



FIRST HARVEST

by

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Director's Note: the opening scene is one unbroken shot.

EXT. CORNFIELD - DUSK

1979, Texas.

A scarecrow on a cross hangs high above a large cornfield, its long white gown sways in the wind.

SOUNDS of classical music rise from O.S. as the Camera slowly pulls back through golden stalks and lands in a clearing.

The music emanates from an approaching produce truck with a *Fresh Hill Farms* logo painted on kitschy pastoral landscapes. It halts, the engine stops and the music dies.

ZOOEY (18), scrawny, exits the driver's door with his hands full of gallon water jugs. He walks to the rear of the truck, drops the jugs, and heads back to the driver's door.

BOOM!

A loud noise from inside the truck.

Zooey does not acknowledge the sound as he grabs more water jugs and again deposits them at the back of the vehicle.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Something is inside, and it does not want to be.

Zooey calmly returns to the driver's door once more. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! But this time, he retrieves a shotgun.

He approaches the rear gate and unlatches it. The door retracts upward as he aims into the shadowed interior.

Beat.

ZOOEY
Out. Come on now.

Camera rounds the corner for a better view, but the truck remains too dark to make out its contents.

With the nose of his shotgun, he strikes the steel frame.

ZOOEY (CONT'D)
Out! Don't be scared.

SOUNDS of rustling.

From the back of the truck appears **MARTHA** (17)- dirty prairie dress, no makeup.

Other figures soon emerge: **15 WOMEN** (late teens)- dressed the same way, each tired and weary.

ZOOEY (CONT'D)
(points gun at the fields)
Quickly. Stick here, together. We
don't know what's out there.

The women help themselves down into the dying light.

ZOOEY (CONT'D)
Drink or urinate. This is our only
stop until morning.

Camera follows Martha as she jumps onto the dirt. She walks past some women drinking water, past others squatting, closer and closer to the cornfield--

ZOOEY (CONT'D)
-Stop right there! Far enough.

Martha freezes, turns. Zooey motions for her to squat. She crouches to the dirt and waits for Zooey to stop staring.

Beat. He does not. She pivots away and begins to urinate.

Camera wraps around Martha and widens out, pulling her gaze once more to the corn. She finishes and slowly rises.

Zooey, distracted, ushers the other women back in the truck.

ZOOEY (CONT'D)
Get inside. Go on now. Get.

Suddenly, Martha makes a run for it- straight for the corn. Zooey sprints after her and raises his shotgun--

ZOOEY (CONT'D)
-Hey!

Camera follows Martha into the first row of corn...

ZOOEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Stop!

...the second row...the third row...

ZOOEY (O.S) (CONT'D)
STOP!!

-BANG!

Martha's body collapses in a red blur, falls out of frame.
Hold on the blood-stained corn stalks.

Camera slowly reverses to find Zooey staring from the edge of the cornfield. He lowers his shotgun, eyes teary.

Zooey turns back to see the other women watching in horror.

ZOOEY (CONT'D)
I told you what I'd do. I have to.
We got to stick together now,
that's the plan. Together or we
don't stand a chance.

He turns his shotgun on the group.

ZOOEY (CONT'D)
Who else wants to run?
(beat)
Back in the truck now!

He moves toward the vehicle prompting the onlookers to shuffle back inside. He wipes his runny face.

Zooey grabs the retractable rear door and slams it shut. He locks it and takes a few private, deep breaths.

Dusk has given way to night and it is darker now.

Zooey inches back to the corn, almost trips over a water jug that he promptly punishes with a kick. He stops, far away from the edge of the field. He mumbles, smacks his head.

Finally he exhales, wipes his eyes and straightens his posture. He walks to the driver's seat and gets in.

The engine ignites and the headlights flip on. The *Fresh Hills Farm* produce truck rolls down the dirt road, taking the classical music with it.

Camera moves into the cornfield, back toward the scarecrow, returning to the exact composition of the opening shot.

Long beat.

Then a trembling, bloody hand reaches up from the stalks and removes the scarecrow's long white gown off the cross.

Below, corn stalks part to form a jagged path toward a COMMERCIAL FARM COMPOUND in the distance, its lights now on.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - DAY

GEORGE VIKSE (69) stares down intently. Rolled sleeves display worn, tan skin. He crouches, concerned.

GEORGE
Small problems just grow into big
problems. Best nip it in the bud.

He stares at a weed sprouting from the soil.

BERCIK (O.S)
Pesticide is bad, George. Very bad.

Wider. George stands in a

CORNFIELD

Unlike the prologue's field, his corn is sparse, green, and only waist-high. **BERCIK** (30s), Polish farmhand, broken English, follows his boss toward a dilapidated barn.

GEORGE
How many Polacks does it take to
deracinate 10 acres by hand?

BERCIK
Deracinate?

GEORGE
Tear up from the roots- the weeds.

BERCIK
We are only 3 Polacks.

GEORGE
That's why we need pesticide.

BERCIK
But we never use any pesticide.

GEORGE
And we never grow any corn.

They arrive at a

GOAT PEN

Outside the barn, a makeshift fence of wire, metal, and pointed tree limbs enclose 30 ROAMING GOATS.

Bercik's brothers **PATRICE** and **RONAN** milk respective goats into pails. Crates of full pint glasses lay at their feet.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
We all loaded up?

RONAN
(in Polish)
2 more goats, then we can drink.

BERCIK
(translating)
Almost.

GEORGE
How many pints for the week?

PATRICE
(in Polish)
Over a dozen dozen.

BERCIK
(translating)
About 150 pints.

GEORGE
Good girls.

George feeds a carrot to Ronan's goat before he departs.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Tomorrow...tomorrow, we spray.

George continues past a rusted windmill pump, toward an old, gothic revival FARMHOUSE.

BERCIK
(in Polish)
Uparty.

GEORGE
Uparty?

BERCIK
(translating)
Stubborn.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Worn furniture. Floral wallpaper. Porcelain doll collection. The only hints of 1979 modernity lie in kitchen appliances.

George stands here and stares down the hall at an ajar YELLOW DOOR that leaks *Felix Mendelssohn's Symphony No.2, Op.52.*

Beep Beep. He turns at the microwave alarm.

Insert on 2 Swanson TV Dinners beside a game of dominos. **CAT** (30), nursing scrubs, eats. Beat.

CAT
It's still cold in the center.

George takes a bite as he studies the pieces.

GEORGE
Yep.

He takes another bite and moves a domino.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Good day then?

Cat raises her hand in a *so-so* gesture. George nods, places another domino.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - 2ND STORY MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

An empty, immaculate bedroom. George, in pajamas, brushes his teeth in the bathroom sink.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

He pours ice tea into a large glass and walks down the hall, past a piano in the living room, toward the Yellow Door.

He enters and gently closes the door behind him.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIBRARY - NIGHT

He places the drink on an adjustable tray beside the hospital bed where **ALICE VIKSE** (60s) opens her eyes, tired but warm.

George grabs a pill holder off the vinyl player's glass case where *Mendelssohn* continues to play.

GEORGE
Beethoven?

ALICE
Mendelssohn.

GEORGE
Sonata--
(off her head shake)
-Symphony. Number...Four.

ALICE

Two. Published posthumously. He
wanted to revise it, but...

GEORGE

Sounds done to me.

ALICE

(playful)

You're an amateur.

He sits on her bed, places several pills in her hand. She
swallows one by one with the ice tea.

GEORGE

Move at all today?

ALICE

Few laps downstairs. Slept a lot.

GEORGE

Any dreams?

ALICE

Two. First was summer at the beach.
Except the sand was so cold I
couldn't get my feet warm. The
other was a concert at school. You
had a dark suit, asked me to dance.

GEORGE

A regular class act I am.

She smiles but suddenly winces in pain.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Your fingers again?

Alice points to her forehead. George leans down, kisses it.

Beat. She points to her left cheek. He kisses her there. Her
right. He follows. Then she points to her lips. They kiss.

ALICE

You brushed your teeth.

GEORGE

One of us oughta.

She laughs. He joins.

LATER

It is dark.

AHHHHHHHHH!

George darts up from a tiny fold-up cot beside his wife's sickbed. He looks at Alice, but she is deep in sleep. George turns to the yellow door.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Camera moves through the dark interior toward the back door, behind George's silhouette.

BAM!

The wooden frame shakes on impact.

BAM!

The door again rattles violently.

GEORGE
Who is it?

He reaches under the stairway and pulls out a rifle. He aims it at the front door with one hand. With the other, he outstretches his hand for the doorknob--

-BAM!

The door shakes and George jumps back. Beat. He recovers, reaches out again. His grip tightens around the doorknob. Finally, he swings the door open to see--

-A GOAT.

AHHHHHHH!

The goat screams again (*Note: goat screams sound human*). George sighs, lowers his weapons and inches onto

THE PORCH

GEORGE (CONT'D)
How'd you get out?

Closer on the goat; some blood runs down its face, another deep laceration on its hip.

AHHHHHHHH! AHHHHH! AHHH!

He looks up, into his backyard to find A DOZEN MORE GOATS.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Goddamn it...BERCIK!

EXT. VIKSE FARM - BACKYARD - DAWN

George, Bercik, Ronan and Patrice sleepily corral respective goats back toward their pen in the misty blue light.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - GOAT PEN - SUNRISE

Ronan leads the last goat into the pen while Patrice fixes the makeshift fence. Bercik holds a chewed up wire.

BERCIK

Coyote is back. They fought him off, only one got scratched.

GEORGE

Thank God...

On "God", the farmhands each perform the sign of the cross.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

...at least they're all back safe.

Beat. Ronan and Patrice mumble in Polish.

BERCIK

(translating)

All but one.

George turns to the distant, empty fields.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Nurse Cat hovers over Alice, nude in the bathtub.

CAT

...the one Asian man I dated said it was normal-- uh, excuse you--

-George opens the door.

GEORGE

I'm off. Do you need anything?

CAT

Oh! Get me some maple candy?

ALICE

Nothing for me, love.

George nods, reaches for the door--

CAT

-Wait.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Cat approaches, shuts the door behind. Softly,

CAT

You still owe me last week's pay.
I'm fine doing it just us but
that's why I go through an agency.
I already turned down another job.

GEORGE

Today. I'll get it.

Cat nods, heads back inside the bathroom.

CAT

(returning to Alice)

Anyway, he was a gemini so it
wasn't gonna work out...

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

A beaten up, baby blue 1967 Ford pickup truck carves into the dusty, sunburnt landscape.

Crates of goat milk jostle in the cargo bed as the truck continues over a transition from dirt to asphalt, toward a small town in the distance.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Parked trucks line the sidewalk filled with tables and tents. A LARGE CROWD roams through the street market. Some kids pet a live chicken held by a POULTRY VENDOR.

George rests on his tailgate beside a stenciled sign, *Goat Milk & Meat*. His worn, dirty boots rest atop coolers.

NANCE (50s) waves as she approaches.

NANCE

I'm late, I know it. Took the
grandkids to church. You sold out?

GEORGE

Loin chops going quick, but I saved
you three pounds.

NANCE
Oh perfect. Thank you, George.

He removes wax paper wrapped meat from the cooler.

NANCE (CONT'D)
They got Dale on the piano; he can
play the notes but he's got no
soul. Not like Alice. We miss her.

GEORGE
(hands over the meat)
That's sweet. I'll pass that along.

Nance smiles as she leaves. George slumps back in his seat,
stares across the market at a CORN VENDOR laughing with **ARNIE WAYNE Sr.** (50) neat, earnest, wearing brand new cowboy boots.

JUNIOR (O.S)
Two pints. A dollar-fifty?

George looks down at **JUNIOR** (11). He places coins on the table and grabs the goat milk.

GEORGE
That's right.

JUNIOR
Were you in World War Two?

GEORGE
Too old.

JUNIOR
World War One?

GEORGE
Too young.

JUNIOR
You a pacifist? Dad says pacifists
voted for Carter and anyone who
votes for Carter is a pussy.

GEORGE
I don't vote.

ARNIE WAYNE
(approaching)
No politics, Arnold.

GEORGE
Reminds me of you as a boy.

ARNIE WAYNE
Gets his mouth from his mother.

Arnie Wayne arrives, playfully tussles his son's hair.

ARNIE WAYNE (CONT'D)
His good looks and voracious
curiosity is mine. Just started
middle school- was hoping he'd get
Mrs. Vikse, shame she retired.

Junior cracks his pint of goat milk and sips.

GEORGE
Not her choice.

ARNIE WAYNE
No, I don't imagine. How is she?

GEORGE
Okay. Good. Tired. That medicine...
You? Sizing up the competition?

George nods back toward the Corn Vendor. Arnie laughs.

