

**SERENA**

Screenplay by  
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Based on the novel by Ron Rash

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EXT. FOREST/SMOKY MOUNTAINS - DAY

The POV OF A CAT, slinking low over moss-covered ground. Its long shadow dances on the dense and ancient trees...

In a clearing up ahead is a mound of deer carcasses. A trap baited for the PANTING cat...

PEMBERTON sights the cat as it flickers in the timber. He's powerfully built, young, and dressed in a rich man's notion of rustic clothing. Circa 1929.

Two older men wait behind him: the dandyish BUCHANAN, 50s; and GALLOWAY, their wiry guide. Buchanan and Galloway both have their rifles at ease. This is Pemberton's kill.

Pemberton draws a bead on a bush that starts to tremble as the cat reaches the edge of the clearing...

His finger curls around the trigger. Waiting. Then:

His prey-- a bobcat, we now see-- pads into the open.

Pemberton has his kill, but he doesn't take it. He frowns, then changes his aim and FIRES:

A tree branch splinters. The terrified cat darts away.

Galloway and Buchanan stare at Pemberton, unsure of what to make of this behavior. He lowers his rifle.

PEMBERTON

I have dogs bigger than that.

He walks past them with an air of disappointment.

EXT. FOREST/GORGE - DAY

The hunting party moves through a spectacular gorge... waterfalls and old-growth timber...untouched by man...

Galloway bounces along in a farm wagon with JOEL VAUGHN, a teenager with red hair spilling from under his golf cap. Pemberton and Buchanan trail them on horseback.

PEMBERTON

I heard there was a panther in these mountains.

GALLOWAY

Who told you that?

PEMBERTON

Snipes found a carcass on Noland.

GALLOWAY

That weren't no panther.

He puts another plug in his cheek and we notice a tattoo on his arm-- monochromatic, like the ones men get in prison.

BUCHANAN

How can you be so sure?

GALLOWAY

Chest wasn't tore open. There's cats will eat the tongue and ears before anything else, but not a panther. It eats the heart first.

VAUGHN

People claim to see it regular.

That doesn't seem to impress Galloway much.

PEMBERTON

Get me a shot at that panther, and I'll give you a twenty-dollar gold piece. Or anyone else who can lead me to it.

A wry smile slides off Galloway's face. But Pemberton meets his gaze, holding up a gold coin...

EXT. SPUR LINE - DAY

The hunting party follows the tracks of a spur line, still under construction. It leads them out of the trees, into a valley that has been commandeered by a timber operation:

The LOGGING CAMP is a cluster of slapdash buildings along the main railroad line, surrounded by a wasteland of stumps and cut branches...

EXT. PEMBERTON LOGGING CAMP - DAY

A HYMN soars from the dining hall. It's Sunday.

Two-dozen "stringhouses" (the crew quarters) sit precariously on a ridge above the main camp, their foundations propped up by locust poles. They look like boxcars on stilts.

Idled on the tracks are the steel dinosaurs that make the operation possible: a Shay engine coupled to a train of flatcars, a steam-powered log loader, and a hi-lead skidder.

Outside the stable, Pemberton swings off his horse and hands the reins to a STABLE BOY.

PEMBERTON

Tell the girl to bring my supper.

Buchanan, dismounting too, frowns. The girl.

They walk into the camp. Pemberton has his rifle balanced over his shoulder like a young English lord...

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

Telephone Boston tonight and ask the old man to advance me another \$10,000. We'll need a second skidder for the western slope.

Buchanan taps a slender, gold-tipped cigarette on a case.

BUCHANAN

This stock market crash has stretched him rather thin.

PEMBERTON

You can talk him into it.

BUCHANAN

You forget who pays my salary.

PEMBERTON

If he ever left the Back Bay, he'd see what a chance he's wasting. You know I'm right, Buchanan. There's a fortune here for the man who grabs it.

Buchanan sighs, wishing he weren't so fond of the young man.

BUCHANAN

I'll do what I can.

PEMBERTON

Call tonight. He's always in a better mood after a sermon.

Buchanan's lighter emits only sparks, so Pemberton produces a Zippo with a flourish and extends the flame to him...

EXT. BEHIND DINING HALL/CAMP - DAY

RACHEL HARMON, a pretty girl of 16, backs down the kitchen steps with a supper tray and crosses the yard, smiling back at the Churchgoers who stare at her...

Vaughn drags his club foot across Pemberton's porch and opens the door for her. Troubled by what she's doing.

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - DAY

Rachel's tray lies on a table beside Pemberton's rifle. The food has not been touched.

THROUGH BEDROOM DOOR: Pemberton fucks Rachel mechanically, staring at the wall. Not that Rachel minds. Her eyes are shut tight.

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - LATER

Pemberton has fallen asleep. Rachel slips out of bed and puts on her shift, taking pains not to wake him...

She pads into the living room on tiptoe, examining Pemberton's things with the pure wonder of a child:

Running her hands over the soft velvet chairs...

...listening to the hum of the electric icebox. Putting her hand inside to feel the cold bottle of milk...

...stroking the gilt frame of a mirror to see if the gold comes off on her finger...

Then Rachel glimpses her reflection and her expression changes. She steps back and turns her profile to the glass, running a hand over her belly. *Does it show?*

PEMBERTON (O.S.)  
You're too pretty to make that  
face.

Rachel spins, startled. Pemberton smiles. Nods at the tray.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)  
Want something to eat?

Rachel shakes her head shyly.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

Next time don't let me fall asleep.  
I wanted to walk the cutting slope  
before it got dark.

He starts eating. Rachel hovers. She wants to say something to him but doesn't know how. And Pemberton is oblivious. The silence is broken by a BELL outside.

RACHEL

That'll be the train back to town.

She moves toward the bedroom to get her clothes but Pemberton stops her with a hand...

PEMBERTON

I was in Asheville yesterday. I  
got you a present.

He produces a roll of bright blue ribbon from his robe.

Rachel holds the silk against her cheek. Then scampers back to the mirror to see how it would look in her hair.

RACHEL

It's real pretty.

She turns to show him, but Pemberton's attention has moved back to the food.

PEMBERTON

Where's your daddy's place again?

RACHEL

Up on Colt Ridge.

PEMBERTON

You ever see a panther up there?

RACHEL

No, sir.

Pemberton frowns thoughtfully as he shovels it in...

INT. AMERICAN LEGION HALL/ASHEVILLE - NIGHT

A series of SLIDES depicts the devastation caused by clear-cut logging in the Smoky Mountains...

KEPHART (O.S.)

The Smoky Mountains contain the  
last virgin forests left in the  
eastern United States.

STUMPS AND SLASH like the area around Pemberton's camp...

KEPHART (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
But with every passing year we're  
losing them to the cut and run  
philosophy of the logging barons.

DEAD FISH AND RODENTS floating in a clogged river...

KEPHART (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Why should these splendid,  
irreplaceable trees be sacrificed  
to the greedy maw of the sawmill?

The spill from the slides plays over the audience...

KEPHART (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Why should future generations be  
robbed of all chance to see with  
their own eyes what a real forest,  
a real wildwood, a real unimproved  
work of God is like?

The lights come on, revealing HORACE KEPHART at the lectern.  
He is a librarian turned mountaineer, a modern Thoreau, and  
the only man in the room not wearing a suit.

KEPHART (CONT'D)  
The question, the only question, is  
this: Shall the Smoky Mountains be  
made a national park-- or a desert?

CHARLES WEBB, the leader of the Park Commission that flanks  
Kephart, leaps to his feet, leading the APPLAUSE.

EXT. CAMP/RAIL LINE - DAY

A Logger balances precariously atop a loaded flatcar, guiding  
another log onto the pile, careful not to get crushed.

Below him, other men duck and weave as they detach the logs  
brought down by the ROARING hi-lead skidder.

Steel cables HISS overhead as they spool off the booms--  
looping up the slope, then circling back down with logs.

From a distance the dangling logs resemble fish on a line.  
But up close they are something else entirely: huge and  
dangerous, swinging to and fro with deadly abandon.

FIND Buchanan, headed up the rail line toward the cutting  
slope. His suit pants are tucked into his boots so they  
won't get muddy...

EXT. SPUR LINE - DAY

A new spur line is under construction. Sledgehammers CLANG as the rails are secured to the carpet of ties...

Pemberton steps into view, shirtless and driving spikes with a sledgehammer, matching his men stroke for stroke.

Buchanan hesitates as he nears Pemberton, watching the rippling sinews of his back with a flicker of desire.

Then Pemberton sees him staring.

BUCHANAN  
Telephone. It's urgent.

Pemberton furrows his brow-- what could be so urgent?

INT. CAMP OFFICE - DAY

CAMPBELL, the camp overseer, looks up from his ledgers as Pemberton and Buchanan come in.

Pemberton picks up the telephone receiver:

PEMBERTON  
This is George Pemberton.  
(listens)  
Yes. Yes. Of course. I'll be on  
the next train.

He hangs up. Too dazed to speak for a moment.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)  
The old man is dead.  
(a beat)  
I have to go to Boston, tend to  
mother and the estate. You can  
manage without me.

Buchanan places a comforting hand on Pemberton's arm.

BUCHANAN  
Take as long as you need.

Pemberton seems unsteady, adjusting as the ground shifts beneath him. He starts to the door. Then stops.

PEMBERTON  
Order that second skidder.

He goes out.



EXT. WAYNESVILLE STATION - DAY

LONG: Pemberton hangs out of the moving car, giving Buchanan a few last instructions...

REVERSE: Rachel peeks around the corner of the depot, watching him go. The blue ribbon is in her hair.

Then her gorge rises and she turns to vomit on the grass.

EXT. WAYNESVILLE STATION - MONTHS LATER

Rachel sits on a bench near the ticket booth, twisting her blue hair ribbon nervously. She is eight months pregnant.

ABE HARMON watches the tracks vibrate, steeling his righteous fury with a jar of moonshine. The pearl handle of a bowie knife peeks out from under his frock coat...

A train WHISTLES. Wheels SCREECH as it brakes.

Down the platform, Buchanan puts away his pocket watch. He has oiled his hair and waxed his moustache for the occasion.

Then the train pulls in and he is swallowed by the steam...

As the cloud dissipates, Pemberton descends from the coach with SERENA PEMBERTON on his arm. He grins at Buchanan like a hunter who's bagged a fabulous trophy.

PEMBERTON

So? What do you think of my wife?

Buchanan stammers, unable to hide his surprise. In her jodhpurs, boots and sensibly bobbed hair, Serena is not the Boston society girl he was expecting.

SERENA

Serena Pemberton.

She sticks out her hand like a man would. Startled, Buchanan hesitates, then shakes it limply.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Don't you know how to shake hands properly, Mr. Buchanan?

Flummoxed, Buchanan corrects his grip and tries again.

BUCHANAN

Pleased to meet you. Pemberton's taken us all by surprise-- bringing a woman to this place.

A PORTER sets the bags on the platform. Pemberton tips him.

PEMBERTON  
What news of the camp?

BUCHANAN  
No serious problems. A worker found bobcat tracks on Laurel Creek and thought they were a mountain lion's. A couple of crews wouldn't go out until Galloway had a look.

SERENA  
Are mountain lions common here?

BUCHANAN  
Not at all, Mrs. Pemberton. The last panther killed in this state was over nine years ago. But your husband is hoping there's at least one left for him to hunt.

He flashes a smile but Pemberton is now staring at Rachel on the bench-- as if recognizing a ghost from his past.

BUCHANAN (CONT'D)  
(softly)  
Abe Harmon seems to think he has business to settle with you.

A beat. Pemberton offers his arm to Serena.

PEMBERTON  
I want to show you the property before it gets dark.

Serena, who has also been peering at Rachel, turns to her husband and smiles. They head across the platform...

But Harmon plants himself in their path.

HARMON  
You and me got a score to settle.

Pemberton regards him coolly.

PEMBERTON  
Make an appointment with my overseer, Mr. Campbell.

HARMON  
We're going to settle it today.

PEMBERTON  
Campbell will take care of it.

HARMON  
Ain't no way to take care of it.  
Not anymore.

He is staring at Serena.

PEMBERTON  
Step aside.

Harmon doesn't move. He just opens his coat to expose the handle of his fine hunting knife.

HARMON  
Get you a knife and lay on.

PEMBERTON  
Don't be a fool. You're drunk.

The men in the horse pen behind him edge forward, watching.

HARMON  
One of us is leaving here with his  
toes pointed up.

Buchanan shouts to the men in the horse pen:

BUCHANAN  
Get the sheriff!

RACHEL  
Come on, Daddy. Let's go.

Harmon swats her hand away and draws his knife, approaching Pemberton with deadly intent.

Pemberton, though unarmed, calmly stands his ground.

BUCHANAN  
Come now, this is absurd-- it's the  
20th century.

Harmon waves him away with his knife, glaring at Pemberton:

HARMON  
I'm calling you out.

Pemberton is silent a moment. Then he eases Serena out of the way and coolly sheds his jacket.

PEMBERTON  
(to Buchanan)  
My knife is in the small valise.

Buchanan stares. He can't be serious...

MOMENTS LATER the two combatants face off on the platform...

Harmon thrusts first, slashing the air, but Pemberton dodges him easily. They circle each other...feinting...testing...

Then Harmon lunges again, with a drunkard's courage--

Catching Pemberton's guard arm-- gashing him--

But exposing his underbelly to Pemberton's blade.

Pemberton moves instinctively, driving his handsome knife hilt-deep into the old man's gut and raking it across.

A sigh escapes Harmon's lips--

His bowie knife CLATTERS on the ground--

And he looks down at the crimson blooming on his belly...his life spilling out before his eyes...

Pemberton steps back, knife still ready...

Harmon staggers backward, as if trying to rescind the steps that led him here, and sags onto the bench.

Serena gently reaches for her husband's bleeding forearm.

SERENA  
Your arm, Pemberton.

Pulsing with shock and adrenaline, he doesn't seem to hear.

Serena presses a handkerchief against the wound, looking into his eyes with a deep and reassuring certainty.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
You had no choice.

A beat. Then Pemberton nods slowly...

Serena picks up Harmon's bowie knife and crosses to Rachel, who is holding her dying father.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
By all rights this belongs to my husband. But I want you to keep it.

Tears flow down Rachel's face but she makes no sound. Serena sets the knife beside her on the bench.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
I'd sell it if I were you. You'll  
need money when the baby comes.

Rachel doesn't lift her eyes from her father. Serena leans in close, speaking words only Rachel can hear:

SERENA (CONT'D)  
This is all you'll ever get from my  
husband and me.

Her expression is not unkind, only firm. *Pemberton is hers.*

EXT. STREET/WAYNESVILLE STATION - DAY

Pemberton is opening the door of his Packard touring car for Serena when he sees SHERIFF MCDOWELL jogging toward them.

PEMBERTON  
I'll only be a moment.

He approaches McDowell warily. The sheriff is a taut man of 50 with a badge pinned to his Sunday suit.

MCDOWELL  
You're coming to my office.

PEMBERTON  
It was self-defense. A dozen men  
can verify that.

MCDOWELL  
You're not leaving Waynesville till  
I get a complete statement.

Pemberton gets out his wallet, but McDowell waves it away.

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)  
We have laws in this county, Mr.  
Pemberton. The lady will wait.

A beat. Pemberton pockets his wallet.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Outside a ramshackle cabin, a POOR WOMAN draws water from a well, a babe at her feet. She looks up as...

Pemberton's Packard whizzes past her, kicking up a roostertail of dust as it rises into the mountains...

INT. PACKARD - MOVING - DAY

Serena cleans the hunting knife with great care and interest. As if she were caressing a talisman of power and strength.

Pemberton drives, stewing.

PEMBERTON

How was I to know she was pregnant?  
Stupid little thing. She never  
said a word.

He looks over apologetically, but Serena is unfazed.

SERENA

Nothing that happened before we met  
even exists.

She puts her hand on his knee...

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

LONG: the Packard is parked on an outcrop overlooking a panorama of the Smokies. SOUNDS of lovemaking...

In the back seat Pemberton and Serena couple in a frenzy, half-dressed, clawing at each other, Serena's head banging against the car door... The pain only seems to drive her on.

Pemberton seems unleashed, as if he's finally found a mate equal to his energy...

The handkerchief tied around his wound slips off. Blood trickles down his forearm and drips off his elbow...

...spattering Serena's cheek. But she pays no mind. Even when the blood rolls into her half-opened mouth...

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - LATER

Pemberton and Serena hold hands at the edge of the outcrop, overlooking the majestic green mountains that surround the lumber camp. Their domain.

SERENA

How far do our holdings go?

Pemberton points out the boundaries.

PEMBERTON

The mountain beyond where we're logging now. West to Balsam Mountain. Horse Pen Ridge to the south. And you can see where we've finished cutting in the east.

SERENA

Thirty-four thousand acres.

PEMBERTON

Plus 7,000 we've already logged.

SERENA

And to the west, Champion Paper owns that?

PEMBERTON

All the way to the Tennessee line.

SERENA

That's the land they're after for the national park.

PEMBERTON

If Champion sells, they'll be coming for ours next.

SERENA

But we won't let them have it-- will we?

PEMBERTON

This land was mine from the beginning-- the old man never even saw it. Nobody's going to make me sell until I'm through with it.

Serena smiles, pleased by his confidence.

SERENA

I need to dress that arm.

PEMBERTON

Kiss me first.

He pulls Serena tight against his body, kissing her...

INT. CAMP OFFICE/BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Sort of a rustic men's club-- leather chairs, standing ashtrays, a well-stocked bar. It's supper time.

Serena, who has changed into a green silk gown, carves her steak. Buchanan and the corpulent DR. CHANEY watch her as if she's an exotic creature at the zoo...

SERENA

Was this table made from a single piece of wood?

PEMBERTON

A chestnut, seven feet across. I made the first notch myself.

Serena nods, impressed. Silence resumes. Chaney refills the wine glasses-- though his is the only one that's empty.

DR. CHANEY

Pemberton tells us your father was a timber man out west.

BUCHANAN

They say women marry their fathers.

He's smiling but the topic seems to be an uncomfortable one for Serena. She looks away, as if burying a memory.

PEMBERTON

Serena's father is deceased. But he was a great logging man. He taught her well.

BUCHANAN

Is that so? I wonder what you think of our operation here.

SERENA

I think you've taken nine months to do about six months' work.

Pemberton laughs. Buchanan looks like he's been slapped.

SERENA (CONT'D)

But a few efficiencies will greatly increase profitability.

BUCHANAN

I say, George, did you find a wife or a partner?

PEMBERTON

Both.

SERENA

I suppose Mrs. Buchanan takes no interest in your work.



BUCHANAN  
I'm a bachelor.

Serena nods as if that explains it.

SERENA  
You'll find I didn't come to  
Carolina to do needlepoint.

Pemberton enjoys the expression on Buchanan's face...

EXT. BUCHANAN'S CABIN - NIGHT

Buchanan stands on the porch, smoking one of his slender cigarettes, listening to the faint CREAKING of the Pembertons' bed as they make love.

PEMBERTON (V.O.)  
Mrs. Pemberton's father owned the  
Vulcan Lumber Company in Colorado.

