

THE KEEPING ROOM

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BASED ON TRUE EVENTS

OVER BLACK:

The sound of a dog BARKING WILDLY. It's distant at first, but then the sound grows louder, and louder...

Until we reveal...

EXT. PLANTATION GROUNDS - DAY

A massive WHITE PLANTATION HOUSE imposes itself, intimidating the yellow grass that spreads out for acres.

And then we pinpoint the source of the barking: a BLACK DOG sits in the middle of the grass, a mere dot in the frame.

EXT. ROAD - SAME

In front of the Plantation, an empty ROAD stretches out as far as the eye can see, stately trees creeping down on either side.

A BLACK WOMAN appears, hauling bags of feed.

She spots our dog, and she stops.

EXT. PLANTATION GROUNDS - SAME

The dog BARKS at her. This gives her pause, until...

She begins to BARK right back at it.

There's some distance between these two, but here they are, barking. It's loud and strange and just this side of surreal. Until --

The dog gives in. The woman wins.

SILENCE.

She lays down her bags of feed and slowly approaches the dog, her hand outstretched.

The dog sits, panting.

BLACK WOMAN

You a good boy or a bad one?

She reaches out...

Closer...

Closer...

SNAP! The dog's jaws clamp down, the woman jumps back, the dog's teeth only narrowly missing the tips of her worn fingers.

And again the dog BARKS.

BLACK WOMAN (CONT'D)
Go on n' get -- don't need your kind
'round here.

And then there's a SCREAM from the house.

SUDDENLY --

A WHITE WOMAN comes running through the front door like a banshee. Her FINE CLOTHES are undone, cascading around her body.

The dog takes off after her. There's a commotion, the black woman goes to follow, the dog gives chase --

A MAN, maybe he's a young man, emerges from the front door, in the uniform of a UNION SOLDIER. From here on out we'll call him SOLDIER #1. He casually takes his gun, aims at the running woman...

But the white woman doesn't see the black woman or the dog or the ground or the sky. She flies away from the house like nothing exists but whatever this man is she's running from...

The black woman stops --

The dog runs --

And then --

BANG!

The white woman falls to the ground, inches away from the black woman. She looks up, briefly, and then --

SHE IS DEAD.

The black woman stares down at the body.

A SECOND UNION SOLDIER -- he'll be SOLDIER #2, probably a bit older -- emerges from the front door of the house. His pants are undone, and he tucks his shirt in as he joins his partner on the porch.

The black woman kneels down and holds the white woman's body in her arms.

Soldier #2, now fully dressed, picks up a GAS LAMP that sits on the porch and with a MATCH from his pocket, he lights it. He considers it for a moment, and then...

He throws it HARD through the open door of the large house. The front hall CATCHES FIRE.

The two men move down from the porch as the FIRE grows behind them.

The closer they get to the black woman, the tighter she holds the fallen body. And then as they move past her, as if it's an after thought, Soldier #1 puts a BULLET in the back of her head.

She falls down, dead.

The FIRE moves fast now, it is beginning to devour the house. Soon there will be nothing but dead bodies and ash.

The dog trots over to the women, smells them.

SOLDIER #2 turns and looks at the dog. He lets out a long, low WHISTLE.

The dog looks up. Trails after them as they walk away, headed SOUTH.

FADE TO WHITE.

TITLE IN BLACK OVER WHITE:

THE KEEPING ROOM

EXT. FARMHOUSE - AFTERNOON

White. Dry. Yellow. Hot.

Images of the landscape come in and out:

-- A rabbit sitting in mossy grass.

-- Some old TREES.

-- A PEN with a single GOAT.

-- A FARMHOUSE, small but proud and in the middle of everything, surrounded by all of its OUT BUILDINGS.

-- The KEEPING ROOM, a cabin-sized stand alone structure, connected to the house by a LONG WALKWAY.

-- The BARN.

And then, people:

LOUISE and MAD.

Louise is 16 and white. Mad is 30 and black. Both work the field. Their clothes, worn and dirty.

It's quiet, save for the noises of their hoes in the earth.

Until...

A GUNSHOT.

The two women start. Everything stands stock still.

After a moment: A SQUEAL OF JOY in the distance.

Mad rolls her eyes. Louise smiles.

EXT. KEEPING ROOM - DUSK

A young woman sits on a log, a DEAD RABBIT spread across her lap with a small RIFLE next to her.

This is AUGUSTA, early 20's and white.

Slowly, the camera creeps towards her. The only noise is the sound of her skinning the rabbit and her heavy, excited breathing.

She is deliberate; she knows how to do this.

There is an inherent violence to the act itself, pulling the skin off an animal. She wipes her hair off of her face leaving a line of blood where the hair once was.

The camera continues to push in until the dead, bloody rabbit fills the screen.

And then --

INT. KEEPING ROOM - EVENING

CLOSE ON: a stewed RABBIT as it is set down on a table.

The Keeping Room is self-contained. A little house unto itself: easy to heat, easy to cool. The small room is overwhelmed by a large FARM TABLE in the middle. Cabinets filled with all sorts of goods line the walls.

At one end of the table is the fire. Pots bubble and spew inside it. The family's history hangs above the fire in the form of tintypes, poppets, dried flowers, an OLD HAT, and several more pots and pans.

It is lit up not only by the fire, but also by small gas lamps that line the windows.

The three women barely use the big house now. This room is their home. If it were big enough, they'd probably sleep here.

Louise is sitting. Mad joins her.

Augusta sits at the head of the table.

LOUISE

It's small.

AUGUSTA

It's food.

LOUISE

Smells good.

MAD

Tastes good too.

AUGUSTA

Things are fun to kill taste good.

MAD

Things are cooked good taste good.

A beat.

LOUISE

Don't know why you let her talk to you that way.

MAD

Your sister?

LOUISE

No. You.

AUGUSTA

Come on now --

Louise looks down.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
You can't imagine how fun it was to kill.

MAD
If your daddy heard you --

AUGUSTA
He taught me.

MAD
For livin', not for fun.

AUGUSTA
But, Mad -- it is fun. And hard. They're so small. And you gotta be real quiet. I was trackin' that creature for near an hour 'fore I shot him. Papa said only shoot once, when you're sure. 'Cause once that gun goes off, everything livin' is gone for miles.

LOUISE
Can we start?

MAD
We all goin' to start.

And with that, the three women dig in. Legs rip off the small, dead creature.

Teeth TEAR into meat. It's messy.

LOUISE
(sauce on her face, food in
her mouth)
Tastes good. Real good.

AUGUSTA
You welcome. MAD
Welcome.

They look at each other.

EXT. KEEPING ROOM - NIGHT

From outside, we see the three gas lamps that light the windows. And one by one, they go out.

The three women emerge through the door. Augusta, RIFLE in one hand, holds a lit chamber candle in the other, leading the way as the women take the walkway to the back door of the Farmhouse.

Augusta opens the door and they go in.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

On a small table by the door are two candlesticks.

Mad picks them both up and hands one to Louise. They light their candles off of Augusta's candle.

The women disperse, candles in hand.

INT. FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Louise lights a small gas lamp in one of the windows.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Augusta lights a small gas lamp.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Mad lights a small gas lamp at the foot of the stairs and goes up.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

A small gas lamp burns on the windowsill. Mad washes her face by the light.

Louise gets into bed, and blows out her candle.

Augusta enters and puts down her candle. She starts to undress. Mad gets into bed and places her candle on a small tin candle-holder next to the bed.

Augusta places her rifle by the side of the bed, blows out her candle and gets into bed.

Mad rolls over and blows out her candle.

INT. BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Augusta is the first to rise. She rubs the sleep from her eyes and splashes some water on her face from a nearby basin.

She dresses, grabs her RIFLE, and quietly slips from the room.

INT. STAIRCASE - SAME

Augusta puts out the gas lamp at the foot of the stairs.

INT. FRONT HALL - SAME

Augusta puts out another the gas lamp.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Augusta puts out the last gas lamp.

EXT. GOAT FIELD - LATER

Louise feeds and plays with the lone goat. She runs around the field, he chases her.

She laughs.

EXT. HORSE PEN - SAME

Mad feeds the old horse, FERN. She pets her nose, wipes some sweat from her own brow.

EXT. WOODS - SAME

Augusta stalks a young deer. The young deer stands alone.

Augusta moves. A TWIG SNAPS.

The deer looks in her direction -- for a moment Augusta and the animal are looking right at each other. Augusta moves to aim her rifle...

And the deer runs away.

The sounds of RUSHING WATER overtake us and...

EXT. CREEK - LATER

Augusta kneels down by a creek. She dips her hand in and shovels out a mouth full of water. She dips her hand in again and splashes the water onto her face.

She looks up at the sky.

EXT. ANOTHER FIELD - DAY

A make-shift cross sticks out from a mound of dirt: this is a GRAVE.

Louise kneels down and drops some wildflowers in front of the cross. She sits, cross-legged, elbow on knee, face in hand, just looking at the dirt.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DUSK

The land sits STILL as the sun sets.

INT. BARN - DUSK

Mad and Augusta clean up below from the day's work.

Louise plays in the hayloft.

MAD

You fixin' to hurt yourself up there,
Louise?

LOUISE

I'm fine.

AUGUSTA

Mad's right -- you watch them boards.

LOUISE

I know where the loose ones are.

AUGUSTA

If you fall, I ain't helpin' you.

MAD

Me either.

LOUISE

Why don't you just fix em?

MAD

Why bother wastin' the work, ain't no one goes up there but you.

AUGUSTA

Come on down here and help us already -- we gotta get to the Keepin' Room, start supper.

Louise jumps from one board to another -- it SHAKES. She teeters. Mad and Augusta look up -- a moment of fear.

Louise steadies herself and smiles.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - NIGHT

Empty plates on the table. Mad holds a UKULELE and sings. Louise and Augusta sing along. Augusta BANGS on the table to the rhythm. Louise DANCES.

Augusta gets up and joins her sister. Arms linked, they move about the room as one.

The song ends and Louise claps, child-like.

Augusta falls into her chair.

Mad starts to play another song, but this one is quiet and very sad.

LOUISE

But we don't know this --

AUGUSTA

Shhhh --

LOUISE

I want her to play --

AUGUSTA

Mad's singin' what she wants to sing.

Louise slowly concedes, sitting and listening, arms crossed. It's a work song. It's about God and all his ghosts. Mad knows it well.