ARNIE WAYNE
Russell? No competition Mr. Vikse.
You put up enough numbers you can
go right to the grocery marts. We
got a good thing going with Piggly
Wiggly, San Angelo through Dallas.

GEORGE
How many acres you up to now?

ARNIE WAYNE
600.

GEORGE
600? Boy. I only see a corner from
my porch. You expanding?

ARNIE WAYNE
Got to, this economy. You used to
put up good numbers, Mr. Vikse.

GEORGE
Hasn't taken in a while. Always
stumbles mid cycle, but we're
trying now. Looking for pesticide
actually, gonna shake down Russell.

JUNIOR
We got pesticide in our truck.

ARNIE WAYNE
I'll give you a few canisters.

GEORGE
How much?

ARNIE WAYNE
Said I'll give them to you.

GEORGE
I don't like favors, Arnie. How
much those cans go for?

Beat.

JUNIOR
How much them loin chops go for?

Junior, faint milk mustache, smiles. George laughs.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Pesticide canisters and empty milk crates bounce in the truck bed. George heads back down the vacant dirt road.

INT. / EXT. GEORGE'S TRUCK - DAY

He adjusts the AM radio dial...talk radio...static...baseball game... static...a sermon...George looks back up to the road--

-A GOAT--

-The truck breaks, swerves, and finally comes to a stop.

Through the clearing dust, George spots his goat moving into the road's forested shoulder. He exits the vehicle after it.

EXT. FORESTED SHOULDER - DAY

The goat stops at the crest of a tiny hill. George shouts from the bottom.

GEORGE
Hold up! Come on back here.

The goat remains static. George reluctantly trudges upwards. As he nears the goat, it scurries out of view down the far side of the slope.

As George finally arrives at the top, he suddenly stops.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Christ almighty.

Reveal **ONE HUNDRED BODIES** in the field below.

George, in shock, stares at the lifeless people (20s-40s).

Long beat.

Finally, he turns, almost sick. He steadies himself in the direction of his truck until--

-SOUNDS OF CRYING.

George turns to the sea of bodies. He scans the field but cannot find the source of its wailing: an infant.

George descends the hill, into

THE FIELD

He steps over still limbs and around limp heads; no blood, no signs of trauma- the landscape more akin to a mass slumber.

The shrieking continues, louder and louder.

George walks over a large, unstained knife, and closes in on a trembling blanket. Tepidly, he lifts the cloth back.

A BABY BOY (6 months old).

George stares stunned at the naked infant. Beat.

He crouches down and awkwardly picks it up.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Shhhh...shhhh....okay....shhhh

Wider. George holds the boy, the only life left in the field.

PRELAP PIANO

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

SHERIFF JIM BROOKES (27) looks even younger than he is as he absentmindedly presses keys on the out of tune piano.

SHERIFF BROOKES
They acquired a mass amount of land
next to you, Arnie, then oblong to
the east...

George sits on the couch, dazed. He stares at coffee ground residue in his mug.

SHERIFF BROOKES (CONT'D)
...We thought it was a commune. I went snooping a year ago but they had crosses up. Figured they were a Christian group, Pentecostal or what have you; snake healing and speaking-in-tongues kinda folks- not illegal just bizarre.

POLICE RADIO SECRETARY (O.S)
I have a 10-77 on Social Services.

Sheriff stands.

SHERIFF BROOKES
Excuse me.
(into his walkie)
Supposed to be here an hour ago...

George looks over to the open yellow door with a view into
THE LIBRARY

Cat holds the sleeping baby up to the window where Bercik, Ronan, and Patrice have gathered to see. They smile as Cat hands the infant to Alice, in bed.

George returns to the Sheriff.

SHERIFF BROOKES (CONT'D)
Unbelievable. The Social Services person- her transmission died outside Waco. She can't get here til tomorrow afternoon, if that.

Cat appears in the doorway, listening.

SHERIFF BROOKES (CONT'D)
This thing is big. A big old mess.

GEORGE
Call the other counties yet? You can borrow some fellas to help identify the dead.

SHERIFF BROOKES
That's good, that's smart.

GEORGE
Hell, state police. Maybe even the FBI. This is gonna make noise.

SHERIFF BROOKES

Gosh, the FBI? I didn't even think
I'd win Sheriff.

GEORGE

You ran unopposed.

POLICE RADIO ignites again with officer chatter.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You're busy Jimmy, we oughta let
you go now and take the baby.

SHERIFF BROOKES

What do I do with the baby?

George clocks Cat leaning against the doorframe.

GEORGE

Don't know *Sheriff*. What do you do?

SHERIFF BROOKES

Social Services was just gonna take
it to the hospital. But that's
three hours each way and I gotta
get back to the field.

Sheriff looks at George, pleading.

GEORGE

No. I can't afford that drive right
now, we're spraying--

SHERIFF BROOKES

-Alice still goes to the hospital
every week though?

GEORGE

Every other week.

CAT

We could watch the baby for a day
or so. He seems healthy and all.

GEORGE

No. I got goats. I got corn.

SHERIFF BROOKES

You got a live-in nurse.

GEORGE

No, Jimmy. No--

ALICE (O.S)
-We go to hospital on Friday.

Everyone turns to Alice, still in bed, baby in her arms.

ALICE (CONT'D)
We'll watch the baby til then.

George, unwilling to dissent. Sheriff heads to the back door.

SHERIFF BROOKES
Thank you, thank you. Alice, Cat,
George. I'll be in touch now. I
truly appreciate it, I do.

Sheriff exits and George follows.

EXT. VIKSE FARM HOUSE - PORCH - DAY - CONTINUOUS

GEORGE
What in the hell, Jimmy?

SHERIFF BROOKES
I'm sorry. I owe you...

Sheriff descends the porch stairs.

SHERIFF BROOKES (CONT'D)
...I'll come back one of these days
and fix your door.

George turns to his door where horn-sized holes have pierced
the wood, smeared with dried goat blood.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - SUNSET

The farmhands wheel the pesticide canisters through the
cornfield. They spray different rows of the short green crop.

George watches from the

GOAT PEN

He shoos away goats- they scatter under a low hanging storm
cover's tin roof. George returns to scrubbing a dirty glass
coke bottle and billy bottle nipple in a bucket of suds.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN

George sets two hot TV dinners down on the table and studies
the adjacent game of dominos.

GEORGE
You move? Where'd you move?

Cat feeds the baby from the cleaned coke bottle at the edge of the table, her scrubs stained with milk, both hands full.

CAT
A little busy, George.

George looks down the hall as the yellow door opens, leaking *Bach's Concerto for Harpsichord & Orchestra No. 6*. Alice slips on a cardigan as she slowly emerges.

Cat turns, surprised. George stands.

ALICE
(arriving)
Smells good.

GEORGE
You're hungry?

Beat.

ALICE
Yes, actually.

George retrieves a third chair for their small kitchen table. He slides his TV dinner to Alice.

She quickly takes a few bites, grinning at the baby. George looks to Cat. Alice feels their eyes.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Sorry.

CAT
No. Eat, please.

GEORGE
We got plenty more.

The baby cries, softly.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
We got chicken and salisbury--

ALICE
-Can I hold him again?

She places her fork down. Cat nods, hands the baby over.

CAT
Likely needs some burping.

Alice holds the child upright against her shoulder and kisses its head. She pats his back until he burps. Alice laughs.

She looks to George. He smiles back at his wife.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - NIGHT

Goats move inside their pen. In the distance, George descends his porch stairs and opens a root cellar door, built into the soil. He descends into the dark. Beat.

A light turns on.

INT. VIKSE FARM - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

A dim concrete basement courtesy one dangling overhead bulb.

Storage shelves contain canned vegetables. Old corn husks hang above a tool bench littered with half-finished projects and an unread copy of ON DEATH AND DYING.

George hovers in the back at a separate table above a pot, plastic buckets and tubes. He scoops liquid out with a mug. Cautiously he smells, then sips. His face goes bitter but recovers into a smile. Moonshine.

EXT. VIKSE HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT - LATER

George sits in a rocking chair with his mug.

His rifle lays across his lap as he eyes the distant goat pen, then the spinning windmill, and finally the buzzing filament of a lantern hanging over the porch railing.

Slowly, his eyelids close.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIBRARY - NIGHT

The baby lies on the dresser. Alice tries to fold a cloth diaper but curls her fingers as if pricked. Cat sees.

CAT

I got that.

ALICE

I'm fine.

Alice tries again but fails. Cat grabs the diaper.

ALICE (CONT'D)
(sits on the bed)
I swear it's the pills that do it.

CAT
(folding)
Your body's just remembering
itself, like when you fall asleep
on your arm. But it's good; it's
progress.

ALICE
Well progress hurts.

Cat finishes the diaper fold. The baby coos at Alice.

CAT
He likes you, Alice.

ALICE
Yeah?

CAT
Yeah. How come you never had any
kids? George didn't want them?

ALICE
We waited. I had school and George
had the farm. Seemed like enough,
until it didn't. And by then it was
too late. That was a real rough
patch, nearly broke George.

CAT
All this time I just thought he was
an asshole.

ALICE,
Oh honey, he's still an asshole.

They share a polite laugh.

LATER

George stumbles in the dark as he unfolds the cot and lays down. Between himself and Alice's hospital bed, the baby sleeps in a cleaned manger adorned with blankets.

George watches the baby's little chest rise and fall.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIBRARY - DAY

Sunlight pours through the window. George wakes and turns toward Alice. Her bed is empty.

PIANO SOUNDS (in tune) from beyond the yellow door.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

George enters the living room where Alice sits at the piano. The baby rests on her lap.

GEORGE

Your fingers?

ALICE

Felt better. Watch this.

Alice taps the left-most piano key, A0. Nothing happens. Then key, B0. Still nothing. Next C1.

The baby coos.

Alice continues moving down the keys. The baby responds only at specific notes as a melody forms.

ALICE (CONT'D)

His own little lullaby. He likes it! Yes he does.

The baby smiles.

GEORGE

Very cute.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

George enters. Cat reads a newspaper and sips coffee.

GEORGE

How's my paper?

CAT

Good. Your coffee isn't bad either.

GEORGE

You got work to do?

CAT

You mean nurse the woman who's laughing at the piano? Today is a good day.

George reaches for the French press coffee, but it is empty. A WHISTLE from the backyard- George turns.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - DAY

George descends the porch stairs toward Bercik.

BERCIK

Good news? Corn is alive- all of it. Even the back acre we thought dead. Weeds are shrinking fast.

GEORGE

(arriving)

What's the bad news?

CUT TO

THE GOAT PEN

A MUTILATED BILLY GOAT. Flies hover over blood and guts. Ronan and Patrice say a *prayer in Polish*.

BERICK

That coyote came back.

George covers his nose with a handkerchief.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - GRAVEYARD - DAY

George ushers dirt into a tiny hole with his boot and plops a large stone on top. Wider to reveal several similar mounds.

A few yards away, ONE SMALL CROSS stands erect in the shadow of a tree. It is old and rusting. George stares.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

INSERT on the TV NEWS:

Telephoto b-roll of the field of dead bodies beyond a perimeter of caution tape. COPS and DETECTIVES everywhere.

TV NEWS ANCHOR (ON TV) (V.O.)

...comparisons to Jonestown but questions remain in what appears to be a mass suicide of the Doomsday group known as the *Rising People's Temple*.

Montage of disparate interviews.

The TV light flickers on Alice, asleep on the couch. The baby wakes in the manger by her feet and starts to fuss.

GEORGE (O.S)
Cat!...the baby!
(beat)
...CAT!

George enters frustrated from the back porch door.

He approaches his sleeping wife and adjusts her blanket. Then he picks up the manger, crying child and all.

EXT. VIKSE HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

George closes the door behind him as he sits back into his porch chair and places the manger at his feet.

The baby cries louder. George offers the bottle. But the baby spits it out. Again, the bottle. Again, rejected.

GEORGE
Not hungry...did you poop?

George leans over the child and sniffs its cloth diaper.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
No. Thank god.

The baby continues crying, louder. George sips his mug.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
You teething?

George dips a finger into his moonshine and outstretches it toward the baby's mouth. He gently rubs its gums. Beat.

The baby calms.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Good, huh? Made it myself--

-George pulls back with a wince. He looks at his finger.

Blood forms. It drips onto the porch.

George returns to the baby, who stares back, finally silent. Confused, George leans down and slowly parts its lips.

INSERT on a single, sharp canine tooth.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Christ.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

George enters the kitchen with a yawn. Cat sips coffee.

CAT

Sleep in, did we?

GEORGE

Up all night with the baby. Where
were you?

CAT

What?

GEORGE

I called for you.

CAT

Didn't hear it.

GEORGE

I screamed.