EXT. CAMP YARD - DAY

Serena sits on a magnificent white Arabian. Pemberton is on the commissary porch, introducing her to the men...

PEMBERTON  
She's the equal of any man here.  
And I expect you to follow her  
orders, same as you'd follow mine.

The workers squint at Serena in the early light. Hard men marked by their trade: scars of all description, eye patches, missing digits, stooped shoulders, tremors...

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)  
She expects no quarter and she'll  
give none. You'll soon see the  
truth of that.

He pauses, enjoying the befuddled looks of the men: *Taking orders from a woman?* Then he nods to Campbell, his overseer.

CAMPBELL  
All right, move 'em out.

The Crew Supervisor blows a silver WHISTLE that hangs around his neck and the crews head out, following the rail line that leads through acres of stumps into the mountains.

Serena gives Pemberton's hand a squeeze, then rides out alongside the men...

EXT. CUTTING SLOPE - DAY

Galloway chews tobacco, watching as LEDBETTER, the lead chopper, calculates the spot for the first notch.

He draws the axe back, about to swing, then:

SERENA (O.S.)  
Don't notch so high.

Ledbetter lowers his axe and finds Serena looking down at him from her white horse.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
You're wasting a foot of timber.

LEDBETTER  
Lower won't fall clear. Ma'am.

Serena endures his condescension, waiting for him to comply.

Ledbetter turns to his crew-- Galloway and another sawyer-- for confirmation of his assessment. A beat.

GALLOWAY  
We're a mite cautious of hittin'  
yonder hickory.

Serena glances at the tree in question. Then she dismounts and strides over to Ledbetter.

SERENA  
Give me your axe.

Ledbetter grins stupidly. Serena extends her hand, waiting patiently until he surrenders the axe.

Serena cases the trunk of the poplar and marks the notch-- a foot lower and to the side of Ledbetter's mark.

She gives him back his axe.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
It'll clear.

As she heads back to her Arabian to remount, Galloway turns to his saw mate:

GALLOWAY  
Two dollars says she clears.

Ledbetter lines up his axe with the new mark, muttering under his breath. Then, with two expert strokes, he makes the undercut right where Serena indicated.

Galloway and his partner step up with their cross-cut saw and get to work, smirking at Ledbetter as they pass...

Serena turns her horse and continues up the slope.

Wedges of bark start to CRACKLE and break against the steel teeth of the saw...a little mound of sawdust forms...

INT. CAMP OFFICE - DAY

The big Mosler safe is open. Buchanan is taking out bundles of cash and stuffing them into envelopes.

Campbell is at the desk, two ledgers before him, one black and one green. Each ledger contains the same column of figures but the payees are different:

In the black ledger the cash is allocated to feed, fuel, office supplies, etc. In the green ledger, the same figures correspond to names. Judge So-and-so. Senator Whosit.

The door to the back room opens:

PEMBERTON

Buchanan?

He's gripping a letter. On the verge of an explosion...

INT. CAMP OFFICE/BACK ROOM - DAY

Buchanan shuts the door quietly. Pemberton tosses the document onto the table.

PEMBERTON

What the hell is that?

BUCHANAN

(clearing his throat)

A letter of attorney. Your father's estate has appointed me to safeguard your interests.

PEMBERTON

Until I'm 35?

BUCHANAN

It's a formality, George. You'll be involved in every decision affecting the camp.

PEMBERTON

*It's my land.*

BUCHANAN  
Of course it is.

PEMBERTON  
You knew about this.

BUCHANAN  
It was his wish-- not mine.

Pemberton's eyes bore in until he believes Buchanan. He turns and stalks to the bar to make himself a drink...

PEMBERTON  
Son-of-a-bitch mocks me from the grave.

BUCHANAN  
Nothing will change between us.  
You have my word.

PEMBERTON  
I want that second skidder.

BUCHANAN  
The order has already been placed.

A beat. Pemberton nods, mollified.

BUCHANAN (CONT'D)  
Your father was wrong about you,  
George. I told him many times.

But Pemberton is staring into his bourbon, unable to see the kindness in Buchanan's eyes...

INT. CAMP OFFICE - DAY

Buchanan puts the letter into an envelope with a Boston law firm's return address. Then he locks it in his desk.

ON Campbell as he works on the ledgers. He has not missed a detail of what just happened...

EXT. CUTTING SLOPE - DAY

Galloway and his partner step clear as the last splinters connecting the poplar to the earth give way and it FALLS with a great, majestic... CRASH.

*Just clear* of the hickory Ledbetter was worried about.

Galloway collects his winnings.

GALLOWAY

I ain't never seen a woman notch a tree, but if there's a science to wagering, it's find out what side Ledbetter took and bet the other.

Ledbetter gathers his axe and wedges, annoyed at being ribbed and not paying attention where he steps...

Suddenly a RATTLESNAKE leaps out and bites him on the thigh.

Ledbetter stumbles backwards over the stump and falls in a heap, clawing at his leg, tearing the fabric. The panic strikes before the venom: *He knows he's a dead man.*

The snake slithers back into the slash and disappears...

LEDBETTER

Cut me. Cut me, goddamn it.

Galloway steps forward, opening a hawkbill knife...

EXT. DR. CHANEY'S CABOOSE - DAY

A COMMOTION as Galloway and other men bear Ledbetter toward an old caboose set in the mud-- Dr. Chaney's infirmary. Ledbetter is convulsing now, near death.

Chaney raises a hand, stopping them on the steps. He hands his lit cigar to one of the men to hold for him.

Drawn by the clamor, Pemberton, Buchanan, and Campbell are crossing the yard to the caboose...

Chaney parts Ledbetter's lips to see the bleeding gums...and squints at his blackened thigh. Two Xs Galloway cut over the punctures are now swollen inside-out.

DR. CHANEY

You're too late. There's nothing I can do. Put him in the chair.

He coolly retrieves his cigar and puffs away.

The men deposit Ledbetter in a rocking chair on the caboose's end platform. Then back away as he shakes and shudders. A SHADOW crosses the men as they watch Ledbetter...

Serena reins her horse.

SERENA

Go back to work.

The men glance at Pemberton, as if he might overrule her, but he just returns the gaze. They shuffle off...

PEMBERTON

These snakes are costing us a fortune. The men get cautious and slow down.

SERENA

They need to be killed off. Especially in the slash.

BUCHANAN

Yet that is the hardest place to see them, Mrs. Pemberton. They blend in so very well.

SERENA

Better eyes are needed then.

She wheels her horse and rides back toward the cutting slope.

Pemberton and Buchanan start back to the office, then pause:

Campbell is now kneeling beside the fading Ledbetter, holding his hand and comforting him as he dies...

EXT. SPUR LINE/SKIDDER - DAY

Pemberton and Buchanan circumnavigate the new skidder, which is smoking and CLANKING beside its twin.

Pemberton signals and the Worker inside throws a lever.

The cables that loop out toward the mountain begin to move... steel lines HISSING and SQUEAKING as they fly...

In the distance, the return feeds of cable are bringing a bounty of fresh-cut logs from the new cutting slope.

Pemberton claps Buchanan on the back. Grinning.

INT. HARMON LOG CABIN - NIGHT

Rachel SCREAMS and twists a quilt in her balled fists-- in the throes of a difficult birth. WIDOW JENKINS mops her forehead and whispers encouragement in her ear...

At last a MIDWIFE holds up a male child so large we see at once the source of Rachel's agony. The big babe WAILS...

Rachel falls back against the pillows, spent.

RACHEL

Why's he crying so? Is he hurt?

WIDOW JENKINS

No. It's a hard place this world  
can be. Tears from the very start.

She takes the baby from the Midwife and sets it on Rachel's breast. The teenager's feelings seem decidedly mixed: Is this squawking alien really her child?

EXT. WOODS/WIDOW JENKINS' CABIN - DAY

Fallen leaves whip round Rachel's legs as she carries her FUSSING baby toward a log cabin...

RACHEL

Hush, now. You got a full belly.

Widow Jenkins opens the door before she can knock. The old woman peers at her a moment through thick spectacles. As if she doesn't approve of Rachel's mission today.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

He's awful fussy. I'm of a mind  
he's starting to teethe.

WIDOW JENKINS

Child, a baby don't teethe till six  
months.

A beat. Rachel hands her the baby and a tote sack.

RACHEL

There's fresh swaddlings and a  
bottle. I'll be back by sundown.

WIDOW JENKINS

You'll need every dime come winter.

Rachel nods, but her mind's made up.

WIDOW JENKINS (CONT'D)

You're as bullheaded as your daddy.

RACHEL

Yes, ma'am.

She heads down the path...

EXT. DOWNTOWN WAYNESVILLE - DAY

Rachel rides an old draft horse into town, feeling the eyes of some gossiping Women across the street. They point and whisper among themselves as Rachel passes...

INT. STONE MASON'S SHOP - DAY

The MASON is hunched over a marble tombstone, tapping out letters with a hammer and chisel...

Rachel steps through the open door and KNOCKS.

The Mason looks up. Coated with marble dust, he looks like he's been rolled in flour. Without a word, he lays down his tools and fetches a small stone tablet for Rachel:

"ABRAHAM HARMON 1879-1930 R.I.P."

Rachel is pleased with how it looks.

RACHEL

There's been Harmons on Colt Ridge  
over 200 years.

The Mason gives her the invoice. Rachel starts counting out his money. In coins, mostly...

EXT. STONE MASON'S SHOP - DAY

The Mason helps Rachel secure the tablet-- now wrapped in a burlap sack-- on to the back of her horse.

She leads the horse out of town, standing up straight and proud as she goes by the Nosy Women...

EXT. HARMON LOG CABIN/FAMILY GRAVEYARD - DAY

The horse waits outside a weathered picket fence, watching Rachel drag the tablet over the graves of her ancestors...

Rachel kneels beside her father's mound, clawing the earth with a mattock..making a place for the tablet...

She cuts the bindings around the burlap and lifts the heavy tablet...waddling the few paces to its destination...then setting it gently in the earth she's prepared.

Rachel steps back to admire the fruit of her labors...



EXT. DOWNTOWN WAYNESVILLE - DAY

Autumn leaves are kicked across the street by the wind, and cluster before a storefront decorated with campaign posters:

"Re-Elect Big Bill McComb - Your State Senator."

THROUGH WINDOW: Pemberton shakes hands with Big Bill himself and slips an envelope of cash under the hat on the table...

As Pemberton comes out of the storefront, crossing a name off a list, he notices a group of Townspeople watching an odd sight on the railroad tracks:

A single flatcar rolls by slowly. Atop the car-- the only freight-- is a large crate with strange markings. Two INDIAN MEN in bright robes are posted on either side, like sentries.

Pemberton seems to know what it is. He jumps into the Packard and drives away-- fast.

EXT. CAMP YARD - DAY

The same CRATE as it moves toward the stable, borne by the Indian Men-- and no one else. Lettering in Hindi and English records a journey from Calcutta to Waynesville.

Loggers line the path, watching quizzically. *What is it?*

Then Pemberton-- just arriving-- pushing through them and runs ahead of the Indian Men to open the door...

INT. STABLE - DAY

The stable door is closed to outsiders. Broken pieces of the crate lie on the straw.

In the last stall, Pemberton and Serena are hushed, beholding a BERKUTE EAGLE. A hood covers its eyes, keeping it calm.

The eagle shifts slightly, its monstrous talons gripping the wooden perch. Then it settles, still as death...

The silence is broken by Serena's horse, stamping a hoof.

SERENA

Tell Vaughn to move the Arabian  
into the stall next to this one.  
The bird needs to get used to him.

PEMBERTON  
I'll have him bring some food and  
blankets, too.

SERENA  
Don't bother. I won't eat or sleep  
again until the eagle does.

PEMBERTON  
Three days?

SERENA  
She's testing me, too.

PEMBERTON  
I'm going to stay with you.

Serena squeezes his hand. She has to do this alone.

SERENA  
Trust me. They need to know it was  
a woman who tamed the eagle.

Pemberton eyes the bird...uneasy... But he nods.

EXT. STABLE - DAY

Pemberton closes the stable doors. Then he turns and  
discovers he's being watched by most of the camp...

EXT. STABLE - NIGHT

Vaughn sits on a chair outside the door, wrapped in blankets,  
fighting to stay awake on a frigid night.

In the back window of Pemberton's cabin, a shadow moves.  
Then the spark of lighter reveals his face. Pemberton eyes  
the barn, fighting an impulse to go out there.

Vaughn offers him a little wave. All's well.

But Pemberton does not look soothed...

EXT. STABLE - DAWN

Vaughn has dozed off on his chair. The DOOR beside him  
rattles and then opens-- waking him.

Serena staggers out, exhausted and blinking in the light.

INT. STABLE - DAY

Serena leads Pemberton across the dirt floor and opens the gate of the last stall...

The eagle's head swivels to her instantly. Waiting.

Serena steps into the stall and gently removes the hood from its head. The bird remains calm.

Serena puts a hunk of meat on the gauntlet that protects her forearm and holds it out. The eagle steps on and begins to feed. Serena strokes its neck with her finger.

SERENA

She trusts me with her life now.

She smiles at Pemberton-- weak and dreamy after her ordeal.

Pemberton regards his wife with astonishment...

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN/BATHROOM - DAY

Pemberton scrubs the barn's grime from Serena's skin as she sits in the tub...

His washcloth pauses over a large burn scar on her back.

SERENA

Does it bother you?

PEMBERTON

No.

She turns and searches his face. But he's telling the truth.

SERENA

I didn't dream when I was with the eagle. It was as if the fire never happened, as if he were still with me... But it wasn't papa. It was you, Pemberton. I felt you beside me the whole time.

(a beat)

Don't ever leave me.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

The hooded EAGLE grips the gauntlet on Serena's arm as she rides toward the cutting slope. An oak armrest, affixed to the saddle pommel, helps her hold the bird steady.

Riding with her-- their eyes on the mysterious eagle-- are Pemberton, Buchanan and Campbell.

EXT. STUMPS AND SLASH - DAY

Serena loosens the laces of the hood and removes it from the eagle's head.

Her Arabian snorts and takes a sideways step. Serena has to steady him before continuing.

Pemberton, Buchanan and Campbell-- still mounted-- watch Serena remove the leather bracelets around the bird's legs.

In the woods behind them, the Supervisor blows the lunch WHISTLE and Lumberjacks trickle out of the trees.

Slowly, carefully, Serena raises her right arm. Then, as if performing a violent salute, she THRUSTS HER ARM UPWARD.

The eagle takes wing...unsteadily at first...but then it catches a draft and soars into the sky, making a slow, widening circle over the valley...

THE FACES...everyone transfixed by the creature's grace...a silent appreciation of nature's majesty...

Buchanan alone seems dubious.

BUCHANAN

Perhaps there's nothing to hunt.

SERENA

The prey believes if it keeps still, it won't be noticed. But the prey eventually flinches. When it does, the eagle always sees.

The eagle remains languid...just coasting on the wind...

BUCHANAN

(to Pemberton)

Judge Parker telephoned me this morning. Champion Paper is selling out to the rainbow chasers.

PEMBERTON

They'll come for us now.

BUCHANAN

With Rockefeller's five million behind them.

(MORE)

BUCHANAN (CONT'D)

If we play our cards right, they  
might offer considerably above  
market value.

SERENA

We're not interested.

BUCHANAN

I'm asking your husband's opinion,  
Mrs. Pemberton, not yours.

Serena eyes have the hard glitter of icicles. Her ferocity  
makes Pemberton smile.

PEMBERTON

My opinion is the same as my  
wife's. But arrange a meeting  
anyway. I want to size them up.

Overhead THE EAGLE stops circling...hangs for a moment in  
midair...then PLUNGES DOWN, ITS BODY IN A V-SHAPE...

As it nears the ground, the eagle opens its wings with a  
flourish as it grips the unseen prey.

The eagle wobbles forward, grappling with its talons,  
*squeezing the life out of something*. Then its head dips and  
rises again with a hank of stringy flesh in its beak.

Serena opens her saddle bag and takes out a lariat with a  
piece of beef tied to the end. She swings the lure overhead.

The eagle turns toward her. Then it rises out of the slash,  
clutching a three-foot long RATTLESNAKE in its talons.

BUCHANAN

Lord God.

The bird flies over the crews, as if to show off its prize,  
and the loggers SCATTER as if dynamite has been lit.

Except for Galloway, who watches calmly.

Then the eagle banks and flies back to Serena...

...settling on the ground near her Arabian. The rattlesnake  
gripped in its talons is twisting slowly, not quite dead.

Serena dismounts and holds out the beef.

The eagle instantly drops the rattlesnake and perches on  
Serena's gauntlet to feed.

VARIOUS LOOKS of astonishment from both overseers and men.

Even from the usually taciturn Campbell.

Galloway takes off his hat and addresses Serena:

GALLOWAY

Can I have the skin and rattles?

SERENA

Yes. But the meat belongs to the bird.

Galloway puts his boot heel to the serpent's head and dispatches it. Then he holds up the corpse so the men can see it's truly dead. A great CHEER goes up.

Serena looks up-- startled. They are cheering for her. She turns to Pemberton, beaming.

ON Buchanan. He loathes her...

INT. HARMON LOG CABIN - NIGHT

Rachel drags herself out of bed, pale and shivering from a fever. She stumbles to the sink and vomits.

Rachel crosses to the cradle and puts a hand to her baby's forehead. He's sick, too-- burning up.

Rachel sits on the bed and tries to get the infant to take her breast, but he won't suckle. He just stares at her, listless and glassy eyed...

Frightened, Rachel puts him back in the cradle and empties the contents of her purse on the bed. Just a few pennies.

EXT. HARMON LOG CABIN/BARN - NIGHT

A lantern bobs down toward the barn as Rachel struggles through the snow, a coat pulled on over her nightgown...

INT. HARMON BARN - NIGHT

Rachel takes a wicker basket off a peg and hangs up the lantern in its place.

She wobbles past her old draft horse to a nesting box in the other stall. Then she steps back in horror:

The chickens inside have been mauled by a predator...blood and feathers everywhere...

Rachel picks up a dead chicken, looking for the eggs beneath, but they're all smashed. Then she hears something and spins:

The eyes of a fox glow in the corner of the barn for a moment before it darts through a gap in the boards.

Rachel hears her baby CRYING in the cabin and runs out...

INT. HARMON LOG CABIN - NIGHT

The baby SQUALLS in the cradle.

Rachel picks him and paces with him, at a loss for what to do. Then she stops, staring at...

THE MANTEL, where her father's pearl-handled bowie knife holds pride of place. The only thing of value in the cabin.

The door CLATTERS shut. Rachel and the babe are gone.

ANGLE: the knife is still on the mantel.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PATH - NIGHT

Clasping the baby to her breast, Rachel stumbles down the path, leaning against the old horse for support...

Her eyes are losing focus. She can barely keep going.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The HORSE-- confused and abandoned on the shoulder.

Twenty yards on, Rachel is weaving down the middle of the blacktop, delirious...

She stops and checks on the bundle in her arms-- putting her ear close to hear the baby breathe. She whispers:

RACHEL  
You're a good boy, Jacob Harmon.  
Mama's proud of you.