The song ends. It's followed by a long silence that somehow feels like it's part of the song.

And then --

There is a NOISE outside. They all start, but remain quiet. Finally, Augusta is the one to stand. She walks to the window and cautiously looks out.

DARKNESS.

She moves to the door and opens it. It CREAKS, and she looks back at Louise and Mad. They stay still as Augusta moves through it.

Mad and Louise don't take their eyes off the door.

It's so damn quiet.

UNTIL --

Augusta POPS UP outside a window right next to Mad and Louise.

Mad and Louise JUMP.

From outside, Augusta laughs. Mad just shakes her head.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Mad and Louise light their candles off of Augusta's.

INT. FRONT HALL - SAME

Louise puts on the gas lamp.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

Augusta gets into bed.

Mad blows out the last candle.

EXT. ROAD - DAWN

An empty road at SUNRISE.

The SOUND of a horse, moving fast.

Then, HORSE and RIDER are seen in the distance. They approach steadily as the light slowly fills in the darkness around them.

Once they are close enough we can see that the rider is a BLACK MAN in a UNION UNIFORM. He rides fast and true -- he knows where he's going.

BLACK RIDER and HORSE fill the frame and the pounding of HOOFS become overwhelming --

Until...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Louise WAKES in a sweat. She GASPS. She wakes Augusta.

They WHISPER, so as not to wake Mad.

AUGUSTA

What is it?

LOUISE

I was havin' a fright.

AUGUSTA

It's alright. Only a dream.

LOUISE

When was the last time you went to town?

AUGUSTA

I keep losin' track of the days -- a while, I reckon.

LOUISE

You should go back.

AUGUSTA

And how you suppose I do that?

LOUISE

You think Fern can't make it no more, but she can.

AUGUSTA

We done talkin' bout this.

LOUISE

Why you get to decide everythin'?

AUGUSTA

You know well as well why. Now back to sleep.

Beat. Louise lies down.

Augusta does too.

LOUISE

Can't close my eyes.

AUGUSTA

Try.

Beat. Louise sits back up.

LOUISE

Ain't it kill you knowin' they might come back? Caleb said, men was comin back. What if he got word?

Augusta sits back up.

AUGUSTA
Our men ain't desertin' no duty.

LOUISE
But they was right there. In my dream.

AUGUSTA
Then go back there and no more talkin' on
it.

Augusta lies back down. Louise just sits there.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Augusta rubs her eyes as she walks out of the bedroom and into the morning. She hears a NOISE and pauses.

She turns towards the far BEDROOM, the one they don't sleep in. She moves towards it, cautiously.

Through a crack, she sees a WOMAN looking at herself in a mirror. She wears a fine DRESS. Her hair is so long and so blonde.

Augusta slowly opens the door, in a trance, she's moving through a dream...

She thinks for a moment it could be...

It's LOUISE.

LOUISE
What?

AUGUSTA
What?

Beat.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
It's you --

Louise turns towards her.

LOUISE
Who you think it was?

Augusta shakes her head back into the real moment.

AUGUSTA
My mind wanders.

LOUISE
I look like her.

AUGUSTA
Thought you was a ghost.

BEAT.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
Take it off.

LOUISE
What?

AUGUSTA
We don't need be messin' with fine
things.

LOUISE
Feels nice to wear a fine thing.

AUGUSTA
I best not see that dress movin' again.

Augsuta leaves the room. Louise looks at herself in the mirror again. She likes it. She turns and looks at herself over her shoulder.

EXT. FIELDS - LATER

The three women work the land together.

Louise still wears their MOTHER'S DRESS even though Augusta has told her to take it off.

Mad looks at her funny and then goes back to her work.

Augusta looks at Mad and then at Louise.

AUGUSTA
Thought I told you to take it off.

LOUISE
Didn't feel like it.

AUGUSTA
Even more ridiculous out here then it was
in there.

LOUISE
Why you care so much?

AUGUSTA
You goin' to ruin it.

After a moment, Louise THROWS DOWN her hoe.

MAD
What's wrong with you?

LOUISE
I don't want to do this no more.

MAD
Too bad.

LOUISE
She shouldn't be talkin' to me that way.

AUGUSTA
Louise --

LOUISE
She's the nigger, she should do it.

Mad just keeps working: it's nothing new.

AUGUSTA
Like I told you, Louise -- we all niggers now.

Augusta resumes her work with Mad.

Louise hesitates, and then makes a decision. She walks away, her back to them.

Mad looks up at Augusta. Augusta doesn't return the gaze.

They keep hoeing.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - LATER

Louise sits alone, playing a game on the floor of the room, something involving a ball and some stones.

She's still wearing her mother's dress, but she's unbuttoned the back so it falls around her shoulders. She thought about taking it off, but didn't make it that far.

She's more concerned with the game now.

We sit with her here for a moment.

And then the sounds of LAUGHTER lead us to...

INT. KEEPING ROOM - NIGHT

Another night, another dinner's mess fills the table.

Mad, Louise and Augusta are laughing their heads off. They are in the middle of playing some kind of game.

Louise is seated at the table, blindfolded, she's back in her NORMAL CLOTHES now. Mad hands Louise an ONION. Louise moves it around in her hands and then holds it up to her face and smells it.

LOUISE

An onion!

She gleefully tears off the blindfold and puts it on Mad.

Louise and Augusta look around the room for something, gesturing so as not to give themselves away. They dart around rejecting each other's choices in as much silence as they can.

Augusta has an IDEA and she pulls off her BLOOMERS.

Louise stifles a giant laugh and hands the bloomers to Mad. Mad inspects them, moves them through her hands.

Realizing what they are, she drops them.

MAD

Didn't your mother teach you to keep ya
drawers on?

Mad takes off the blindfold and shakes her head.

Louise and Augusta LAUGH.

Augusta puts on her bloomers.

Louise wraps the blindfold around Augusta's face.

Mad and Louise move around the room, looking. Louise pulls the MAN'S HAT down from above the fire.

Augusta holds it in her hands. She feels it, slowly. She suddenly stops smiling and gets real QUIET.

She takes off the blindfold and puts the hat back above the fire.

LOUISE

What?

MAD

What's wrong?

AUGUSTA

I don't want to play no more.

EXT. KEEPING ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

CRACK!

An axe and a log descend into frame, the axe held by Augusta. The piece of wood SPLINTERS in two.

Augusta resets with a new piece of wood and her axe -- this is ritualistic, for her. She knocks the axe gently into the piece of wood, the axe catching in it. Then she raises her arms, wood and axe as one, and...

CRACK!

She SLAMS everything down onto the hard ground, splitting the log into two perfect pieces.

She does this for a while, until there is a small PILE of wood beside her.

AND THEN --

A SCREAM not too far off.

Augusta drops the axe and runs around to the other side of the building, where she and Mad COLLIDE.

MAD

It's a mad raccoon. Louise --

Augusta runs into the Keeping Room. She emerges with her RIFLE and runs past Mad.

Mad backs into the exterior of the Keeping Room and watches.

GUNSHOT. Mad winces.

Augusta comes back. Furious.

A beat.

Then, she SLAPS Mad. Mad shows no sign of pain.

AUGUSTA

I missed.

Augusta leaves Mad there and goes back into the Keeping Room. Mad just stands there.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Louise writhes and sweats in the bed.

Mad and Augusta whisper in the corner.

AUGUSTA

We haven't got anythin'?

MAD

Nothin'.

AUGUSTA

You search the whole Keepin' Room?

MAD

'Course.

AUGUSTA

Fern won't survive the ride. We known that for months.

MAD

It don't matter. Maybe they got somethin' at the Weaver farm could help. Closer than goin' all the way to town.

AUGUSTA

We ain't heard from them since -- since I don't know when.

MAD

It's worth a try.

Louise MOANS.

Mad goes to her. She wrings out a cloth and places it back on the girl's forehead.

MAD (CONT'D)

(to Augusta)

Go.

The sound of horse hoofs pounding earth, gradually getting louder, takes us to --

EXT. ROAD - DUSK

Augusta riding as fast as Fern's old body will let her.

EXT. ROAD - LATER

Augusta approaches THE WEAVER FARM. It's dark and quiet. No lamps or candles here.

EXT. WEAVER FARM - DUSK

Augusta dismounts Fern, ties her to the fence post and approaches the FARMHOUSE.

EXT. WEAVER FARMHOUSE - DUSK

Augusta moves to the door and knocks. It creaks open under the weight of her fist.

AUGUSTA

Hello?

Beat.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Mary? Clara?

Augusta goes inside.

INT. WEAVER FARMHOUSE - DUSK

Augusta moves through the first room of the house.

It doesn't look lived in. Just the opposite: this place has been abandoned. No noise. Just dark and quiet.

INT. STAIRCASE - SAME

CREAK.

Augusta goes upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS - SAME

Augusta moves through the hallway.

AUGUSTA

Mary? Clara?

She goes into one of the bedrooms.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

She rummages through the cabinets, looking for something, anything to help Louise. Problem is, she doesn't know what she's looking for.

All she finds are a tintype of a baby, some sewing tools and some unidentifiable dried HERB.

She smells the herb and sticks it in the belt of her skirt, just in case.

She looks up and she catches a glimpse of something in a mirror --

It's just her own reflection. She steadies herself.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Augusta moves into the final bedroom at the end of the hall. She pushes the door open.

There is a WOMAN'S BODY lying in the bed in the corner.

Augusta goes to her.

AUGUSTA

...Mary?

MARY lies motionless in the bed. Her eyes WIDE OPEN.

THE WOMAN IS DEAD.

Augusta SHAKES her as if she's trying to wake her from a deep sleep.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Mary.

A line of blood is dried from her mouth, down her face to the bed. Augusta follows the line and her eyes keep going down to the floor where a bottle lies, broken. Some kind of POISON.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

How long you been lyin' this way?

Augusta picks up the bottle and places it on the table next to the bed.

She rolls Mary so she is flat on her back. At first, she's not sure what to do.

THEN --

She lays her arms at her sides. She closes her eyelids.

She steps back and looks at her work.

EXT. WEAVER FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Augusta walks quickly out of the house. Once outside, She stops and stands for a moment, trying to catch her breath.

Is the whole world this way now?

EXT. ROAD - LATER

Augusta rides.

EXT. ROAD - LATER

The first lights of town.

Fern is tired. Augusta, too.