Cat shrugs, continues reading. George eyes her as he reaches for the coffee- empty again. Alice enters with the baby.

ALICE

Are we late?

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The truck cruises over the transition from dirt to asphalt.

INT. GEORGE'S TRUCK - DAY

Sunlight passes in and out over the baby's face. George's left hand steers, his right rests in the center with a band-aid on his finger.

Alice grabs his hand, grips tight. She appears tense.

GEORGE

It'll be fine. It always is.

Beat. Her eyes focus on the baby.

ALICE

We're better than an orphanage.

George releases his grip, places his hand back on the wheel.

INT. HOSPITAL - INFANT WING - DAY

George, Alice and the baby follow BAY NURSE (50) down a hall, past TECHS, some EXPECTANT PARENTS and BRAND NEW PARENTS.

BAY NURSE

Sheriff said you found him on the side of the road. Some people just aren't ready to be parents.

Alice looks at George- the Sheriff had a cover story.

GEORGE

Strangest thing I ever saw.

BAY NURSE

I've seen stranger. Did an ER residency; you wouldn't believe what some folks put up their anus.

They stop at the glass windows of the observation area.

Alice hands the Baby to a young NEONATAL NURSE, who enters the back room behind the glass, where 2 NEWBORNS rest.

George listens impatiently to the Bay Nurse, distracted by Alice who has become emotional.

ALICE

What happens to him now?

BAY NURSE

We'll do blood work, fingerprints, vaccinations. Then guess his age to draw up his paperwork.

ALICE

A retroactive birth certificate?

BAY NURSE

He's gotta grow up to pay taxes, don't he?

ALICE

What will you name him?

GEORGE

We're late, hun.

BAY NURSE

Last name goes to the doctor. First name? We'll draw straws; adoptive parents gonna change it anyways.

ALICE
What about *Eli*?
(to George)
You like that name? *Eli*?

GEORGE
...Yeah, sure.

Alice turns back to the Bay Nurse.

BAY NURSE
Eli. That's a lovely name.

Behind the glass, Baby Eli snuggles into his bassinet.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

MONTAGE. Cross cut between Baby Eli and Alice as each has weight measured, blood drawn, eyes checked, and enter an MRI machine (Alice) or incubator (Eli).

INT. HOSPITAL - EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

THREE DOCTORS sit near MRI images across the room from Alice. DR. LIU (40s) marks a questionnaire.

DR. LIU
...any digestive issues since your appetite has returned?

ALICE
No.

DR. LIU
Any resurgent abdominal swelling?

ALICE
No.

DR. LIU
Almost done. What age did you begin menopause?

ALICE
57.

DR. LIU
Have you ever been pregnant?

Beat.

ALICE
Three times.

DR. LIU
Full term to birth?

ALICE
Only once.

DR. LIU
Male or female?

ALICE
Male.

DR. LIU
How old is your son now?

ALICE
Excuse me?

DR. LIU
What year was he born?

ALICE
March 25th, 1944. He was a
stillborn.

Dr. Liu looks up for the first time.

ALICE (CONT'D)
I've answered these questions
before. Was there a problem with my
scans?

DR. LIU
No, Alice. This is good news.

INT. HOSPITAL - OFFICE - DAY

A cramped office. Stacks of books and papers on the desk.
George and Alice sit across from DR. JARRAD (50s).

DR. JARRAD
If the surgery didn't take, we'd
see spread to the colon or lungs:
stage 4. Instead I see regression,
containment to the pelvic region.
If I saw this for the first time,
I'd say its stage 2. Go to Austin
and a democrat'll call it stage 1.

GEORGE

If the surgery worked, why has it taken, what, four months to show?

DR. JARRAD

The armidex, the aromasin, the prolia, changes in diet, sleep, any combo of these. We don't know.

ALICE

But I'm better.

DR. JARRAD

Regression doesn't mean *inactive*. We see cancer weaken and sometimes come back even stronger. For now, we've moved in a great direction.

ALICE

Do I have to keep taking the pills? My joints on that stuff- I can't even use the stairs most days.

DR. JARRAD

Don't rock the boat, Alice. Keep up with the pills. And whatever you're doing differently, keep doing it.

Alice looks at George.

INT. HOSPITAL - INFANT WING - DAY

Baby Eli sleeps in a little blue cap. Unheard through the soundproof glass, George and Alice discreetly argue. Her passion in sharp contrast to his stoicism. Beat.

Finally, he mutters. She hugs him, kisses his cheek.

INT. HOSPITAL - INFANT WING - DAY

George signs some forms at the front desk.

BAY NURSE

Social Service'll present adoption candidates in a few weeks. Usually come with neat essays and photos...

He looks over to the observation area where Alice is pressed against the glass. Fog forms as she watches the Neonatal Nurse lift and present Baby Eli.

BAY NURSE (CONT'D)
...and if you decide to keep him,
easy, it's just a few more forms.

GEORGE
No, ma'am. This is only temporary.

BAY NURSE
Well then. A temporary
congratulations to you.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

George's truck parks in the driveway beside Cat's Chevelle Station Wagon.

Alice exits with Baby Eli and heads inside their home while George opens the tailgate filled with groceries, baby products, and large cardboard boxes.

Ronan, Patrice, and Bercik approach the truck.

GEORGE
Can you takes these inside?

George glances back at his house. Through a window he watches Alice and Baby Eli greet Cat.

BERCIK
Baby not gone?

Cat, upset, looks back at George.

GEORGE
Baby not gone.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

George has sprawled out on the floor with tools and various open cardboard boxes. The TV plays the end of *Jeopardy*.

Cat enters, sets Baby Eli on the floor.

CAT
I'm off the clock.

GEORGE
Can you just watch it til Alice is
out of her bath?

CAT
No.

GEORGE

No? I need another- look- Jesus-
it's putting shit in its mouth!

George swipes an instruction manual out of Eli's hand,
brushes the tiny assembly pieces away.

CAT

A child is not a puppy you get to
make your sick wife feel better.

GEORGE

I said I didn't want it. I said
that. You butt in, you did that.

CAT

A couple days is not adoption.

GEORGE

We didn't adopt! It's, this is
temporary. That's all. And if it
gives her something to focus on for
a couple weeks then good; she's
feeling better.

CAT

My last client, Mr. Cogan- leukemia-
he felt better for a whole week,
about two months before he died.

Cat storms up the stairs.

CAT (CONT'D)

You're putting that highchair
together backwards.

Baby Eli stares at George.

The TV NEWS starts: *images of bodies in the field*. George
switches channels to a JOHN WAYNE MOVIE.

GEORGE

Watch that.

Eli continues looking at George.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jars of opened baby food. Baby Eli sits in a new highchair,
face and bib already a mess. Alice, wet hair, outstretches a
spoonful. George watches.

ALICE

Peach. Peach. Mmmm. Peach.

Eli opens his mouth wide. His ponderous face turns pleased.

BABY ELI

Mmmmbaaa.

ALICE

Yayyy. Peach is yum. Let's try more
Peas. Okay? Peas, peas, peas.

Baby Eli reaches for the spoon.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You want more? More? Look George,
he wants to feed himself. See!?

Eli grabs the spoon and tries, mostly fails, to get smashed
peas in his mouth. Alice claps. Eli smiles, turns to George.

Suddenly, Baby Eli burps.

Alice laughs. Then Eli giggles. Alice laughs harder, can
barely catch her breath. She smacks the table as tears form.

George stares at Eli, humorless.

GEORGE

Don't get too attached.

Alice pretends not to hear.

EXT. VIKSE HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

The goats sleep under the tin roof in their pen. George
watches from his porch chair where he sips his mug. The
creaking wood sounds like a metronome. Tick. Tick.

His eyes slowly close. Tick. Tick.

A LOUD, DISTANT BARN DOOR SLAM.

George wakes and grabs the rifle. A rustling from the pen.

He stands, raises his weapon and scans the field via scope.
But the goats just amble, no panic at all.

Beat. George lowers his rifle, looks up to see--

-A SILHOUETTE approaching fast.

GEORGE
Who's that?

As the shadow nears it takes a female shape.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Said who is that!?

George aims his rifle as it approaches the light.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Stop right there--

-Cat raises her hands.

CAT
I look like a coyote!?

George lowers his rifle, sits back down. Cat mumbles as she marches up the porch, lands on the last step.

GEORGE
What were you doing in Bercik's
barn so late?

CAT
None of your business.

GEORGE
I employ you both, so actually
that's exactly what it is.

CAT
I was returning a book he lent me.

GEORGE
What book?

CAT
The Bible.

George laugh-coughs into his mug.

CAT (CONT'D)
It's good to believe in something.

GEORGE
I'll believe it when I see it.

CAT
You been drinking more these days?

GEORGE
That is none of your business.

CAT

Keep it up and you'll be my next
client. Then it will be.

She approaches, grabs his mug for a sip. She coughs.

GEORGE

Did I offer you a taste?

CAT

(returns the mug)

Thought you actually changed.

GEORGE

No one changes. You just become
more you. Like a snake that sheds
its skin, over and over again,
until there you are.

CAT

Can't talk to you when you're
drunk, you remind me of my dad.

She enters the home, leaving George alone.

GEORGE

A poet, I'm sure.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIBRARY - NIGHT

George sleeps in his cot. SOUNDS of Baby Eli crying O.S.

ALICE (O.S)

Shhh...It's okay...

George tosses and turns, then slowly wakes as the cries grow.

GEORGE

What does it want?

ALICE (O.S)

Nothing. Go back to bed.

Sounds of Alice shuffling for the baby and the door opening.

GEORGE

(sitting up)

Alice?

He sits up but the room is empty. The yellow door is open;
Alice and Eli are gone. George turns on a lamp. Beat.

Suddenly, a DARK FIGURE passes behind him. He turns--

-The yellow door SLAMS SHUT and a shadow passes over it, then another. Different shapes move across the walls in a pattern.

George traces the contours back to their source- a mobile of felt angels and clouds spinning above Baby Eli's new crib.

George grabs the mobile, halts its gentle rotation. Beat.

ANOTHER DARK FIGURE PASSES OVER THE WALL BEHIND HIM.

George stands, spooked, eyes on the wall. Beat.

FAINT SOUNDS OF BABY CRYING start again from the next room.

George cautiously approaches the wall. As he nears, he sees the floral wallpaper warping in narrow passages like there is a leak. A protruding bulge abruptly appears and then retracts. George jumps back.

The strip of wallpaper slowly peels off entirely to reveal--

-BLOOD RUNNING DOWN THE NAKED WALL.

SOUNDS OF CRYING grow louder and more crisp, emanating from the wall itself.

George watches the bulge appear again, morphing into AN INFANT'S HAND, REACHING OUT AT HIM--

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIBRARY - NIGHT

-George wakes up in his cot.

He turns to see the crib and hospital bed are empty. He sits up with a view through the open yellow door into

THE LIVING ROOM

Alice gently rocks Baby Eli back to sleep.

INT. VIKSE FARM - GOAT PEN

Patrice and Ronan corral goats into a head gate, locking them upright. George takes a stool and grabs his head, hungover.

BERCIK
Morning prayer?

GEORGE
I'm good.

Bercik nods, rosary in hand. His brothers bow.

BERCIK

(in Polish)

*I believe in God, the Father
almighty, creator of heaven and
earth. I believe in Jesus Christ,
God's only Son, our Lord, who was
conceived by the Holy Spirit, born
of the Virgin Mary, suffered...*

CAT (O.S)

George! Phone!

George turns to his house.

EXT. VIKSE HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

He grabs the receiver sitting on the windowsill.

GEORGE

Yeah?

SHERIFF BROOKES (O.S.)

It's Jimmy.

GEORGE

Sheriff Jim Brookes? Can't believe
I'm talking to a real live TV star.

SHERIFF BROOKES (O.S.)

Rather be on M.A.S.H than the news.

GEORGE

No doubt.

SHERIFF BROOKES (O.S.)

Listen, George. Did that baby...
did you notice anything strange?

George peers through the window, billowing curtains reveal
Eli on the floor, playing with Alice.

GEORGE

Besides all those dead bodies?

Baby Eli spots George. Alice turns to the window, waves.

SHERIFF BROOKES (O.S.)

Any signs of abuse?

GEORGE

Not that I recall. Why?

SHERIFF BROOKES (O.S.)
Made it to their compound- well one
of em. Found home video tapes we're
going through now, odd ceremonies,
rituals...Think they branded women,
maybe kids too. Trying to verify.

GEORGE
You can't verify with one of those
poor bastards in the field?

SHERIFF BROOKES (O.S.)
No, they were all male.

Other voices O.S on the Sheriff's end.

SHERIFF BROOKES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'm getting rained on here, George.

