supposed to get brave, they don't make marks of the guys who hit marks!

He FIRES again, the chair SHIFTS. Cassidy strains for air.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)

It's not so much what you nicked from me. But more the principal of the thing. Now, you do the dance.

CASSIDY

Can't blame a girl for trying.

Washington has to smile. Still he raises the gun.

WASHINGTON

So where did you put it?

INT. CITY HALL - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Two Bills carries Anna in one arm, she kicks and screams. He has the HAT BOX in the other hand.

INT. PRIVATE QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

He swings the door closed and locks it. Crosses to the lounge chair and throws Anna in it. Puts the hat box on the counter.

She shrinks back in the chair, afraid. He pours himself a slug of whiskey. She looks across the room at...

THE VENT in the wall.

TWO BILLS
(to himself)
Liquid courage... Funny.

He slams the liquor and begins rummaging through the shelves, puts a SET OF KEYS in his pocket.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)
It's too bad about your mother, I
kind of liked her you know.

Two Bills grabs a series of folders, LAND DEEDS and throws them in a WASTE BASKET. Tosses in BANKING STATEMENTS too.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)
This town's gonna disappear. Just
like Atlantis. Here one day, rolled
over the next. See, it wasn't
flooded, it wasn't the hand of God.
It was man. Just built right over
top of it. That's how it works.

He LIGHTS a cigarette and throws the match into the waste basket. It eventually catches fire.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)
Good night Red Thistle. You and I
will find someplace else...

He turns to the chair to find it EMPTY.

Finds Anna wriggling through the vent.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)
Don't even think about it...

She SLIPS through, out into the hallway leaving Two Bills desperately grabbing the box and briefcase as he gives chase.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Anna runs, her short legs pumping as fast as she can. Two Bills clamors in behind, barreling down.

TWO BILLS
Goddamnit, stop right now! There's
no one out there, no one's going to
take care of you!

She doesn't even look back, the hallway leads to a...

LARGE STAIRCASE leading to the first floor.

Anna bounds down them two at a time. The fat man looms over her shoulder struggling to keep up.

INT. MAIN LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

She careens into the open space, dead bodies, Primrose included, litter the scene. She freezes in her tracks...

TWO BILLS

That's it... Don't move.

Just enough time for Two Bills to scoop her up.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Two Bills unlocks the door to a FORD TRUCK, CIMARRON COUNTY seal on the side. He shoves Anna into the cab. He squeezes himself in after and fires it up.

INT./EXT. FORD TRUCK - TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Accelerating into the open air running over dead bodies in the street. Just as he's walked over them all along.

His DRIVER SIDE MIRROR explodes from a gunshot.

Crane, rifle poised at a distance. FIRES again.

SHATTERING the back window. Two Bills speeds off. Anna slides down to the floor, huddling.

MAIN STREET

Kicking up dust down the empty avenue, past City Hall toward the city limits. He LAUGHS off the shattered glass on his neck and gazes to the hat box.

Then tries to open the lid, finds it LOCKED.

TWO BILLS

It ain't ever easy.

Two Bills SLAMS the hat box against the dashboard over and over, SPLINTERING the thin wood and popping the lock.

Takes his eyes off the road. The lid SLIDES off.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)

What the hell?

HUNDREDS of BETTING SLIPS fall out of the box, unbound. PROPERTY OF AL CAPONE stamped across the top. The winds whip through the cab tossing them into the air like a tornado.

The fat man looks back up.

Cassidy STRUGGLES atop the chair, dead ahead. He swerves...

Right at Washington in the middle of the street, business end of the shotgun opened up like a black hole...

THE BLAST OBLITERATES the windshield. Tears into Two Bills' torso, the car VEERS LEFT of Washington who remains still.

Anna SCREAMS.

The truck CAREENS into a parked car, rupturing the other car's gas tank as it LEAKS out into the dirt.

Two Bills comes to a stop in the middle of the road. He wheezes, his face flecked with pellet, blood OOZING from a hole in his CHEEK.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)
(heavy wheezing)
Not for this... this paper.

He reluctantly looks down at the damage, BLOOD staining his expensive suit in a dozen different places.