EXT. TOWN - LATER

It's virtually a GHOST TOWN. Augusta had no idea.

The only establishment open is the SALOON, which is also, of course, a whorehouse.

As she approaches, a dog, THE DOG, is tied to the post out front. He BARKS wildly just as before.

Augusta dismounts and ties Fern to the post. Once she is off the horse, the dog quiets.

Augusta stands still and regards the dog. It's a comfort after what she's just seen.

Augusta moves to pet the dog and...

SNAP!

The dog lunges at her. She backs up -- cautious, now -- and makes her way inside.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

The RED ROOM is sparsely populated. The whores aren't what they used to be. Red velvet ROTS everywhere.

The few patrons that were too old or too crippled to fight watch her as she moves towards a bar at the far end of the room.

And then she sees something odd: two UNION SOLDIERS at a table by the fire. She does not to look at them. Of course, we know who they are: Soldier #1 and Soldier #2.

She makes it to the BAR.

CALEB, the old bartender, turns and sees her.

CALEB

Augusta?

AUGUSTA

Caleb.

CALEB

(re: the soldiers)

You shouldn't be here.

He glances up at them.

AUGUSTA

I know.

CALEB

Why then?

AUGUSTA

It's Louise. Mad raccoon bit 'er.

CALEB

I can't help.

AUGUSTA

Doesn't someone have some medcin'?

CALEB

Not round here. Not in a long time.

AUGUSTA

What should I do?

CALEB

You been ridin' all night?

AUGUSTA

Yessir.

CALEB

On Fern?

AUGUSTA

Yessir.

CALEB

She dead yet?

AUGUSTA

Just about.

Caleb grabs a BOTTLE OF WHISKEY and pours her a shot.

CALEB

Drink this.

He slams it down in front of Augusta. She inspects the glass.

AUGUSTA

You sure?

CALEB

Positive.

Augusta swallows it whole. Sputters.

CALEB (CONT'D)

Good girl.

AUGUSTA

You hear from anyone out at the Weaver place? Seen Clara?

CALEB

Mary was the last one I saw. Few months back. She was lookin' for Clara. She run off. Probably went north, I said.

AUGUSTA

I just been there. Mary's dead.

CALEB

What now?

AUGUSTA

Drank herself some poison. Just lyin' up there.

CALEB
God forgive her.

AUGUSTA
I closed her eyes for her.

CALEB
First time you see a dead body?

AUGUSTA
I seen my mother when she go.

CALEB
You alright then?

AUGUSTA
I'm alright.

Beat.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
Went there hopin' for some medcin'. Found
this.

Augusta pulls the dried HERB from her belt.

CALEB
Ain't nothin' dried sage'll do to help
Louise.

AUGUSTA
Anyone come back since last time I asked?

CALEB
A few injureds. A few deserters. Can't
tell you who -- too dangerous with them
so close.

AUGUSTA
But no --

CALEB
No.

Caleb gently shakes his head.

Augusta tries to hide how foolish she feels for thinking
maybe there would be good news.

CALEB (CONT'D)
You should go.

LOUISE

But I can't go back with nothin'. All
that ridin' and nothin' for Louise?

MOLL, a whore, sits a few stools down. She has overheard
their entire conversation.

It's hard to tell if she's young or old, but if there
wasn't a war on, you can be sure she'd be beautiful.

MOLL

Hi.

Augusta just looks at her.

CALEB

(re: Moll)

You can say hi.

AUGUSTA

...Hi.

MOLL

Caleb?

Moll doesn't take her eyes off Augusta.

CALEB

Moll?

MOLL

Can I speak to ya?

Caleb gives Augusta a look and then motions for Moll to
follow him into the back.

CALEB

(re: the soldiers)

Don't you look at 'em.

Augusta watches them as they walk back behind the bar.
She fiddles with her empty glass, draws circles with her
finger on the bar.

Behind her, the SOLDIERS look right at her.

But Augusta doesn't look back.

Moll and Caleb return.

MOLL

There ain't no medcin'.

AUGUSTA

Already knew that.

Moll pours two shots. She hands one to Augusta. She clinks her glass to Augusta's and they shoot them down.

MOLL

You put her in the tub. You boil that water beyond boilin'. Don't worry bout burnin' her. Got that?

AUGUSTA

Yes ma'am.

MOLL

You close her in that hot room and no matter how much she screams, you don't let her out. Only once she stops screamin' you open that door, cause she's liable to of passed out.

AUGUSTA

Alright.

MOLL

You got vinegar?

AUGUSTA

Yes ma'am.

MOLL

After you let her out, you put that vinegar on that wound as much as she'll let you.

AUGUSTA

That'll work?

MOLL

There's a chance.

AUGUSTA

Alright.

MOLL

You ready for her to die?

Augusta shakes her head.

Moll pours them two more shots. They down them.

MOLL (CONT'D)

She's young, so it might work. But you get ready.

AUGUSTA

Alright.

MOLL

Where you ridin' to?

AUGUSTA

Due east. Not far, but far enough.

MOLL

What you ridin'?

AUGUSTA

A dead horse.

Moll gets up and motions for Caleb to follow. Augusta watches them go.

This time, Augusta can't help herself. She turns to see if the SOLDIERS are still there.

And they are staring STRAIGHT AT HER. Soldier #1 SMILES.

Augusta quickly turns away. She overhears Caleb and Moll arguing.

And then, Moll returns.

MOLL

You're gettin' Martin. He's a good ride.

AUGUSTA

Why you bein' so nice to me?

MOLL

I knew your Daddy. He was a good man.

AUGUSTA

He was alright.

MOLL

You look just like 'em.

Moll pours them one last shot.

AUGUSTA

Everyone says I look like my mother.

MOLL

I never met her.

AUGUSTA

Hardly knew 'er myself.

They shoot the drinks.

MOLL
You best get goin'.

AUGUSTA
Thank you.

MOLL
You take care now, alright?

Augusta nods. She gets up. The soldiers follow her like a dog following a piece of meat. It is near impossible for her not to look, but she manages to make it outside without giving in.

EXT. SALOON - LATER

Augusta waits outside for Caleb to bring around her new horse. She pets Fern on the nose, whispers to her.

The DOG sits. Real quiet. Just staring at her.

AUGUSTA
You know I know better now.

He WHIMPERS a little, calling her near.

She crouches down, cautious. He's calmer. They regard each other for a moment as if there was nothing else breathing but this girl and this dog.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
No fun being tied up, I know.

VOICE (O.S.)
Suppose not.

It's SOLDIER #2. Augusta stands up fast.

SOLDIER #2
I only bite as much as he does.

Augusta looks away.

SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)
And he don't bite.

Pause.

AUGUSTA
He tried to bite me not a while ago.

SOLDIER #2
But he didn't, did he?

AUGUSTA
No. I reckon he didn't.

SOLDIER #2
Battle.

AUGUSTA
Pardon?

SOLDIER #2
His name.

AUGUSTA
Oh.

SOLDIER #2
We found him on his own a few years back.
Up in Virginia. He's a good dog.

AUGUSTA
Can't tell with him all tied up.

SOLDIER #2
No?

AUGUSTA
It's when they can run you know what they
are.

SOLDIER #2
You got dogs?

Augusta shakes her head.

SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)
I like dogs more than I like people.

AUGUSTA
It don't make no difference to me,
really.

SOLDIER #2
Dogs or people?

AUGUSTA
That's right.

SOLDIER #2
What's a girl like you doing on your own?

AUGUSTA
I got lots of people.

SOLDIER #2
I don't see nobody.

AUGUSTA
I said I got lots of people.

Caleb comes round with Martin, the new horse.

CALEB
Here's your horse.

Caleb puts the horse between Augusta and the Soldier. The Soldier is now blocked from her view.

SOLDIER #2
That's a mighty fine horse for such a young girl.

CALEB
(shooting him a look)
You go on now, Augusta.

AUGUSTA
What about Fern?

CALEB
I'll take care of Fern.

Augusta mounts Martin.

Martin starts to move, and Soldier #2 keeps his eyes on her. He bends down and runs his hand along Battle's head. He and Caleb share another look.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Augusta rides Martin.

In the background, we hear a GUNSHOT.

And then ANOTHER.

Augusta stops the horse. Listens intently.

ANOTHER.

And then Augusta kicks Martin, and he's off -- now there's just the sound of the night, the girl, and the horse.

EXT. ROAD - LATER

Augusta rides FAST.

Suddenly something CATCHES her dress. She GASPS.

She turns as her dress RIPS, leaving a patch behind in the fingers of a tree.

She turns back, looking ahead, riding FASTER.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

Augusta slows as she approaches the lights of the FARM.

Mad is waiting outside for her.

MAD

Where you get that horse?

AUGUSTA

Whore gave it to me.

MAD

I knew your Daddy wasn't just playin' cards.

INT. BATHROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Mad and Augusta stand on either side of the bathroom door. STEAM pours through the cracks in the wood and under the door.

Louise is SCREAMING.

This goes on for some time.

And then, after a bit, it's over. It's quiet.

Mad and Augusta look at each other. They wait another beat. And Mad opens the door.

Steam is EVERYWHERE.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Louise lies in bed, red-faced and breathing deeply.

Mad lies next to her.

Augusta sits in a chair next to the bed, looking out the window.

Augusta goes to Louise and lifts the skirt of her nightgown. The WOUND shines purple and black. She takes a cloth, dabs it with vinegar and applies it to the wound.

Louise MOANS, but doesn't wake.

EXT. FIELDS - LATER

Two dead CHICKENS lie on the ground.

Augusta and Mad look down like GIANTS at the chickens.

MAD
Must be the raccoon.

AUGUSTA
Means we can't eat em, right?

MAD
Probably best not to.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - MID-DAY

AUGUSTA
What do you mean there's nothing to eat?

MAD
You hit anything today?

AUGUSTA
No. Didn't have no --

MAD
We should talk 'bout that goat again.

AUGUSTA
His name's Pete.

MAD
I know his name.

AUGUSTA
Then don't call him 'that goat.'

MAD
Just cause you give him a name don't mean
we can't eat him.

AUGUSTA
We need the milk.

MAD
We need the meat.

AUGUSTA
We got turnips and carrots.

MAD
How long you think that goin' to last?

They stand in silence for a moment.

AUGUSTA
We got anything to drink?

MAD
Yeah. Goat's milk.