GEORGE
Yep.

George hangs up, stares back through the curtain.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY - LATER

Baby Eli, naked in the sink. Water builds around the infant. Alice dips her fingers under the faucet and adjusts the temperature. She wipes Eli's head. He giggles.

ALICE
Feel good? Yeah? Yeah...

Alice grabs his right leg, turns it. Closer on the back of his thigh: a hand-carved inverted crucifix.

The water continues filling the sink. Alice, upset, releases his leg; Eli's limbs are now all underwater.

The faucet STUTTERS to a stop.

Alice adjusts the hot water, then the cold. Nothing. She taps the faucet again and again to no avail.

Eli giggles and splashes. Alice considers the faucet until--
-CRRRRSHHHHHHHH!

BLOOD GUSHES OUT FILLING THE SINK.

Alice, horrified, grabs the faucet but her wet hand slips on the valves. Blood runs everywhere. Finally, it shuts off.

Baby Eli laughs and slaps his hands, kicks his little feet. His tiny, smiling face now covered in red.

INT. WATER WELL - DAY

Hold on blackness. Until a lid slides to reveal a tiny circle of daylight above. Camera is deep down in a well. Two silhouettes appear. One pours a long rod down the hole.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - BACKYARD - DAY

George stands at his stone well beneath the windmill. Next to him is Arnie Wayne.

Arnie withdraws his rod, steeped in blood-like liquid.

GEORGE
Smells like shit.

ARNIE WAYNE
That's the sulfur. This is clay
resolves. Gives it that red hue.
How old is this well, Mr. Vikse?

GEORGE
Your daddy dug it for me, maybe the
year you were born.

ARNIE WAYNE
Yep. Clay erodes over time. Even
faster when you pump salt water.

GEORGE
We don't pump salt water.

Arnie pulls paper from the rod's tip; it is green.

ARNIE WAYNE
You got 5 times the salt
concentration you'd ever want.

GEORGE
Does that make us sick?

ARNIE WAYNE
No. Dehydrated maybe. But if this
is your irrigation source, you're
killing your own crops. Didn't need
that pesticide after all, huh?

George scratches his head.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - LATER

Arnie Wayne smokes a cigar, holds a forked-stick dowsing rod parallel to the ground and walks through the backyard past

THE LITTLE GRAVEYARD

He passes the dirt mounds with stone markings, toward the tiny cross. George watches the rod bend down to the soil.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Arnie points at an old geological map of the farm.

ARNIE WAYNE

There are two areas ripe to hit a
fresh water spring. Here or, my
preference, over by this tree.

GEORGE

We can't dig there.

Chopin's Nocturnes, Op.55: No. 1 in F-Minor rises from O.S.

ARNIE WAYNE

The other spot might hit limestone--

-Alice enters with Baby Eli and opens the fridge.

ARNIE WAYNE (CONT'D)

Mrs. Vikse? Heyyyy, how are you?

Arnie stands. Alice approaches, kisses him on the cheek.

ALICE

Hello, Arnold. Sorry, I didn't know
you two were still working.

ARNIE WAYNE

It's so nice to see you. You look
wonderful, just great.

ALICE

Thank you, I'm feeling better.

ARNIE WAYNE

And who is this little guy, huh?

George stares Alice down. She notes his displeasure.

ALICE

Oh. This, this is Eli. My niece's
youngest.

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)
They're on a trip, so we're keeping
an eye for a week or two.

GEORGE
Hopefully less.

Arnie detects the tension, deflects with a laugh.

ARNIE WAYNE
Boy howdy. I remember these days.
Lots of sleepless nights. Babies,
all babies, sure is a lot of work.
But it's all worth it, isn't it?

ALICE
I imagine so.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Alice and Baby Eli sleep. George quietly unfurls his cot.

GEORGE
Alice...Alice you up?

No answer. George lays down and turns the lamp off. In the darkness, he tosses in search of a cool spot. Settled, he cranes his neck back toward Alice--

-SHE LEVITATES A FOOT ABOVE HER BED.

George darts up and flicks the lamp on to illuminate--

-Alice in bed like normal.

Beat. Baby Eli also sleeps.

George wipes his eyes, confused. He shakes his head and reaches again for the lamp switch. Off.

IN THE DARKNESS, ALICE SLOWLY RISES ABOVE HER BED.

George flicks the light back on--

-But Alice rests again on the mattress.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Alice... hey, Alice?

She continues to sleep. Long beat. George finally resigns. Lamp still on, he lays back on his cot. Beat.

CLICK. The light turns OFF by itself.

George whips his head to the lamp. Then, back to ALICE, HOVERING.

He flicks the light back on.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Alice. Wake up. Alice get up--

Baby Eli tosses in his sleep and AUDIBLY GRUMBLES--

-The lamp light grows brighter and brighter. George turns to the white-hot filament. It continues to buzz until it BURSTS.

Darkness, again. Beat.

Camera stays on George, frightened. He slowly, quietly lays back down on his cot and turns over, facing away.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

George tired, stands on a chair to adjusts the fuse box. He turns to an obstructed view of

THE LIVING ROOM

Alice plays *Eli's Lullaby* on the piano, the baby on her lap. George stares as Cat enters.

CAT
You don't ever look good but today
you especially look like shit.

Cat, bedhead and baggy shirt, pours herself the last bit of coffee and unfolds the paper. George gets off his chair.

GEORGE
You look about as rough as me and
you're only half as funny.

CAT
Couldn't sleep again?

George nods. Sees the paper's cover story on the dead bodies.

GEORGE
Bad dreams.

CAT
Oughta take some of her medicine.
That'll knock you flat out.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - BACKYARD - DAY

Gloves, safety goggles, open cans of beer. Arnie Wayne, Junior, and 2 EXCAVATORS guide a power augur into the ground.

A rotary drill rotates in a violent blur. Suddenly it stops. Fresh water pours out over the ground forming a puddle.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - CORNFIELD - DAY

Bercik stands by a tall sprinkler tripod and relays a thumbs up 20 yards from Ronan at his own sprinkler, who relays a thumbs up to Patrice down the line, ditto to George in the:

THE BACKYARD

George flips on a large motorized pump. Water cascades out of the farmhands' sprinklers. They cheer. George laughs, turns to see Alice on the porch with Baby Eli, clapping.

CORN TIMELAPSE

Days pass. Weeks pass. Corn grows, straightens, and blooms.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - CORNFIELD - SUNSET

In different rows of the distant fields, the farmhands till corn with sickles and pack cobs into burlap sacks.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cat shuffles corn into a hand mill, spitting out cornmeal. Alice cracks eggs into a bowel of masa and kneads it.

INT. VIKSE BARN - NIGHT

Ronan plays a concertina atop haystacks. George pours his moonshine shots for Cat, Alice, Bercik, Ronan, and Patrice.

PATRICE
Na Zdorovie!

ALL
Na Zdorovie!

They drink. Ronan plays Polish birthday song *A Hundred Years*.

PATRICE
*Sto lat, sto lat,
 Niech zyje, zyje nam...*

Alice holds the baby's hands so he stands upright. Eli jumps up and down in a little dance. The others follow and sing.

PATRICE / RONAN / BERCIK
*...Sto lat, sto lat,
 Niech zyje, zyje nam
 Jeszcze raz, jeszcze raz,
 Niech zyje, zyje nam,
 Niech zyje nam!*

George unveils a loaf of cornbread, a lit candle on top.

GEORGE
 Happy Birthday, Bercik.

Bercik blows out his candle. Gentle applause. George cuts the cornbread, placing pieces on plates. The Farmhands all bow.

RONAN / PATRICE
 (in Polish)
*Heavenly Father we thank You for
 Bercik. Bless him always in Your
 love. Bless us too, Holy Father,
 and this food with which we
 celebrate. Help us all to praise
 You and give You glory through
 Jesus Christ our lord.*

BERCIK/ RONAN/ PATRICE/ CAT
 Amen.

Baby Eli sneezes.

CAT
 God bless you!

Baby Eli sneezes again.

ALICE
 (fanning the air)
 I think the smoke got to him...

Ronan's continues to play as Bercik pours more moonshine. Everyone savors the cornbread. George raises his mug, proud.

PATRICE
 Byczy!

ALL
 Byczy!

LATER

The music has softened into something romantic. Everyone is tired, drunk. Baby Eli yawns in Alice's arms. His eyes close.

Nurse Cat and Berick dance, close and intimate. He whispers something in her ear. Cat laughs. George watches, displeased.

Ronan plays the final notes of his song and removes the concertina from his neck, finished.

George stands and places a hand on Alice's shoulder.

GEORGE

Bed?

ALICE

Cat, does the baby have a fever?

Cat walks beside her, hand to Eli's forehead. Bercik joins her, and finally Ronan and Patrice. Note: composition mimics Caravaggio's *Nativity with Saint Francis and Saint Lawrence*.

CAT

He's hot.

Alice coughs, badly. Cat moves her hand to Alice's head.

CAT (CONT'D)

Alice, you're hot too.

CROSS FADE

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIBRARY - NIGHT

The mobile of felt angels and clouds spins above Baby Eli, sleeping in his crib. Alice stares while a record spins, Chopin's *Mazurka in C-Sharp Minor, Opus 50, No.3*.

George enters with ice tea and withdraws her pill holder.

GEORGE

You think Cat and Bercik are dating? It's like she forgot she's here to take care of you.

ALICE

They're young. Let them be young.

George stops, stares at the pills in his hand. He counts.

GEORGE

There are 15 pills here. You know
how many were here last week?

(off her head shake)

You haven't been taking your
medicine.

ALICE

It hurts my fingers, my joints,
turns me groggy- keeps me sick.

GEORGE

We do what the doctors tell us to
do until you're better.

ALICE

I am better.

GEORGE

You're sick.

ALICE

I have a little cold.

GEORGE

You're sick, damn it. I wish you
weren't, I wish I could take it on
for you. But I can't.

He presents the pills again. Beat. A refusal.

ALICE

I'm meant to be better. Just like
you were meant to find Eli.

GEORGE

Alice.

ALICE

You think I'm superstitious.

GEORGE

I think you're drunk and you should
take your medication.

He shoves the pills closer but her eyes remain on his.

ALICE

How am I supposed to take care of
Eli?

Frustrated George drops the pills and exits.

GEORGE
Time that baby found a real home.

Alice turns to Eli.

EXT. VIKSE HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

George sits, rifle in his lap, rocking in his chair. He eyes the lamp's flickering filament. Then, RUSTLING from the distant sheep's pen.

George stands, aims his rifle. Through the scope he spots a COYOTE clawing at the fence. George fingers the trigger.

BANG!

The coyote goes down, kill shot to the head. George looks up from the scope with a deep breath.

PRELAP CHOIR

INT. CHURCH - DAY

George's hand on the pew. It inches toward Alice's. They touch, but Alice moves away. Her modest diamond wedding ring catches light, throwing a prism of colors across the church-stations of the cross, a painting of virgin Mary and baby Jesus, toward the alter where PREACHER (50s) stands.

PREACHER

He answers you when you're sick and lonely and scared. The hopes and fears you can't even speak- he hears you, like a mother hears her child. And he answers you. Are you listening? Deuteronomy 32-29: *See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.*

(points)

Alice Vikse. Will you please?

Alice exits her pew into the aisle. The entire congregation turns and slowly stands as she walks to the alter's piano. George watches the crowd whisper. He turns to Arnie Wayne, beside his wife KIM and Junior. Arnie smiles back, winks.

Alice begins to play the hymn, *Whispering Hope* but messes up. She pauses and starts again- this time she plays clean.

CHOIR

*Soft as the voice of an angel,
breathing a lesson unheard, hope
with a gentle persuasion whispers
her comforting word...*

The entire crowd joins, but George does not know the words.

CHOIR / ENTIRE CONGREGATION

*...wait til the darkness is over,
wait til the tempest is done, hope
for the sunshine tomorrow, after
the shower is gone.*

INT. CHURCH - BASEMENT - DAY

Alice, Nance (from the street market) and 6 VOLUNTEER WOMEN sew different sections of a large patchwork quilt.

NANCE

Watching the grandkids the other day, and Ronnie climbs up the counter to steal a cookie. So I smack his tush, you know, tell him "no cookies". Just now we come down stairs to the refreshments. I grab a cookie, then I feel a pat, turn around- Ronnie whacked my behind, wagging his finger, "no cookies."

She laughs.

ALICE

I remember when he was just a little thing. Now he's got eyebrows and opinions.

NANCE

I tell Jody, enjoy it every day. Trite but true, they grow up fast.

OVER AT THE REFRESHMENTS

George sets his cornbread onto the table of assorted snacks. Arnie Wayne ambles up, eyeing the sweets.