TWO BILLS (cont'd)
Ahh... shit.

EXT. RED THISTLE - MAIN STREET - SAME

Washington looks back at Cassidy, decides to leave her hanging. Gun firmly in hand, he walks toward the TRUCK.

The passenger door pops open, Anna crawls out.

INT./EXT. FORD TRUCK - SAME

Two Bills reaches deep into his inside jacket pocket, withdraws the LEATHER NOTEBOOK, blood-stained and pellet-punctured. His GOLD PEN is broken.

TWO BILLS
(sotto)
Looks you got your halt on the interest anyhow.

He LAUGHS, turns to a COUGH that seeps blood from the corner of his mouth. He throws the broken effects aside.

Reaches back into his pocket. Pulls out the TWO BILLS.

He gazes at them with a twinge of sadness. Covetous to the end. Only, there's something different...

He's holding TWO ONE-DOLLAR BILLS. His smile fades. A shadow suddenly FALLS across his face.

Washington RELOADS his shotgun, staring down at him.

WASHINGTON

They always say, you don't take it
with you when you go.

TWO BILLS

That little bitch...

The shotgun ERUPTS, shredding the two bills in the fat man's hand to pieces and doing the same to him.

Washington grips the hat box, plastered with gore he pulls it out. A HANDFUL of the SLIPS still remain but most are scattered through the cab.

He pockets them, for nostalgia's sake.

MAIN STREET

Cassidy struggles on the chair, her feet inches from the edge. The weak leg rocking underneath...

It breaks, she hangs. Her feet kicking for purchase.

A GUNSHOT. Suddenly she drops, the rope severed.

Crane stands in the road, rifle smoking. He leaves her there.

ANNA (O.C.)

Crane!

EXT. FORD TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Anna runs out from behind the truck toward Crane, she makes it all of three steps when Washington SNAGS her by the collar and pulls her back. He drops the shotgun, pistol instead.

Crane aims his rifle, pulls up.

WASHINGTON

You shouldn't have done that,
Shakey. Cassidy dies and we go our
separate ways.

Crane looks back at Cassidy, the rope around her neck. Lying
there in the dirt trying to get her hands free.

CRANE

There's no going separate now.

WASHINGTON

Don't tell me she's got you fooled?
This girl would take on ten more
towns and ten more men, lesser men
than you. She probably told you I
put the bullet in her passenger.

Cassidy frees her hands, rises to her knees. Her eyes finding
Crane's, his fist clenched around the gun. Uncertain.

She pleads for her life. Crawls on her knees to him.

CASSIDY

Please. After everything you did
for me? You wouldn't shoot me. You
wouldn't shoot a girl.

WASHINGTON

Give the girl an award! This is
what you protect? The entire town,
wiped into oblivion for this dime-
dancer. She worked you. Like a
chump. Tell me. Was it worth this
little girl's mother dying?

Washington raises his pistol and unceremoniously fires a...

GUNSHOT. RIPPING into Cassidy. Stunned, she looks up at
Crane, surprise in her eyes. Bullet hole in her chest.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)

There's your answer. You'll have to
ask yourself that question someday,
see if it comes up different.

ANOTHER GUNSHOT.

This one takes Cassidy down, onto her back bleeding out. She
can't believe she's dying...

Until she does.

Crane watches it happen. His grip on the rifle eases, until it slips completely and the rifle falls.

He turns to Washington. Empty-handed.

CRANE

Let her go.

Washington smiles, unhands Anna who runs out to Crane. The man kneels to her... Whispers something in her ear.

Anna backs away from him. Crane stands to face Washington.

WASHINGTON

Chicago rules?

Crane nods, Washington throws down the pistol. Takes off his jacket, just more blood. No guns, no knives. Only God's gift to all human beings.

They RUSH each other in the street.

Absolutely brutal. Washington like a feral animal, the two men at each other's throats. He finds Crane's ribs are busted and hammers on them.

Crane forces him back against the truck. Clips Washington's busted arm. Washington HOWLS. Crane PUNCHES him in the throat. The Black Hat falls to a knee...

He catches his breath, hand going to a hidden KNIFE.

WASHINGTON (cont'd)

You know, the city hasn't been the same without you. Still, somehow you've stayed the same without us.