She staggers on with clouded eyes, losing steam, each step harder than the last...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAWN

HEADLIGHTS come over a rise.

A Model-T slows as it approaches Rachel's horse-- now wandering aimlessly beside the road...

Sheriff McDowell gets out of the Model-T. Scans the area. Then he starts to run...

Rachel is lying on the pavement, clutching Jacob and babbling as the sweat streams off her...

EXT. WIDOW JENKINS' CABIN - DAY

The Model-T jerks up the path.

Widow Jenkins sets down a milk pail. What's all this?

McDowell gets out of the car, carrying Rachel and the child.

INT. WIDOW JENKINS' CABIN - DAY

The Widow is cooling Jacob with a damp cloth.

McDowell tucks Rachel into bed. She is shaking with chills.

MCDOWELL  
You must love that child dear as  
life.

RACHEL  
I tried not to. I just couldn't  
find a way to stop myself.

Her cracked lips part in a little smile.

MCDOWELL  
I'll fetch a doctor.

Rachel grabs his wrist.

RACHEL  
All I got to trade is that horse.

McDowell clears his throat. Overcome for a moment.

EXT. CUTTING SLOPE - DAY

A jagged limb swings from the branches of an oak tree-- green and budding with spring.

A Foreman and a team of Trimmers-- men with hatchets and handsaws for cutting the limbs off of fallen trunks-- wait warily near a fresh-cut tree. Eyeing the dangling limb.



At last a breeze jars the limb loose and it FALLS-- piercing the muddy ground with a THWACK.

The Foreman blows his whistle and the Trimmers get to work on the fallen log. As the Foreman walks on...

ANGLE DOWN THE SLOPE, where a Shay engine is pushing a train of empty flatcars toward camp for another load of logs...

EXT. RAIL LINE/CAMP - DAY

Rachel hops off a flatcar as the train pulls in. She waves her thanks to the engineer and walks toward the dining hall.

EXT. CUTTING SLOPE - DAY

Pemberton sits on his horse, watching a cutting crew hack at the last specimen of uncut hardwood on this particular slope. Serena's horse is reined next to his.

PEMBERTON

We're making real progress now.  
We'll harvest the whole 34,000  
acres in a couple of years.

SERENA

I think less than that.

She waits. Knowing he rode up here for a reason.

PEMBERTON

Rachel Harmon asked for her old job  
back.

A beat. Serena blinks but says nothing.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

Campbell says there's no work for  
her in town anymore. I won't let  
them starve.

SERENA

Does she intend to bring the child  
to camp with her?

PEMBERTON

A neighbor will keep him.

SERENA

Him. So it's a boy.

She watches the lead chopper drive another wedge.

PEMBERTON

I'll tell her myself so she knows  
it isn't charity. She'll work for  
every penny.

(a beat)

Well. I thought you should know.

He nods and turns his horse.

SERENA

Pemberton. Make sure she isn't  
allowed around our food.

The notion makes Pemberton pause. Then he rides off...

INT. DINING HALL - DAY

Pemberton squints at the blue ribbon in Rachel's hair, as if  
it looks vaguely familiar...

PEMBERTON

What happened with your father...  
You saw it yourself, so you know I  
was only defending myself.

Rachel nods, avoiding his eyes. Pemberton surveys her figure  
for a moment, as if trying to remember what it was that he  
once found attractive. Then she looks up.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

You can start Monday.

RACHEL

Thank you. Sir.

She walks toward the door. Pemberton tries to let her leave  
without speaking again... But he can't:

PEMBERTON

The child. What's his name?

Rachel turns. Surprised.

RACHEL

Jacob. It's from the Bible.

(a beat)

If you was to want to see him...

A Kitchen Worker comes into the hall with a mop and bucket.

PEMBERTON

Monday.

Rachel lets the door fall shut behind her.

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pemberton and Serena grapple under the sheets.

His hand gropes for the drawer of the bedside table...opens it...we see condoms inside. Then Serena's hand shuts it.

SERENA

Let's make a son.

Pemberton enters her. Without a condom.

EXT. CAMP YARD - DAY

A dozen down-and-out HOBOS try to stand up straight as Campbell walks among them, gauging their fitness...

He nods at one. Then another. Then he leaves.

The men not chosen shamle back toward the camp gate, toward a Hooverville they've established on the other side:

Hollow-eyed WIVES and hungry CHILDREN wait amid the tents and lean-tos on the ravaged hillside.

A car HONKS and the men move aside to allow an enormous black sedan passage into the camp. In the back, Webb and Kephart and other Park Commissioners eye the camp with distaste...

INT. CAMP OFFICE/BACK ROOM - DAY

Campbell is passing a box of cigars around when Buchanan comes in late, looking mortified.

BUCHANAN

I'm terribly sorry.

WEBB

No need for apologies, Mr. Buchanan. We haven't begun.

He notes Buchanan's Phi Beta Kappa key as they shake hands.

WEBB (CONT'D)

A Princeton man?

BUCHANAN

'98. Yourself?

WEBB

1910. You must know--

SERENA

We're very busy, gentleman. Please tell us your proposition.

Webb seems faintly shocked by a woman asserting herself.

WEBB

Of course.

Everyone settles in around the table. A Commissioner passes thick documents to Pemberton and Buchanan. Then, after a moment's hesitation, to Serena as well.

WEBB (CONT'D)

The initial price we offered Pemberton Lumber Company was, I admit, far too low. With the generous help of Mr. Rockefeller we are now prepared to make a more substantial offer.

PEMBERTON

How much?

WEBB

Four hundred thousand dollars.

PEMBERTON

Our price is one million.

Webb cannot conceal his surprise. Buchanan fidgets lighting a cigarette, avoiding the chairman's eyes.

KEPHART

The land was appraised at four hundred. Before the market crash.

PEMBERTON

What about our investment in plant and equipment-- the 26 miles of railroad we've built?

KEPHART

From which you've profited already. Why not give something back to the people here?

PEMBERTON

Which people? The 2,000 farmers you've run off their land?

Kephart starts to reply but Webb stops him with a glance.

WEBB

Regrettable, I do agree. But in the long run I believe it's for the greater good.

KEPHART

This is an opportunity to make your mark for future generations.

SERENA

Leaving something as it is makes no mark at all.

WEBB

Congress has chartered the park, Mrs. Pemberton. If we're forced to take your land by eminent domain, you'll be lucky to get half what we're offering.

PEMBERTON

The price is one million dollars.

A beat. Webb leans back, puffing his cigar and eyeing the Pembertons bemusedly...

EXT. CAMP YARD - DAY

Buchanan shakes hands with Webb and Kephart and the other Commissioners at their car. Smiling, friendly...

Pemberton and Serena watch them from the office porch.

SERENA

Buchanan has been negotiating behind our backs.

PEMBERTON

What makes you so sure?

SERENA

His eyes. He wouldn't look our way, not once.

Pemberton squints at Buchanan...

EXT. DINING HALL - DAY

Galloway slouches against the Packard, chewing tobacco. A snake's rattle now dangles from his hat.

Churchgoers carrying Bibles trickle past him, headed to the dining hall for Sunday services.

Pemberton says goodbye to Serena:

SERENA  
Will you bring home the panther?

PEMBERTON  
We're only scouting today.

Serena kisses him and heads toward the stable...

Pemberton opens the door to the Packard. And freezes:

GALLOWAY'S MOTHER is in the back seat, peering at him through the tunnel of a black bonnet. Not *peering* exactly: her eyes are sclerotic. Sightless.

GALLOWAY  
Mama likes to get out on a pretty  
day like this.

Pemberton doesn't know what to say. He gets behind the wheel, trying to shake off Mrs. Galloway's eerie visage.

The Packard drives off...

As Serena nears the stable, she stops in her tracks, watching the Churchgoers walking over from the train:

Rachel trails the others, casting her eyes about. She's done her hair neatly and put on a clean dress. And she carries her baby with his face turned out-- the better to be noticed.

Then Rachel's eyes find Serena-- the first time they have seen each other since the train platform. Rachel hurries away, now clutching her infant protectively.

Serena's gaze follows her all the way to the dining hall...

EXT. BACK COUNTRY - DAY

Pemberton's Packard winds up a dirt road...past collapsed and abandoned houses...foreclosure notices nailed to trees...

INT. PACKARD - MOVING - DAY

Mrs. Galloway sits primly with her hands in her lap.

PEMBERTON  
Does your mother ever speak?

GALLOWAY

Not unless she's got something  
worth listening to. She can tell  
your future if you want.

PEMBERTON

Will I find my mountain lion,  
Mother Galloway?

He watches her in the mirror a long beat. Then Mrs. Galloway  
nods. Pemberton laughs. Sure he will, sure he will...

EXT. RUTTED ROAD - DAY

The Packard sits in a clearing at the end of a dirt road.

Mrs. Galloway is in the back seat, in the same prim repose.  
The only motion to her figure is the bellows-like movement of  
her cheeks as she sucks a piece of candy.

EXT. FOREST/STREAM - DAY

LONG: Pemberton and Galloway appear and disappear in a dense  
stand of trees.

CLOSER: they are moving upstream along a fast-flowing creek.  
Galloway's sharp eyes scan the mud for tracks...

GALLOWAY

This way.

He and Pemberton follow faint markings, pushing through a  
thicket to find a deep pool surrounded by mud.

The TRACKS of a heavy animal are pressed into the mud.

PEMBERTON

Cat?

GALLOWAY

Yeah, it's a cat.

PEMBERTON

There aren't any claw marks.

GALLOWAY

Them don't come out till it's time  
to do some killing.

He settles on a knee and measures a track with his finger.

GALLOWAY (CONT'D)  
Bobcat. Big one, though.

PEMBERTON  
Sure it's not a mountain lion?

GALLOWAY  
I reckon you could stick a tail on  
it and claim it for a panther.  
There's fools that'd not know the  
difference.

He looks at the sun to gauge the time.

GALLOWAY (CONT'D)  
Next time we'll come at nightfall.  
If there's a panther roundabout,  
you'll hear him.  
(smiles)  
Sounds like a baby crying. Except  
it shuts off of a sudden, like  
something that's had its throat  
slashed. Make the back of your  
neck bristle up like a porcupine.

VOICES in the distance. Pemberton signals to Galloway to be  
quiet and peers through a gap in the thicket:

LONG: McDowell watches as Kephart expertly snares a butterfly  
in a net. He puts the specimen in a jar. McDowell takes the  
jar and examines it as they move deeper into the woods...

GALLOWAY (CONT'D)  
(softly)  
They's always out catching bugs  
together. That high sheriff's near  
as hep on naturing as Kephart.

PEMBERTON  
I hear he's got a cabin up here.

He turns to Galloway with a meaningful expression...

EXT. KEPHART'S LOG CABIN - DAY

Galloway squats in the clearing outside, keeping watch.

INT. KEPHART'S LOG CABIN - DAY

Pemberton steps past a large, handmade map of the proposed  
park and pokes around, opening cabinets and drawers...



Kephart lives like a Spartan, keeping only what's necessary for a writer's survival. Including a portable typewriter and several jars of clear whiskey.

Pemberton spots a briefcase beside the typewriter stand and rifles through the sheaf of legal documents inside. But there doesn't seem to be anything of interest...

Then a WHIPPOORWILL cries outside. Galloway.

EXT. KEPHART'S LOG CABIN - DAY

Pemberton glides out-- spotting something on the ground as he does. Approaching VOICES keep him from picking it up.

Kephart and McDowell stride into view, stopping at pistol distance, like gunfighters on Main Street.

KEPHART

What are you doing on my land?

PEMBERTON

Your land? I assumed you already donated it to the park.

KEPHART

I have, in my will. Until then, you're trespassing.

GALLOWAY

We're just passing through. Heard a panther might be roaming around.

MCDOWELL

Move on. Or I'll arrest you for trespassing.

PEMBERTON

That's not very hospitable.

He lights a cigarette. Kephart just glares at him.

Pemberton shrugs and turns to go, but drops his Zippo.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

Damn.

As he bends to retrieve it, we see him palm a CIGARETTE BUTT lying in the dirt.

Pemberton nods to Galloway. Time to go.

McDowell and Kephart watch them leave. Suspecting they're up to something, but not sure what...

INT. PACKARD - DAY

Pemberton is at the wheel, staring at the cigarette butt. It's slender, gold tipped. The kind Buchanan smokes.

Galloway closes the back door for his mother then slips in on the passenger side. He waits on Pemberton a moment.

GALLOWAY  
I can drive if you're winded.

Pemberton starts the car.

GALLOWAY (CONT'D)  
Don't worry. We'll get you a panther yet.

Pemberton puts the Packard in gear and drives.

EXT. CAMP YARD - DAY

The Packard rolls into the camp, passing a pickup with a green paneled hut in the bed: "R.L. Frizzell, Photographer."

An open coffin leans against the back wall of the commissary. A logger's CORPSE is propped up inside. Posing stiffly on either side of the deceased are his WIDOW and YOUNG SON.

The shutter of the box camera CLICKS and FRIZZELL emerges from beneath the black cloth. Campbell pays him.

Two loggers put the lid on the coffin and nail it in.

ANGLE: Pemberton and Galloway get out of the Packard.

PEMBERTON  
What's going on over there?

GALLOWAY  
That's Stewart, got hit by the skidder boom. They're taking his picture for a remembering.

Pemberton crosses to Campbell.

PEMBERTON  
Where's my wife?

CAMPBELL

Up there with the eagle.

Pemberton is about to head off when he notices Frizzell is waddling toward the dining hall. The congregants from the church service are lingering over a potluck picnic.

Frizzell plants his tripod and aims it at a fussy baby in a blue gingham smock.

Something about the child holds Pemberton's attention...

Frizzell shakes a shiny rattle to get the baby's attention but the infant ignores him, squirming...

Then Rachel steps out of the congregation and picks up the baby. She calms him and puts him back on the ground.

Campbell turns to go, but Pemberton grabs his arm.

PEMBERTON

Stay here a minute.

He squints, trying to get a good look at the baby.

Frizzell gets back under the black cloth. FLASH!

Rachel picks up the baby and turns him, brushing his hair away so Pemberton can get a good look at the face.

Then Widow Jenkins takes her arm. Rachel watches Pemberton over her shoulder as the Widow leads her to the train...

Pemberton gets out his wallet and gives Campbell a five.

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - NIGHT

The CIGARETTE BUTT in a saucer on the mantel. Serena picks it up. Examines it. Puts it back.

SERENA

He needs no signature from you-- no approval?

Pemberton pours himself a drink.

PEMBERTON

Just that letter from the lawyers.  
Son-of-a-bitch.

SERENA

What happens if he's unable to  
perform his duties as trustee?

PEMBERTON  
Mother takes his place.

SERENA  
Would she interfere?

PEMBERTON  
Hardly.

Serena crosses to the table and picks up a newspaper. She holds it out so Pemberton can see the front page:

"ROCKEFELLER TO VISIT ASHEVILLE. Noted Philanthropist Seeks To Advance National Park Scheme."

Pemberton grabs the paper and reads...

SERENA  
Rockefeller is coming to sign deals with Champion Paper and the other landowners they've intimidated. Buchanan means to be one of them.

Pemberton looks up from the paper. Unable to contradict her.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
He's made his choice. Now we have to make ours.

Her eyes have a dark cast that chills Pemberton...

PEMBERTON  
What are you saying?

SERENA  
If we don't stop him now, we'll lose everything.

Pemberton gropes for an alternative but grasps nothing. Serena comes to him, soothingly, and takes him in her arms...

SERENA (CONT'D)  
I can do it if you want me to.

PEMBERTON  
No. I'll take care of it.

He knocks back his drink in one gulp.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The beating of HOOVES is muffled by a blanket of leaves.

A hunting party is moving up the trail.

Vaughn leads, in the wagon with Galloway and the dogs.  
Following on horses are Campbell, Buchanan, and Pemberton.

Pemberton watches the bounce of Buchanan's split-tail hunting coat as he rides in front of him.

GALLOWAY

Hope you brung that \$20 gold piece.

Pemberton starts-- broken from his reverie.

PEMBERTON

Thought we were after deer.

GALLOWAY

That panther likes him a deer, too.

EXT. PASTURE - DAY

The hunting party splashes through a creek and the trees give way onto an abandoned pasture...withered fence posts strung with tendrils of barbed wire...

They ride toward a slouching homestead. Beyond the collapsed barn, an apple orchard covers the slope...

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

Vaughn unleashes the dogs, who leap out of the wagon and charge YAPPING into the orchard...

Pemberton dismounts and takes the lay of the land.

PEMBERTON

(to Galloway)

You and Campbell can take the left.  
We'll go over there.

Galloway and Campbell head off as instructed.

Pemberton takes his rifle from its sheath on his horse and checks the load and the safety.

Maddeningly deliberate as far as Buchanan's concerned.

BUCHANAN

The dogs are running, George.

Pemberton does not accelerate his ministrations...

EXT. BARN - DAY

Pemberton peers at the desiccated skin of an animal, tacked to the back wall. Ragged now, it was once a great cat.

BUCHANAN  
There's your panther.

PEMBERTON  
You made a deal with Kephart.

BUCHANAN  
(a beat)  
For your own good, George. I got them up to 450.

PEMBERTON  
The timber's worth a million.

BUCHANAN  
You shouldn't believe everything she tells you.

Pemberton is silent. Cold. The BARKING starts to get closer. Buchanan shakes his head disgustedly.

BUCHANAN (CONT'D)  
Maybe the old man knew you better than I thought.

PEMBERTON  
Which side?

BUCHANAN  
I'll set up over there.

Pemberton nods and takes up a position near the barn...

He checks the load again, then he watches Buchanan.

The BARKING grows louder. The dogs are driving the game.

BUCHANAN (CONT'D)  
Here they come.

He raises his rifle.

Pemberton does the same.

A large BUCK lurches out of the woods and into the orchard, right into Buchanan's shooting alley.

Buchanan takes aim and... FIRES TWICE.

The buck is hit in the hindquarters and staggers sideways through the orchard's center row before it falls.

The buck thrashes, trying to stand.

Buchanan rises, going toward it.

PEMBERTON

The dogs will finish it off.

BUCHANAN

Why let him suffer?

He stalks toward the wounded buck.

Pemberton gently releases the safety on his rifle. CLICK.

Buchanan pays him no mind. He is near the buck now, holding his rifle as the animal writhes, trying to get a clean head shot to finish him off. But the buck won't cooperate.

Pemberton slowly turns his rifle toward Buchanan...

Buchanan pauses and takes off his hunting jacket. He folds it neatly and lays it on the grass.

The SIGHT on Pemberton's rifle settles on his fastidious companion. He takes a deep breath to calm himself, holding Buchanan in his sights. But still he doesn't fire.

Buchanan picks up his rifle again and goes closer to the deer, close enough that he can press the barrel directly against the creature's skull.

Then, as he is about to apply the coup de grace, Buchanan catches something in the corner of his eye and turns:

Pemberton is AIMING HIS RIFLE AT HIM.

Buchanan freezes. Startled. His lips form a plea-- then the sound is drowned out by the REPORT of Pemberton's rifle.

Buchanan is hit in the center of his chest. He crumples, his bewildered eyes reproaching Pemberton as he falls.