ARNIE WAYNE

Kim got me on this diet- gotta get my fix here. That looks good.

GEORGE

Still warm. Go on, try it.

He hands Arnie cornbread. He tastes, his face lights up.

ARNIE WAYNE
That is good cornbread. Truly good.

Arnie takes another bite.

ARNIE WAYNE (CONT'D)
Got a tinge of butter in the
center, huh? Moist, tender like
pie. This Abner's Bakery?

George shakes his head, points to himself. Arnie, confused.

ARNIE WAYNE (CONT'D)
You're actually growing?

GEORGE
Harvesting. First time in a decade.

Arnie smiles, puts his half-eaten piece down.

ARNIE WAYNE
Good for you, Mr. Vikse. Yeah,
that's real nice. How many acres?

GEORGE
10. But who knows next year. Sold
you that sprawl back in the day but
I still own about 200.

ARNIE WAYNE
Well, that'd be a serious yield,
Mr. Vikse. Sure would.

Arnie's eyes drift elsewhere, he waves at someone O.S.

ARNIE
Oughta say hello to Ralph...

George walks around Arnie, cuts him off on the other side.

GEORGE
Thing is, I need a combine.

ARNIE WAYNE
Oh, Mr. Vikse, I'm getting ready to
harvest myself.

GEORGE
No favors- I'd rent one from you.

ARNIE WAYNE
I'd help but I've got buyers.

GEORGE

If I can turn a little profit, show
the bank I got something going- you
tasted it, it'll sell.

ARNIE WAYNE

No, I know it will.

GEORGE

Fair price, Arnie.

Beat.

ARNIE WAYNE

Let me crunch some numbers, yeah?

GEORGE

Yeah. Good. Thanks.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

George pushed his cart past PATRONS around the corner, into
an aisle to find Sheriff Brookes, basket full of frozen food.

GEORGE

I pick Swanson over Banquet, the
meat is less dry.

SHERIFF BROOKES

(turns to George)

Yeah? Been eating at the station;
Staties got me logging home video
tapes day and night. Swear I
wouldn't mind the hours if this
thing was making more sense.

GEORGE

What's not adding up?

Sheriff looks around. They are alone.

SHERIFF BROOKES

We got the toxicology reports back.

GEORGE

How'd they do it. Cyanide? Bleach?

SHERIFF BROOKES

Off the record?

GEORGE

Sure.

SHERIFF BROOKES
No known cause of death.

Beat.

GEORGE
100 people don't just drop dead.

SHERIFF BROOKES
Sure is odd.

GEORGE
Odder than odd.

Alice rounds the corner with her hands full--

ALICE
-Found them. Oh, hi Jimmy.

SHERIFF BROOKES
Alice, look at you. So nice to see
you up and about. Feeling better?

ALICE
Oh, yes. Much better.

Sheriff looks at the jars in her hands: baby food.

ALICE (CONT'D)
No hard foods yet. Day at a time.

Sheriff nods.

INT. GROCERY STORE - CHECKOUT LINE - DAY - LATER

They wait in line.

GEORGE
You're getting good at that.

ALICE
What?

GEORGE
Lying.

ALICE
We didn't lie.

GEORGE
Alice.

ALICE
He didn't ask about Eli.

GEORGE
Who? Eli? Oh, your niece's baby.

Alice turns and starts loading the conveyor belt. Ahead of them, a CLERK rings up dozens of gallon water jugs.

Reveal the customer is ZOOEY, the prologue's truck driver.

Zooey pays, briefly looks back at George as he exits.

George helps shovel items toward the Clerk.

ALICE
I don't know why, but I'm worried
about him.

GEORGE
We've only been gone a few hours.

ALICE
I miss him.

George stares out the windows just as the FRESH HILLS FARMS produce truck exits the parking lot blaring classical music.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

George and Alice exit their vehicle and grab groceries from the rear truck bed. Alice stares at their house. It is dark.

ALICE
Why aren't there any lights on?

MUFFLED CRIES coming from inside.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Darkness. PANICKED SHRIEKS. The front door opens to Alice.

ALICE
Eli?

Eli wiggles alone on the floor surrounded by broken glass. Alice runs to the infant and nervously cradles him.

ALICE (CONT'D)
What did they do to you?

George arrives, notes broken lamps and shattered bulbs.

GEORGE
Cat?...Cat!?

EXT. VIKSE FARM - BACKYARD - NIGHT

George bursts onto the back porch and down the steps.

GEORGE
CAT!?...BERCIK!?

GAGGING NOISES from the barn. George sprints toward it.

INT. VIKSE BARN - NIGHT

George enters, his face falls.

GEORGE
What the hell...

Bercik's body violently convulses, illuminated by lantern.

Cat, Ronan, and Patrice each hold a different limb. Suddenly his body stops and his eyes roll to the back of his head.

George watches, helpless.

Cat places two fingers in Bercik's mouth over his tongue.

Beat. Bercik's seizure slows.

His body settles and then goes limp. His eyes return focus, terrified but present. Ronan and Patrice pray in Polish.

CAT
You're fine...You're alright now...

EXT. VIKSE HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT - LATER

George sits with Cat on the porch stairs. They each drink.

CAT
We're all just hanging out singing,
but Eli starts crying and he won't
stop. Then the lights start
blinking. All of them. Bercik goes
to the fuse box but it zaps him. He
seemed OK but wanted to lay down.
Minute later, they're all yelling.

GEORGE
What were you singing?

CAT
Nothing, some hymns. It's Sunday.

Cat finishes her drink.

CAT
I got 7 little brothers and sisters
and I never heard a baby cry like
that.

She stands revealing two large duffle bags at her feet.

CAT
Sleeping in the barn tonight, in
case he starts again. If you need
me, get the power back on and call.

George watches her move into the darkness.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Candles are lit around the home.

George sweeps the broken bulb glass into a dustpan, discards the shards into a trash bin. Closer on the trash. Bills, junk mail, and a LETTER FROM SOCIAL SERVICES.

He hovers over TORN PHOTOS OF YOUNG COUPLES and phrases like "Adoption Applicants" and "Eagerly awaiting your reply."

He looks up and peers through a crack in the yellow door into
THE LIBRARY

Eli nurses a bottle in Alice's lap. She sings to him, softly.

ALICE
*Baby mine, don't you cry
Baby mine, dry your eyes...*

George inches closer to the door.

ALICE
*...Rest your head close to my heart
Never to part, baby of mine--*

-Alice turns. Tight on George's eyes as she shuts the door.

INT. VIKSE FARM - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

Shattered light bulbs are spread out. Reading glasses on, George selects one with tweezers and raises a candle close.

The filament is burnt to a crisp.

He selects another. Ditto. Another--

-KNOCK! KNOCK!

He looks to the stairs and the latched steel doors above.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - BACKYARD - NIGHT

The root cellar doors open. George pokes his head out to find no one. Instead, there rests a glass of red wine.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

George enters with the wine to *Bing Crosby's It's Been A Long, Long Time*. Candles burn throughout the house.

GEORGE
Found the spare fuses.

Alice enters, all done up in a dress and makeup.

ALICE
Took forever but Eli is finally down for the night.

She sips from her own wine glass.

GEORGE
What number is that?

ALICE
I can't count in the dark.

GEORGE
I'll have the lights on in five.

He walks toward the kitchen--

ALICE
-No.

GEORGE
No?

ALICE
Dance with me.

GEORGE
I'm all dirty.

ALICE
You're handsome.

GEORGE
I smell.

ALICE
I like your smell.

She grabs his glass, places both on a table.

ALICE
Dance with me.

She slings her arms around his neck. He raises his hands to her waist. They dance.

GEORGE
We haven't done this in a while.

ALICE
We haven't done a lot of things in a long time.

GEORGE
Are you flirting with me?

ALICE
It's called foreplay.

GEORGE
You used to be more subtle.

ALICE
I'm old and I know what I want.

GEORGE
And what exactly do you want?

ALICE
I want you...to spin me.

He smiles, twirls her out and then back into his body.

ALICE
I feel like I'm just now waking up from an awful dream.

GEORGE
It's been a rough year.

They sway back and forth. She rests her head on his shoulder.

ALICE (CONT'D)
George? Tell me a secret.

GEORGE
You know all my secrets.

ALICE
Then say something romantic.

Beat.

GEORGE
I missed you.

He smiles, but his eyes have become damp. She pats his cheek.

ALICE
I knew that one.

She leans in and kisses him. Again. Longer.

She breaks with a laugh, grabs her wine, moves to the stairs. George follows with a candle.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - 2ND STORY MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

They enter the dark room. He places the candle down.

George lays Alice down in bed. She sneaks under covers as her blouse comes off. His belt and jeans fall down as he joins her under the sheets, kissing, laughing. Their bodies move into each other--

-SOUNDS of Baby Eli fussing.

GEORGE
You brought the baby up here?

ALICE
He'll stop in a second.

George resumes kissing Alice. But the baby whimpers. George stops. Alice takes over. Beat. They are back in it until

Baby Eli breaks into a full on cry.

ALICE
(sitting up)
Hold on.

GEORGE
Don't.

ALICE

He just wants to be held for a second, it's a new room--

GEORGE

-Alice. We're having a nice time.

She hovers at the edge of the bed. The cries continue.

ALICE

(standing)

Sorry.

GEORGE

You're not sorry.

ALICE

George, it's a baby.

GEORGE

(sharp)

It's not your baby.

ALICE

(sharper)

No. We never had one.

GEORGE

We couldn't.

ALICE

We couldn't?

GEORGE

We tried and we couldn't.

ALICE

That's right, it died.

GEORGE

I don't want to talk about this.

ALICE

Of course you don't.

GEORGE

We get so few good days.

ALICE

You never wanted to talk so we never talked.

GEORGE

So few. And you want to waste them.

ALICE

You never asked me what I wanted because you knew what I wanted. And if I said the words out loud, then it would be real and you would actually have to deal with it.

GEORGE

Go on, pick him up! Finally better and you want to waste it on a baby.

ALICE

Yes! That's what I want! I've always wanted it--

GEORGE

-and I couldn't give that to you--

ALICE

-You wouldn't consider adopting, couldn't fathom it. And I just sat here, biting my tongue for years, for what?

GEORGE

But now you've changed.

ALICE

Yes. And you're the same; a bitter old man since you were 30.

GEORGE

We've had a good life together, I don't regret it.

ALICE

Lay in a sickbed for a year, then tell me what you don't regret.

Beat. Eli cries louder.

GEORGE

I don't have a lot left to give. I only got enough in me for you.

ALICE

You're selfish.

GEORGE

I am. I want you for myself.

Alice reaches into the crib and presses Eli to her shoulder.

ALICE
Wanted a baby all my life. Now I
got two.

Alice turns her back to George. He stares at Baby Eli.

EXT. WAYNE FARM - UTILITY BARN - DAWN

Light leaks across the sky above a massive commercial
cornfield. Golden stalks sway in the wind.

Junior and 12 FARMHANDS huddle together outside a large barn
smoking or drinking from thermoses. Arnie Wayne enters frame.

ARNIE WAYNE
Morning boys. You all clock in?

ALL
Yeah...yep...yessir.

ARNIE WAYNE
Clock in, then right off to work
with a cigarette break.

He winks and smiles. Some laughter. He looks at Junior, a
white stick pokes out of his mouth.

ARNIE WAYNE (CONT'D)
You smoke now too?

Junior withdraws a lollipop. Arnie laughs.

ARNIE WAYNE (CONT'D)
Alright fellas, Gerald's got the
keys. My East boys know what
they're doing. West company, we got
two combines placed, Tad's driving
the third out there now. Radio me
for bathroom breaks- no shitting in
the corn please, we don't fertilize
again til after harvest. Alright?
Alright, let's have a good day.

He claps and the men spread toward the corn, moving past
mills, grain trucks, and tractors.

Arnie follows Junior toward the stalks.

ARNIE WAYNE (CONT'D)
You eating with the boys or you
want lunch with mommy and me?

JUNIOR
What's Mom making?

ARNIE WAYNE
Good question. I'll radio you.

Arnie halts. CAMERA continues with Junior into

THE COMMERCIAL CORNFIELD

He is dwarfed by the 8-foot tall corn as he trudges deeper through the shadowed rows, swiping stalks from his face...

...sixth row...seventh row...eighth row...

A NOISE.

Junior stops. Beat.

ANOTHER SOUND.

He turns to

SOMETHING WHITE AND RED IN THE DISTANCE.

Junior looks around but he is alone. Beat. He walks deeper into the thicket, toward the object. Faster. Closer.

His face contorts in disgust as he reaches A BLOODY ROBE. Junior kneels to the cloth--

-SOUNDS OF WHIMPERING FROM THE NEXT ROW.