AUGUSTA
That's not what I meant.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - SAME

CLOSE ON: A JAR OF MOONSHINE as Mad sets it down on the table. She and Augusta both stare at it for a moment.

MAD
Jesus ain't goin' be happy bout this.

AUGUSTA
I think there's lots of things Jesus
ain't happy 'bout right now.

MAD
Lord forgive me.

AUGUSTA
You never had this before?

MAD
No ma'am.

AUGUSTA
I'll show you.

Augusta gets two glasses. Mad pours. Augusta raises her glass. Mad raises hers.

Augusta downs hers. Slams down the glass.

Mad downs hers. Slams down the glass.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
That's the worst thing I ever tasted.

MAD
But you --

Augusta grins.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - LATER

Mad and Augusta are now DRUNK.

AUGUSTA
Gets easier more you drink.

MAD
Gets real easier.

AUGUSTA
I like the way I feel.

MAD
Bill was the only one your Papa let drink
it. He would come back at night just
stinkin' from it.

AUGUSTA
You was with him? Bill?

A beat.

MAD
I was.

AUGUSTA
You wanted to have his babies.

MAD
Oh, lord.

AUGUSTA
You miss him?

MAD
I do.

AUGUSTA
Was he --

Augusta stops herself.

MAD

Go on -- with this moonshine in me I'm
fixed to answer any question you got.

AUGUSTA

You real sad?

MAD

We all real sad.

Augusta gets a dreamy girl look on her face like she's
fixing to ask something blue.

AUGUSTA

What's it like?

MAD

Oh no.

AUGUSTA

You said you'd --

Mad motions for Augusta to pour her another shot.

Augusta pours. Mad drinks.

MAD

What you wanna know?

AUGUSTA

What's it like? What's it feel like?

MAD

You'll know.

AUGUSTA

But what if I won't?

MAD

You'll know when your husband takes you --

AUGUSTA

What if all the men kill all the other
men? What if it's the end of the world
and we the only ones left.

MAD

It's not the end of the world --

AUGUSTA

I think about all the women sittin' in
houses right now were supposed to be
taken, but ain't.

(MORE)

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Learned how to shoot a gun fore they
learned how to bed. Learned how to be men
'stead of wives.

Mad hears her. She thinks about it.

MAD

It's scary. It feels good, but it's
scary. It hurts! But *good* hurts. Like
ridin' a horse. Or shootin' a gun.

AUGUSTA

You didn't ever shoot no gun --

MAD

Well, what does it feel like?

Augsuta thinks.

AUGUSTA

Feels powerful --

MAD

Yeah --

AUGUSTA

And it hurts --

MAD

That's right --

AUGUSTA

But you like it --

MAD

That's what I'm talkin' bout --

AUGUSTA

It's like shootin' a gun --

MAD

Yes ma'am --

AUGUSTA

Alright.

A beat. She SMILES.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Least I done that!

They LAUGH and CLINK glasses and shoot some more
moonshine. A silence overtakes the room, but it's
comfortable and soft. Until --

A NOISE, directly behind them. They turn to see...

LOUISE.

She's just standing there. Like a GHOST.

Augusta and Mad stare at her.

Louise tries to speak. She can't quite do it.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

What is it Louise?

MAD

What you need?

Pause.

LOUISE

I'm... hungry.

MAD

Did she say --

AUGUSTA

-- hungry?

Mad and Augusta break into noises of RAPTURE. Shouting and hollering and dancing around the room. Louise, standing stock still at the center of it all, even manages a smile.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

She's hungry!

MAD

What did you say?!

LOUISE

I'm hungry.

MAD

Say it again!

LOUISE

I'm hungry!

INT. KEEPING ROOM - LATER

Mad is at the stove, cooking FURIOUSLY.

MAD

I'm gonna cook you somethin' so good,
 Louise. Come back from the dead stew,
 that's what. Come-back-from-the-dead
 stew!

Augusta is sitting next to Louise. She stares at her. Louise just looks ahead.

Mad starts to sing a song while she cooks. It's about -- of course -- come-back-from-the-dead stew.

Augusta touches Louise's hair like something you're not supposed to touch. Louise looks at Augusta and smiles.

LOUISE

You thought I was gone?

Augusta can't say the word -- YES -- she can only nod.

Augusta puts her head on the table, Louise puts her head on Augusta's head. They both watch as Mad cooks and sings.

Augusta smiles a contented, drunken smile.

EXT. ROAD - DUSK

CLOSE ON: The red tongue of a tired of a dog, PANTING.

It's Battle.

And then we widen out to reveal Soldier #1 and Soldier #2 as they come walking up behind him. Soldier #2 walks ahead of Soldier #1, who lags behind holding a bottle of WHISKEY and a BLOODY LIP.

SOLDIER #2

Didn't realize you needed your mouth to walk proper.

SOLDIER #1

Whore damn near bit my lip off. I feel dizzy.

SOLDIER #2

Just keep drinking that whiskey. It'll stop hurting soon.

SOLDIER #1

Ain't enough whiskey in this bottle fix what I got.

SOLDIER #2
No one suffers but you.

SOLDIER #1
If you'd a been bit we'd still be sitting
back at the whorehouse stead of moving.

SOLDIER #2
Don't quite know that I'd call what
you're doing moving.

SOLDIER #1
You sure we're going the right way?

SOLDIER #2
Road only goes one way.

SOLDIER #1
How do you know it's the right road in
the first place?

SOLDIER#2
Battle knows.

SOLDIER #1
Maybe we should stop and look at the map.

SOLDIER#2
Maybe you should quit acting like she bit
off your foot.

Battle suddenly stops and sits.

Soldier #1 and Soldier #2 stop their bickering and take
notice of his stillness.

SOLDIER #2
What is it, boy?

Battle whimpers.

SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)
You got something there?

Battle YELPS.

Soldier #2 looks at Soldier #1, who is now just sitting
down in the center of the road.

Soldier #2 shakes his head and goes over to where Battle
sits, still calling to his master to come look.

As Soldier #2 approaches Battle, he looks up and sees
what the dog sees:

A SWATCH OF FLOWERED FABRIC

is caught in the branches of a tree.

Soldier #2 grabs the fabric off of the tree, holds it to his nose and, breathing deep, takes in the smell.

SOLDIER #1

What's he got?

SOLDIER #2

Let's just say we don't need no map.

INT. BEDROOM - JUST BEFORE DAWN

Mad and Louise sleep. Augusta groggily wakes, and holds her head: her first HANGOVER.

She gets out of bed and splashes water on her face from the basin. And then something MOVES behind her...

It's just Louise having a restless sleep. Augusta gazes out the window...

Outside is the pre-morning sky, the silhouettes of trees in still dark light, and...

SMOKE.

Augusta leans closer to the window.

Indeed, it is smoke -- a thin stream of it -- and it is not too far away. And at the base of the smoke, a small FIRE.

Augusta, eyes locked, grabs her rifle from the bedside. She sits in a rocking chair, rifle in hand, looking out the window.

EXT. CREEK - THE NEXT DAY

A series of images:

-- Trees rustle and sway.

-- The creek moves, hitting rocks and dragging sticks.

-- Augusta runs down the hill to the creek with a BUCKET.

-- Mad helps Louise slowly down the hill and helps her sit down. Augusta hikes her skirts and stands in the water.

-- Mad sits with Louise as Augusta fills the bucket and hauls it to where the others sit. Augusta fills the ladle with the cool drink and Louise sips it down.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

Augusta carries the full buckets of water on her shoulders. Mad supports Louise.

Augusta stops. Mad and Louise walk past her. She looks off in the distance, dumbstruck.

There's that SMOKE again. Even closer, now.

EXT. FIELDS - MORNING

Augusta walking quickly.

MAD (O.S.)
Augusta! Augusta!

Augusta gets to the GOAT FIELD. Mad is standing over something.

THE GOAT IS DEAD.

MAD (CONT'D)
We gotta find that raccoon.

AUGUSTA
Wait --

Augusta bends down and inspects the goat more closely.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
Gimme' that stick.

Mad retrieves a nearby stick. Augusta takes the stick and pushes the goat's head to the side with it and...

ITS NECK has been SLIT from one side to the other.

MAD
What --

AUGUSTA
Wasn't no raccoon did this.

MAD
Probably not them chickens neither.

AUGUSTA

No -- the chickens was the raccoon.

MAD

What now?

Augusta starts to speak and stops herself. She thinks.

AUGUSTA

Just say it.

MAD

Say what?

AUGUSTA

You did this.

MAD

What?

AUGUSTA

You wanted him dead - you been wantin' to eat him and now you blamin' a raccoon?

MAD

I ain't kill nothin' without you.

Augusta pushes Mad. Mad grabs her hands. Holds tight.

MAD (CONT'D)

Catch yourself, Augusta.

Augusta loosens her grip. Mad drops Augusta's hands.

AUGUSTA

If it wasn't you, what then?

MAD

This farm is cursed.

AUGUSTA

What do you mean?

MAD

White girls get things kept from 'em.

AUGUSTA

I don't like what you're implyin' --

MAD

I seen the ghosts of this house with my own two eyes.

AUGUSTA
Ain't got no ghosts.

MAD
There are monsters in this world you
don't know 'bout.

Augusta considers this.

AUGUSTA
We should eat it.

MAD
I wouldn't.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - NIGHT

Augusta and Louise furiously eat the GOAT. Mad just sits and watches.

AUGUSTA
You sure you don't --

MAD
Nuh-uh.

They go back to it. It's more than a little disgusting.

Over this image, the sound of a horse breathing fast takes us to --

EXT. TOWN - DAY

It's empty, as before.

The Black Rider and his horse come down the road through town. They reach the Saloon.

EXT. SALOON - DAY

The body of CALEB, the bartender, lying in the street, DEAD. The Black Rider goes to him, rolls him over, knows even before he sees him that he's dead. He shakes his head.

There is a horse lying DEAD not too far off from where Caleb lies. The Black Rider moves to the horse. He comes around the front and sees it's proud, dead face.

The Black Rider bends down.

BLACK RIDER

...Fern?

He looks up, eyes searching.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Augusta shakes Mad AWAKE.

MAD

What --

AUGUSTA

Shhhhhh.

MAD

Why you wake me up just to be quiet?

AUGUSTA

Just listen.

They listen together. NOTHING.

MAD

I'm goin' back to --

AUGUSTA

Just wait. Please.