Pemberton just stands there. Smoke curling from his rifle. Unable to move. Then a twig SNAPS. He spins.

Campbell, who is coming around the barn, stops short.

Pemberton lowers his rifle. *How much did he see?*

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

Vaughn hops onto Buchanan's horse and gallops into the woods.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Pemberton and Campbell ride into the camp, following Galloway in the wagon. The dogs stand round Buchanan's body in the bed, like sentinels...

Dr. Chaney and Sheriff McDowell rise from the porch of the office, where they have been waiting with Vaughn.

Galloway drops the gate and shoos the dogs out.

Dr. Chaney steps up to examine the body...probing the wound with his bare finger...

DR. CHANEY  
One shot. Rifle.

He picks up a dull, white oval.

MCDOWELL  
Is that button?

DR. CHANEY  
No. A piece of vertebrae.

PEMBERTON  
He was in the orchard. He was supposed to be farther away from the barn.

MCDOWELL  
Anybody else with you?

PEMBERTON  
No.

MCDOWELL  
You see anything, Campbell?

Campbell feels Pemberton's gaze. He shakes his head.

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)  
Looks like your shot hit dead center in the heart. Pretty amazing accident.

Pemberton doesn't reply.



MCDOWELL (CONT'D)  
You and Buchanan get on, did you?

PEMBERTON  
He was a friend of my father's.

MCDOWELL  
Is that an answer?

It's all the answer he's getting.

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)  
Put the body on the train. I'm  
going to have an autopsy done.

Campbell helps the men lift the corpse out of the wagon.

McDowell eyes Pemberton a moment, then turns to Galloway:

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)  
You got anything to add?

GALLOWAY  
It was an accident.

MCDOWELL  
How do you know that?

GALLOWAY  
He ain't a good enough shot to do  
it on purpose.

PEMBERTON  
Anything else, Sheriff?

A beat. McDowell turns and heads for his car...

Pemberton squeezes his fist, as if strangling a tremor.

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - NIGHT

Pemberton comes in and heads straight to the bar, pouring  
himself a whiskey...gulping it...

In the mirror beside him, Serena's form seems to resolve out  
of the shadows...watching Pemberton searchingly...

SERENA  
So it's done.

Pemberton nods. She moves to him.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
And the sheriff?

PEMBERTON  
Suspicious. But he has nothing.

SERENA  
You'll need to find that letter  
from your father's lawyers. It's  
motive.

PEMBERTON  
I'll take care of it.

Serena wraps her arms around him.

SERENA  
I wish I were a man so I could have  
been with you.

PEMBERTON  
I could have shot him in the back  
but I didn't. I waited till he  
looked me in the eye.

Serena's hands wind round him and unbuckle his belt...

Then her eyes find his in the mirror. Her arousal seems to  
drive away Pemberton's doubts. He turns and they go at each  
other with ardor, clothes flying, furniture knocked over...

INT. MORGUE/ASHEVILLE - NIGHT

Buchanan's stiff corpse is on the slab.

The CORONER is bent over a table, finishing his report. But  
McDowell lingers, as if unsatisfied with the answer...

CORONER  
(with finality)  
Accidental death.

A beat. McDowell puts his hat on and stalks out...

The coroner resumes writing.

Behind him, SHOES step around from behind a partition.

Then an ENVELOPE filled with cash is set on the table beside  
the Coroner's report. When he looks up to say thanks:

The door is already swinging shut on Campbell.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Campbell's Dodge pulls into the sleeping camp.

He gets out, holding a small cardboard box.

INT. CAMP OFFICE - NIGHT

Campbell sets the box on Buchanan's desk. Inside are the effects from the corpse: watch, keys, Phi Beta Kappa pin.

Campbell takes the keys and unlocks a drawer...rifling the papers inside until he finds the envelope with the return address in Boston...

INT. CAMP OFFICE - DAY

The safe is open. Pemberton removes a stack of cash and places it on Campbell's desk.

Campbell stops sorting the mail and regards the money warily.

CAMPBELL  
I'm paid fair enough.

PEMBERTON  
You have a family, don't you?  
Consider it a bonus.

CAMPBELL  
What am I expected to do for it?

PEMBERTON  
Nothing but what you've done. Keep  
the books. Manage the men.

Campbell puts the bribe in his coat and resumes sorting.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)  
You brought back Mr. Buchanan's  
things from the coroner.

Campbell nods toward the box on Buchanan's desk.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)  
Did you happen to see an envelope  
from Boston?

CAMPBELL  
There wasn't any envelope that in  
the box.

Pemberton looks at him a moment, weighing the assertion.  
Campbell is as placid as ever...

CAMPBELL (CONT'D)  
But this came for you.

He unlocks his desk and removes a square packet tied with a string. Pemberton has no idea what it is.

He opens it, curious. Inside is the PHOTOGRAPH Frizzell made of Rachel's baby...

EXT. HARMON LOG CABIN/FAMILY GRAVEYARD - DAY

Jacob Harmon watches solemnly as Rachel stirs up a bucket of mud and horse manure with a trowel. He has grown since the photograph. A toddler now instead of an infant.

RACHEL  
There may come a time you need to  
know how to do this. So watch.

She plops a big scoop of the chinking material on a plank of wood. Then she smooths it into a gap between the logs...

RACHEL (CONT'D)  
See? Let's let you do it now.

She wraps his little hand around the trowel and helps Jacob scoop up some of the muck.

RACHEL (CONT'D)  
Daub it on good.

She guides his hand to the gap and they fill a bit more.

Jacob turns to her as if to ask if he's done it right and Rachel smiles. Jacob makes a happy sound.

EXT. HARMON CABIN - LATER

All but the bottom row of logs are chinked now. Jacob crawls into view, spreading muck all over himself and the logs as he tries to finish "his" row...

Meanwhile, Rachel crouches on the roof, fitting river stones from a burlap sack into the empty spots in the chimney...

RACHEL  
You about finished chinking them  
logs, Jacob Harmon?

She leans over to look at him. Then she pauses:

Widow Jenkins is approaching with a wicker basket on her arm.

EXT. HARMON LOG CABIN/PORCH - DAY

Widow Jenkins washes Jacob's face with a wet handkerchief as Rachel eats fried okra and hominy from the basket.

WIDOW JENKINS

Joel Vaughn asked about you at the service today. He was worried you or the young one was feeling puny.

She looks at Rachel meaningfully.

WIDOW JENKINS (CONT'D)

Turned into a right handsome man, don't you think?

RACHEL

Yes, ma'am. I suppose so.

WIDOW JENKINS

He'd make you a good sweetheart.

Rachel makes a face. Not likely. The Widow shakes her head.

WIDOW JENKINS (CONT'D)

That man ain't never gonna do nothing for you.

Rachel opens her mouth to protest-- she never thought Pemberton *would*-- but it's clear the Widow isn't buying.

Rachel blushes and goes back to eating.

EXT. STUMPS AND SLASH - DAY

Pemberton and Serena ride hard up the slope.

EXT. LOGGED AREA - DAY

A SURVEYOR and his CHAINMAN stretch a Gunter's chain across the debris. HOOFBEATS are bearing down on them...

Then Pemberton and Serena gallop into view, closing in--

The Surveyors pause-- they wouldn't--

But Pemberton and Serena don't slow down.

The Surveyors drop the chain and jump out of the way as Pemberton and Serena charge through them and on up to the crest of the denuded ridge.

They rein their horses and look down the other side:

At the bottom of a logged slope is a stream that must be the boundary of the Pembertons' holdings: on its far bank, the trees are still standing.

And so are McDowell, Kephart and Webb.

EXT. THE FOULED STREAM - DAY

The combatants measure each other across the stream, which is fouled with logging waste and dead fish...

PEMBERTON  
Get them off my land.

MCDOWELL  
Those men are Federal agents making  
an official survey.

He splashes across to Pemberton, holding out a document.

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)  
Consider yourself served.

WEBB  
You have 90 days to clear off so  
the state can take lawful title.

KEPHART  
We gave you a chance to sell at a  
fair price, Mr. Pemberton.

MCDOWELL  
Getting along all right without  
your partner?

PEMBERTON  
He wasn't my partner. Buchanan  
overstepped his authority.

MCDOWELL  
That why you shot him?

PEMBERTON  
It was an accident. Your own  
coroner said so.

MCDOWELL

And two days later he was driving a new Packard.

SERENA

Fish upstream, Sheriff. You won't catch anything here.

Pemberton tears the document in two and tosses it into the water with the dead fish...

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - NIGHT

Serena turns her profile to the mirror, running a hand over her belly to gauge its growth-- as Rachel once did before the same mirror. She is beginning to show...

SERENA

What did the lawyer say?

PEMBERTON

That he can stall, but they'll seize the land in the end.

SERENA

How long?

PEMBERTON

A year at most.

(a beat)

He thinks they'd still give us the \$400,000. To avoid the hassle. He thinks we should take it.

Serena glances at him. Is he serious?

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

The sheriff was in the commissary last night, asking about Buchanan.

SERENA

If he's asking questions, he must not have the answers.

Pemberton drains his whiskey. Not so sure about that...

SERENA (CONT'D)

Do you know where we should go? After we finish Carolina and mount your lion's head in our study...

PEMBERTON

I hadn't thought that far.

SERENA

The Mato Grosso in Brazil. Virgin forests of mahogany for hundreds of miles. And not a single timber company.

PEMBERTON

I'm surprised no one else has thought of taking those trees.

SERENA

They have but they're too timid. The forests have no roads; some aren't even mapped. It's a challenge worthy of you, Pemberton.

She smiles and pulls him close, placing his hand on the slight bulge in her belly...

SERENA (CONT'D)

We can build an empire for our son.

PEMBERTON

(a beat)

What would it take to get started?

SERENA

A million, maybe two. We'll need investors, of course.

PEMBERTON

And for that we'd have to show them what we can do under pressure.

SERENA

If we face down the federal government and don't blink...

Pemberton mulls it over...it's tempting... Serena kisses him and takes his glass, getting him a refill.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Is it true Galloway was in prison?

PEMBERTON

Five years. Manslaughter, I think. But he's the best hunting guide in the state. The men say he can track a grasshopper across caprock.

Why is she asking?



INT. CAMP OFFICE - DAWN

Galloway stands, somewhat bewildered to be here, holding his hat with the rattlesnake tails.

Pemberton hands him a silver supervisor's whistle.

PEMBERTON

Put him down for another \$5 a week.

Campbell does not seem keen on the idea of making Galloway a supervisor. But he takes a pen and opens the ledger...

EXT. CUTTING SLOPE - DAY

The WHISTLE bounces on Galloway's chest as he climbs the frozen slope. The glint of the sun off the metal seems to catch the eyes of the men he passes:

No one congratulates him on his promotion.

Galloway pauses near a pair of Sawyers struggling to get their saw through an oak.

On the ground is the Chopper's axe and a can of kerosene.

The Chopper himself is sitting on a cut log, taking a cigarette break.

Galloway picks up the axe and HURLS IT, END OVER END...

IT THUDS INTO THE LOG-- making the Chopper jump.

One look at the man who threw it has him rushing back to the oak and squirting kerosene on the saw to oil the blade...

Galloway walks on, grinding out the Chopper's cigarette under his brogan.

ANGLE: The eagle circles, high above the trees...

A HUGE POPLAR falls toward us and CRASHES to the earth.

A team of Trimmers looks skyward:

The poplar left several sheared-off branches in the trees on either side as it fell. Dangling like so many daggers.

Unlike the Foreman we saw earlier, Galloway doesn't let them wait for the branches to clear. He just blows his whistle-- signalling them to get to work.

The Trimmers look at Galloway a beat, then fall in.

Galloway walks on, leaving the Trimmers behind, the rattles on his hat going SHUSH-SHUSH...

ANGLE: Up the slope Serena is astride her white Arabian, the eagle on her arm...watching the new supervisor approvingly...

A sheared-off LIMB teeters above the Trimmers...wobbling back and forth, as if deciding... Then it FALLS.

The broken end of the branch strikes a Trimmer in the back, DRIVING THROUGH HIM LIKE A SPEAR, knocking him to the ground.

He raises himself to his knees for a moment. Then dies.

His comrades look up the hill, where Galloway is receding.

Galloway does not look back.

INT. CAMP OFFICE - DAY

Pemberton takes bundles of cash from the safe and stuffs them into envelopes, as Buchanan once did.

Campbell records the figures in the black and green ledgers.

Then Pemberton pauses at the window, looking outside:

The dead Trimmer is being carried to Dr. Chaney's caboose.

Pemberton watches until the loggers move out of view. Then he frowns-- he's lost track of the count. He takes the money out of the envelope and starts over...

EXT. PRISTINE FOREST - DAY

Serena rides along the snowy bank of a river, wearing a long duster that masks her pregnancy. She is surrounded by soaring, old-growth trees. A natural cathedral.

Serena passes a spectacular WATERFALL and rides on, climbing toward the top of a ridge...

EXT. TOP OF RIDGE - DAY

Serena reins her Arabian to a stop and looks down into the valley below, listening to the faint percussion of axes...

A train WHISTLES...unseen at first...then it chugs into view: Dozens of flatcars, all piled with cut logs, ride the rails toward Waynesville. As the train disappears around a bend...

REVERSE TO Serena, watching from the same place on the ridge. But the season has changed. It's spring. The trees are budding. And Serena's belly now presses against her coat.

EXT. STUMPS AND SLASH - DAY

LONG: Serena gallops through the wasteland like a Valkyrie.

ANGLE ON the same waterfall. And we realize this wasteland is the pristine forest she rode through a moment before.

The Arabian churns the muddy slope, trampling green shoots under its hooves...

EXT. CAMP YARD - DAY

Pemberton lifts a large box from the back seat.

Vaughn hobbles toward him, offering to help. But Pemberton waves him away. This is a private matter. He lugs the box into his cabin alone...

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - DAY

Pemberton puts the finishing touches on the cradle he has just assembled and carries it into the bedroom.

INT. CAMP OFFICE/BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Campbell stands near the door, waiting as Pemberton peruses a sheaf of papers. He has evidently interrupted dinner.

PEMBERTON

Snipes?

Campbell nods solemnly. Pemberton signs, shaking his head.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

He was with us from the start.

Dr. Chaney pats his plump lips.

DR. CHANEY

The men are getting killed at a rather prodigious rate these last few weeks. When Buchanan was here, there seemed to be fewer deaths.

SERENA

We're working steeper inclines now.  
The rain makes footing treacherous.

DR. CHANEY

If only I could stitch together all  
the severed limbs, I could make you  
a new man every week or two.

He smiles but they don't seem to find his jest amusing.

DR. CHANEY (CONT'D)

Anyway, this depression ensures  
plenty of replacements. I saw 20  
men at the depot in Waynesville  
today. Ragged as scarecrows.

Campbell collects the papers and leaves. Chaney turns back  
to his ham, surgically removing a rind of fat.

DR. CHANEY (CONT'D)

Still. It's a great deal more work  
for me when they get hurt...

His beady eyes glitter with avarice.

INT. CAMP OFFICE - NIGHT

Campbell gathers his things to leave for the night. As he  
turns to the door, his gaze falters over Buchanan's desk--  
staring at it a moment, disturbed. Then he goes out...

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - NIGHT

Pemberton and Serena are standing at the bedroom door,  
admiring the cradle.

PEMBERTON

Have you thought about what you're  
going to do after the baby comes?

SERENA

The same as I'm doing now.

PEMBERTON

I suppose we can find a woman to  
look after him.

SERENA

One of those hillbilly slatterns?  
He can ride with me.

Pemberton looks dubious.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
Any child of ours can stand a  
little jostling, Pemberton.

True enough. He puts his arms around her. Kisses her.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
Chaney was asking a lot of  
questions tonight.

PEMBERTON  
Twenty dollars a week will close  
his mouth.

SERENA  
That much?

PEMBERTON  
It's only a few more months. Then  
we'll build our empire.

Serena smiles.

INT. WAYNESVILLE JAIL - NIGHT

Campbell taps the envelope with the Boston return address  
against his palm, waiting.

McDowell reads Buchanan's letter carefully. Then he folds it  
up and hands it back.

MCDOWELL  
You'll have to testify to what you  
saw. And what you did. I can't  
promise you won't do time.

CAMPBELL  
I know.

MCDOWELL  
I want you to show that to a man in  
Raleigh, a judge they don't own.  
He'll need to see the ledgers, too.

CAMPBELL  
He keeps those in the safe.

MCDOWELL  
You'll have to figure a way.  
Wouldn't do any good to hang him  
and leave her in charge. Would it?

A beat. Campbell nods.

EXT. CAMP OFFICE - DAY

On the porch, Campbell smokes and watches a heavy rain lashing the camp. Waiting.

INT. CAMP OFFICE

Pemberton dials the combination of the Mosler safe and opens it. He puts the ledgers on Campbell's desk, then...

He opens the door. Letting Campbell back inside.

INT. DINING HALL - DAY

Rachel eats her lunch alone, shunned by the other girls on the kitchen staff... Then a tray loaded with china and silverware settles on her table. She looks up:

Joel Vaughn tugs on his golf cap, grinning.

VAUGHN

Mind if I rest up a minute? That's a powerful heavy tray.

Rachel nods shyly. He swings his bent foot over the bench.

RACHEL

That must be for Mr. Pemberton.

Vaughn tenses slightly at her mention of Pemberton.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

They say he likes you. Might make you an overseer like Mr. Campbell.

VAUGHN

No, thanks. I'd just as soon go someplace else, if I can.

RACHEL

Like Seattle, Washington maybe?

She grins. But Vaughn's expression is blank.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Back in school Miss Stephens asked us where in America we wanted to go.

(MORE)

RACHEL (CONT'D)  
You said how the furthest-most  
place from that schoolhouse sounded  
pretty good to you.

VAUGHN  
(remembering now)  
And she made me measure it out on  
the map-- Seattle, Washington.

RACHEL  
You always was the funniest one in  
that school.

A beat. Then she notices a couple of Girls at another table,  
whispering and staring at them. It embarrasses her.

RACHEL (CONT'D)  
Best not let them victuals get  
cold.

VAUGHN  
(loudly)  
Don't mind them old snuff mouths.

Rachel covers a smile with her hand. When she looks up  
Vaughn is holding out a toy train to her.

VAUGHN (CONT'D)  
For your young one.

He nods. Take it. Rachel is touched...

EXT. FOREST/BIG OAK - DAY

BOOTS in the mud as Galloway steadies himself on a slope. He  
steps over giant roots and crouches beside a barrel-thick  
oak, pointing out the spot for the undercut.

The Chopper, a boy of 17, nods and raises his axe.

Galloway holds his hand at the spot until the last second, so  
the dim boy doesn't forget it, then eases back.

But the Chopper's foot slips on the muddy roots. His knee  
buckles and the axe swings down well short of the trunk...

Galloway's LEFT HAND PARTS FROM HIS ARM WITH A SOFT, FLESHY  
SOUND. It tumbles into a gap between the oak's roots, the  
fingers curling inward like a dying spider...

Galloway staggers back and leans against the trunk-- blood  
leaping from his upraised wrist.

The Chopper drops his axe in shock.