Junior inches forward and parts the corn stalks to reveal Martha, the prologue's gunshot victim, curled up. Her hands pressed to the recent wound around her hips. **Reveal the prologue is chronologically this point in our story.**

Martha looks up, weakly raises a finger to her lips.

MARTHA
Shhh.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIBRARY - DAY

The yellow door opens and Cat enters.

CAT
Want me to draw your bath or--

She stops to find George alone in the sick bed. He wakes.

CAT
Where'd your wife sleep?

He fumbles for his mug and points up.

Cat nods, turns to a strip of wallpaper peeling off the wall.

CAT (CONT'D)
I called the agency this morning,
just to see if they had anything.

He opens his mouth to speak, but decides on a sip instead.

CAT
They did. And you know Alice is
better but now it's babies and sick
workers...things here are strange.

Beat. Cat wants a reaction.

GEORGE
When do you leave?

CAT
I didn't say I took the job.

GEORGE
But you want to.

CAT
...Yeah.

GEORGE
Then go.

Beat. Cat backs away, reaches for the door.

CAT
Ok. Then I will. As soon as the
farmhands are better.

GEORGE
They're sick?

CAT
They all got the flu or something.

The door shuts, causing the strip of wallpaper to peel more.
He stares at an older, yellow paint on the wall beneath.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - GOAT PEN - DAY

George, mud-stained, wrestles a goat into a head gate by its

horns. He sits on a stool and milks with one hand while he drinks his mug with the other. He looks down into the pail.

Blood.

George looks up to the house in the distance where familiar PIANO SOUNDS leak *Baby Eli's Lullaby*.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alice plays the piano as Baby Eli tries to inch his body toward her. She cheers him on.

ALICE

Come on, you can do it! Come on...

Eli crawls on the rug, past the TV NEWS. Closer on the screen: *NEWS ANCHOR* talks beside a photo of Martha.

TV NEWS ANCHOR (ON TV)

...Authorities say she escaped while in transit, along with other members of the Rising People's Temple, from an underground silo meant for storing grains, used for the past month as a doomsday bunker. When Armageddon didn't come, the members fled.

B-ROLL of INVESTIGATORS scattered on a farm. Photos of an abandoned industrial shelter with rows of bunk beds. Cut to an impromptu press conference. Sheriff Brookes in the BG.

FBI AUTHORITY (ON TV)

We believe they've been transported in batches to another compound in the southwest, possibly Mexico, and may be armed and dangerous.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Cases of goat milk bounce harshly in the back of George's pick up truck as he drunkenly swerves across the dirt road.

INT. / EXT. GEORGE'S TRUCK - DAY

George refills his mug from a pint of moonshine. He drinks.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

A SMALL CROWD stands beside a CAMERAMAN and a FIELD REPORTER pointing mics at Arnie Wayne and Junior.

FIELD REPORTER 1
Did she say anything else when you
found her?

JUNIOR
No. She was hurt bad and spooked
even worse.

ARNIE WAYNE
She was pretty incoherent.
Brainwashed far as I could tell.

Field Reporter whispers to the Cameraman; he stops rolling.

FIELD REPORTER 1
Ok, thank you. Thanks a lot.

JUNIOR
You said Six O'Clock News?

FIELD REPORTER 1
Yes, sir. You'll be on the TV then.

CORN VENDOR RUSSELL (O.S)
Oh you boys is famous now!

Junior and Arnie Wayne turn, walk toward Corn Vendor Russell.

George watches from the back of his truck, tracing Arnie
through the CROWD OF SHOPPERS. He sips his mug and stands.

CORN VENDOR RUSSELL (CONT'D)
Shoulda worn a *Wayne Farms* shirt in
that interview. Product placement.

ARNIE WAYNE
That right, Russell? Oughta offer
your advisory services around town,
for a nominal fee of course.

CORN VENDOR RUSSELL
Yep. For a thousand bucks you can
call me advisor. For a million,
I'll let you call me daddy!

They laugh as George arrives, but stumbles and falls.

CORN VENDOR RUSSELL (CONT'D)
Woah there, George.

GEORGE
Shut your mouth, Russell.

ARNIE WAYNE
You OK?

George is visibly drunk. Arnie and Junior help him up.

GEORGE
Fine.

CORN VENDOR RUSSELL
That's one word for it.

GEORGE
Can I talk to you?

ARNIE WAYNE
Sure, Mr. Vikse. Let's talk.

Arnie places a hand on George, guides him back to his stand.

ARNIE WAYNE (CONT'D)
You sure you're alright?

GEORGE
Fine. I'm uh, I'm coming up on
peak. I wanna know if I can count
on you or not?

ARNIE WAYNE
Let's get you a seat first, huh?

GEORGE
I just need to rent one combine.
All I need is a yes or a no.

ARNIE WAYNE
Mr. Vikse, let's sit you down--

GEORGE
-Well, is it a yes or a no?

ARNIE WAYNE
Your liable to hurt yourself--

GEORGE
-Just answer the damn question!

They stop.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I'm not stupid! I'm not a stupid
man. I see how you do that to
people. I got eyes.

Only Arnie notices as some patrons turn, quiet down.

ARNIE WAYNE
What do I do, Mr. Vikse?

GEORGE
Nothing! Talk but you say nothing.
You smile and it means nothing!

ARNIE WAYNE
I never promised you a combine.
Never said that.

GEORGE
Your father and me, we were good
friends, we got history--

ARNIE WAYNE
-My daddy liked you very much, but
I own the farm now.

GEORGE
I'm a friend, Arnie.

ARNIE WAYNE
Of course, Mr. Vikse. But you
harvest corn and you're also a
competitor.

GEORGE
That's horse shit! That's not how
you were raised.

ARNIE WAYNE
You're not my father, Mr. Vikse.
You're no one's father.

Arnie turns away, back toward the corn stand. The frozen
crowd slowly thaws back to life. From a distance, Junior
stares at George. Beat. George turns away.

INT. POLICE STATION - OFFICE - DAY

Sheriff Brookes wears oversized headphones at a tube TV in
the back corner of a cramped, open-plan office. His eyes
drift to 3 FBI AGENTS across the room, talking.

SECRETARY (50s) approaches with paperwork and VHS tapes.

SECRETARY

Audio goes in and out but I typed up transcripts best I could. Mostly preaching. Some weapons training too.

SHERIFF BROOKES

Alright, thanks.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Then there's this one. I started it, but I couldn't.

SHERIFF BROOKES

What's on it?

She shakes her head, places it on his desk and walks away.

Sheriff stares at the VHS tape. Long Beat. He looks around. Then, cautiously, he enters it into the deck.

Closer on the TV as a dark, grainy image appears: *candle light illuminates a NUDE WOMAN laying on the ground, crying.*

Sheriff again looks around and adjusts the monitor.

Back to the TV: *zoom out to reveal this is MARTHA and she is pregnant. Wider still, she lays on the floor surrounded by MALE ONLOOKERS, her limbs each gripped by FEMALE HELPERS.*

Suddenly, everyone points. Camera pans to see the LUMP IN HER STOMACH ABRUPTLY SHIFT.

The Sheriff leans toward the monitor to see--

MARTHA BEGINS TO LEVITATE OFF THE GROUND AS THE CANDLES SPONTANEOUSLY FLAME OUT AND THE VIDEO GOES BLACK.

Sheriff Brookes raises the volume to its maximum. His headphones leak SOUNDS OF A WHISPER CHANT and then...

A NEWBORN BABY CRYING.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - DAY

Rain falls on the corn. Violent gusts of wind bend the stalks to reveal the Vikse Home as George parks his truck and exits with a crate of milk and meat.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

George enters the quiet house and wipes his wet boots.

GEORGE
Alice?

He looks upstairs. But turns to SOUNDS OF STATIC from

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Empty. George places the crate on the table and looks down the hall at the yellow door. He steps forward but halts--
-STATIC SOUNDS. A baby monitor receiver rests on the counter.

George turns the volume up. Faint, static-ridden noises crystallize into SOUNDS OF DRESSER DRAWER RUMMAGING.

Suddenly, the yellow door bursts open. Cat stops surprised to see George. She continues, hands full of pill bottles.

GEORGE
You found batteries for these?

CAT
(approaches, whispers)
Shhhh. They're napping upstairs.

Cat arrives in the kitchen, places the pills on the counter.

CAT (CONT'D)
Found batteries and playing cards,
a gold earring, and every kind of
pill in the world except Motrin.

He opens a drawer, withdraws a near empty bottle of Motrin.

CAT (CONT'D)
Is that all?

GEORGE
You going into surgery?

CAT
Bercik, Ronan, and Patrice all have
fevers. I mean bad- 102, 103. What
was in that pesticide?

GEORGE
I don't know. Nothing harmful.

CAT
It's *pesticide*.

GEORGE
Everybody uses that stuff.

CAT
Without gloves and masks?

She grabs the Motrin and turns to the back door.

GEORGE
That was weeks ago, that's not it.

CAT
Oh no? Then what?

Cat exits into the pouring rain toward the barn.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - GOAT PEN - DUSK

The storm continues. Under the pen's tin roof a kid goat sucks milk from its mother. She licks its wet fur dry.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Prescription bottles read "Alice Vikse". Pills line the counter. BANG! A pot crushes them until only dust remains.

George brushes the grounds into a glass of ice tea and stirs. The baby monitor comes to life with WHISPERING.

He lowers the volume and looks down the dark hall.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

He quietly approaches the yellow door.

SOUNDS OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE grow louder as he spots a shadow rocking under the doorway. Closer, he hears

ALICE SPEAKING. It sounds like Latin.

George, confused, pushes the yellow door open to

THE LIBRARY

Baby Eli nurses a bottle on Alice's lap. She opens her eyes.

GEORGE
Were you sleeping?

ALICE
I'm not sure.

GEORGE
I heard you talking.

ALICE
Sleep-talking?

GEORGE
Sounded like Latin.

ALICE
I don't speak Latin.

GEORGE
No, you don't.

He turns to see the wallpaper has peeled even more, exposing
an elephant decal atop a yellow wall.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Alice, you know, last night. I, uh,
I don't want to make you upset.
Never. And I did. I guess I have
for some time--

ALICE
--No, George, I haven't been
sleeping well with the baby...

GEORGE
...Yeah.

ALICE
Yeah.

The baby coos. They both turn to see happy Baby Eli.

ALICE (CONT'D)
George, he's smiling at you.

GEORGE
I see. Hello there.

ALICE
He likes your voice.

Baby Eli continues to stare, babbles.

BABY ELI
Mmmm-baahhhh-daaaaaa.

ALICE
You want to hold him?

GEORGE
My hands are all wet. Here.

George offers his wife the iced tea.

ALICE

You can rock him to sleep?

GEORGE

Not tonight.

ALICE

If you held him, I know you'd like it. You can feel what he feels.

George approaches Eli. But instead kisses Alice's head.

GEORGE

He looks content.

As George exits, he turns to see Alice sip her ice tea. George smiles and shuts the door.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Curtains move as wind blows through an open window.

George sits on the couch, hunched over a dominos game of solitaire on the coffee table. He drinks from his mug.

SOUNDS OF ELI CRYING via baby monitor receiver.

Frustrated, George lowers the volume. But the cries continue to echo from upstairs.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - 2ND STORY MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door creaks open, spreading light across Alice, deep in sleep. The empty iced tea glass rests on the nightstand.

George turns to Eli crying in his crib, hands outstretched.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

George puts a bottle of milk in the microwave. He sits Eli upright on the counter. Thunder clap. The baby cries as a gust of wind sends curtains in the next room flying.

GEORGE

You're alright. You're fine. It's the wind. It's just the wind.

George opens the microwave then sucks the bottle himself. Warm enough, he hands the milk to Eli who drinks.

GEORGE
Good? Good.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

George places Baby Eli in a walker at the edge of the table with a view of the open window. He resumes his dominos.

BABY ELI
Mmmbbaa...baaaa...mmaa.

GEORGE
Really?

BABY ELI
Ba-mmmmm...abbaabba...mmmb!

GEORGE
Fascinating.

Eli stretches across the table and grabs a domino. George takes it back and moves all pieces out of Eli's reach.

GEORGE
Solitaire. Means only I play.

George considers his next move and sips his mug.

Eli reaches out again until he can go no further, but his tiny fingers are still too far away. Suddenly

THE DOMINO SLIDES ACROSS THE TABLE ALL BY ITSELF...

George turns, watches it move
...INTO BABY ELI'S HAND.

George, shocked.

BABY ELI
Mmbbbba...bbb-ba.

He gently grabs the domino from Eli and places it on the table where it had been. Then he drags it even further back.

Eli grows disgruntled.