MAD

Probably just some a them ghosts you
white people got in here.

They wait. Nothing.

MAD (CONT'D)

I'm goin' back to sleep.

AUGUSTA

Please just wait. Come have a look with
me.

MAD

If I come downstairs with you and we look
around, then we go back to sleep?

Augusta nods.

MAD (CONT'D)

Alright.

INT. STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER

Augusta, gun in hand. Mad right behind her. They quietly make their way down the stairs.

They hear a NOISE. It's coming from outside.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Augusta and Mad move in the darkness.

The sounds of a struggle:

RIP!

A SNARL as flesh and bone TEAR.

Augusta rounds the corner of the house and sees a CREATURE tearing ANOTHER CREATURE apart. It's dark, but she's sure as sure that it's the RACCOON.

Augusta AIMS, SHOOTS and HITS. The menace WHIMPERS and COLLAPSES. Augusta runs towards it.

The raccoon is dead, but not because she killed it. It's dead because the dog she just shot had devoured it.

THE DEAD DOG IS BATTLE.

Augusta backs away in fear.

She runs into someone, CRIES OUT --

It's MAD.

AUGUSTA
We gotta get inside.

MAD
Was it the raccoon?

AUGUSTA
Yes -- but somethin' else too.

MAD
What?

AUGUSTA
We gotta get inside now, Mad.

And suddenly in the distance we hear DRUNKEN singing -- men's voices, melodies in the night.

SOLDIER #1
Battle! PHFT! PHFT! Battle!

Augusta runs inside the house. Mad follows --

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Augusta and Mad run upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

They wake Louise.

AUGUSTA

Get up.

LOUISE

No.

MAD

(to Augusta)

You tell me what's goin' on.

AUGUSTA

There's men comin'. Soldiers.

MAD

And how is that bad?

AUGUSTA

Yankees.

MAD

What make you think that?

AUGUSTA

I just shot their dog!

MAD

How you know what dog belong to what
Yankees?

AUGUSTA

I tell you once we're safe, alright?

MAD

Safe from what?

AUGUSTA

(almost to herself)

I knew it when I saw that goat, and I
didn't --

SOLDIER #2 (O.S.)
 You shot my dog!

Augusta motions to Mad and Louise to sit still and quiet.

SOLDIER #2 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 (louder)
 You shot my dog!

SOLDIER #1 (O.S.)
 (singing)
 He was just a dog.
 Same as you and me.

Pause.

SOLDIER #1 (CONT'D)
 (singing)
 And you went and shot him.
 Couldn't let him be.

SOLDIER #2 (O.S.)
 He is singing but he only sings when he's
 real drunk or real mad and right now,
 he's both!

A beat. He is waiting for some kind of response.

SOLDIER #2 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Young lady we got guns ain't been used in
 days. And they are *itching* to fire.

And then it's quiet. The women whisper, and fast:

AUGUSTA
 Where are the other guns?

MAD
 What?

AUGUSTA
 The guns --

MAD
 I think they in the shed.
 (remembering)
 Oh! And that small one in the box
 downstairs --

AUGUSTA
 We need to get all of 'em and bring 'em
 back.

MAD

Bring 'em back where?

AUGUSTA

Here.

MAD

Why you wanna stay here?

AUGUSTA

Where else we goin' to go?

MAD

Keepin' room. Only safe place there is on this land.

AUGUSTA

We ain't leavin' this house.

MAD

Too many doors and windows and rooms --

AUGUSTA

We ain't leavin' --

MAD

And why not? If they is soldiers like you say -- what can we do?

AUGUSTA

We goin' to fight.

MAD

We goin' to fight the Union army?

AUGUSTA

S'only two men.

MAD

How you know that?

AUGUSTA

I suppose I don't --

MAD

Louise, come with me --

AUGUSTA

(angry, now)

You ain't takin' her.

LOUISE

I don't want to fight nobody, Augusta --

AUGUSTA

And what happens once they find you down
there? What happens when you're in the
Keepin' Room and they come through and
you just sittin' there --

MAD

They don't know nobody's here. That's why
we gotta hide and the Keepin' Room, it's
safe and small.

AUGUSTA

They know we're here. I shot their dog.
(a beat, and then she tells
them)
They followed me.

MAD

What --

Suddenly, a SOUND from downstairs --

A WINDOW BREAKS.

Louise goes to SCREAM. Mad covers her mouth.

Once they are still, Augusta moves to the door.

AUGUSTA

You lock this behind me. And don't you
dare go to no Keepin' Room.

She goes out. Louise tries to stop her. Mad pulls her
down.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Augusta creeps through the house. We hear the Soldiers
drunkenly singing just outside the wall of the house as
she moves from one room to another.

SOLDIER #1 (O.S.)

(singing)

His dog is gone.
He can't go on.

SOLDIER #2 (O.S.)

You best stop that singing before I turn
this gun on you.

INT. ANOTHER ROOM - NIGHT

Augusta opens a window. She looks out towards the front of the house, points her gun down, looks from side to side.

She can't see the soldiers.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Mad and Louise sit huddled in the corner.

A SHARP KNOCK.

AUGUSTA (O.S.)

It's me.

Mad opens the door. Augusta slips in and quickly closes the door behind her.

LOUISE

You alright.

AUGUSTA

I can hear 'em but I can't see 'em.

MAD

I still says it's ghosts.

Another window downstairs BREAKS.

AUGUSTA

You know ghosts who break windows?

Augusta stands.

LOUISE

What are you doin'?

AUGUSTA

Do you want them to come up here?

LOUISE

No.

AUGUSTA

Then I gotta go.

Augusta goes.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Augusta stands at the top of the stairs. Takes a deep breath and makes her decision.

She smells something. Once she's at the bottom of the stairs, she darts to --

INT. FRONT HALL - SAME

A small fire BLAZES on the floor just inside the broken window. The gas lamp has been shoved onto the floor and there it has broken and set a fire.

Augusta drops the gun and looks around for something to put out the fire. There's nothing. Thinking fast, she pulls off her nightgown and puts the fire out with it.

Once it's out she picks up the gun again.

She moves through the house now, NAKED, gun in hand.

Another window BREAKS. She moves to the nearest HALLWAY and hides in the darkness.

In the WINDOW:

A HAND creeps through the broken glass and goes to open the window from inside.

From the shadows, Augusta takes aims at the hand. She tries to steady herself best she can and when she's ready, she takes a long deep breath...

And SHOOTS.

The hand RECOILS as the bullet passes through the tender area between the thumb and forefinger.

SOLDIER #1 (O.S.)

Jesus!

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Augusta holds the gun. Listening. Waiting.

A SHOT is fired back -- it hits the wall near her. She GASPS. Soldier #1 yells something to Soldier #2 about his hand, and then their voices recede from the side of the house.

Augusta WAITS. She is FROZEN in place. She waits until she can't hear the Soldiers anymore. And then she waits just a bit more.

Cautiously, she moves to the window. She opens what's left of it and hangs outside, holding the gun tight. She looks to her right...

NOTHING.

To her left...

NOTHING.

They're gone...

CRASH!

Soldier #1 runs at the side of the house and grabs at Augusta with his now very bloody hand. She quickly pulls herself inside and slams the window down on his hand --

He lets out a SCREAM --

INT. FRONT HALL - SAME

Augusta is running fast. She grabs the gas lamp.

She digs around underneath a table and pulls out a small box. It's nothing special, filled with mostly trinkets and odds and ends, things that may have belonged to her mother, a long time ago...

And then she finds it: a small PISTOL.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Soldier #1 holds his arm to his chest. He is moving quickly, but comes to rest on an exterior wall of the house.

SOLDIER #1
(under his breath)
Shit shit shit!

He breathes deeply, his gun at the ready.

Suddenly Soldier #2 comes around the side of the house.

Soldier #1 STARTS and AIMS...

SOLDIER #2
Drop your gun, it's me.

Beat. He does.

SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)
How bad?

SOLDIER #1
Women takin' all kinds of parts of me
today.

He shows his hand. It's bad. Soldier #2 winces at the site of it.

Decisive, he crouches down next to Soldier #1 and puts down his gun. He takes the tail of his shirt from his pants and rips part of it off at the bottom. He wraps the scrap around Soldier #1's hand.

AUGUSTA (O.S.)
(from inside the house)
I will use this gun again!

Soldier #2 looks to Soldier #1 as if to say:

You got it in you to keep going?

Soldier #1 nods. Soldier #2 gets up and helps him up.

They grab their guns.

SOLDIER #2
(loud)
No more games. We're coming in.

He motions for Soldier #1 to be quiet and points towards the roof.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Augusta hears words but isn't sure exactly where they are coming from, or where the men plan to enter the house.

There's a real racket outside now --

BANG!

They seem to be kicking the walls. *Are they trying to kick them in?*

And then the sound of a BODY falling and hitting the soft earth below... and then a pause... and then that banging on the walls again...

And then she puts it together:

THEY ARE CLIMBING THE HOUSE.

Augusta runs to the stairs and then realizes something and heads back down. Quickly, she puts out the other gas lamps and runs back up.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Augusta knocks on the bedroom door.

AUGUSTA

Open up! It's me!

Mad opens the door.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

This conversation happens VERY quickly:

LOUISE

What's happening? Where are your --

AUGUSTA

(to Mad)

Do you know how to use a gun?

MAD

What --

AUGUSTA

Do you know how to use a gun --

LOUISE

Why are you naked?

AUGUSTA

There was a fire. I had to put it out.

LOUISE

What?

Augusta opens a wardrobe and pulls on a pair of bloomers and a camisole as she talks.

AUGUSTA

Watch. You take the powder and put it in,
then you take the ball and put it in.
Then, you pull this part back and you
wait and when you're ready, you push this
as hard as you can.

Mad takes the PISTOL.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Wait. But don't wait too long.

MAD

Alright.

Now there is BANGING on the walls downstairs. Some shouts
and conversation. And suddenly we realize...

The men continue to CLIMB THE HOUSE.

LOUISE

Are they --

AUGUSTA

You got that?

MAD

Yes.

Louise is scared. She doesn't understand what's
happening.

AUGUSTA

And remember, don't shoot unless you're
sure or else --

MAD

I know what else.

AUGUSTA

Now -- I'm gonna need to you to run.

LOUISE

Where we goin?

MAD

The Keepin' Room.