Galloway's legs fold beneath him and he sinks down the oak, letting out a soft MOAN.

Up the slope, Serena turns and spurs her white horse...

Galloway stares at her blankly, holding his stump upright but otherwise doing nothing to stanch the flow.

Serena dismounts and cuts the reins from her horse.

She cinches the leather around Galloway's arm, stopping the flow of blood.

Then Serena removes her coat and wraps it around him.

SERENA

Get him on my horse.

But the men-- a cutting crew and a team of Trimmers-- don't move. Staring in wonder at her pregnant belly. As if they hadn't known until now that she was truly a woman...

SERENA (CONT'D)

Now.

Two men lift Galloway onto the Arabian and hold him there.

Serena thrusts out a hand and the others help her climb into the saddle. Doffing their hats as they step back.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Get back to work.

Holding Galloway on, she rides down toward camp...

EXT. DR. CHANEY'S CABOOSE - DAY

Galloway slumps on Serena's horse as Dr. Chaney examines the tourniquet on his arm.

DR. CHANEY

Damn good job whoever tied this...  
You'll have to get him to a  
hospital if he's to have a chance.

CAMPBELL

I'll take him.

He and Pemberton lift Galloway down and drag him toward the Dodge. Galloway's feet plow small furrows in the mud...



GALLOWAY  
 (to all in earshot)  
 I'll live. It's done been  
 prophesied.

Serena turns her Arabian to head back. Then she sees:

Rachel is watching her from the kitchen door. Agape.

Coatless and soaked to the skin, there is no missing Serena's condition now. She meets the teenager's gaze for a moment-- with an air of triumph.

Rachel scurries back into the kitchen.

The Dodge is driving away. Pemberton walks back...

PEMBERTON  
 Looks like you saved his life.

But then his expression changes-- something is wrong--

Serena is clinging to the pommel to keep from falling off her horse. In pain...

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Serena sits on the edge of the bed, pale and wincing.

DR. CHANEY  
 Lie down on your side.

Pemberton watches Chaney open Serena's peignoir and press a stethoscope to her abdomen...

Then he palpitates the area, making Serena grimace.

CLOSER: Chaney seems to extend this part of the examination, as if he takes a quiet pleasure in causing her pain...

DR. CHANEY (CONT'D)  
 Nothing to worry about, madam.  
 Most likely something has not lain  
 well on your stomach.

SERENA  
 It doesn't feel like a stomachache.

DR. CHANEY  
 Well, it certainly isn't labor.  
 (a beat)  
 (MORE)

DR. CHANEY (CONT'D)  
The hospital in Asheville can  
provide a second opinion. If the  
discomfort is too much for you.

She meets his condescending gaze.

SERENA  
That won't be necessary.

DR. CHANEY  
Bed rest, madam. You'll be fine in  
a day or two.

PEMBERTON  
Is that all you can do for her?

DR. CHANEY  
Fetch her some peppermints. They  
do wonders.

He snaps his bag shut.

EXT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - NIGHT

A Worker sets a bit of valerian root on the Pembertons'  
porch. Another man leaves a jar of dark liquid.

These offerings join several others glowing in the porch  
light: mandrake and milkweed...polished stones and beads...

EXT. CAMP GATE - DAWN

A FIGURE limps up the road, past the Hooverville, which is  
just beginning to stir in the early light.

Galloway pauses a moment to catch his breath, pale and weak.  
His bandaged stump hangs uselessly at his side.

He feels the greedy looks of the hobos. A job is opening up.  
But Galloway gathers himself and walks on.

EXT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - DAY

Galloway steps over the pile of offerings and KNOCKS. A  
beat. Pemberton yanks the door open.

PEMBERTON  
Get your severance from Campbell.  
I told him to give you double.

GALLOWAY  
I need to see your missus.

PEMBERTON  
She's not well.

GALLOWAY  
I'll wait.

The presumptuous son-of-a-bitch seems to mean on the porch.  
Neither man moves for a moment. Then:

SERENA (O.S.)  
Send him back.

The rattles on Galloway's hat shake as he removes it. He  
waits until Pemberton reluctantly steps aside, eyeing the  
herbs and amulets on his porch.

PEMBERTON  
What is all that?

GALLOWAY  
Mountain medicine.

He steps past Pemberton and disappears inside.

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pemberton leans against the mantel, smoking and trying to  
make out the MURMURING behind his closed bedroom door. The  
whole thing aggravates him...

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN/BEDROOM - DAY

Serena is propped up in bed, a bag of peppermints in her lap.

SERENA  
We need to keep him on the payroll.

Pemberton is dressing-- oddly for him-- in a suit and tie.

PEMBERTON  
He's not much use with one hand.

SERENA  
Galloway's mother prophesied a time  
when he would lose much but be  
saved by a woman. He's honor-bound  
to protect me and do my bidding the  
rest of his life.

PEMBERTON  
You don't believe that hocus-pocus.

SERENA  
It doesn't matter what I believe.  
Galloway believes it. Anything I  
ask, he'll do.

Pemberton shrugs. It's not worth arguing over.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
You look rather formal today.

PEMBERTON  
I'm having lunch with Judge Parker.  
He's getting greedy.  
(then:)  
I can stay if you need me.

SERENA  
I'll be all right.

Frustrated, Pemberton unknots the tie and starts over. Then he notices a hatchet has been placed underneath their bed.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
His mother says it cuts the pain.

She smiles. What harm can it do?

EXT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN/CAMP YARD - DAY

Pemberton kicks his way through the offerings crowding his porch and stalks down to his Packard.

He drives off with a ROAR and a spray of mud...

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN/BEDROOM - DAWN

Pemberton's arms are draped protectively around Serena's midsection as they sleep...

Then Serena's eyes snap open. She reaches down between her legs and feels something.

Serena fumbles for the lamp switch-- knocking the peppermints off the table and scattering them across the floor--

PEMBERTON  
What's the matter?

Serena holds up her hand. It's covered with blood.

EXT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - DAWN

Pemberton staggers out with Serena in his arms, heading for his Packard. He's startled to see:

Galloway is running toward them. How did he know?

PEMBERTON

Get Campbell. I need him to drive.

Galloway veers off toward Campbell's cabin, stub arm flapping at his side...

INT. PACKARD - MOVING - DAY

Campbell drives with his foot to the floor.

Pemberton cradles Serena in the back, a blood-soaked towel between her legs. She is deathly pale.

Pemberton lifts her limp wrist to his lips.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Serena's gurney hurtles down a corridor. Pemberton jogs alongside it, with a gray-haired DOCTOR.

DOCTOR

She needs blood. A lot of it and fast. What's her type?

PEMBERTON

(he has no idea)  
Same as mine.

The gurney SLAMS THROUGH the doors to the emergency room.

INT. HOSPITAL/EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Serena and Pemberton are side-by-side on gurneys. A rubber tube connects their arms.

The Doctor squeezes an olive-shaped pump in the tube to get the blood flowing. Then he hands it to a NURSE.

DOCTOR

Every 30 seconds. Any faster and a vein could collapse.

He steps around the gurney and an ATTENDANT helps him lift Serena's legs for a pelvic exam. The Doctor frowns.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
Get the mayo stand and a lap pack.

The Attendant rolls over a stand with surgical implements...

The Nurse watches the clock, waiting for the time to tick off, then looks down in surprise:

Pemberton is gripping her wrist.

PEMBERTON  
I'll pump the blood.

He tightens his grip until the startled Nurse lets go.

Pemberton squeezes the pump. Waits only a few seconds. Then squeezes it again. He watches the blood sluice through tube from his arm to Serena's. Pumping and pumping...

INT. HOSPITAL/CORRIDOR - DAY

Chaney watches the surgery through an observation window:

The Doctor dips both hands into Serena's abdomen and lifts out a lifeless child. He looks at it a moment, then sets it on a tray. Not worth further attention.

Chaney turns away, his face damp with sweat.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - DAY

Chaney lumbers past Campbell...

DR. CHANEY  
I'm getting her some flowers.

Campbell looks up from his magazine.

INT. HOSPITAL/MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY

Chaney approaches the exit. Then stops.

THROUGH THE GLASS IN THE DOOR: Galloway is leaning against a car at the curb. His eyes rise to meet Chaney's. Ice cold.

HOSPITAL STAFF step around Chaney, on their way out.

As they push through the door, Chaney ducks and slips away--back down the corridor he came from...

Galloway puts a plug in his cheek and saunters off.

INT. HOSPITAL/SERENA'S ROOM - DAY

Serena lies on the bed, asleep.

Pemberton shuffles in, unsteady after all the blood he gave, and pulls up a chair beside her. He takes her hand. Waits.

Serena awakens...searching his face for the news...

SERENA  
The child is dead.

PEMBERTON  
Yes.

SERENA  
A boy?

Pemberton nods. She studies his face. There's more.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
What?

PEMBERTON  
We won't be able to have another.

A beat. Tears begin to stream down Serena's face.

SERENA  
You want a son; you need a son.

PEMBERTON  
You're all that matters to me.

SERENA  
I shouldn't have kept working-- my  
body knew all the time but I didn't  
listen. My baby...

PEMBERTON  
Shh.

SERENA  
You're going to leave me.

Pemberton holds her as she sobs...

INT. ASHEVILLE TRAIN STATION/MEN'S ROOM - DAY

Chaney is at the urinal, listening to the trains being CALLED in the lobby outside.

Then the DOOR opens and he spins his head nervously--

But it's just a FATHER holding a squirming BOY.

BOY  
No! No! I won't!

The Father turns on the tap and scrubs the boy's hands.

Chaney buttons up and uses the adjacent sink. He nods sympathetically at the Father.

The Father, who seems on the verge of child abuse, finishes his task and carries the boy out-- not bothering with towels.

Chaney washes up. *In the mirror above him we see a stall door easing open...slowly and silently...*

Galloway glides out, a long hunting knife in his hand. He crosses to Chaney without making a sound.

Chaney looks up from the sink-- sees Galloway in the mirror--

Then Galloway slashes his throat with the knife. Chaney's final words are a BLOODY GURGLE...

INT. HOSPITAL/SERENA'S ROOM - DAY

Pemberton has crawled in beside Serena as she sleeps.

Then he realizes Campbell is standing over them.

INT. ASHEVILLE TRAIN STATION/MEN'S ROOM - DAY

Chaney is propped up on a toilet in one of the stalls, his palms lying open. In each hand is a peppermint.

A POLICEMAN turns to Pemberton and Campbell, as if to ask if they know anything about this.

Pemberton stares at the carnage. And shakes his head.

EXT. CAMP YARD/PEMBERTON'S CABIN - DAY

The Packard rolls slowly past the assembled Workers...

Pemberton opens the passenger door and reaches in to help Serena. But her expression makes him withdraw his hand.

She rises and makes slow steps toward the cabin-- wan and sweating, but determined to show the men her strength.



The reverent FACES of the men as Serena passes... They seem to regard her as something bordering on the supernatural.

The herbal nostrums on the porch have multiplied by several times. Pemberton has to clear a path with his foot as he leads Serena to the door.

Serena makes it inside without falling. Then Galloway posts himself on the porch. Like a faithful guard dog.

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - DAY

As soon as they get inside, the air seems to go out of Serena. She leans heavily on Pemberton as he helps her toward the bedroom...

Suddenly Serena stops. Gripping his forearm. Anguished.

THROUGH BEDROOM DOOR: the cradle is still there.

SERENA  
*Get rid of it.*

As Pemberton goes in to get the cradle, she leans against the wall, averting her eyes.

INT. STABLE - DAY

The CRADLE-- and the shadow of an axe rising on the wall--

Pemberton brings the axe down with full force. Again and again. SMASHING the cradle to bits. Then he stops:

Campbell has appeared at the door.

CAMPBELL  
Excuse me. The invoices piled up  
while you were in Asheville.

A beat. Pemberton drops the axe.

INT. CAMP OFFICE - DAY

Pemberton dials the combination of the safe...

Behind him, the door to the back room is slightly ajar. *With a mirror hanging on it that wasn't there before...*

EXT. CAMP OFFICE

Campbell stands on the porch, his back to the window, peering intently at his palm:

A SCRAP OF MIRROR in his hand reflects Pemberton at the safe. Dialing the combination...

EXT. CAMP YARD - NIGHT

Campbell scans the camp furtively, the only soul stirring on a moonless night...

He slips into his Dodge, taking pains not to slam the door, and releases the brake. The car rolls toward the gate.

As the car gains speed, Campbell pops the clutch and the engine putters softly. But the gears GRIND as he shifts.

ANGLE: The one-armed guard dog curled up on the Pembertons' porch raises his head at the sound.

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - DAY

Serena is enthroned in a cane back chair atop an enormous map of Brazil. Lost in the contours of the Mato Grosso...

SERENA

Galloway can find him.

Telegrams litter the floor. A stack of books and *National Geographic* magazines teeters beside Pemberton.

PEMBERTON

You mean kill him.

SERENA

Do you have a better idea?

Pemberton is silent.

SERENA (CONT'D)

Campbell's made us vulnerable.  
Same as Buchanan. It's like an  
infection, Pemberton. If you don't  
cauterize it, it spreads.

A beat. Pemberton nods.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
There will be no one like Campbell  
in Brazil. Just the two of us.  
Isn't that what we want?

PEMBERTON  
(a beat)  
Yes. You're right.

SERENA  
Whether it's right wasn't my  
question. Is it what we want?

PEMBERTON  
Yes.

A beat. Then, as if a fresh perspective might clear her  
mind, Serena rises, moves her chair a bit, and looks anew.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)  
I'll tell Galloway.

SERENA  
He left this morning.

Pemberton looks startled.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
I didn't want to wake you.

Pemberton eyes the dark intensity with which she devours the  
map. Something about it seems to make him uneasy.

INT. TRAIN STATION/RALEIGH - DAY

Galloway steps off a train. The rattles on his hat shake  
gently as he weaves through a crowded platform...

EXT. FOREST/STREAM - DAY

Pemberton squats at the bank of a glittering stream. He  
consults a map and compass-- twice-- then peers at the  
thicket across the water...

INT. HOTEL LOBBY/RALEIGH - DAY

Galloway pushes through a revolving door.

A BELLHOP is loading bags on a luggage cart. He pauses when  
a silver COIN bounces at his feet...

EXT. MUDDY POOL/THICKET - DAY

There are fresh TRACKS of a cat in the mud where Galloway and Pemberton found them before.

Pemberton follows the tracks around the pool...and up to the rocks where they vanish...

He puts away the map and compass and scrabbles up the rocks for a better view. Then a DISTANT CRY freezes him. Like the mewling of an infant-- but cut off abruptly.

The CRY repeats. Pemberton takes the rifle off his shoulder.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY

ANGLE DOWN an empty corridor. The thick carpet mutes every sound but one: a soft RATTLING, like the warning of a distant timber snake...coming closer and closer...

EXT. DENSE FOREST - DAY

Pemberton runs through the trees, panting and sweating, clutching his rifle with white knuckles...

A DARK SHAPE moves in the distance before him. Flitting from tree to tree. Too far away to make out clearly. It might be the panther. Or the shadow of something else...

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY

Galloway KNOCKS on the door to Room 412. Then his gnarled hand disappears into his tote sack.

EXT. FOREST/PASTURE - DAY

Pemberton staggers out of the woods and into an overgrown pasture. He stops. Out of breath and unable to continue.

In the distance is a slouching homestead...a collapsed barn...and an old apple orchard...

Suddenly Pemberton realizes: *He's been here before.*

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY

The door to 412 opens. Campbell looks at Galloway a split-second-- just long enough for recognition to turn to fear--

Then Galloway swings a hatchet.

EXT. BARN/ORCHARD - DAY

The DESICCATED HIDE of a panther hanging on the back wall.

Out in the orchard, Pemberton is standing where Buchanan fell, looking down as if the body were still lying there...

INT. HOTEL/ROOM 412 - DAY

Galloway's hatchet rises and falls. Rises and falls.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The Packard is pulled over on the side of the road. Hood up.

Pemberton frowns at a broken fan belt...

EXT. CAMP YARD - DUSK

Pemberton trudges back into camp, calling to a Worker on the commissary porch:

PEMBERTON  
Where's Vaughn?

The Worker points toward the dining hall...

INT. DINING HALL - DUSK

PREACHER BOLICK holds forth behind a stack of vegetable crates that holds his immense Bible. The eternal lake of fire and so on...

Pemberton shuffles in at the back, scanning the crowded benches...looking for Vaughn... Then he spots a shock of red hair near the front.

Pemberton weaves through the crowd and bends to speak to Vaughn-- but Rachel is seated beside him. An awkward beat.

Then Pemberton whispers his instructions to Vaughn, who rises and heads for the door. Pemberton starts to follow him, but:

*A tiny boy is staring at him. Little Jacob-- squeezed in beside his mother-- was obscured until Vaughn got up. But now father and son are only a few feet apart...*

For a moment there is an *electricity* between them-- almost as if the child recognizes his father. Pemberton is frozen on the spot, mesmerized by the toddler's brown eyes.

The Preacher's voice trails off. Rachel and other members of the congregation turn, staring at Pemberton...

Who sees only his son. Not until Jacob goes back to his toy does Pemberton realize he's become the center of attention.

Embarrassed, he charges back toward the exit, weaving through the silent, staring crowd. The only sound is a RUSTLING of onionskin as Bolick flips through his Bible...

PREACHER BOLICK

From the book of Obadiah. "The  
pride of thine heart hath deceived  
thee, thou that dwellest in the  
cleft of the rock, whose habitation  
is high, that saith in his heart,  
who shall bring me down."

He closes the Bible with profound delicacy.

PREACHER BOLICK (CONT'D)

The word of the Lord.

The door clatters shut behind Pemberton.

INT. CAMP OFFICE - DUSK

Pemberton stares at the picture of Jacob as an infant.

Then he opens the bottom drawer of his desk and digs out a dusty old photo album. He thumbs backwards through the family photographs...

The pictures are of himself, from college back to infancy, and the effect of his paging back is to see him grow progressively younger, as if time were running in reverse.

Pemberton stops and stares at a photograph of a boy about two years old. It is a picture of himself, but it could just as well be the boy in the dining hall.

Pemberton tucks the photo of Jacob into the family album.

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - NIGHT

Pemberton comes in and finds the envelope with the Boston return address on the mantel. Now stained with a bloody fingerprint. He picks it up.

SERENA (O.S.)  
Nothing can stop us now.

ANGLE: Languid in the bathtub, she is watching him through the half-opened door.

A beat. Pemberton tosses the bloody envelope into the grate and watches it catch and flare...

INT. CAMP KITCHEN - DAY

Rachel washes dishes. Then a Cook taps her on the shoulder with a droll expression. She's wanted...

EXT. CAMP OFFICE - DAY

Rachel pauses on the porch to fix her hair and smooth her apron. Then she knocks and goes in.

INT. CAMP OFFICE - DAY

Pemberton is writing in a ledger as Rachel comes in. They are alone.

PEMBERTON  
I'm finished with that.

He nods toward a tray full of dirty dishes. Rachel looks at him a beat-- is that all? Then she gets the tray and starts to leave...

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)  
Your boy is looking well.

RACHEL  
Thank you, sir.