GEORGE
Do that again.

The baby extends his hand once more.

George turns to the domino.

Long beat.

The domino remains static. Eli finally lowers his hand.

George reaches for the unmoved piece, but as he nears it...
the wind howls and furiously blows the curtains--

-THE DOMINO SLIDES ACROSS THE TABLE AND INTO BABY ELI'S GRIP.

George darts up onto his feet, spooked as the wind continues to knock stray papers onto the floor.

Eli nibbles on the domino. George approaches the whipping curtains. But as he nears the window, the wind stops.

He shuts the window. Hold on the view outside of the barn.

INT. VIKSE BARN - 2ND STORY - NIGHT

A crucifix hangs on the wall above Cat, asleep on a futon. Her breathing body moves in and out of shadows.

CREAK.

Her eyes open. She slowly turns to the dark hallway. Empty. Cat returns to her sleeping position. Beat. Behind her,

A SILHOUETTE RACES DOWN THE HALL.

She whips around.

CAT
...Bercik?

Cat grabs a match and lights the lantern at her side. She stands toward the hallway.

She slowly steps forward with the light to reveal

A POOL OF BLOOD ON THE HALLWAY FLOOR.

Cat hovers, concerned. She directs the light over the puddle and bends closer to a reflection there. Beat. It moves.

CAT (CONT'D)
What the--

-ANOTHER FIGURE SPRINTS RIGHT PAST HER.

Cat swings the lantern but it is too dark to see the end of the hallway where A DISTANT DOOR SLAMS. Beat.

Cat, still crouched, nervously shifts the lantern down to see a trail of blood drops on the floor.

CAT (CONT'D)
Ronan? Patrice?...you alright?

Cat rises, frightened.

Barefoot, she slowly traces the red splatter to the end of the corridor. She stops. The trail continues under a door.

CAT (CONT'D)
Somebody in there?

She knocks. Beat.

Cat opens the door to

THE BATHROOM

Bercik, pale, sweaty, bloodshot eyes, stares at himself in the mirror. Cat steps forward, unnoticed.

Then Bercik's mouth opens.

CAT (CONT'D)
You feeling ok?

His mouth opens wider until BLOOD OOZES OUT.

Bercik bends to the sink. Reveal Ronan and Patrice behind; both sick, hovering over the tub and toilet respectively. They turn, exposing their own bloody mouths.

Cat, terrified.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Headlights move throughout the house and across sleeping Eli.

HONK! HONK! HONK! HONKKKKKKKKKKKKKKKK!

George stands, runs to the front door as the baby wakes.

EXT. VIKSE HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The rain has stopped. George runs out of the house rattled as Cat opens her car door and stands.

GEORGE
I just put the baby down.

CAT

Something's wrong! Their fevers
won't quit and now there's blood!

GEORGE

Blood?

CAT

Coughing it up- they need a doctor.
Headed to Isham. I'll call you!

Cat gets back in the car and takes off. George watches the
farmhands, in the way back seat, recede into the night.

He turns to his home and through the window sees Eli crying.
The child notices George and softens.

INT. POLICE STATION - OFFICE - DAY

Sheriff sits up in his chair opposite an unseen couple.

SHERIFF BROOKES

This must be an impossible time for
you, I can only imagine. I've had
dozens of such meetings and it
doesn't get easier. Now, in order
to verify the dead you'll excuse me
as I ask you some questions.

He picks up a clipboard, reads.

SHERIFF BROOKES (CONT'D)

Gender.

VOICE (O.S)

Male.

SHERIFF BROOKES

Hair color.

VOICE (O.S)

Brown. Bald mostly.

SHERIFF BROOKES

Eye color?

VOICE (O.S)

Brown.

SHERIFF BROOKES

Height and weight?

VOICE (O.S)
About 2 feet. Maybe 20 pounds.

Sheriff looks up. Reveal this is Zooey. He sits beside **BETTY** (18), quiet and robotic.

ZOOEY
Her baby is almost 7 months now.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - DAY

Hold on the corn, dancing in the breeze. Crows scatter as a WOODEN CROSS DRAPED WITH A CLOTH rises up over the crops.

DEEP IN THE CORN

George nails a stake into the dirt. He sighs, grabs another 12' tall wooden cross and heads further into the thicket.

LATER

Wider. Another poor-man's scarecrow is erected in the distance. There is one every 50 yards.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Prescription pills are lined up on the counter. BAM. A pot crushes them until only dust remains.

George gathers the grounds into a glass of ice tea and stirs. The baby monitor bursts to life with *Chopin's 12 Etudes, Op.10: Etude No.3 in E Major.*

George lowers the volume and looks down the hall.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The yellow door. Fast approaching.

George's silhouette moves closer and closer to the tiny crack from which the music emanates.

Tight on his eyes, arriving. A slit of light hits his face. Beat. He can hear the SOUNDS OF HIS WIFE HUMMING.

He pushes the door open, but instead of the Library he sees

A NURSERY

Bright, fresh, yellow painted walls with decals of elephants.

George, confused, approaches the rocking chair where Alice cradles a still unseen Baby Eli draped in a long 1940s gown.

GEORGE

Alice?

Alice turns to reveal

SHE IS BREASTFEEDING BABY ELI.

ALICE

...he's hungry.

Baby Eli releases from her nipple. A stream of blood runs. George's face falls into shock.

Eli starts to choke. Louder, harsher. His lips part as AN INSECT CRAWLS OUT ONTO HIS CHIN AND FLIES AT GEORGE.

She smiles unaware. George can only point at Eli's mouth as MORE BUGS POUR OUT OF THE INFANT'S MOUTH: LOCUSTS.

They fly all around the room. George swats away the plague, walking backwards into

BLACK SPACE

Through the swarm, George sees the yellow door suddenly slam shut. Tight on him, furiously flailing his hands until

EXT. VIKSE HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

George wakes is his chair, one hand on his mug resting on his wet crotch. He looks up, surprised to see Arnie Wayne.

ARNIE WAYNE

You piss yourself, Mr. Vikse?

Beat.

GEORGE

I'm not that old, not yet. Spilled--

ARNIE WAYNE

-I saw. Spilled your drink.

GEORGE

How long you been watching me?

ARNIE WAYNE
Just now arrived.
(smells)
Plum?

GEORGE
Muscadine grape.

ARNIE WAYNE
Daddy used to make his liquor with
cherries. Tasted awful.

GEORGE
Why are you here, Arnie?

ARNIE WAYNE
So you can apologize.

Beat. George nods.

GEORGE
I was drinking and, well, I've been
acting a little funny lately.

ARNIE WAYNE
You and everything else.

Arnie tosses him an ear of corn.

ARNIE WAYNE
We reaped half my acres, then this.

George peels the husk back to reveal BLACK, INFECTED KERNELS.

GEORGE
How bad is it?

ARNIE WAYNE
Spreading east. Victor's been hit,
Russell too. You don't have them
yet if that's what you're asking.

GEORGE
Your surprisingly calm.

ARNIE WAYNE (CONT'D)
Insurance will help. Kicks in when
I burn a shelter-belt around my
property, help stop the spread.

GEORGE
When's the fire?

ARNIE WAYNE (CONT'D)
Tonight. I'll burn my perimeter,
all along the edge there. Maybe
harvest the rest as salvage grain--

-MUFFLED SOUNDS of the BABY O.S from the house. Arnie turns.

ARNIE WAYNE (CONT'D)
...You still got that baby?

GEORGE
No.

Beat. The O.S CRIES slowly die.

ARNIE WAYNE
When Arnold found that girl, we're
waiting for the ambulance and she
just keeps repeating how she has to
warn everyone. So I ask her, warn
us about what?...a child.

George stares, unblinking. Arnie finally laughs.

ARNIE WAYNE (CONT'D)
Batshit crazy, I tell you.

George feigns a smile.

Arnie looks to the house. He slowly raises his hand, waving.
George turns.

Alice appears in the window, rocking Baby Eli.

ARNIE WAYNE (CONT'D)
Yeah, you been acting real funny
lately, Mr. Vikse.

GEORGE
I'm fine.

Arnie nods, turns.

ARNIE WAYNE
Watch out for the fire, Mr. Vikse.

Arnie exits around the side of the house. George looks into
his mug- some liquid still left. He tosses it over the porch.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alice holds Baby Eli's arms as he bounces up on his feet in
front of *Sesame Street*. Then he falls.

ALICE

Uh oh. It's OK. Up again. Up, up.

George enters, sullen.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Didn't come to bed last night.

He sits on the couch nearby.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You OK?

GEORGE

Didn't sleep well. Bad dream.

ALICE

You remember it?

Beat. George watches Eli bounce.

GEORGE

No. You have any?

ALICE

One. We're younger in the dream, me and you. And Eli's there, except he's older. We walk in the dark and you keep humming a song. But you're both faster and I fall back in the dark. So I just follow the song.

GEORGE

Sounds scary.

ALICE

It wasn't.

Eli stares. George covers his face. Beat. He removes his hands to reveal a smile. Eli giggles.

ALICE (CONT'D)

You're good at that.

GEORGE

Nobody's bad at peek-a-boo.

ALICE

You make him smile, George. He loves you.

GEORGE

Love is a big word for a baby.

ALICE

Actually, it's a perfectly sized word.

George forces a smile and stands again. Alice grabs Eli.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Gonna take a nap?

GEORGE

Might go the other way, make some coffee. You want any?

ALICE

No thanks. We're going for a walk.

She stops and rests her head against his face, long enough for him to kiss her forehead.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Cat called. They have to stay another night at the hospital... I'm sure they'll be fine.

George nods, unconvinced. Alice exits onto the back porch.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

George fills the kettle and places it on the stove.

He peers out the back window to see the goats gather as Alice and Eli pass by. The goats SCREAM- a chorus of screeches.

Alice and Eli keep walking and disappear into the cornfield.

SOUNDS OF A CAR O.S.

INT. VIKSE FARM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

George reaches for the remote and turns off *Sesame Street*. But the CAR SOUNDS continue to rise.

He turns to the front window to see a POLICE CAR pull up.

George looks at the mirror, observes himself. Beat.

KNOCK KNOCK.

INT. / EXT. VIKSE HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

George opens the door to Sheriff Brookes.

SHERIFF BROOKES

Hi George.

GEORGE

Jimmy.

SHERIFF BROOKES

I spoke to the hospital. I know
you've got the baby. And that's
fine- you're not in trouble.

Beat.

George sees Zooey and Betty hovering by the cruiser.

GEORGE

Who are they?

SHERIFF BROOKES

These folks are his real parents.

SHERIFF BROOKES (CONT'D)

They left that group shortly after
their baby was born, but they're
still sort of free spirits. They
just now heard about the whole
catastrophe. May we come in?

George opens the door wider. Sheriff waves at the couple.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Betty, Zooey, and Sheriff all sit.

SHERIFF BROOKES

George, this is Zooey and Betty.

GEORGE

Nice to meet you folks.

ZOOEY

(looking around)

You have a large home.

GEORGE

It does the job.

George tidies up near his chair, clearing toys, baby shoes.

SHERIFF BROOKES

To cut right to it, George, these
folks would like their son back.

Beat. George stares at the odd couple.

GEORGE

Well...I have to say this is
somewhat of a relief. For me. I
imagine Alice will take it hard.

SHERIFF BROOKES

Is Alice home?

CREAK.

Everyone turns to the noise. But the room is empty.

GEORGE

She went for a walk.

SHERIFF BROOKES

I see. Is the baby here?

Betty will not make eye contact. Zooey will not look away.

GEORGE

Baby's with Alice. Unsure when
they'll be back.

SHERIFF BROOKES

I see.

SOUNDS of the O.S. kettle humming.

SHERIFF BROOKES (CONT'D)

Now, the media still doesn't know
about the baby and I think we'd all
like to keep it that way, frankly.
Perhaps tomorrow, you all can come
down to the station?

KETTLE HISSING. Zooey, unblinking.

GEORGE

Of course. I think that would be
decent, to have the night, let
Alice say goodbye. Pack up, these
toys and such. Clothes. You should
have them...

KETTLE SCREECHES. George stands.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Steam pummels the window. George enters, turns the burner off. The whistling dies.

He wipes fog away from the glass and peers out into his backyard. He searches but cannot see Alice or Eli anywhere.

George turns back.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

He rounds the corner to find--

Alice and Baby Eli standing in the living room.

SHERIFF BROOKES
Good timing after all.

George slowly approaches the group once more.

ALICE
You're here for Eli?

ZOOEY
Armon.

Everyone turns to Zooey.

ZOOEY (CONT'D)
His name is Armon.

George sits. Alice follows. Eli squirms in her arms, unhappy.

ALICE
I'm sorry, I didn't know you were
coming...
(to George)
Did you?