AUGUSTA

That's right.

Mad nods.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
Mad was right. Ain't safe here.

LOUISE
But you said --

BANG!

The soldiers are SO CLOSE. They can almost hear them breathing.

AUGUSTA
Mad, you take that gun and you take my sister and you run as fast as you can and you get to the Keepin' Room. And once you there, you stay with that gun, ready to shoot.

LOUISE
What about you?

The men have reached the second floor.

AUGUSTA
Gonna' make sure they don't see where you went.

LOUISE
But --

AUGUSTA
Louise. Go.

Louise nods. She takes the small gas lamp to light their way. Augusta opens the door.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Mad and Louise quietly slip out and run down the stairs to the back door. They open it and ease into the night, leaving the door open behind them.

From outside, the sound of the soldiers climbing and banging seems to suddenly CEASE.

Mad and Louise disappear from sight.

Augusta moves quietly towards the open door, her GUN leading the way. We stay with her, the door growing larger on frame with each step she takes...

She doesn't see anyone. She doesn't hear anyone. Or was that a -- no, it can't be...

It's just sound of her footsteps as she moves...

EXT. FARMHOUSE - SAME

Augusta moves across the long walkway to the closed door of the KEEPING ROOM. Still only the sound of her feet...

Noiselessly, she opens the door...

It's EMPTY.

A TERRIFYING SCREAM comes from the front of the house.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - SAME

Augusta RUNS around to the other side of the house.

The front door is OPEN. She goes inside.

INT. FARMHOUSE - SAME

The sounds of STRUGGLE pour down the stairs.

She knows she has to be strategic. QUIET.

But quite suddenly she is overwhelmed... she can't take it...

She starts to cry...

She stifles her heavy breath...

She stands in silence, alone.

She hears people upstairs. The muffled noises of Louise or Mad trying to CRY OUT.

CRASHING. BREAKING. CRIES.

She steadies herself and moves towards the stairs.

INT. STAIRCASE - SAME

Augusta goes up the stairs.

A CREAK. A PAUSE.

And then --

SHE IS RIPPED OUT OF FRAME FROM BEHIND.

But the camera continues to move up the stairs, creeping upwards as if we are following Augusta on what is now the journey of a ghost. It comes to rest in front of the bedroom door, where the muffled sounds of a struggle can be heard from within.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

Soldier #1 is on one side of the room, Louise is on the other. He moves towards her, she moves away. She is very weak.

The small gas lamp sits next to the table.

SOLDIER #1
If you don't stop moving, I might just shoot you.

Louise stops moving.

SOLDIER #1 (CONT'D)
I don't want to shoot you.

Louise moves away again.

SOLDIER #1 (CONT'D)
If you don't want me to shoot you, why don't you come and sit right here, on the bed.

Louise gives up and moves to the bed.

He holds the gun in one hand -- the hand that hasn't been shot up -- and RIPS her nightgown off with the bandaged one. It doesn't rip all the way, so he TEARS at it again. Some of the blood from his hand gets on her skin.

Louise is SHAKING.

He pushes her back on the bed. He pulls down his pants and begins to RAPE her.

She CRIES out. He pulls the upper part of her nightgown up and stuffs it in her mouth. She GAGS.

He continues to hold the gun as he rapes her.

She tries to rise up, but she is so weak, and he is a man. He pushes her back down. He holds her down with the hand with the gun in it.

Finally, she submits.

This is not something to look at, not ever.

But there is one small moment, just one, where it doesn't feel wrong to Louise, when she goes to a place in her mind where she realizes that this -- *this* -- is what it feels like to have a man inside you. And it feels good.

A GUNSHOT rings out from outside just as he finishes.

It's over.

He moves off of her. After a moment we hear her slow, wheezing breaths.

Continuing to hold the gun, he stands, pulls up his pants and flattens his shirt inside them. He walks over to the window. Looks out. Sees nothing.

Louise doesn't move.

He slowly walks over to the mirror. Smooths his hair.

He takes some water from the basin and splashes it on his face. He looks at Louise, behind him in the mirror.

He looks at her lying there. He looks at the blood around her. She sees it too.

He walks by the bed, looking at her, and keeps walking towards the door. Their eyes meet for a moment. Usually, they don't look at him after. It unnerves him, looking in her eyes.

He shakes it off. He's proud. Like a hunter after the kill. He opens the door, steps out, and --

BANG!

He is shot right in the HEAD.

Mad stands there, shaking, PISTOL aimed straight out.

After a moment, Louise stands and moves towards the open door. HALF alive, nightgown HALF off, BLOOD EVERYWHERE.

She takes Mad's gun and tries to shoot him again. The gun doesn't go off --

CLICK! CLICK CLICK!

But it only had the one bullet. She struggles to pull the Soldier's gun out of his hand, finally gets it and shoots him in the head.

And then she takes the butt of the gun and bashes his face in with it.

ONCE.

TWICE.

THREE TIMES.

Mad wrestles with Louise.

MAD
Enough. Enough.

Louise resists. Mad wrestles on.

MAD (CONT'D)
Enough.

Finally, Louise submits.

Augusta comes running up the stairs. She stops when she sees the soldier dead on the ground and the women beside him.

AUGUSTA
You sure learned to use that fast.

MAD
Where's the other one?

AUGUSTA
He got Daddy's gun. And part of me too.

Augusta motions to her leg. She's been SHOT. The back of the leg. There's blood everywhere. She swoons a little.

MAD
Let's go to the Keepin' Room.
(pause)
This time, we go together.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - NIGHT

Mad, Augusta Louise come through the door. Mad and Louise hoist Augusta up between them.

They put her down on a chair. Louise collapses into the one next to her.

Mad runs to one of the cabinets and pulls out some muslin. She also pulls out the big jug of MOONSHINE.

She puts them both down on the table.

Augusta stretches her leg out, pulls up the bloomers.

Mad pours the moonshine on the wound.

AUGUSTA

AAAGGGHHH.

Then, Mad rips the muslin with her teeth and winds it around Augusta's wound.

Louise is still wearing the bloody, torn nightgown, but she's wrapped it around herself in such a way that it hides what needs to be hidden.

Augusta sits back down. Mad sits too.

Augusta pours three shots of moonshine. She puts one down in front of Louise.

LOUISE

You want me to drink this?

AUGUSTA

Yes.

MAD

You mind your sister and drink up.

The three women take the shot and SLAM down the glasses.

Louise sputters. Coughs.

LOUISE

More.

Augusta pours Louise another shot.

Louise drinks it down. Sputters less.

It's quiet for a moment.

MAD

At my second farm, there was this one shed we wasn't allowed at. All the other sheds had their jobs. One for feed. One for tools. But there was this one shed that we was told never to go in. Not to play near it. Not to get curious. We made up all sorts of stories bout it. Gold. Monsters. God. Then, one day when I was 'bout 10 the man told me to go to the shed. '

(MORE)

MAD (CONT'D)

Til then, I had never known what happiness was. I was goin' to the shed. I would get to know. I walked to the shed, my heart comin' out my dress, I was gonna get to know, I was gonna get to know. I was gonna be the one to tell all the others.

Beat.

MAD (CONT'D)

I open the door. Only thing in there was a low cot and no windows. I stood in there a minute so unsure. So sad that that was all. Wonderin' why we wasn't supposed to know for so long. And then the man come in. And he had me. He was so big and I was so small. So small that I didn't even know what was happenin'. That was the first time. And there were many more. Some times they cut the baby out. Other times, they kept 'em. I don't know where they are now.

LOUISE

You don't think --

MAD

You might.

Louise looks down.

MAD (CONT'D)

There are many kinds of monsters. You never know which one goin' be yours. Wish I could say I killed mine. You put a bullet in yours today.

Louise looks at Mad in a way she never has.

Mad raises her glass to Louise and drinks. Augusta is in a trance.

MAD (CONT'D)

(to Augusta)

You alright?

AUGUSTA

Yeah.

MAD

Your daddy never did -- don't you worry. He hit us, sure, but never that.

Augusta nods.

And then they hear a NOISE outside. A man's feet pounding on the earth.

MAD (CONT'D)
We best be sure that door is locked.

And then --

BANG!

A GUNSHOT. And ANOTHER. Right outside the door, but not at it.

Augsuta moves to check the door. She stays real close to it. The women don't dare to breathe.

Until...

The door knob RATTLES...

All of this happens VERY FAST:

Mad stands right behind Augsuta, clutching her pistol --

Augusta motions for Mad to hand her the pistol, she places it right at the center of the door --

Louise backs into the corner --

Augusta looks back at her sister and at Mad, both shaking with fear --

BANGING on the door.

Augusta SHOOTS.

The bullet tears through and --

THUD.

SILENCE.

Augusta looks back at Mad and Louise again. She puts her ear to the door. There is no sound.

She presses her eye to the hole made by the gun.

We see the BOOTS of a Union Army soldier pointing toes-up towards the sky.

And then...

Augusta's face cracks into a SMILE. She begins to laugh a crazy, hysterical laugh. Louise smiles too, and begins to echo Augusta's laugh. It's almost as if she is controlled by her.

MAD (CONT'D)
You don't even know if he all dead yet.

Augusta stops. So does Louise.

Cautiously, Augusta opens the door. The BODY lies before her. She walks out, gun at the ready.

Mad and Louise wait behind in the Keeping Room.

EXT. KEEPING ROOM - SAME

Augusta peers down through the darkness and sees a BLACK FACE staring back up at her. Eyes WIDE.

It is the face of the BLACK RIDER.

THIS IS BILL.

Augusta drops the pistol and backs up into...

INT. KEEPING ROOM - SAME

MAD
What is it?

Augusta just keeps moving backwards. Mad stands and goes to the body.

AUGUSTA
Don't!

LOUISE
What? What's wrong?

EXT. KEEPING ROOM - SAME

Mad stands staring down at Bill.

She doesn't move for a LONG moment. She stands there, staring, weighing, realizing...

Until finally...

She kneels down, and kisses him real hard on the mouth. She looks down and takes the pistol out of his belt, stands up, goes back inside, and closes the door.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - SAME

Mad walks back past Augusta and sits at the table.

Augusta is shaking now. She just looks at Mad.

A LONG PAUSE.

AUGUSTA

Say somethin'. Please. Just say somethin'
Mad.

Mad remains silent.

LOUISE

What's goin' on?