PEMBERTON  
He gets enough meat, does he?

RACHEL  
Beg your pardon?

PEMBERTON  
A boy needs iron in his diet.  
(a beat)  
I'll tell the cook to give you a  
packet of beef to take home.

RACHEL  
I'm much obliged.

Pemberton says nothing more. They just look at each other.

RACHEL (CONT'D)  
I'm real sorry for what happened to  
your missus.

Pemberton nods. Then resumes writing. Rachel leaves.

EXT. CAMP YARD - DAY

Rachel crosses back to the kitchen with Pemberton's tray.

ANGLE: In the lumber yard, Galloway looks up from his conversation with a Foreman. He watches Rachel...then looks back at the office she just left...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The Packard races around a pickup truck at high speed...

INT. PACKARD - MOVING - NIGHT

Pemberton drinks from a flask as he drives-- distracted and out of sorts. He is wearing a tuxedo.

Serena, also in evening wear, watches him a moment.

SERENA  
Penny for your thoughts.

PEMBERTON  
We're wasting our time. These  
local idiots aren't going to invest  
in Brazilian mahogany.

SERENA  
They'll invest in the moon if we  
present ourselves properly.

A beat. Pemberton takes another drink.

EXT. BILTMORE - NIGHT

The mansion is a cliff of lights. Towers and spires surge up in silhouette. Gargoyles leer from the parapets.

An ATTENDANT in black tails takes Pemberton's keys and gets in the Packard. Serena squeezes Pemberton's arm reassuringly and they walk up the path to the massive chateau...



INT. BILTMORE/DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Champagne flutes pass by on silver trays. Elegant dinner party Guests are chatting over cocktails, surrounded by fabulous paintings and antiques. The sort of wealth that makes the Pembertons look like strivers...

Pemberton and Serena are with two potential investors: CALHOUN, a rascally Southern gent; and LOWENSTEIN, younger, a recent emigre from New York.

CALHOUN

The woman who tames eagles. Your reputation precedes you.

SERENA

As a business partner, too, I hope.

Calhoun raises his glass.

CALHOUN

To fortunes made in these mountains.

SERENA

Why limit ourselves? When there's so much to be gained elsewhere.

LOWENSTEIN

And where is that, Mrs. Pemberton?

SERENA

The Mato Grosso in Brazil. Best mahogany forests in the world.

LOWENSTEIN

Brazil? You can't be--

SERENA

Eight dollars on each dollar invested there-- as opposed to two to one on your money here. And no park commission to contend with.

LOWENSTEIN

Eight to one, Mrs. Pemberton? I find that hard to believe.

SERENA

I have the documents to prove it. Land prices, cost of machinery, labor. I can bring them to you.

PEMBERTON

My dear, you've barely allowed these gentlemen to sip their drinks.

CALHOUN

I'd listen to such a proposal any time of the day or night, just for the pleasure of your company.

SERENA

What about you, Mr. Lowenstein?

LOWENSTEIN

I don't see myself investing in Brazil under any circumstances.

CALHOUN

Hear her out, old boy. I'm told she knows more about timber than any man in the state.

PEMBERTON

There's no doubt about that.

He puts his empty glass on a passing tray and takes another.

LOWENSTEIN

What about your camp here? I understand the government is moving against you.

SERENA

By the time the government takes our land, Mr. Lowenstein, there won't be a tree standing.

Lowenstein nods, impressed...

EXT. CAMP YARD/PEMBERTON'S CABIN - NIGHT

Pemberton and Serena walk back from the Packard...

Pemberton stumbles drunkenly on the porch steps, but Serena catches his arm before he falls.

SERENA

Careful, Pemberton. I don't want to lose you.

Then Galloway steps out of the shadows on the porch and opens the door for them. Pemberton gives him a dirty look...

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Serena's green silk dress lies across a chair.

Pemberton watches her changing into boots and jodphurs. Is she really headed out again?

SERENA

I need to drop off those documents  
for Lowenstein.

PEMBERTON

At this hour?

SERENA

I don't want to give him a chance  
to change his mind. Galloway can  
drive me.

PEMBERTON

No. I don't mind.

He starts to button his shirt but Serena seizes his hands.

SERENA

You need to rest, Pemberton.

She kisses him tenderly...

EXT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN/CAMP YARD - NIGHT

Serena and Galloway cross the camp yard together and go into the camp office.

Galloway's car pulls up in front of the office and Joel Vaughn gets out, leaving it running as he waits for them...

Serena and Galloway emerge from the office and walk down to the car. As she passes under the porch light, something in her hand gives off a silvery wink.

Galloway closes the door for her. Then he waits as Vaughn writes something on a pad-- directions, it seems.

Galloway's car drives off.

Vaughn waits until the headlights have disappeared over the ridge, then he turns and hobbles into the office.

ANGLE: Pemberton is standing in the window of his cabin, watching the whole thing. Curious and unsettled...

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - NIGHT

Whiskey fills a highball glass. No ice.

Pemberton gulps it down. Then he pours another...

INT. CAMP OFFICE - NIGHT

Vaughn clicks the telephone cradle a few times and waits for the operator to come on the line...

VAUGHN

Miss Eula, this is Joel Vaughn.

Ring up the sheriff for me.

(a beat)

Yes, ma'am, I know what time it is.

INT. WAYNESVILLE TELEPHONE EXCHANGE - NIGHT

MISS EULA, in a robe and slippers, plugs the line into the switchboard and opens her call log to make a record...

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - NIGHT

The clock on the mantel CHIMES. One. Two. Somewhere far away a dog is BARKING.

Collapsed in a chair, Pemberton stares glassily through the window, another highball of whiskey in his hand.

THROUGH WINDOW: Spasms of heat lightning in the sky...

INT. BACK BAY TOWNHOUSE/BOSTON - NIGHT

MRS. LOWELL leads Pemberton through a cocktail party...

MRS. LOWELL

There's a woman who wishes to be introduced to you. But I warn you, George, she's already frightened off every other bachelor in Boston.

She opens the French doors to the solarium...

And Serena, standing apart from the other LADIES in the room, turns to face them. A vision in a green silk gown.

Mrs. Lowell measures the expression on Pemberton's face.

MRS. LOWELL (CONT'D)  
Let us go meet her, shall we? Just  
remember you were warned.

She opens the French doors...

EXT. STREET/SERENA'S FLAT IN BOSTON - NIGHT

Light snow falling. Pemberton walks Serena home...

Serena mounts the icy steps and unlocks the door.

She does not say a word. She simply walks inside, and leaves  
the door open for Pemberton to follow.

Pemberton hesitates on the stoop. Not sure he's been invited  
in. He brushes snow off his shoulders, stalling.

Serena turns, fixing her eyes on him. They contain the utter  
certainty that he will follow her. She takes off her coat.

At last Pemberton steps inside.

Serena lays her coat on a chaise. She pulls down one strap  
of her gown. Then the other.

The green silk shimmers as it collapses to the floor.

Pemberton shuts the door behind him.

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - NIGHT (RESUME)

The clock CHIMES four.

Outside it's raining. No sign of Serena.

Pemberton's chin slowly settles to his chest...

The highball slips from his loosened grip and SHATTERS.

EXT. WIDOW JENKINS' CABIN - DAY

BOOTS step out of the Model-T.

Sheriff McDowell shuts the door and regards the cabin warily.  
He unsnaps the cover of his holster.

INT. WIDOW JENKINS' CABIN - DAY

McDowell squints at a vague SHAPE in the gloom.

He slides open the curtains of the front window and a beam of sunlight finds Widow Jenkins sprawled on her back, her eyes fixed, a savage gash across her throat.

BLOODY FOOTPRINTS lead away from the corpse. Two sets. One is larger, bulky-- from a man. But the other footprints are dainty enough to be a lady's...

EXT. WIDOW JENKINS' CABIN - DAY

McDowell strides back to the Model-T, his eyes blazing...

He yanks open the door, revealing a terrified Rachel inside-- clutching little Jacob to her breast.

RACHEL  
Is the widow all right?

MCDOWELL  
No. We're going to have to find a  
place for you and the young one.

Rachel's face is blank, uncomprehending...

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - DAY

A POUNDING on the door. Pemberton, still slumped in the chair where he passed out, stirs himself...

CRUNCHING through broken glass as he goes to open the door. McDowell scowls at him. A beat.

MCDOWELL  
There was a murder up on Colt Ridge  
last night.

He absorbs Pemberton's surprise... The only sound is the clock TICKING.

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)  
Old widow woman named Jenkins,  
never hurt a soul. Somebody  
slashed her throat.

PEMBERTON  
Why are you telling me?

MCDOWELL  
I'd like to speak to your wife, if  
you don't mind.

PEMBERTON

She's out with the cutting crews.

MCDOWELL

How far?

PEMBERTON

She could be anywhere from here to the Tennessee line.

MCDOWELL

Convenient. Does she happen to be wearing a narrow-toed riding boot? Size six, judging by the prints.

PEMBERTON

My wife had nothing to do with some old woman's murder.

MCDOWELL

She's the one been looking after Rachel Harmon's boy. I figure your wife and that one-armed mongrel of hers thought they could make her tell where the child was.

A beat. Pemberton clears his throat.

PEMBERTON

Was the child harmed?

MCDOWELL

Ask your wife.

PEMBERTON

I don't need to.

MCDOWELL

Maybe I can't do anything about the others, but I vow I'll do something about the murder of an old woman. And I'll not let a mother and her child be killed. Even if it is your child.

(a beat)

I'll be back. And next time I'll bring a warrant.

He walks back toward his car...

EXT. CAMP YARD - DAY

McDowell's Model-T putters off.

Pemberton emerges from his cabin and hurries toward the office, tucking in his shirt tail as he goes...

INT. CAMP OFFICE - DAY

The door flies open and MEEKS (Campbell's replacement) looks up from his adding machine.

PEMBERTON

Get out.

Meeks shuffles out, perplexed. Pemberton locks the door.

He crosses to his gun case and opens it, picking up the hunting knife that hangs beside the rifles-- the knife he used to kill Harmon...

Pemberton turns the knife over in his hands. Nothing seems amiss. He slides the blade out of the sheath. It's clean.

Then Pemberton's eyes track back to his desk-- the bottom drawer is ajar...as if someone's been rummaging in it...

He yanks the family album out of the drawer and flips back through it until he finds the photograph of Jacob:

The little boy's face has been SCRATCHED OUT.

EXT. FOOT BRIDGE - DAY

Vaughn's CAP is hanging on the rail post with a note pinned to it. A gnarled hand snatches up the cap.

Galloway looks at it a beat, then gives it to the OLD FISHERMAN who apparently brought him here.

GALLOWAY

Tell me what it says.

OLD FISHERMAN

(reading)

Dear Mama, pray God will forgive me  
for taking my own life...

Galloway peers at the rapids under the bridge. And spits.

EXT. CUTTING SLOPE - DAY

Serena sits on her horse, squinting thoughtfully into the distance as Galloway reports to her:



GALLOWAY

Vaughn must've telephoned the high sheriff after we left.

SERENA

I want the child.

GALLOWAY

He'll be hid good now. That sheriff ever was a clever one.

Serena turns her gaze on him. So cold it could freeze water.

SERENA

Let me know if I need to find someone else.

She rides off.

INT. WAYNESVILLE JAIL - DAY

An unbalanced ceiling fan RATTLES, stirring the dust.

McDowell stares at a fat envelope of cash laying on his desk.

PEMBERTON

Make sure they get somewhere safe.

I don't want to know where.

(a beat)

You know I had nothing to do with what happened on Colt Ridge.

McDowell finally puts the envelope in his pocket.

MCDOWELL

This doesn't change anything between us. You'll hang if I have any say about it. The both of you.

PEMBERTON

You'll be replaced tomorrow. I just telephoned Senator McComb.

MCDOWELL

You think you can get away with anything, don't you?

PEMBERTON

As a matter of fact, I have a keen sense of my limitations.

He turns to leave.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

Just make sure the boy is safe.

Then the door opens and a GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN holding a carpet bag comes in with Rachel and little Jacob. Everyone freezes.

Pemberton stares at his son. Jacob stares back. For a moment there is no sound but the TICK-TICK-TICK of the brass chain against the ceiling fan's motor.

Then McDowell opens a drawer and removes a revolver. He raises it slowly, aiming at Pemberton.

MCDOWELL

Get out of here.

Pemberton starts to speak but McDowell cocks the hammer.

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

If you say one word, one single word, I swear to God I'll kill you.

Pemberton does not doubt him. He walks toward the door.

Rachel clutches Jacob close as he passes, as if Pemberton might try to snatch him. But Pemberton just walks on, out into the sunlit street...

INT. PACKARD - DAY

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD: Rachel and Jacob settle themselves in McDowell's Model-T.

McDowell starts the car and drives away, up toward the unspoiled mountains in the distance...

Pemberton exhales a cloud of cigarette smoke. He does not try to follow them. But neither does he move.

He watches, eyes heavy with sadness, as the car carrying his son dwindles to a speck and is swallowed by the horizon...

INT. MODEL-T - MOVING - DAY

Jacob whines and fusses in his mother's lap. McDowell is not a man used to having children around...

MCDOWELL

If he's hungry I can stop and give you privacy.

RACHEL  
Ain't that. He's just put out  
'cause I forgot to bring him any  
play-pretties.

McDowell nods, wincing at the mewling...

EXT. KEPHART'S LOG CABIN - DAY

McDowell steps onto the porch. KNOCKS.

There's a SHUFFLING within and Kephart comes to the door.

MCDOWELL  
I need a favor.

Kephart bows to Rachel with a tipsy grandiosity.

INT. CAMP OFFICE/BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Serena's cutlery CLINKS against her plate, accentuating the emptiness of the room. Pemberton's food is barely touched.

SERENA  
A rather dainty appetite tonight.

PEMBERTON  
Where's Galloway?

SERENA  
I sent him on a job.

She stabs a little potato with her fork.

PEMBERTON  
The sheriff said that Harmon girl  
hightailed it out of town.

SERENA  
(smiling)  
"Hightailed it." You sound like  
one of them.

PEMBERTON  
Far away, I got the impression.

He refills his wine glass. Emptying the bottle.

SERENA  
You didn't used to drink so much.

Pemberton looks up and finds genuine concern in her face.

A beat. He reaches for the glass, but Serena's arm shoots out and grabs his wrist-- so violently that the wine sloshes on the table. She doesn't let go.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
We've both killed now. What you  
felt at the depot-- with Buchanan--  
I've felt it too. We're closer,  
Pemberton, closer than we've ever  
been before.

Her eyes are tender, filled with love. Pemberton looks at a long moment, as if seeing her anew.

PEMBERTON  
Let the child go.

Serena's expression turns abruptly cold. She releases Pemberton's wrist and sits back, picking up her knife and fork. Calm, but with a tremor that betrays her rage...

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)  
He's no threat to you.

SERENA  
You've gone soft.

PEMBERTON  
I'll never see him again. You have  
my word.

Serena falls eerily still a moment. At the edge...

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)  
For God's sake, he's just a baby.

Suddenly Serena EXPLODES out of her chair, shoving dishes and glassware onto the floor-- flipping the table over--

She stalks toward Pemberton, gripping her steak knife.

For a moment they are face-to-face, her eyes are filled with a murderous fury. But Pemberton does not back down. It's as if he doesn't care whether she stabs him or not...

Then Serena grabs his hand and presses the knife into it.

SERENA  
Here, Pemberton. Take it.

She closes his fingers around the grip and raises his hand so the knife is poised at her throat. Defenseless...

SERENA (CONT'D)  
 If you love your bastard child so much. *Do it.* Because that's the only way you'll stop me.

She dares him with her eyes... But Pemberton cannot kill her. Serena smiles. She knew it all along.

Pemberton throws down the knife and stalks out.

INT. KEPHART'S LOG CABIN - NIGHT

McDowell sets provisions on the table: diapers, a bottle of milk, a greasy bag of hamburgers, and a CLICKING cigar box.

He smiles at Rachel. Pleased with his cleverness.

MCDOWELL  
 Play-pretties for if he gets fussy.

Rachel lifts the lid. The box is full of marbles.

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)  
 There's cat eyes and solids and swirls. Steel shooters, too.

Kephart shakes his head and smiles.

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)  
 What?

KEPHART  
 They're usually not shooting marbles till they're a tad older.

McDowell's face colors.

RACHEL  
 Look here, Jacob.

She holds the box so the marbles roll and CLACK. Jacob reaches in, grabs a fistful, and drops them back in.

Then, of course, he tries to put one in his mouth.

RACHEL (CONT'D)  
 No, Jacob. No.

KEPHART  
 Here.

He grabs a wool sock from a clothesline by the stove.

KEPHART (CONT'D)  
There's but one thing for a boy to  
keep his marbles in.

He holds the sock open, a twinkle in his eye, and waits for McDowell to pour the marbles into it.

EXT. DIRT ROAD/FOREST - NIGHT

A car PURRS into the cover of the trees. Its lights go off.

A man moves through the shadows-- hard to make out at first, then his figure is silhouetted by the full moon:

He has only one arm.

EXT. FOREST/KEPHART'S LOG CABIN - NIGHT

Galloway crouches at the edge of the trees. A dagger swings from the lanyard around his neck.

There's a light on in Kephart's cabin, but the curtains are drawn. Smoke is rising from the chimney.

Crouching low, Galloway dodges from shadow to shadow, the only sound the faint RATTLING of his hat...

KEPHART'S PORCH. A breeze luffs the curtain and we glimpse the typewriter and a jar of moonshine.

Then Galloway looms up beside the window-- dagger in hand. Slowly, silently, he bends to peer inside...

There's a CLICK behind him.

And Kephart steps into the moonlight, holding a shotgun.

KEPHART  
You're too late.

Galloway turns around slowly.

KEPHART (CONT'D)  
Get off my land.

He raises the shotgun to his shoulder.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

McDowell's Model-T races through the night.

INT. MODEL-T - MOVING - NIGHT

Rachel bounces along in the passenger seat, holding Jacob as he sleeps-- tiny hands clutching the knotted sock of marbles.

McDowell glances over, nods. Glad to see the boy quiet.

RACHEL  
How'd you know they was coming for  
us last night?

MCDOWELL  
Joel Vaughn telephoned me.

RACHEL  
(a beat)  
They'll kill him for that.

MCDOWELL  
They'll try.

RACHEL  
You know where he is?

MCDOWELL  
Don't want to. I put him on a  
freight and told him to get as far  
from these mountains as he can.

A beat. Then Rachel smiles to herself. *She knows.*

THROUGH THE WINDOW: the Model-T races past a road sign that reads, "Kingsport, Tennessee, Elevation 1,208."

EXT. MRS. SLOAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Carrying the carpet bag, McDowell leads Rachel up to the house. The only one in town with any lights on.

INT. MRS. SLOAN'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - NIGHT

MRS. SLOAN pours iced tea for McDowell, who's sitting at the table with Rachel and more food than six adults could eat.

Jacob wakes up-- squirming and FUSSING.

RACHEL  
Probably needs changing.

She starts to get up, but Mrs. Sloan swoops in.

MRS. SLOAN  
I can do it.

She tickles Jacob as she carries him out. He giggles.