CRANE

(shakes his head)

People change.

WASHINGTON

Rules change.

Washington rises up with the KNIFE but Crane is ready. He grabs Washington's wrist, breaks his arm around his own forearm, driving the knife into his NECK.

Washington's stabbed himself.

The man actually smiles. Knows when he's been bested.

Crane walks away, picks up his rifle and comes back to Washington who is slumped against the truck. He slams a CLIP in the chamber.

He shows him the butt of his rifle, the GOUGES in the wood.

CRANE

Guess who's going to be my last notch? This one has Evelyn's name on it.

Crane puts the barrel to the GASH on Washington's head and blows it wide open.

A moment. Crane's brain catching up to his instincts.

He reaches into Washington's pockets, finds the book of matches. Pulls one and STRIKES it.

It ignites. He tosses it on to the spilled fuel.

Walks away as the FLAMES spread from the car to a garage. From the garage to City Hall and beyond. Crane kneels down and scoops Anna into his arms.

INT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Crane and Anna stand at the foot of the bed.

Evelyn's peaceful look, betraying her wounds as if for their sole benefit. The mother's worry drained from her face.

ANNA

I don't want to leave.

CRANE

Me neither.

She turns her head, sobs like a HICCUP. Just a preview. Suddenly it all comes out. Sobbing into Crane's hip until it tires her out and she stops as soon as she's started.

She walks out of the room.

Crane gently sits down beside her body.

He reaches into his pocket and withdraws the NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPH of he and his brother William.

CRANE (cont'd)

See you in California, Ev.

He lays the photograph down beside her. Crane leans his rifle against the wall and walks out of the room empty-handed.

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The sun hanging heavy in the West, Crane and Anna load the rest of their things in Evelyn's car.

A BLACK CLOUD OF SMOKE now hangs over City Hall and the town itself. Exorcising the demons.

EIGHT-YEAR OLD (O.C.)

Is it over?

The Frank Boys are there, alone in the street.

Then, the CREAK of an opening door. A CHILD pokes his head out of a nearby doorway. His big SISTER appears behind him.

Then more PEOPLE slowly show themselves, in windows and coming out of alleyways. All are drawn to Crane.

The survivors.

CRANE

It's over.

(addressing the crowd)

Pack up what you can, leave now and not a second later. Nothing's going to live here again.

Crane nods for Anna to get in the car. He follows her. The people watch. Too stunned to move or too stubborn to leave.

EXT. HIGH PLAINS HIGHWAY - LATER

The high plains stretch on for miles and miles in all directions, no sign of life let alone people. Just fences.

Crane drives while Anna reads to him from THE JUNGLE BOOK.

ANNA

"They have no manners, these Men Folk," said Mowgli to himself.

"Only the gray ape would behave as they do."

(she closes the book)

I can't see anymore.

CRANE

You're getting better. Dinner time?

She nods. Crane withdraws a SACK, hands it to her.

CRANE (cont'd)
This is all we got.

Anna finds some bread and cured meat. She begins eating.

ANNA
Where's yours?

CRANE
I'm saving it.

Anna looks at him funny.

CRANE (cont'd)
Might be the last one.

ANNA
We probably have a few more.

She digs deep into her pocket, pulls out something and hands it to Crane.

He looks at it...

A ONE HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL. Two Bills' hundred.

ANNA (cont'd)
What'll that get us?

Crane looks at it. Looks at Anna, big wide smile.

Concerned, he takes it. Puts it away. Watches her closely, a little bit of Evelyn or a little bit of Cassidy?

CRANE
It'll get us to California, maybe a
few miles further. Don't steal
again though, ok?

The car approaches a LARGE TRUCK driving slowly down the highway, first car for miles.

Crane eases over to pass them. Sees...

A half-dozen MEN and WOMEN sitting in the uncovered bed of the truck. Dirty and tired. Their people.

Anna rolls down her window, WAVES to them.

ANNA
We're going to California!

Anna keeps waving. Crane's eyes find the rearview and the panhandle behind them. Disappearing. Yet etched on their minds and the skin of their hands.

At the same time being blown away and buried.

FADE TO BLACK.