AUGUSTA

I'm just gonna keep havin' to say words
cause I can't bear this quiet.

MAD

(to herself, real quiet)
He come back.

AUGUSTA

That's not what I'm... please, Mad --

MAD

It ain't bout you.

AUGUSTA

But I --

MAD

I ain't angry with you, Augusta.

AUGUSTA

Wha --

MAD

I'm angry cause I came right close to
killin' him myself.

Augusta moves right next to Mad. Mad grabs her hand real hard.

LOUISE

We wanted him dead, right?

AUGUSTA

Hit me or hurt me or somethin'.

MAD

(biting back feeling)

Glad you done it 'stead of me. He would never forgive me if I's the one who done it.

AUGUSTA

But it didn't even have to be --

MAD

What? You want me to sit here cryin'? Talk 'bout how much I love Bill? How I can't believe he made it all the way here just to die? What's the purpose in that? How that goin' to get us through this night?

LOUISE

(realizing what happened)

Wha --

AUGUSTA

Mad --

MAD

There's another man come through that door any second. Ain't no time to think on such things.

Beat.

LOUISE

Bill? He came back -- he was goin' to --

MAD

When you goin' to learn what don't happen don't matter?

Augusta motions to Louise to be quiet.

MAD (CONT'D)

You just go on.

Mad takes out Bill's gun. Holds it. Regards it. Puts it in the waist of her skirt.

AUGUSTA

We best block up that door, 'case that other one come back.

MAD

We ain't goin' to wait for him.

LOUISE

What we goin' to do?

MAD

We goin' out there to hunt him. And we
ain't come back here 'til he ours.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

We're WIDE on the farm and the surrounding buildings.
Maybe we see two tiny figures, creeping. But it could
just be a trick of the eye.

And save for the symphony of southern bugs...

It's DEAD QUIET.

And then on the side of the frame, we see...

Soldier #2 moving through the darkness. Gun up. Ready to
catch those girls.

SLAM!

The door to the farmhouse shuts.

He turns. Goes to it. Enters, cautiously.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Soldier #2 moves quietly through the house, gun at the
ready.

He hears FOOTSTEPS going up the stairs.

INT. STAIRCASE - SAME

He moves up the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

He looks into one room. It's EMPTY.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Another room. EMPTY.

But did he hear something at the other end of the house?

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

In the back of the dark room he sees a man sitting in a chair with his back to the door. A gas lamp blazes next to him.

Soldier #2 immediately holds up his gun, ready to shoot if the man is an enemy.

SOLDIER #2

That you, Henry?

No response. Can't be Henry then. He raises his gun.

SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)

Who are you?

still nothing.

SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)

I said: who are you?

And still nothing

SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)

You the man was shooting at me before?

Silence.

SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)

I got a gun ready to fire right through the back of your head if you don't answer me.

He's scared now, but --

SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)

Answer me!

In a moment of bravery, he kicks the chair around with his boot, gun pointed but shaking in his hands.

His breathing STOPS.

It is Soldier #1 -- HENRY -- propped up in the chair, head blown straight through and bashed up, and what's left of his eyes are WIDE and WILD.

Soldier #2 muffles his own scream by shoving his fist in his mouth.

There's a note pinned to his chest that simply reads:

YOU NEXT.

Over this he hears:

The VOICES of girls singing outside the house. Maybe it's one of the songs they sang earlier.

Soldier #2 is shaking. He is bewildered.

FEAR in his eyes.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Soldier #2 comes stalking into the night.

The flash of a FIGURE runs in-between two out buildings. He tries to see where it went, but it's too fast.

Then ANOTHER FIGURE off to the side.

He doesn't know which way to go.

And ANOTHER. He starts towards it, but then it's gone.

A WAIL -- coyote like, something not quite animal but not quite human -- emanates from the trees.

SOLDIER #2

Who are you? You tryin' to scare me? Show yourself, coward!

The SINGING starts again, and somehow... it's coming from the trees.

He moves towards the trees where he thinks the singing is coming from. He gets real close to it -- it's loud now -- and then suddenly it STOPS.

He hears something coming --

WHUMP! WHUMP! WHUMP!

And out from the darkness comes a horse -- MARTIN -- GALLOPING straight for him.

At first he's too bewildered to move, but he gets his wits about him just in time to jump out of the way and falls to the ground as Martin gallops past him and disappears into the dark.

He shakes his head and looks around. And then --

Like an apparition, there's Louise. She's a good distance away, but it's most certainly her. They hold each other's gaze for a moment...

And then she's GONE.

SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)
I see you, girl!

Louise runs as fast as she can into --

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Soldier #2 cautiously enters. It's dark in here. He can't see her.

He moves slowly, carefully, gun at the ready.

A VOICE from above --

LOUISE (O.S.)
Please don't shoot. I don't have a gun.

He turns in the direction of the voice.

SOLDIER #2
Where --

And then the voice is suddenly SOMEWHERE ELSE.

LOUISE (O.S.)
I'm scared. There's another man loose on the farm. He's trying to kill us, too.

SOLDIER #2
How you movin' round like that?

LOUISE (O.S.)
I'm scared.

SOLDIER #2
You seen the man's face?

LOUISE
He's everywhere.

And now the sound of CLIMBING.

SOLDIER #2
You goin' up to the hayloft?

LOUISE (O.S.)
Your friend had me.

Soldier #2 gropes around in the dark until his hands land on A LADDER. He looks up to the hayloft and slowly begins to climb.

SOLDIER #2

Did he now?

LOUISE (O.S.)

If I let you, do you promise not to shoot me? Will you protect me from the other one?

SOLDIER #2

I have to find you first.

CREAK.

Louise's feet carefully move across the boards of the hayloft.

LOUISE (OS)

Ain't goin' to let you find me less you promise.

SOLDIER #2

Alright. I promise.

Louise LIGHTS a MATCH and holds right up near her FACE.

She is facing him. She waves it out.

Soldier #2 catches a glimpse of her EYES. He moves towards her, she moves back.

Another MATCH:

Her LIPS.

She waves it out. Moving backwards, now.

He advances.

Louise's feet, walking backwards, so lightly.

Another MATCH:

Her HAIR.

She waves it out. Still moving backwards.

His feet, approaching.

One last MATCH:

She is SMILING, beckoning.

He steps towards her and...

THERE'S NOTHING THERE.

There's no floor. The board is gone. He FALLS, emits a GUTTURAL sound, some CLATTERING, and then --

THUD. He hits the ground.

His gun on the ground beside him.

A foot kicks the gun away. A hand reaches down and grabs it.

AUGUSTA

This belongs to my daddy.

Augusta and Mad face the Soldier, who looks up at them, directly into the barrel of the gun. Louise joins them.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - NIGHT

Mad, Augusta and Louise sit by the fire looking at something across the room, guns trained.

Soldier #2 sits in a chair, feet bound and a rope wrapped around his chest. He's broken now, close to done.

He holds a glass of moonshine, the only thing to ease the pain.

SOLDIER #2

This is fine moonshine.

AUGUSTA

Our daddy made it.

SOLDIER #2

Your Papa made fine moonshine.

Silence.

SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)

Mighty fine of you to give me some sips before I go.

The women just stare at him.

SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)

Who was that other man shooting at me?

MAD
That was Bill.

SOLDIER #2
He was wearin' one of ours.

MAD
He was.

SOLDIER #2
Funny that.

MAD
I reckon.

SOLDIER #2
Where is he now?

AUGUSTA
I killed him. Thought it was you.

Soldier #2 cracks a smile and then bursts into a full on LAUGH. It is just him laughing for a good long moment.

Then, he settles and stops.

Again: SILENCE.

SOLDIER #2
He kill my partner?

MAD
No. That was me.

LOUISE
And me.

MAD
He was already dead.

LOUISE
I made him *real* dead.

Mad pauses.

MAD
That you did.

SOLDIER #2
How long you girls been on your own?

AUGUSTA
Long enough.

SOLDIER #2
You do alright.

AUGUSTA
We do alright.

As she speaks, Augusta gets up, goes over to the fire, pulls down the HAT from the game of Blind Man.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
You know, this is my favorite room.
Always been my favorite place on this
whole land. This room. And I guess since
I never been anywhere else, that means
this room is my favorite place in the
whole world.

She puts on the hat.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
My daddy built this room. Bill and
Nathaniel too. And I intend to stay here.
Ain't no one gonna' make it otherwise.

SOLDIER #2
I ain't gonna.

AUGUSTA
You got that right.

SOLDIER #2
Me an' him, we were scouts. Sent on ahead
to cover the outlying land, send messages
back to the coming regiments. Sherman's
marching all across this state and he's
not taking prisoners. None of us are.
(beat)
Georgia's fallen.

AUGUSTA
You kill that bartender? And that whore?

SOLDIER #2
Sure did. But I'm not going to be the one
to kill you. But someone just like me
will. Someone who looks like me, hates
your land like me, he'll shoot you right
in the head. All three of your pretty,
little heads.

AUGUSTA
Too bad you ain't goin' live to see if
you're right or not.

SOLDIER #2
You know how many battles I fought in?

AUGUSTA
Don't seem like many.

SOLDIER #2
No. It don't. But it was. And yet, here I
sit --

AUGUSTA
-- here you sit --

SOLDIER #2
-- shit.

AUGUSTA
That's what you get for bein' bad.

SOLDIER #2
North ain't bad.

AUGUSTA
Didn't say it was. Said you was.

SOLDIER #2
And you, are you good?

AUGUSTA
Don't know anymore.

SOLDIER #2
Used to though, right?

AUGUSTA
Sure did.

SOLDIER #2
And when was that?

AUGUSTA
Back when all the men was where they
belonged. Made the world seem correct.
And then all things got moved and once
all things got moved didn't seem to be a
right and a wrong no more. Didn't seem to
matter. Doesn't matter, does it?

SOLDIER #2
I killed that bartender and that whore.
You going to kill me. Someone going to
kill you too.

AUGUSTA

Maybe.

SOLDIER #2

I'm just glad it's not going to be me.

AUGUSTA

What now?

SOLDIER #2

Glad I don't have to be the one to put the bullets in. Might even say I was starting to like you.

AUGUSTA

You tryin' to get let go -- I know.

SOLDIER #2

I know *she* won't let me outta here alive.

He looks at Mad.

SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)

I'm just telling you I like you. Say something true before I die.

AUGUSTA

(a beat)

I am sorry 'bout your dog.

SOLDIER #2

Thank you.

AUGUSTA

That's a true thing.

SOLDIER #2

He was a good dog.

AUGUSTA

You bout finished your drink?

SOLDIER #2

Just abou --

Augusta shoots him in the head. Louise screams.

LOUISE

Why did you --

AUGUSTA

I was startin' to like him too.

Mad and Louise are speechless.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Now, what we gonna do with these bodies?

A jarring THUMP takes us to --

INT. STAIRCASE - LATER

Mad and Augusta lug Soldier #1 down the stairs by his feet.

THUMP.

THUMP.

EXT. GOAT FIELD - LATER

By the light of the moon, Augusta digs a big, messy HOLE. Louise sits to the side, watching. The body of Soldier #1 lies by her side.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - LATER

Mad drags Soldier #2 by his boots. A trail of blood behind him.

EXT. GOAT FIELD - LATER

Mad drags the body around the side of the house.

MAD

(shouting)

Come help!

Augusta hauls herself out of a SECOND HOLE she's been digging and runs to help Mad carry the body the rest of the way. They dump him next to Soldier #1.

They stop in front of the hole. They look down.

MAD (CONT'D)

Them's good holes.

Augusta nods.

With their feet, Mad and Augusta push the body of Soldier #1 into the ground.

EXT. GOAT FIELD - LATER

Mad and Louise work on filling in the first hole.

Augusta sits by the body of Soldier #2, getting ready to push him in. She looks at his face. She touches his nose. She looks at his jacket and pats his pockets. She pulls out a small purse with some coins and a TINTYPE of a young woman.

She looks at the woman's face. She holds the picture close to hers. She puts it back. She finds a few bullets, too. Takes them.

She looks at him one last time and then, with all her might, she rolls him in.

EXT. GOAT FIELD - LATER

Mad and Augusta shovel the dirt on top of the second hole. Louise sits by.

INT. SHED - NIGHT

Mad is standing inside over Bill's body. They dragged him in there to hide him from Soldier #2.

Augusta walks in. Mad doesn't turn, she just feels Augusta behind her.

MAD

Don't know what I want to do with it.

Beat.

MAD (CONT'D)

Don't want to bury it.

AUGUSTA

You can think on it if you want.

MAD

As long as I just leave 'em there, it's alright.

AUGSUTA

Then leave 'em.

MAD

How strange he show up here dressed up like a Yankee.

AUGUSTA
Disguise maybe?

MAD
No, I reckon he joined up.

AUGUSTA
With them --

MAD
Maybe he was free even.

Augusta understands.

AUGUSTA
And he came back.

MAD
Let's dig him a hole.

AUGUSTA
But you --

MAD
If you don't make me put him in the
ground, I might never stop standin' right
here.

EXT. GOAT FIELD - LATER

The women stand over the now filled up, make-shift
graves, looking at their work.

The THREE GRAVES: mounds of dirt swelling up out of the
earth, side by side.

LOUISE
I remember when this field was full of
goats.

MAD
Seems like lives ago.

AUGUSTA
I reckon it was.

MAD
We should say a prayer.

Mad bows her head and closes her eyes. Augusta and Louise
do the same.

After a moment, Augusta opens her eyes and looks up again. The sky is getting just a bit brighter. The sun's not up, but it's no longer night.

AUGUSTA
We best get inside.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - LATER

Louise sleeps in the corner. Mad and Augusta talk by the fire.

AUGUSTA
You think if Bill made it back... maybe?

MAD
Don't get your hopes high.

AUGUSTA
I know, but --

MAD
Ain't goin' to tell you again.

This next bit in hushed whispers:

AUGUSTA
What are we gonna do if she's got a baby?

MAD
Take care of her. Like always.

AUGUSTA
You know how to cut 'em out?

MAD
That's a Godless thing to say.

AUGUSTA
Sorry.

Beat.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
We stayin' here?

MAD
We are.

AUGUSTA
Then we goin' to need to go out to the garden, get all the food we can. Ain't no animals left.

MAD
I'll go. You stay with Louise.

Augusta nods.

Mad takes the rifle and heads outside.

Augusta looks over at Louise. Watches her sleep.

Augusta looks at her gun. Runs her fingers across it.

AND THEN --

MAD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Augusta!

Augusta starts.

MAD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Augusta come out here!

Augusta wakes Louise.

LOUISE
(waking)
What?

AUGUSTA
Come on.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - SAME

Mad stands on a hill overlooking the land. As Augusta and Louise approach, they know exactly why she called out.

The three women stand, looking out. And then we see:

THE WORLD IS ON FIRE.

LOUISE
Looks like the sky's on fire.

MAD
Looks like the whole world's on fire.

AUGUSTA
They comin'.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - SAME

The three women sip moonshine.

A pile of carrots, turnips and beets fills the table.

The faint SOUNDS OF WAR approaching in the distance.

AUGUSTA

This is all the food we got. Can't go outside no more.

LOUISE

You sure we shouldn't run?

AUGUSTA

Where to? Ain't nothin' safer than these walls.

MAD

Ain't nothin' safe.

AUGUSTA

This room is the best hope we got. This is our home and we gonna' defend it.

LOUISE

This our home.

Louise takes Mad's hand. She holds tight. Mad holds tight back. She knows what Louise is trying to say even if Louise doesn't know quite how to say it.

MAD

So we just sit?

AUGUSTA

No.

A resounding RIP takes us to --

EXT. FARMHOUSE - JUST BEFORE DAWN

Augusta takes wooden SHUTTERS off the side of the farm house.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

Louise PULLS NAILS out of whatever she can.

INT. SHED - SAME

Mad GATHERS tools.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - DAWN

The women furiously BOARD UP the windows.

Louise holds boards as Mad nails them.

Augusta looks wildly around the room and then moves towards the TABLE.

Augusta shoves everything off of it, sending the mess flying around the room.

She tries to upend the table, but she can't do it.

LOUISE

How many you think they is?

MAD

More than we can count.

BOOM!

A cannon erupts in the distance.

Louise and Mad get back to work. Augusta goes back to the table, takes a deep breath --

LOUISE

(frustrated)

What if we didn't stay here? What if we went?

AUGUSTA

Went?

LOUISE

Out there --

MAD

They're comin' -- and fast.

LOUISE

So?

MAD

The entire union army walking right for us and you just wanna walk right back?

LOUISE

They walkin' here either way. Don't see what a few bullets and boards is goin' to do to keep 'em out.

AUGUSTA

We can hold 'em.

LOUISE

Keepin' Room's just walls, Augusta, ain't nothin' more than that.

Augusta goes back to trying to lift the table.

MAD

Three dresses comin' 'gainst the Union army don't mean nothin'.

Augusta resumes the struggle. She puts her whole body into the lifting, as if blocking the door with the table will save them. She grunts. The table lifts a little and then falls back to the ground.

Augusta stands there. Mad and Louise watch her.

She leans on the table. Breathing heavy.

AUGUSTA

(realizing)

What if it was men 'stead of dresses?

Augusta looks up, meeting Louise's gaze.

And then the SOUND of digging --

EXT. GOAT FIELDS - LATER

EARTH flies everywhere.

Augusta stands in one of the graves. They've dug it up. Mad stands above, helping her lift the body out.

Louise stands by. She's sweating. Shaking a little, even.

The two bodies of the white soldiers lay on the ground in front of the dug up holes and piles of dirt.

Augusta looks at Mad.

AUGUSTA

You ready for Bill?

Mad looks at Augusta.

EXT. GOAT FIELDS - LATER

Augusta and Mad pull Bill's body out of the unearthing grave. They take a few heavy breaths.

Mad takes him in one last time.

MAD

It's funny how people look the same whether they dead or alive.

AUGUSTA

What do you mean?

MAD

He gone. But he don't look so bad...

AUGUSTA

He look dead.

MAD

But he look goooooood.

Augusta smiles a deranged, exhausted smile.

Mad runs her hand down his face.

AUGUSTA

(smiling)

Alright.

INT. BEDROOM - DUSK

Mad, Louise and Augusta in the bedroom.

Augusta stands in front of the mirror in full UNION UNIFORM. Mad stands behind her, the same.

Louise is still getting into the borrowed clothes. She struggles. Her symptoms are starting to show.

She shakes it off and moves to join Mad and Augusta in front of the mirror. They look at themselves, all dressed up as men. Soldiers.

The uniforms are too big, of course, but the women wear them well.

As they speak, they keep looking in the mirror.

LOUISE

Had a dream the other night Papa and
Nathaniel were comin' back. It's funny it
was Bill instead. Don't you think?

MAD

Don't know that funny's the right word.

LOUISE

What is the right word?

MAD

Don't think there is one.

LOUISE

We goin' to kill em or join em?

MAD

Guess we'll have to see what fits.

LOUISE

So we just go?

MAD

It was your idea.

LOUISE

I think we just go.

MAD

Alright.

LOUISE

Strange, isn't it? We don't know them and
they don't know us but we want to kill
each other.

The sounds of GUNS and CANNONS grow closer. And then the
sound of men's voices emerge from the din.

AUGUSTA

'Fore they left, I asked daddy why the
war was happenin'. He said it was the
season. Just like there's summer, spring,
and winter and fall... there's war.

Louise wipes her brow. Augsuta and Mad exchange a look.

The three women look at themselves in the mirror. They
aren't women anymore.

AUGSUTA

Let's go.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

It's dark now.

The three women emerge from the house. Each has a gun.

The sounds of war grow louder, nearly consuming them, nearly consuming all of us.

They walk on, away from the house.

Louise looks at Augusta, their eyes locked for a moment. Augusta looks at Mad, their eyes meet and then they look ahead again, toward the road.

They are all feeling the exact same feeling in the exact same way: they are all at once afraid and unafraid.

A few men appear, UNION SOLDIERS. Running across the road. The women walk on, unrecognized for what they are.

A few more guns. A few more cannons.

They keep a steady pace.

And slowly, slowly, EVER SO SLOWLY, the camera RISES UP into the night sky...

UP, UP, UP...

Into the air, above the women, above the road and the Keeping Room and the Farm and the Barn and all of the Out Buildings...

And settles into the night sky.

FIRE.

CRACKLING.

HOLLERING.

BARKING.

GUNSHOTS.

MEN ARE EVERYWHERE.

They creep up over the land like zombies.

THE END.