Rachel starts to speak but a train HOOTS as it passes, very close. Rattling the dishes.

RACHEL  
How long till we can go back?

MCDOWELL  
(a beat)  
I'm going to see a man in Raleigh tomorrow. If you don't hear from me by Friday, take this and get as far away as you can.

He puts the envelope with Pemberton's money on the table.

RACHEL  
Don't seem right taking your money.

MCDOWELL  
It's not my money.

He looks at her meaningfully. Then gets up.

RACHEL  
There's been Harmons on Colt Ridge over 200 years.

McDowell puts his hat on. Nods to her. He knows.

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - NIGHT

Pemberton leans against the huge map of Brazil, watching Serena through the open bedroom door. Stewing.

Dressed for bed, Serena bends at the window so she can peer at the moon-- her legs and hips poised like a cat about to strike. She speaks casually, as if the fight never happened:

SERENA  
Our investors are ready to sign. I think we should invite them for your birthday. Make a party of it.

Silence. She turns to him, letting his gaze ride her curves.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
Come to bed, Pemberton.



Her eyes dare him tauntingly...just as they did when she held the knife at her throat...

Suddenly Pemberton charges her, grabbing her by the hair and hurling her onto the bed.

He tears open her peignoir, then grasps her by the throat as he yanks open his belt.

Still her eyes dare him...without fear...

Pemberton falls upon Serena, taking her with a violent intensity, each thrust a clenched fist. Her head smacks against the wall...the night stand topples...

But Serena doesn't seem to mind at all.

INT. WAYNESVILLE JAIL - NIGHT

Galloway rifles the drawers of McDowell's desk...slamming each one in turn as he finds nothing of use...

EXT. DOWNTOWN WAYNESVILLE - NIGHT

Galloway stands in front of the courthouse, the rattles on his hat shaking as he scans the silent street.

Then his eyes settle on the Waynesville Telephone Exchange.

INT. WAYNESVILLE TELEPHONE EXCHANGE - DAY

Miss Eula twists the tie of her robe nervously as she watches Galloway poring over a log book...

MISS EULA

That's confidential, you know.

THE BOOK: under the heading "Long Distance Log," Galloway's bony finger scans the list of times and cities called.

GALLOWAY

Which one did the sheriff call?

Miss Eula hesitates, then points at "Kingsport, Tennessee."

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAWN

Galloway's car races through the early light...

EXT. DOWNTOWN WAYNESVILLE - DAY

McDowell gets out of his dusty Model-T. Dog-tired.

INT. MCDOWELL'S APARTMENT - DAY

McDowell shuffles in and finds...

Pemberton sitting at his table with a bottle of whiskey.

PEMBERTON  
Hope you don't mind. I helped  
myself.

A beat. McDowell turns away to hang up his jacket.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)  
Are they safe?

MCDOWELL  
I thought you didn't want to know  
where they are.

PEMBERTON  
I don't. But Galloway hasn't been  
in camp since yesterday morning.

A chill goes down McDowell's spine...

INT. MRS. SLOAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Mrs. Sloan presses the phone to her ear as she looks around the kitchen with a stricken expression.

Cut pieces of rhubarb on the counter. A pie shell waiting to be filled. And an empty sugar canister.

MRS. SLOAN  
(into phone)  
She's gone into town.

She looks down at Jacob, clinging to her leg...

INT. PACKARD - MOVING

McDowell's empty whiskey bottle bounces on the seat as Pemberton drives back toward camp...

Then he squints at something through his windshield:

A caravan is approaching, headed the opposite direction.

EXT. THE ROAD

Three horse-drawn prairie schooners lead the procession:

HAMBY'S CARNIVAL DIRECT FROM PARIS.

SEEN BY EUROPE'S ROYALTY.

ADULTS A DIME. CHILDREN A NICKEL.

A tethered menagerie trudges behind the covered wagons. Slump-backed Shetland ponies. Ostriches. Zebras. Each animal is identified by a wooden placard around its neck.

Bringing up the rear is a flatbed wagon with a TARP-SHROUDED CAGE on top. The tarp describes the animal underneath as:

THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST CREATURE.

Suddenly the Packard brakes hard and spins around...

EXT. ROAD - LATER

The caravan is pulled over on the shoulder.

Pemberton peers at the wagon containing THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST CREATURE, but the beast remains hidden by its shroud.

A CARNY carries a chicken, SQUAWKING and flapping, up to the cage. With great trepidation, he lifts the edge of the tarp and shoves the chicken inside.

The unseen beast lunges-- SHAKING THE WHOLE WAGON. A flurry of feathers rises through the top of the cage.

Pemberton smiles darkly.

Then HAMBY waddles over to him in seedy tails and a top hat.

HAMBY

Pleased to make your acquaintance,  
sir. My name is Hamby and I am the  
proprietor of this attraction.

He bows.

HAMBY (CONT'D)

Perhaps you know of a creature  
worthy to test my champion.

PEMBERTON

Show it to me.

Hamby claps his hands and the Carny unties one end of the tarp-- carefully-- and lets it fall:

A huge KOMODO DRAGON paces in a fouled cage. At least five feet long and grumpy with confinement...

HAMBY

My dragon has fought a jaguar in Texas, an alligator in Louisiana, an Orangutan in London, numerous breeds of canine and several men now deceased.

PEMBERTON

And never lost.

HAMBY

Never, my good man, never.

PEMBERTON

Will he fight anything?

HAMBY

Anything that can walk, swim or fly. *Mano a mano*, to the death.

A beat. Pemberton nods. He might know of an opponent...

EXT. DOWNTOWN KINGSPORT - DAY

Rachel comes out of the General Store with a bag of sugar. She's about to cross the street, but--

Lounging against the door to the post office is a man she knows, a man *with an absence where his left hand should be*.

Galloway chews on a matchstick, looking the other direction.

Rachel backpedals and slips between two buildings...

INT. KINGSPORT DEPOT - DAY

Rachel counts out \$19.75 on the TICKET MASTER's counter.

RACHEL

How far will this get me and a young one? I need the next train.

TICKET MASTER

Where you headed?

RACHEL  
Don't matter. Seattle, Washington.

The Ticket Master regards her with curiosity.

TICKET MASTER  
Twenty dollars would get you as far  
as St. Louis. Leaves here at 8:14.

RACHEL  
When we get on the train can I get  
tickets for the rest of the way?

The man nods. Rachel pushes the money over the counter and  
the Ticket Master gives her the two tickets and 50 cents  
change. But Rachel pushes the quarters back to him.

RACHEL (CONT'D)  
If a man with one hand comes by,  
you ain't seen me.

The Ticket Master smirks at her little offering.

TICKET MASTER  
You must be in some serious  
trouble. And folks with trouble is  
like folks who got head lice or the  
shits. Stand too close and pretty  
soon you got it yourself.

Rachel meets his gaze until his smirk evaporates.

RACHEL  
You'll help me or you won't. You  
can refuse to take my money or take  
it and tell where we went anyhow.  
But know one thing. If that man  
finds me, he'll rake a knife blade  
across my baby's throat and bleed  
him out like a shoat in a hog pen.  
That blood will be on your hands.

TICKET MASTER  
(a beat)  
I won't tell nobody.

He pushes the quarters back to Rachel.

INT. MRS. SLOAN'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Rachel rushes in, pale and breathless.

But Mrs. Sloan already knows what she's going to say. She just holds out the telephone to Rachel...

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS/BOXCAR - DAY

Rachel carries Jacob and the carpetbag toward the tracks outside Mrs. Sloan's house...up to a boxcar on a siding...

She puts Jacob into the car and clambers in behind, settling in the shadows where she can keep a watch.

THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR ON ONE SIDE: Mrs. Sloan is leaving her house with a suitcase, walking at a brisk clip.

THROUGH THE OTHER OPEN DOOR: A solitary Passenger sits on the bench at the depot, waiting for the train.

Jacob starts to fuss.

RACHEL

Hush now. You're all right.

She holds Jacob in her lap and gives him the sock of marbles to play with. Cooing in his ear till he quiets...

EXT. CAMP YARD - NIGHT

A big canvas tent has been erected, glowing in the night.

INT. CARNIVAL TENT - NIGHT

A waist-high steel-mesh fence forms a ring at the center. Several CARNIES are shaking the joints of the fence, demonstrating its strength to the audience.

The flatbed wagon holding the dragon backs up so its door fills the only opening in the circular fence.

Hamby emerges from behind a curtain and sets down a small table in front of the ring.

HAMBY

Bring your billfolds, gentlemen, I welcome all wagers.

There is a surge toward him, fists clutching dollars--

It's enough enthusiasm to give Hamby pause.

INT. CAMP OFFICE - NIGHT

Pemberton has work spread out on his desk but he's not doing it. His attention is on the telephone that isn't ringing...

The door opens and Serena steps in. The hooded eagle is perched on forearm. She's ready.

INT. CARNIVAL TENT - NIGHT

A muscular CARNY crawls over the top of the dragon's cage and raises the door.

The Komodo dragon swaggers forth into the pit.

Hamby smiles at the GASPS of the crowd, taking more bets. Then a sudden CHEERING startles him from his labors:

Serena-- who has entered the tent with Pemberton-- raises her free hand for silence. Her men quiet.

She moves the eagle from her arm to her fist and whispers something in its ear. Then she nods to Pemberton, who shoves hard against the cage, creating a little gap.

Serena steps into the ring with her eagle.

Hamby runs toward Pemberton.

HAMBY

Get her out of there!

PEMBERTON

Be my guest.

Serena whispers a last instruction to the eagle and removes its hood. The eagle's eyes instantly find its adversary.

The gladiators stare at each other across the ring, summoning something from an older world...

Then Serena thrusts her hand up and the eagle takes flight.

It flaps directly over the dragon, which lunges upward with surprising dexterity--

SNAPPING ITS RAZOR JAWS just inches from the bird.

The eagle alights on the top of the fence. Serene.

The combatants measure each other again. Then the dragon darts toward the eagle, passing just beneath it, SNAPPING as it goes by but unable to reach high enough...

The eagle seems to yawn at this sortie.

The dragon circles around, eyeing the bird, then tries the same maneuver again, this time going faster, building more momentum to jump and reach the eagle...

But just as the dragon LEAPS, the eagle POUNCES, grasping the reptile's face with its claws--

PIERCING THE DRAGON'S EYES.

The dragon thrashes blindly, this way and that.

The eagle flutters back to Serena, who hasn't left the ring.

The dragon LUNGES against the fence, making it shudder.

CRIES go up in the crowd-- "That ain't gonna hold it!" and so on-- and a few of the patrons stumble over each other in a mad dash for the exit...

Pemberton watches sadly as the dragon weakens. White froth forms at the corners of its mouth; its belly drags the floor.

HAMBY

Come on. Fight, damn you!

Serena thrusts her arm again and the eagle takes off...

It swoops down, lands on the dragon's neck, and PIERCES the base of the reptile's skull with its hallux talons...

Then it flies up to roost in the rafters.

The dragon, mortally wounded, uses what strength it has left to stagger across the ring and collapse near Hamby.

HAMBY (CONT'D)

More light!

A Carny tosses him a torch and Hamby leans into the ring, grieving over his fallen champion. Then, with theatrical formality, he drops a handkerchief over the dragon's head.

A CHEER goes up and Serena turns to Pemberton. Triumphant.

INT. BOXCAR - NIGHT

Jacob has fallen asleep in Rachel's lap.

THROUGH OPEN DOOR: A few more Passengers have joined the first man waiting on the platform. It's almost time.



Rachel lifts Jacob gently, trying not to wake him as she puts his head on her shoulder. The she freezes:

THROUGH THE OTHER DOOR: A tiny light is moving inside Mrs. Sloan's house, like a firefly flitting from room to room...

Then Jacob wakes up FUSSING.

RACHEL

Shush.

She finds a graham cracker for him to chew on. After he quiets, she looks back at Mrs. Sloan's house:

The light has vanished.

A train WHISTLES, making Rachel start.

THROUGH OPEN DOOR: The passengers are stirring themselves. Down the track is the headlight of a train. Rachel's train.

Rachel looks toward Mrs. Sloan's house one more time, peering into the blackness around the house, looking for any light or movement... But there's nothing there.

She gathers up Jacob and the carpetbag and slips out.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS/DEPOT - NIGHT

Rachel slinks across the tracks to the depot side.

As she nears the depot, she pauses in the shadow of a giant oak to watch the platform.

Her train pulls into the station and shudders to a stop. Two men get off. The waiting passengers start to board.

Rachel feels for the tickets in her pocket and heads toward the platform. Almost immediately she stops. Staring at...

A SHADOWY VOID on the depot's far side. There is no *clear* sign of Galloway, and yet the space seems...filled.

Rachel stays rooted to her spot. Shrouded in darkness.

Even as the Conductor calls the ALL ABOARD.

The train pulls out of the depot, its bright lights passing Rachel as it steams away toward St. Louis...

The caboose passes her last, the FLAGMAN waving his lantern in farewell. And the tracks fall dark again.

Rachel peers at the shadowy void by the depot...

Finally there's movement...Galloway's face FLASHES in the spill from the platform lights...then he's gone again.

Rachel keeps waiting-- her breathing shallow, her hand pressed over Jacob's mouth. Another train WHISTLES.

A freight CLATTERS slowly along the far tracks, coming the opposite direction the passenger train went.

It's not braking. Just moving slowly through town.

Rachel waits until its boxcars start to pass her position. Then she dashes toward it, covered by darkness at first, but then she has to *move into the moonlight*...

ANGLE: Galloway steps forward on the platform.

Rachel waits as one closed boxcar after another passes her, glancing back toward the platform:

But Galloway has vanished.

At last an open boxcar rolls up. Rachel puts Jacob and the carpetbag inside and hops in herself.

The train starts to speed up.

Rachel pokes her head out of the boxcar, looking back:

Galloway is now running alongside the train, passing the caboose, making up the distance one boxcar at a time-- all while wagging a finger at her in admonishment...

Rachel backs into the boxcar and sets Jacob against the wall. Then she moves away, into the darkness...

GALLOWAY'S FACE appears in the open door of the car. He trots alongside the train, his hand on the door handle, gathering to pull himself up.

REVERSE: Jacob bounces his hands on his knees, oblivious. Then Rachel steps forward, half in shadow.

Galloway grins and pulls himself halfway into the car-- head and belly on the metal floor, legs dangling--

Suddenly Rachel leaps at him and brings the sock full of marbles down as hard as she can on his leering face.

Galloway's eyes go white. For a moment he is balanced half-in and half-out of the car. Then Rachel presses her heel against his forehead and shoves him off.

Galloway TUMBLES DOWN INTO A GULLEY.

Rachel leans out of the boxcar, watching to see if he rises. Jacob is squalling, but she doesn't go to him. Not until the caboose passes the spot where Galloway fell.

Then Rachel runs back to her son and picks him up.

RACHEL

Shush. We're all right now. We're all right.

She holds him tight.

EXT. DIRT ROAD/MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

Serena's Arabian SNORTS as she and Pemberton ride up a steep and twisting dirt road. They don't speak.

Serena eyes Pemberton as they round a bend. Worried about him. Before she can speak, they're interrupted by a SHOUT:

A crooked figure is climbing the dirt road on foot.

Serena turns her horse around.

SERENA

I'll be right back.

PEMBERTON

No. I want to hear.

Serena cocks her head. What's gotten into him?

MOMENTS LATER Galloway drinks from Pemberton's canteen. He has a noticeable gash and swelling on his cheek.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

Take a tumble, Galloway?

Galloway eyes him coolly.

SERENA

Well?

GALLOWAY

Traced that freight to Knoxville, but they didn't buy no ticket there. And there was no other freight left before I got there.

SERENA

Then they must still be there. How far can they get with no money?

GALLOWAY

No, ma'am, they ain't in Knoxville. I looked everywhere. Somebody must've helped them.

Serena ponders a moment. Then turns to Pemberton with a faint air of suspicion. He smiles placidly.

GALLOWAY (CONT'D)

I can ask mama to vision them.

Serena has little faith in the occult. But she nods-- to get rid of Galloway if nothing else.

He hunkers back down the slope...

Serena and Pemberton ride on, turning out onto the granite outcrop they visited on Serena's first day here.

All the acreage that Pemberton pointed out to her that day has been stripped-- a swath of devastation that lies like a hideous scar on the face of the mountains.

SERENA

We've done well here.

Pemberton nods absently. A beat. Serena hurls her eagle into the air, where it catches the draft and flaps, soaring up into the sky...

PEMBERTON

What will she hunt in Brazil?

SERENA

The natives call it a fer de lance. More deadly than a rattlesnake.

PEMBERTON

I won't be going with you.

Serena looks at him without expression.

SERENA

What shall I say to the investors?

PEMBERTON

Nothing. I'll be a silent partner. Like them.

Serena turns away, watching her eagle circling.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)  
I'd only hold you back.

SERENA  
Nothing will hold me back.

Silence. Pemberton looks across the devastation, to the distant green of trees uncut, domains beyond his reach.

PEMBERTON  
The only thing I ever really wanted  
from this place was that goddamn  
panther. And it doesn't exist.

He turns his horse, starts to ride away.

SERENA  
Pemberton.

There is a slight crack in her voice. A tiny tremor.

Pemberton waits. But she doesn't-- can't-- speak further.  
She turns away...

Pemberton looks up-- something moving in the sky--

The eagle is diving for its prey.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

A car is coming down the grade way too fast-- weaving-- OUT  
OF CONTROL--

INT. THE CAR - MOVING

Kephart pumps the brake frantically but nothing happens.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD

The car careens off the road and PLOWS INTO A TREE. Knocking  
loose a bounty of acorns that pelt the wreck like hail.

Kephart is slumped over the passenger seat. Dead. On the  
floor is the rattle from a timber snake's tail...

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY

CLOSE: the covered dishes on a room service cart RATTLE as it  
rolls along the hall...

A room door opens. McDowell in a robe. He waves the WAITER inside and checks the hall-- all clear.

The Waiter takes the covers off the plates and hurries out, in too much of hurry to collect a tip.

McDowell looks down at the dime in his hand.

Behind him, someone is emerging from the draped area at the bottom of the cart...

EXT. CAMP - EVENING

Along a spur line, men are pulling spikes with crowbars and stacking the heavy rails on a flatcar.

A stairway of crossties, shorn of their rails, climbs the slope, gradually fading into invisibility.

The two great skidders and their long skeins of steel cable are gone, too. Dismantled and carted off.

Grass is starting to poke up between the boards of the railroad platform. Mother Nature's advance guard.

LAUGHTER from the dining hall. Pemberton's birthday party shuffles out with drinks in hand, heading for the office...

Serena trails the group, wearing her green silk dress.

INT. CAMP OFFICE - EVENING

The party gathers round a cake blazing with candles:

Lowenstein and Calhoun have brought their WIVES. And other investors: MR. and MRS. SALVATORE. MR. and MRS. DE MAN.

Pemberton blows out the candles to APPLAUSE.

MRS. SALVATORE

What an impressive table. Can this possibly be a single piece of wood?

PEMBERTON

A chestnut. Cut less than a mile from here.

SERENA

Pemberton Lumber Company will find even bigger trees in Brazil.

She smiles at Pemberton. Then turns to the open door, where Galloway has appeared in his usual silent fashion.

SERENA (CONT'D)  
Bring her in.  
(to Pemberton)  
Entertainment for our guests.

Galloway guides his Mother in, her wooden shoes CLACKING.  
There's a sharp intake of breath from the ladies...

CALHOUN  
What sort of entertainment?

SERENA  
Mother Galloway can see the future.

LOWENSTEIN  
Marvelous. I can fire my broker.

Laughter. Except for Serena and the Galloways.

SERENA  
Who wants to go first?

MRS. LOWENSTEIN  
Oh, me, please. Do I need to hold  
out my palm?

SERENA  
Just ask your question.

MRS. LOWENSTEIN  
Very well. Will my daughter be  
married soon?

The old woman turns to the direction of her voice and nods.

MRS. LOWENSTEIN (CONT'D)  
Wonderful. I was afraid she'd wait  
until I was pushing up daisies.

Mother Galloway stares in her direction a moment longer.

GALLOWAY'S MOTHER  
All I said was she'd be married.

An uncomfortable silence falls over the table. Mother Galloway's sightless orbs scan for another taker. Then:

DE MAN  
Pemberton should be next. It's his  
birthday.

SERENA

Yes, and I have the perfect question. Ask her how you'll die.

Nervous glances. Mrs. Salvatore covers her mouth, shocked.

But Serena holds Pemberton's gaze. Smiling. He refills his glass of whiskey.

PEMBERTON

That's something I'd like to know. How will I die, Mother Galloway? A gunshot? Perhaps a knife?

CALHOUN

A rope's what you deserve.

There's a little nervous laughter that's cut off when Mrs. Galloway's head swivels eerily to Pemberton.

GALLOWAY'S MOTHER

No gun nor knife. Nor rope around your neck.

PEMBERTON

My father was done in by his heart.

GALLOWAY'S MOTHER

It ain't to be your heart either.

PEMBERTON

So what, pray tell, is the thing that will kill me?

GALLOWAY'S MOTHER

(a beat)

They ain't one thing can kill a man like you.

She turns and her son leads her to the door...

Serena beams proudly. A beat. Then Pemberton laughs and raises his glass to her.

Everyone realizes it was a joke. Relieved smiles spread...

LOWENSTEIN

She played her role well. Not a hint of a smile.

CALHOUN

Hear, hear. A birthday toast. To the man who has everything.



SERENA

I disagree. There's one thing my husband does not have. A panther.

PEMBERTON

She pours salt in my wounds.

SERENA

Not at all. Galloway has been scouting. He found it.

PEMBERTON

Where?

GALLOWAY

Up in Ivy Gap.

SERENA

He baited the meadow and three nights ago the panther came to feed. Tomorrow she'll be hungry.

Too good to be true? Pemberton isn't sure...

GALLOWAY

Don't forget that gold doubloon.

INT. PEMBERTON'S CABIN - NIGHT

Serena helps a drunken Pemberton negotiate his way around the trunks packed up for the move...

Pemberton collapses heavily on the bed. And watches as Serena pulls off his boots for him.

Serena slips off the straps of her dress. Pemberton raises a hand to stop her, gazing at her like a vision: Serena looks as she did the night they met, when she shed the same dress.

PEMBERTON

You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen.

Serena looks at him a moment, eyes glittering with tears. Then she lets the dress fall and lies beside him a moment.

SERENA

I'm going to miss you, Pemberton.

She raises her head to kiss him. But he has fallen asleep.

EXT. CAMP YARD - DAY

Galloway puts his gear in the back of the Packard.

INT. CAMP OFFICE - DAY

Pemberton gets down his rifle and puts a box of ammunition in his jacket. As he starts to close the gun case, his eye catches on the knife that killed Harmon and the widow.

He glances out the window...at Galloway leaning against the Packard, putting a plug in his cheek as he waits...

Pemberton tucks the knife into his belt.

EXT. CAMP YARD - DAY

Pemberton sets his rifle on the back seat with the gear.

PEMBERTON  
You forgot your rifle.

GALLOWAY  
Don't need it. This is your kill.

He grins. A beat.

GALLOWAY (CONT'D)  
The missus is waiting on you.

LONG: Serena, on her Arabian, is conversing with Frizzell, the photographer. He has set up his tripod on the railless track where the skidder once sat.

EXT. TRACK/BOOM SITE - DAY

Serena smiles down at Pemberton from her horse.

SERENA  
The park commission wants to document the devastation we wrecked upon the land. I thought we should be in it.

Frizzell shrugs grouchily. Makes no difference to him.

Serena extends a hand and Pemberton comes to her. Not really in the mood, but humoring her.

Frizzell slides a fresh plate into his camera.

Serena poses with her hand on Pemberton's shoulder, backgrounded by the devastated slope. CLICK!

EXT. FOREST/IVY GAP - DAY

Pemberton and Galloway ford a shallow creek and head up the rocks on the other side.

PEMBERTON  
You're sure it was the panther?  
You saw it?

GALLOWAY  
Better than that. I heard it.

He glances back at Pemberton with a crooked grin...

EXT. FOREST/MEADOW - DAY

They pick their way down a steep drop that ends in a splendid, sunny meadow, dotted with tufts of broom sedge.

GALLOWAY  
This way.

The mauled CARCASS of a deer lies on the grass.

GALLOWAY (CONT'D)  
See how the chest is tore open?  
None but a panther does that.

Pemberton gets on one knee for a look. Then he nods.

A KNOTTED BEDSHEET sags from a dogwood branch on the edge of the meadow. Galloway slashes it with a hawkbill knife and...

A dead fawn spills onto the ground. Galloway grabs its back leg and drags it into the meadow. Fresh bait.

GALLOWAY (CONT'D)  
There's a flat place up there.

He points toward the ridge, where a granite outcrop pushes out of the slantland like a huge fist.

GALLOWAY (CONT'D)  
You can set there and see this  
whole meadow. And it's high enough  
that cat won't smell you.

Pemberton eyes the steep climb dubiously.

PEMBERTON  
Is there a path?

GALLOWAY  
Not but the one we'll make getting  
there.  
(with a shrug)  
I can haul that rifle in the crook  
of my arm if you want. Might make  
it easier for you.

PEMBERTON  
No, thanks.

Makes no difference to Galloway...

EXT. MOUNTAIN LAUREL/GRANITE RIDGE - DAY

Pemberton trails Galloway through high laurel, laboring up  
the difficult slope...

Then Galloway ducks into dense stand of brush several strides  
ahead and Pemberton loses sight of him.

Pemberton slows. Watchful. He reaches under his jacket to  
unbutton the strap that holds his knife in its sheath...

Then he pushes into the thicket where Galloway vanished.

There's no sign of him. Tensing, Pemberton scans the gaps in  
the laurel...his hand reaching around for the knife...

GALLOWAY (O.S.)  
If you ain't born to this skinny  
air a fellow will lose his breath  
easy up here.

He is looking down at Pemberton from higher up the slope.  
Then he grins and waves. Get a move on.

EXT. GRANITE OUTCROP/BASIN - DAY

Galloway squats beside a natural basin, fed by a spring  
above. He takes two sandwiches from his tote sack and opens  
the paper to examine them.

GALLOWAY  
This one's yours.

Pemberton takes the sandwich and eats. It's not very good  
but he's hungry after the climb...

Then he cups his hands and gulps water from the spring.

GALLOWAY (CONT'D)

That spring up top gives cold water  
even in the dog days. You'll not  
find better.

PEMBERTON

It's damn sure better than that  
sandwich.

Galloway cuts a piece from a plug of tobacco and puts it in  
his cheek. Chewing contemplatively.

GALLOWAY

Best go ahead and get up on that  
ledge. Won't be long before the  
meadow starts to shadow up.

Pemberton looks at the outcrop.

PEMBERTON

How do I get up there?

GALLOWAY

Stand on that smaller rock. Then  
put your foot in that crack above.

PEMBERTON

Then what?

GALLOWAY

Then you got to hoist yourself.  
It's flat as a skillet. You ain't  
going to roll off.

A beat. Pemberton puts his foot in the crack tentatively.

GALLOWAY (CONT'D)

When you get up there, I'll hand  
you the gun. It'll be easier.

He holds out his hand for the rifle. There's no other way.

Pemberton looks at Galloway suspiciously. Then he removes  
the bullet from the chamber and pockets it.

PEMBERTON

Don't want you stealing my kill.

Galloway grins as he takes the rifle.

Pemberton puts a foot on the smaller rock. The other in the  
crevice. Then he reaches up and puts his hands on the ledge.

He hesitates. Hit by a wave of nausea.

Galloway spits.

GALLOWAY

Need a boost?

PEMBERTON

No, I don't need a goddamn boost.

He takes a deep breath and kicks his leg over the outcrop...

Pemberton rolls onto the ledge, satisfied with himself. But a BUZZING fills the air. He raises his head and sees FOUR RATTLESNAKES coiled right beside him. Shaking their tails...

Pemberton tries to move but one of the snakes lunges and SINKS ITS FANGS IN HIS CALF.

Pemberton calls out and rolls away--

OFF THE EDGE OF THE OUTCROPPING--

He TUMBLES DOWN, bouncing off the smaller rock--

Then TUMBLING AND SLIDING DOWN THE SLOPE, head over heels, grasping for a handhold but finding nothing to slow him...

Pemberton comes to a stop in the thicket of laurel.

One ankle is bent at an unnatural angle and his unbuttoned hunting knife has come loose and gashed his arm.

Pemberton tries to move and regrets it. He lies back.

There's a THRUSH-THRUSH-- someone approaching through the laurel-- then Galloway emerges and stands over him.

GALLOWAY

You're about as tore up as a fellow can get.

PEMBERTON

Help me up.

Galloway lifts him to his feet, but with the broken ankle it's impossible for Pemberton to stand without help.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

Get me into the meadow.

Galloway helps him out of the laurel and into the meadow, easing him to a sitting position among the broom sedge...

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)  
A rattlesnake bit me.

He pulls up his pant leg. Just above the boot, two small holes piece the skin. Already getting red and puffy.

Galloway squats for a closer look.

Pemberton tosses him the knife.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)  
Get the poison out.

GALLOWAY  
Too late. It's in your veins.

PEMBERTON  
Just cut.

Galloway methodically cuts an X across each puncture. He squeezes out some blood as Pemberton grimaces.

Then he yanks out one of Pemberton's bootlaces and makes a tourniquet above the knee.

The leg seems to redden and swell before their eyes.

Another wave of stomach pain hits Pemberton.

PEMBERTON (CONT'D)  
Damn stomach. Wouldn't think a snake bite would cause that.

GALLOWAY  
It don't.

He looks off, toward the mountains.

PEMBERTON  
Take the car and find a phone. Get a doctor up here. Then go to the camp and find Serena. She'll tell you what else to do.

Galloway does not reply at first. He steps over to his tote sack and swings it over his shoulder.

GALLOWAY  
She already has. Told me what to do, I mean. You're gonna be in this meadow a long while.

Pemberton looks at him a moment, starting to comprehend. Then his stomach contracts with such force he doubles over.

GALLOWAY (CONT'D)

That'll be the sandwich your missus made special for you. Mixed in some rat poison. I told her that rattlesnake den ought to do the trick, but she wanted to be sure.

He wipes a dribble of tobacco juice off his chin.

GALLOWAY (CONT'D)

She said to tell you she thought you the one man ever strong and pure enough to be her equalling. But your mewling over the babe showed her the otherwise of that.

PEMBERTON

The child is safe. I got a cable from McDowell.

Galloway smiles thoughtfully, opening his hawkbill knife and stepping toward Pemberton.

GALLOWAY

I whittled on him a right good bit, but he wouldn't give that young one up. Mama says he's too far away to get him in her mind now.

His hawkbill slashes down, across Pemberton's pocket, freeing the \$20 gold coin. Galloway picks it up.

GALLOWAY (CONT'D)

I figure I earned this.

PEMBERTON

Is there really a panther?

GALLOWAY

You'll know the truth of that soon enough. That cat will come across the ridge there, just to the left of that cliff hang. She'll smell your blood and soon enough she'll come on down for a visit.

He lifts his tote sack and slings it over his shoulder. Then he shambles off toward the trees...

Something surges in Pemberton's stomach and he spits blood on the grass. Then he gathers himself and rolls over.

He pulls himself over the ground, inch by agonizing inch...



EXT. NOLAND MOUNTAIN - DAY

Serena rides alone at the top of denuded Noland Mountain, looking sadly at the landscape beyond, knowing Pemberton is down there somewhere, in one of those green hollows...

EXT. MEADOW - DUSK

The shadows are long across the grass as Pemberton pulls himself a few inches then stops to rest. He has moved maybe ten yards since we left him.

Pemberton heaves but there's nothing left to bring up. He shivers. Shuts his eyes. Knows it's over. With his last reserve, Pemberton pushes off and rolls over onto his back.

ANGLE: There's a THRUSH-THRUSH in the laurel. Something is moving in there. Creeping toward him...

Pemberton is staring at the sky. Then there's a CRY at the edge of the meadow. Like the sound of an infant.

PEMBERTON  
(softly)  
Jacob.

There is a smile on his face as the long, cat-shaped shadow slinks low over the ground, coming closer and closer...

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN/SEATTLE - DAY

Jacob sits on a folded quilt in the corner, banging the toy train Vaughn gave him on his knee.

Rachel toils over a sink, washing pots and pans in the busy kitchen, keeping an eye on the boy when she can.

Then MRS. BJORKLAND breezes in and pins a new check on the wheel. Before she goes back to the dining room, she kneels beside Jacob and pinches his cheek. Smiling at Rachel...

EXT. SEATTLE STREET - DUSK

Rachel walks away from the restaurant, carrying Jacob. Her eyes are on something in the distance:

The snow-capped peak of Mt. Rainier. The mountain is the only bit of nature she can glimpse in her new home.

A car HONKS and Rachel realizes she's stopped in the middle of the street. She hurries to the curb, clutching little Jacob in the bustling crowd...

Rachel passes a line of Tramps and Hobos waiting to get into the Salvation Army, not seeing a familiar shock of red hair:

VAUGHN

Rachel? Rachel Harmon?

Rachel takes a few steps more before she recognizes her own name. She turns slowly. Her eyes must be deceiving her.

But beneath the grime and tatters, Joel Vaughn is smiling his shy smile at her...

Rachel stands there a moment, stunned, as Vaughn hobbles toward her. Then she rushes to him and they embrace...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SEATTLE HOSPITAL - DAY

A 1972 Dodge Dart pulls up to the curb, Jim Croce bleeding through the windows.

A MAN, 40s, gets out the car holding a paper bag. The hair and clothes are 1970s, of course, but otherwise he bears a startling resemblance to Pemberton. This is JACOB HARMON.

INT. SEATTLE HOSPITAL/ELEVATOR

Jacob steps into the elevator and rides up alone. As the floors DING he takes a framed photo out of the paper bag:

It's a picture of a family on a camping trip in the late 1930s. A boy poses between his parents, Mt. Rainier in the background. The parents are Vaughn and Rachel.

The memory of it is poignant for Jacob.

INT. SEATTLE HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

The same PHOTOGRAPH as Jacob sets it on the bed stand.

Then he turns to the woman in the bed-- Rachel. She's nearly 60 now, frail and wasted. Dying.

JACOB

How's that, mama?

He takes her hand as she gazes at the picture.

JACOB (CONT'D)

That the one you were thinking of?

A tracheotomy tube makes speaking impossible, but Rachel nods, remembering... Then she looks back at Jacob and points to a basket of magazines on the floor.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Want me to read to you?

Rachel shakes her head. Just get the basket.

Patient, as if she were a child, Jacob fetches the basket and brings it to the bed. Rachel gets a LIFE magazine from the pile and opens it, tapping a dog-eared page. Look at *that*.

Jacob peers blankly at a PHOTOGRAPH of Serena Pemberton, now 70, on the porch of her timber plantation in Brazil...

Then he looks at Rachel. This woman means nothing to him. But Rachel signals to him-- insistent-- keep going.

So Jacob pages through the various pictures of Serena and her operation in Brazil, all meaningless to him...

Except for one-- the only one that's not in color:

Set against a wasteland of stumps and shattered tree limbs, Serena sits astride a great white horse. She must have moved at the same time as the shutter, for her face is blurred.

But the powerfully built man standing by her is clear enough.

Jacob squints at his father a moment. Then turns to Rachel. Understanding now the fire in her eyes...

She motions toward a little overnight bag on a chair.

Inside is her father's pearl-handled bowie knife...

EXT. SERENA'S HACIENDA IN SAO PAULO - NIGHT

A full moon over the silent streets.

At the front gate of a splendid estate, a bored SECURITY GUARD smokes and watches the street. Listening to samba on his transistor radio.

EXT. SERENA'S HACIENDA/BACK LAWN - NIGHT

A dark figure slinks across the grass.

The SCREENED PANEL of the back door as a pearl-handled bowie knife slashes it diagonally.

INT. SERENA'S HACIENDA/CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Jacob moves swiftly down the corridor, muting the beam of his flashlight with a hand...

Around the corner, a grizzled old man sleeps on a pallet outside the door to the master bedroom. A pistol lies in reach of his right hand. His left arm ends in a stump.

Jacob's shadow passes over the sleeping Galloway, but he does not stir. Perhaps that hearing aid in his ear is turned off.

By the time Galloway opens his eyes, Jacob is holding him by the hair and raking the bowie knife across his windpipe.

He dies without seeing his killer.

Jacob steps over the corpse and eases open the bedroom door.

Mottled light through the window softens the sleeping woman. One would scarcely believe she is 70 now.

Jacob glides silently to the bed. Then waits.

Gradually Serena awakens to the presence beside her.

Jacob steps closer and lets the moonlight hit his face... He says nothing. His face betrays nothing.

Serena remains in the netherworld between sleep and wakefulness, looking on an apparition of the man she loved.

Then she reaches for Jacob, smiling...

EXT. SERENA'S HACIENDA - NIGHT

The massive front door flies open with a CLATTER.

The Security Guard at the gate spins.

And Serena steps out of the house slowly, her hands gathered at her belly.

The Guard takes a step toward her, asking her in Portuguese if anything is wrong...

Serena takes another step and pulls her hand away from her abdomen-- *holding the bowie knife she has just extracted.*

The Guard runs up the walkway.

Serena staggers forward...her nude body gashed and bleeding from multiple wounds...the moonlight in her white hair like a mane of fire. She seems to hover a moment...

Then she falls, tumbling down the porch steps.

The knife skids away from her hand.

The Security Guard drops to his knees beside her and feels for a pulse. Then he jumps up, *CALLING OUT* for help as he runs up the steps and into the house...

Jacob glides calmly from the shadows and picks up his grandfather's knife.

His powerful frame moves without hurry across the pavement and through the front gate, which *CLICKS* shut behind him.

*ANGLE ON* Serena. Her head is turned, her arm extended toward the gate... It's almost as if she's reaching out to him.

But Jacob is nothing but *FOOTSTEPS* now, a shadow on the street, dissolving into the night...

*FADE OUT*