GEORGE
No.

SHERIFF BROOKES
Didn't mean to barge in, Alice.

ALICE
No, of course not.
(to Betty)
You must've been worried sick, I
can't imagine.

Alice repositions Eli to face Betty.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Would you like to hold him?

Betty looks to Zooey. Long Beat. Baby Eli starts to pout. Alice notes their hesitation and looks to George, confused.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Why didn't you come searching for
your son until now?

ZOOEY
We were traveling and just heard
the news.. We want to thank you and
your husband for your grace and your
compassion. For feeding and
clothing and loving this child as
you clearly do. You're kind people.

Zooey outstretches his hands. Baby Eli whimpers.

ZOOEY (CONT'D)
May I?

Alice sighs. She starts to extend Baby Eli toward him. But George blocks the handoff. Alice looks at her husband.

GEORGE
You confirmed the medical records
and all that then, Jimmy?

SHERIFF BROOKES
The baby wasn't born in a hospital.

ZOOEY
We don't believe in doctors.

SHERIFF BROOKES
They corroborated details about the
commune there, and a description of
the child the hospital had.

George cracks a smile.

GEORGE
Short, bald, chubby's not exactly
unique as far as babies go.

ZOOEY
You don't believe us?

GEORGE
It's not about belief, I'd just
feel better with some proof.

BETTY
We thought they killed him.

Zooey raises his hand and Betty quiets. Alice watches, uncomfortable.

ZOOEY
Armon is 7 months and 20 days old today. He loves music. It's the only thing that ever truly settles him. He has an awful cry and it can be quite deafening.

GEORGE
Babies cry. Babies like music.

ZOOEY
There is a mark, a cross, carved on the back of his right thigh.

Sheriff looks at Alice. She slowly nods, affirming.

SHERIFF BROOKES
Ok. That's something.

GEORGE
Carved?

ZOOEY
Armon has abilities. Very special and extremely powerful. He is a divine empath; he can feel what others feel. He can also manipulate things with his mind.

Beat. Sheriff, shocked, looks to George. He turns to Alice.

GEORGE
Eli's just a baby. He babbles and cries and shits. That's all.

ZOOEY
(to Alice)
You've seen it.

SHERIFF BROOKES
I, uh, I think that the next step, given the high profile nature of recent events, would be to administer a blood test.

ZOOEY
That takes weeks.

BETTY

You don't understand, we're trying
to help you.

SHERIFF BROOKES

We'll settle this whole thing as
soon as humanly possible. OK?

Zooey stares at George. Beat.

Then he breaks into a smile and stands, prompting Betty and Sheriff Brookes to do the same.

ZOOEY

Fine. We'll have Armon back soon.

Alice holds Baby Eli tight. She remains seated as George stands and sees the visitors to the front door.

INT. / EXT. VIKSE HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Sheriff leads Betty down the stairs toward the police car.

SHERIFF BROOKES

Thank you, George. We'll talk soon.

Sheriff Brookes mouths the words *sorry* to George as he goes. Zooey lags behind and grabs George's hand.

ZOOEY

*The end of something is better than
its beginning. Patience is better
than pride. Ecclesiastes 7:8.*

George pulls his hand away. Zooey turns. George shuts the door and locks it. He turns to Alice.

ALICE

What kind of mama won't hold her
own child?

George shakes his head and stares at Baby Eli.

EXT. WAYNE FARMS - COMMERCIAL CORNFIELD - DUSK

On the distant horizon, a group of silhouettes gather together in a field, raising hands to relay a signal.

Suddenly, they spread out as FIRE ignites, engulfing rows of corn. A plume of smoke climbs up through the purple sky.

EXT. VIKSE FARM HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

George watches the fire spread from his porch, rifle in hand.
SOUNDS of *Baby Eli's Lullaby* from inside.

INT. VIKSE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

George enters and locks the door behind him. He tucks his rifle back under the stairwell.

He sits and watches Alice play the piano. She starts a new song, *Chopin's Nocturne in D-Flat Major Op.27 No.2*.

Baby Eli yawns in his walker.

ALICE

You're not drinking tonight.

GEORGE

Cutting back. Why?

ALICE

I wouldn't mind some.

GEORGE

My nerves are a little shot too.

ALICE

I don't trust those people.

GEORGE

Me either.

Beat. She continues playing, but softer.

ALICE

We don't have to give Eli back.

GEORGE

If he's theirs we do.

ALICE

Some parents shouldn't be parents.

GEORGE

Even bastards got rights, Alice.
This was always temporary.

She stops. Eli has fallen asleep.

ALICE

But it doesn't have to be. We can
fight.

GEORGE

I'm not saying I like it.

ALICE

We can hire a lawyer, a good one.

GEORGE

To do what?

ALICE

Our name's on those guardian forms.

Alice grabs the sleeping child. They walk to the yellow door.

GEORGE

OK.

ALICE

OK?

GEORGE

Yeah.

ALICE

Yes?

GEORGE

Yes. We hire a big expensive lawyer, three piece suit, and we hustle up and back to court for months and months until Eli's ours. And then what? We're 70 with a baby. You're still sick.

They continue into

THE LIBRARY

Alice lays Eli down in the crib.

ALICE

I'm better.

GEORGE

Maybe. Maybe you really are. OK, then what? How much time we got left, 10 years? We'll be 80 and he'll still be a boy...

She stares at the sleeping baby.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
...20 years? We'll be 90 when he's
done school. How long? My mother
died at 46. My daddy at 50.

George moves to the open window by the baby, shuts it.

Alice grabs the baby monitor and stops at the doorway.

ALICE
I love him, George.

Alice stares. Beat. She softly closes the door. Back into
THE LIVING ROOM

GEORGE
What would happen to Eli if we go?

ALICE
Old is better than crazy.

GEORGE
Alice.

She shuts off one lamp and the room falls darker.

ALICE
You can't plan 20 years. You take
one step forward, one, and you
trust there's a second. If I waited
until I felt ready for anything, I
would've done shit with my life.
And damn it, I want this.

GEORGE
I know you do.

ALICE
Maybe...we were chosen.

Beat. Alice hovers by the only remaining lamp.

GEORGE
That's just something broken people
say when they have to endure.

ALICE
I'd rather be delusional and still
feel something.

She turns off the second lamp; the room goes dark, revealing
SEVERAL WOMEN IN PRAIRIE DRESSES OUTSIDE THEIR HOME.

Neither George or Alice see as they approach the stairwell.

GEORGE

I think it's been a long day and we
both need some sleep.

BABY MONITOR STATIC SOUNDS as Alice follows George upstairs.

Then BABY ELI CRYING leaks over the monitor.

Alice stops. George's feet continue climbing.

ALICE

I thought he was down.

GEORGE (O.S)

Gotta let him cry himself to sleep.

Alice's feet reluctantly continue up and out of view.

SOUNDS OF THE BABY CRYING GROW LOUDER.

Long beat.

ALICE (O.S)

I'll be right back.

GEORGE (O.S)

Leave him, Alice.

Alice descends back into view. She crosses through the living room and opens the yellow door to

THE LIBRARY

Alice freezes.

Curtains blow from the open window that had just been closed. She turns to CRYING coming from the shadows.

ZOOEY STANDS OVER BABY ELI.

ALICE

Are you a dream?

Beat.

She inches closer to the crib, toward a frightened Zooey.

BANG!

A wound forms below Alice's naval, staining her nightgown. She staggers back against the door.

Zooey lowers his revolver, shocked himself.

Suddenly, two arms enter through the window. It is Betty.

BETTY
Grab it!

Zooey snaps back to life and peers into the crib where Baby Eli screams.

Alice cannot hold herself any longer and slides down against the doorframe to reveal--

George, behind in the living room. He raises his rifle.

BANG!

He aims high, away from Eli. Zooey flinches. Betty ducks.

BANG!

Zooey retreats further away from the crib. He fumbles for his own gun but is scared by George's third gunshot. BANG! Zooey jumps out of the window.

George grabs Eli wrapped in his blanket and bends to Alice. He turns to see the front doorknob jiggle; they want in.

GEORGE
Can you stand?

Alice, hurt but conscious.

ALICE
I think so.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - NIGHT

George bursts onto the back porch, gun in one hand and the crying baby in the other. Alice hangs off his shoulder as they descend the steps together.

SEVERAL WOMEN IN PRAIRIE DRESSES stand at the bend.

PRAIRIE DRESS 1
They're back here!

Commotion sounds.

George kicks open the root cellar doors.

He helps Alice down the steps into blackness as Zooey rounds the house and raises his gun.

BANG!

The shot ricochets off the cellar doors. George pivots Eli away and fires back as he squats down into

INT. VIKSE FARM - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

George closes the steel doors above.

Blackness.

SOUNDS of the door being locked from the inside.

GEORGE

Alice?

Baby Eli cries furiously.

Finally, the single overhead light bulb ignites to illuminate Alice on the ground. She looks weak.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Alice!

He places crying Baby Eli beside her atop his blanket. He kneels to his wife. Alice, pained, sweats profusely.

George pats her abdomen and lower back to inspect the wound.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

There's no exit wound. The bullet is still inside.

ALICE

Is that bad?

GEORGE

No. That's fine. You'll be fine.

He looks up at the overhead light, which suddenly starts to GLOW BRIGHTER.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - NIGHT

Zooey leads his dozen Prairie Dresses followers through the backyard and toward the root cellar doors where

Light leaks from the gap between.

Zooey stops at the doors below and presses his boot to the latch, then raises it high and STOMPS DOWN. He repeats.

INT. VIKSE FARM - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

Baby Eli's cries grow PIERCING as

The overhead lightbulb burns even brighter.

Alice's grip on George's hand weakens. Her eyes close under strained, heavy breathing.

GEORGE

Alice. Stay here. Don't leave me.
Stay right here.

BOOM! BOOM!

George looks up to the doors above as they endure impact.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - NIGHT

Zooey and some Prairie Dresses keep stomping on the doors until the slit widens with a major dent.

Light flickers from beneath.

INT. VIKSE FARM - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

Alice stops breathing.

George's eyes go wide.

He shakes her.

GEORGE

Alice? Alice!? Wake up!

Baby Eli's little body shakes as it screams.

George winces at the child's CRESCENDOING CRIES until

ALL SOUND GOES MUTE.

INSERT on the lightbulb's filament burning up.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - NIGHT

THE PRAIRIE DRESSES BEGIN TO COVER THEIR EARS.

Light pours out from the crack in the cellar doors. It glows brighter. Zooey points his gun at the hole. But suddenly,

HIS GUN STARTS TO SHAKE.

His hand continues trembling, until
THE GUN FLOATS OUT OF HIS HAND AND INTO THE SKY.

INT. VIKSE FARM - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

Baby Eli wails as sparks rain from the overhead bulb.

George turns to Alice. From her torso

THE BULLET EXITS HER WOUND, FLOATS UP TO THE BURNING LIGHT.

George traces the tiny metallic cylinder with his eyes.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - NIGHT

ZOOEY LIFTS OFF THE GROUND.

His body bends backwards, as if his chest were being pulled up to the sky while his face contorts in tremendous pain.

Behind him, the Prairie Dresses' feet also lift.

INT. VIKSE FARM - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

Alice's hand suddenly grips George's hand.

She is alive.

The bullet continues up toward the light, brighter and brighter and brighter until the filament bursts.

Blackness.

SOUND rushes back with a cacophonous thud of falling objects.

MUCH LATER

Still Black.

SOUNDS of footsteps on stairs, hands fumbling with the steel doors. They are pushed aside as dawn light floods in.

EXT. VIKSE FARM - DAWN

George steps up through the doors, his rifle outstretched ready to fire. Instead he sees

A DOZEN DEAD BODIES sprawled out in the backyard including Zooey, Betty, and the other Prairie Dresses.

The stubble fire continues burning through the outlying cornfields, closer now to George's property.

The goats clamor together in their pen, moaning loud.

George turns as Alice emerges from the cellar with Baby Eli.

BABY ELI
Bmmmm...Mmba-da...Mm-da...da...

Alice steps forward with a smile. Her nightgown filled with dry blood but her face serene, healthy and somehow younger.

BABY ELI (CONT'D)
...da-da. Da-da. Da-da.

Alice outstretches Baby Eli.

Beat.

George stares at the child.

BABY ELI (CONT'D)
Da-da...da-da.

George, eyes wet, accepts the infant and hugs him close.
FRENZY SOUNDS of all the goats now screaming.

In the distance, a wooden cross draped with cloth is silhouetted by a wall of flames.

Baby Eli snuggles into George as Alice joins her husband. Together, they watch the fire.

They are a family.

THE END

Credits: Dinah Shore "(I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons"