

AIN'T THEM BODIES SAINTS

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A summer night. Crickets chirp, the sky is black.

A young man and woman sit in the front seat of a beat-up old truck. There's a tiny bit of light coming from the dome above them, a golden light stretched thin over the tops of their heads and the young arcs of their cheekbones.

The young man's name is BOB MULDOON, 24. The girl is RUTH, 23.

A SIX SHOOTER rests on the seat beside them. Glistening, cold.

Bob's head rests against Ruth's shoulder.

Ruth runs a finger through Bob's dirty hair.

And then the sound of AN ENGINE, and the wash of HEADLIGHTS across their windshield, both flaring and then receding into the night.

He looks around.

MULDOON

You see Freddy?

RUTH

There he is.

He peers out into the darkness.

Through the drivers' side window, he sees a figure emerge from the black, standing against a brick wall. Another young man - FREDDY, 25, skinny, steely. He smiles at them, and then vanishes around a corner.

Bob grabs the gun from the seat.

MULDOON

Okay.

RUTH

Five minutes?

MULDOON

Tops.

RUTH

If you're not out by then, I'm  
coming in after you.

MULDOON

I'll count on it.

She laughs and he leans across the seat, riding that bravado  
to a kiss.

They part. He quietly opens the door and hops out of the car.

Ruth slides into the drivers' seat and watches as he vanishes  
into the dark.

She waits.

CAMERA PULLS BACK on the truck, sitting idle as the first  
blue tint of DAWN begins to brighten the sky.

CUT TO BLACK



6 INT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS 6

Ruth peeks out the window.

RUTH  
I shot someone.

On the floor beside her, Muldoon holds Freddy's head in his bloodied hands. Freddy is dying, breathing fast and shallow.

The girl repeats herself.

RUTH (CONT'D)  
I think I shot someone.

7 EXT. FARMHOUSE - THAT MOMENT 7

The cops are gathered around the policeman who's been shot. A YOUNG COP, face creased with pain, blood staining his uniform. His panicked words and heavy breathing are muted by the quiet of the morning. A voice crackles on a radio:

POLICE OFFICER (O.C.)  
We need an ambulance out here right now. We've got an officer down, I repeat...

8 INT. FARMHOUSE - THE NEXT DAY 8

Ruth glances down as Freddy, white as a ghost and slick with sweat, looks around wildly, trying to find something for his eyes to focus on, eventually settling on the corner of a window, where his gaze fixes and his breathing gradually slows and he dies as Muldoon holds him.

Muldoon looks at Ruth, and she back at him.

He gets up, letting their fallen friend's body fall limp on the floor. He goes to her and takes her in his arms, holding her tight. The blood from his hands rubbing off on her shoulders, in her hair.

For a moment, we FREEZE FRAME on them, their embrace...

And then he takes the gun from her hand.

9 EXT. FARMHOUSE - THAT MOMENT 9

The police are slowly advancing through the grass, towards the house. Their guns drawn, held low.





16

16

17

17

FADE IN ON:

ECU on a PEN scratching on PAPER:

"DEAR RUTH"

We hear it too, in Muldoon's gentle Texas voice.

MULDOON (V.O.)

*Dear Ruth...*

18

INT. PRISON CELL - MORNING

18

Muldoon is sitting alone in his cell. He's sitting under a tiny skylight, writing a letter on the pages of a spiral notebook. As he finishes each page, he tears it out.

MULDOON (V.O.)

*It's been some time since I last wrote. I was stuck in the hole again. It's October now, which means Christmas is right around the corner and our little girl's got another birthday coming up.*

On the wall across from him, a SNAPSHOT of Ruth and a BABY GIRL is pinned to the wall.

Moments later, his writing is disturbed by the loud KER-CHACK of the doors opening. The day has begun.

19

INT. PRISON BLOCK - MORNING

19

A SHARP STACCATO BEAT rings down the corridors of the prison - a baton, rapping against the bars of the cell.

MULDOON (V.O.)

*I hate that I've got to miss it.*

The prisoners begin to stir in their cells. Grunts and groans and cat calls and quiet muttering.

20

INT. PRISON WORKSHOP - DAY

20

Muldoon stands over a workbench, making cuts in pieces of wood with a JIGSAW. Further down the assembly line, those pieces are being fashioned into chairs.

MULDOON (V.O.)

*It's hard to keep track of things  
in here. I'm not special here. No  
one cares who I am or what we did.  
I measure myself now by the books I  
read, and the miles I run.*

Muldoon finishes one piece of wood and moves on to another.

21 INT. PRISON YARD - AFTERNOON

21

The men stand in the yard, milling about, almost statuesque in the afternoon light.

MULDOON (V.O.)

*I paid a guard to stay in the yard  
an extra hour, and I ran 14 miles  
around those walls. That's when I  
think the best.*

Muldoon JOGS in circles around the yard. One lap, then another, then another, then another. Picking up speed, falling into perfect form.

22 INT. PRISON MESS HALL - DAY

22

The prisoners all file through the cafeteria line and carry their lunch trays to the metal picnic tables that fill the commissary.

Muldoon sits across from an old man with thick glasses, who's pulling apart a piece of cornbread.

FOUR EYES

No blueberries.

Muldoon sips on his coffee, glancing over the rim of the paper cup. Other men around the room are looking at him.

He finishes his coffee and stands up, grabbing his tray. He's going to take it to the trash when...

Someone approaches him, a tiny wiry guy in a WIFEBEATER. He's scarcely noticed him before a FIST swings his way, a sharpened spoon clenched within it.

MULDOON (V.O.)

*I think a great deal about the  
things I've missed out on. Like the  
moment Sylvie was born. The look on  
her face here and there throughout  
the day.*

(MORE)

MULDOON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*All the places I'm sure you've taken her. How she changes. And you, too. It's too easy to think you haven't changed at all, but I know that isn't so.*

Muldoon grabs the blow and twists it, and the two men tumble to the floor. Other prisoners rise to watch the scuffle. Muldoon quickly gains the upper hand, rolling atop the man, pinning down blade with one hand while curling the other into a fist and driving it into his assailant's face. BLOOD spatters across the floor and Muldoon's face.

23 INT. SOLITARY CELL - DAY

23

Muldoon, bruised and bloodied, takes his seat on the cot in a solitary cell. The light in the room dwindles to a slit as the door is shut.

MULDOON (V.O.)

*I know things aren't working out exactly as we planned. But don't you ever think I'm not thinking about it.*

CAMERA PUSHES IN on his silhouette in the darkness, rising and falling with his slowing breath.

24 INT. SOLITARY CELL - DAY

24

The door opens again, revealing a newly bearded Muldoon squinting at the light.

25 INT. PRISON SHOWERS - DAY

25

The men stand in the open showers. Water cascades from the faucets, steam rises from the floor. Muldoon washes a few weeks' of grime and dried blood from his skin.

MULDOON (V.O.)

*I dream about getting a chance to see you again. And to hold our baby girl.*

26 INT. CELL - DAY

26

Muldoon returns to his normal cell. He picks up the half-finished letter on his bed and looks at what he's written.

MULDOON (V.O.)  
*They're turning out the lights now,  
 so I better cut this short. Tell  
 Sylvie I love her. Tell her some  
 good stories about me.*

ECU on his pen, scratching out his signature at the bottom of the paper.

MULDOON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*Love, Bob.*

27 INT. PRISON WORKSHOP - DAY

27

Muldoon is back at his work bench, cutting wood.

MULDOON (V.O.)  
*P.S. Please let me know if you have  
 any plans for Christmas.*

The whistle blows. Muldoon turns off his saw, takes off his goggles and joins the other men in leaving for lunch.

CAMERA PUSHES IN on his jigsaw blade...

HARD CUT TO:

28 EXT. NURSERY - AFTERNOON

28

A small garden shop and nursery, full of flowers and greenery and packets of seed. Behind it is a garden, rows of furrowed topsoil in which baby trees have been planted.

This is where we find RUTH. 27 years old now. Lines on her face and dirt under her nails. There's a calmness to her that wasn't there in that wired girl in the farmhouse. She moves gently, calmly.

She carefully lifts a young sapling from a pot and plants it in a hole in the ground.

CAMERA PUSHES IN ON HER as she scoops the dirt towards it with her bare hands, pressing the earth into place around the roots.

29 INT. NURSERY - AFTERNOON

29

Ruth punches a register with her dirty hands, ringing up a customer. The customer leaves, and Ruth glances at the clock, and then at the window, where the daylight is waning.

30      EXT. DAYCARE - AFTERNOON

30

Ruth steps into a preschool classroom, and her face immediately lights up when she sees -

RUTH  
Hey, little kitten!

- her daughter, SYLVIE, age 4, sitting on the floor amongst other children. She looks up and gives a radiant smile to her mother. She gets up and runs to her mother's arms.

Ruth grabs her and lifts her up, holding her close. Her fingers are still dirty.

31      INT. RUTH'S CAR - NIGHT

31

Ruth drives. Sylvie sits in the back seat, relaying in her hardly-perfect diction some story she heard...

SYLVIE  
Then he went hunting.

RUTH  
He did? Did he say what he hunted?

SYLVIE  
A bear.

RUTH  
Did he shoot it?

SYLVIE  
No, because the bear ate him.

RUTH  
Then how'd he tell you the story?

SYLVIE  
What?

RUTH  
If the bear ate him, how did he tell you the story?

Sylvie thinks on this for a second.

32      INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

32

Sylvie sits at the table, scarcely able to see up over the edge.

She reaches out a finger to touch something...and then a tiny wet nose responds, meeting her halfway. A KITTEN. A tiny little calico, scarcely two weeks old, rubbing up against her hand.

It's one of five, in fact. Its siblings are all asleep, curled up on a blanket on the floor, tucked into each other. A whole litter, minus the mother.

She giggles as the kitten licks her hand.

SYLVIE

His tongue feels funny.

RUTH

You need to let these little ones sleep.

She scoops up the baby cat and strokes it with her finger. Sylvie hovers overhead, trying to find the best view.

33

INT. BEDROOM - RUTH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

33

Bedtime. Warm light seeps out from somewhere. Tungsten tones, like an oil lamp. Ruth and Sylvie are in bed together, Sylvie in her PJs and Ruth in a shirt and shorts. They're curled under a blanket. Ruth has a STORY BOOK open and is reading to Sylvie, although there's less reading going on and more pointing at pictures.

RUTH

And what's that?

SYLVIE

A star.

RUTH

What's wrong with the star?

SYLVIE

It's crying.

RUTH

It's crying? Why is it crying?

SYLVIE

Because it's lonely.

RUTH

What's going to make that star happy?

SYLVIE

I want to go see the kitties.

RUTH

The kitties are all asleep. Just like you need to be. You're a sleepy little kitty.

HARD CUT TO:

34 INT. BEDROOM - RUTH'S HOUSE - MORNING

34

And suddenly it's morning. All that orange light turned white. Sylvie stands at the edge of a bed, watching her mother sleep. She reaches out gently and touches her mother's head.

SYLVIE

Mommy.

She moves her hand down to her Ruth's arm and pushes her shoulder, gently trying to wake her.

SYLVIE (CONT'D)

Mommy.

Ruth scarcely stirs.

35 EXT. RUTH'S HOUSE - MORNING

35

An old street, trees slung low and unchecked overhead, asphalt cracking from years' of use, intermittently lined with single-story clapboard houses that seem to be sinking into the earth. RUTH'S HOUSE seems particularly isolated, set off to the side on a too-large plot of land. It's white paint peeling.

Outside the house, a man sits in a POLICE SQUAD CAR. This is Deputy PATRICK SMALLS. Mid-30s, with a boyish face countered by a receding hairline. He's the police officer who was shot outside the farmhouse.

He waits a moment, and then gets out of the car.

As he's shutting the door, he glances ACROSS THE STREET. It's a wide street, and the house directly opposite him sits receded on its lawn. A BIGGER HOUSE, two stories, its gables slanting upwards. A wrap-around porch outside it, upon which sits an OLDER MAN. From this distance its difficult to make out his features, aside from an imposing BEARD the color of flint.

This man now raises his arm up in greeting. He's watching Smalls. He leaves his arthritic hand up in the air for a beat too long - almost a salute - just to make sure Smalls sees him.

Smalls does. He waves in return. Then gives a glance around, as if someone else might be watching him, and approaches the front door.

36

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

36

The doorbell rings. The kitten's ears perk up, and so do Sylvie's.

SYLVIE

I'll get it!

RUTH

No, sweetheart, let mommy get it.

She goes to the door and opens it.

SMALLS

Morning, Ruth.

RUTH

Hey.

Ruth squints at him.

SMALLS

Wasn't sure if I'd catch you before you went to work.

RUTH

We were just having breakfast. You want some coffee?

SMALLS

Sure. Sure, I could have a cup.

She steps aside and lets him into the house.

Sylvie stays put at the table, eyeing him shyly. He gives her a friendly wave.

SMALLS (CONT'D)

Hey, little girl. What's that you got there?

SYLVIE

A kittie!

SMALLS

A whole bunch of kitties. Is that what you're eating for breakfast?

SYLVIE

(laughing)

No!

SMALLS

Don't lie. You were gonna cook one of those up, weren't you?

SYLVIE

Uh uh.

RUTH

Go and get your shoes on, Sylvie. We have to leave soon.

Sylvie reluctantly takes off down the hall. Momentarily alone, Smalls picks up the kitten. Holding it close to his chest and stroking it behind the ears until its eyes droop and it begins to pur.

He carries it over to Ruth, who is pouring two cups of coffee. A quick glance at the refrigerator reveals: a few snapshots of Sylvie, some of her artwork hanging with magnets, a meager grocery list.

SMALLS

You got yourself some cats.

RUTH

We found them under the porch.

SMALLS

Gonna take care of them all yourself?

RUTH

I can handle some cats, at least.

She hands him a mug. He exchanges it for the kitten, which he sets down with its kin, who are all now waking up.

SMALLS

(taking a sip)

Thank you.

They watch the kittens crawl over each other.

RUTH  
 (hushed)  
 I wasn't sure you were gonna come  
 back.

SMALLS  
 Well. It's sorta my job.  
 (beat)  
 I hope that's okay.

RUTH  
 I'm glad.

Her shoulder brushes against his. They both keep standing  
 there, letting that little bit of physical contact sink in.

Then...

SMALLS  
 Listen. There's something I gotta  
 tell you. It's going to be all over  
 the news later, and I wanted you to  
 hear it from me first.

RUTH  
 What?

Another beat, and then -

HARD CUT TO:

37      INT. RUTH'S CAR - DAY      37

Ruth drives again, CRYING.

From the backseat, Sylvie watches her mother with concern.

WE HOLD ON Ruth's face, as she stares out the windshield and  
 weeps.

38      EXT. WOODS - DAY      38

CAMERA PULLS BACK ON:

A wall of woods now, reaching up vertically, impenetrable. An  
 EIGHTEEN WHEELER roars by. The sounds of interstate traffic,  
 blurry flashes of cars whooshing past in the foreground.  
 Sirens rise, blaze past and die down again.

MULDOON materializes from the woods, slipping out from the bank of trees like a miniature ghost. His blues turned brown, dried mud peeling from him, like he's shedding old skin.

He looks out at the highway, waiting for an opportunity to cross - and then he does, plunging forward across the two lanes of blacktop and macadam and into the brush on the opposite side.

39 EXT. ROADSIDE DINER - DAY

39

Muldoon walks towards the parking lot of a roadside diner.

The first person he sees is a woman (SISSY) getting into her car.

He walks right up to her -

MULDOON

Hey.

- and grabs her by the arm and, before she can protest, SHOVES HER DOWN into the car, just as she lets out a scream -

40 INT. WOMAN'S CAR - DAY

40

The woman is driving. She looks petrified.

MULDOON

Just stick to the highway.

They keep driving.

SISSY

I recognize you.

MULDOON

I'll bet you do.

SISSY

...what are you gonna do to me?

(beat)

Where are we going?

MULDOON

You don't worry about that. Just keep on driving.

41 INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

41

Ruth sits in a chair in an office in a small POLICE PRECINCT, being questioned. She's stone-faced, composed, almost perfectly still.

COWBOY HAT

This is the sixth time Bob's tried to escape since he got sent up. Did you know that?

RUTH

No.

COWBOY HAT

And you haven't heard from him since that last letter?

RUTH

No. Nothing.

COWBOY HAT

Or from anybody asking about him? Anyone at all?

RUTH

No.

COWBOY HAT

You got those letters still?

RUTH

Pat's seen them.

Cowboy Hat glances up at Smalls, who's standing behind him, leaning against a desk.

COWBOY HAT

Can you bring them in all the same?

Ruth nods. She looks around suddenly, almost wild-eyed.

RUTH

I'll do whatever you want. But he won't come back. He won't come back for me, if that's what you're thinking.

HARD CUT TO:





The car door SLAMS. Ruth walks away from it, through the grass, up the hill.

CAMERA PANS with her as she walks, REVEALING...

...that OLD FARMHOUSE, swarming with POLICE and STATE TROOPERS.

She gets closer to the house, walking past a police cruiser. An officer approaches her.

POLICE OFFICER  
Ma'am, you can't go in there.

She stops, continuing to gaze up at the house as if in a daze.

51 EXT. RUTH'S HOUSE - EVENING

51

Ruth pulls up outside her house.

Sylvie is in the backseat now, and Ruth gets out and opens the back door to fetch her from her car seat. As she lifts her up, she looks across the street...

The first thing she notices is the police car parked at the edge of her block.

The second: that OLD MAN is standing on his porch. Slowly, he steps down the stairs and walks across the street, coming into clear resolution. He's in his 60s. His beard is bigger, sharper up close. He's the kind of man who looks like he could lead an army.

His name is SKERRITT.

He approaches Ruth. Looks at Sylvie and touches her cheek.

SKERRITT  
Hey lil' girl.

Sylvie laughs. She's familiar with him.

SKERRITT (CONT'D)  
Aren't you looking pretty today.  
You get your Christmas list put  
together yet?

She shakes her head shyly.

SKERRITT (CONT'D)  
No? Well you need to get on that.  
Tell your momma to help you out.

Skerritt's eyes turn towards Ruth.

SKERRITT (CONT'D)  
 (to Ruth)  
 Anything you want to talk about?

Ruth looks off down the street and shakes her head.

RUTH  
 Everyone thinks I got something to  
 tell them. I don't have a goddamn  
 thing.

Skerritt nods and gazes at her.

52 EXT. SMALL TOWN - EVENING

52

Muldoon skids down the side of an overpass, sticking close to the underside of a bridge and then heading towards a SMALL INDUSTRIAL TOWN tucked away into the hills. A little burrow of homes and red brick buildings, presided over by the cold smokestacks of an old steel mill.

53 EXT. JOANIE'S HOUSE - EVENING

53

Muldoon knocks softly on the back door of a tenement home and then steps back into the alley, waiting patiently, coiled tight.

After a moment - movement through the curtains, the shuffle of footsteps, the click of a lock. The door opens, just a crack. An OLD WOMAN with gray hair peeks out past the chain lock.

MULDOON  
 You Joanie?

JOANIE  
 I am.

MULDOON  
 Jake told me to come here.

JOANIE  
 Who are you?

MULDOON  
 I'm a friend of Jake's. He told me  
 to come here. You got something for  
 me, he said you'd give me.

She looks him up and down, at the muddy rags of his clothes, the dried blood on his hands.

JOANIE

Jake's got a lot of nerve.

54      INT. JOANIE'S BATHROOM - JOANIE'S HOUSE - EVENING      54

Muldoon stands under the shower head.

CUT TO:

He stands before the foggy mirror and neatly trims his beard and mustache. Refining his haggard look into one as sharp and defined as the razor in his hand.

55      INT. JOANIE'S BEDROOM - JOANIE'S HOUSE - EVENING      55

Joanie is pulling some laces in some old work boots as Muldoon enters.

JOANIE

You want these, too?

Muldoon nods a thank you.

JOANIE (CONT'D)

I got rid of those rags you were in.

(beat)

This was in your pocket.

She hands him something. A tattered, creased PHOTOGRAPH - that SNAPSHOT of Ruth and Sylvie.

56      INT. JOANIE'S KITCHEN - EVENING      56

Muldoon sits at the kitchen table, eating hurriedly. Joanie watches him, like a mother.

JOANIE

You want some more?

MULDOON

(between mouthfuls)

Thank you.

She smiles and ladles some food onto his plate.

JOANIE

How's Jake doing?

MULDOON

Close to good as he can get, I guess.

She nods, and glances out the window.

JOANIE

He sounds happy when he writes.

MULDOON

Writing to you makes him happy.

He cleans his plate.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

Do you have a map I could look at?

JOANIE

Where are you planning to go?

MULDOON

Like a state map.

JOANIE

Lemme see.

She gets up and rummages around in a drawer. She pulls out a tattered old map.

JOANIE (CONT'D)

This is the best I've got.

She sets it down on the table. Muldoon unfolds it. Parts of it come away in his hands.

Joanie chuckles as she looks at it.

JOANIE (CONT'D)

I think me and Jake bought that on our honeymoon. We were gonna take a road trip to California and got lost trying to get out of the state.

Muldoon looks over the map, following rural routes, his finger tracing it Westward...

FADE TO:

Early Sunday morning. A small whiteboard CHURCH. A simple cross atop it.

Ruth and Sylvie walk hand and hand down the sidewalk towards the church. Through the trickle of people entering the building, Ruth sees a police car parked down the street.

58      INT. CHURCH - DAY

58

The service is in progress - a hymn is being sung.

Ruth sits in the back pew, her lips shut tight.

She notices people glancing her way. A few whispers.

Smalls sits near the front. He looks back, too, and sees Ruth sitting there.

59      INT. MAUDE'S - NIGHT

59

In a small joint tucked away in the hills, someone is strumming a guitar and singing an old country song. Other folks sit and slap their hands on their knees and clap along.

Smoke wafts around the ceiling fans, hanging over the pool tables. Customers sit at the bar, drinking whiskeys and beers. Mostly men here, most looking like they've been coming here for a long time, some looking like they've never left.

A big hound dog loafs by the bar. Standing behind which, presiding over it all, chatting with the customers, is SWEETIE. An affable guy, probably in his 30s, who'll look much the same in 10, 20 30 years, simply because he's happy where he is.

At the moment, he's chiding a patron while unscrewing the nozzle from a keg.

SWEETIE

I'm not making that bet.

DRUNK

Come on.

SWEETIE

I'm not making that bet because I ain't a retard. I'll sell you another beer before I kick you out, is what I can do.

Sweetie frees the empty keg, hoists it out and up and carries it...

...BACK in to the tiny, cluttered BACK ROOM behind the bar. He sets it next to some other empties, and is about to pick up a new one when he HEARS SOMETHING - metal on metal, windchimes, something brushed up against - and pauses.

He peers through the screen door, leading out into the night...

...and then realizes that he's looking right past the dark figure standing there, scarcely silhouetted in the dim light.

Sweetie squints.

CUT TO:

60

INT. MAUDE'S - NIGHT

60

The bar is closed, emptied out. Sweetie is clearing empty glasses and bottles from the tables.

MULDOON sits at a table, taking a long sip from a beer.

SWEETIE

...So Tom Hall was looking to sell it. I told him I can't pay you what you're asking but I've got this much in cash I can put on the table right now. He wasn't gonna walk away from something like that. So now I run it and live out back. No one ever comes up here but the folks who ain't no one anyhow. Which suits me fine, after the ride I been through. I'll hang onto this until my probation's up and then I'll sell it. I've got a five year plan.

The dog approaches him. Muldoon scratches it behind its ears.

SWEETIE (CONT'D)

Surprised she's not biting your hand off.

MULDOON

Naw. She knows I'm good.

He stands up.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

You got a dime?

Sweetie throws him one. Muldoon slips it into the jukebox, punches a number.

A song begins to play.

MULDOON (CONT'D)  
How do you turn it up?

SWEETIE  
There's a little...yeah, that's it.

Muldoon moseys back across the bar. Reveling in the loud music.

SWEETIE (CONT'D)  
So how'd you do it?

MULDOON  
Get out?

SWEETIE  
Yeah. Took you long enough.

MULDOON  
Well.

He leans back against the bar, like he's about to spin a yarn.

MULDOON (CONT'D)  
I just started walking. Just like I said I would. No one got in my way.

SWEETIE  
You just walked out.

MULDOON  
Yeah.

SWEETIE  
How's that work?

MULDOON  
The guards, they come by your cell every night, saying 'lights out' and rattling their sticks on the bars. This one guard, he would always joke and carry on with us and I told him one night, it's been nice knowing you but I won't be around much longer. I figure, I'll be out in about ten days. He asked me how I was gonna do it and I said I was just gonna walk out the door.  
(MORE)

MULDOON (CONT'D)

He said they would stop me and I said no sir. I told him I had better things to do. He said, that's not the way things work. I say, they only work that way because you think they have to. I say, I've got a higher calling. I've got a wife and a little girl who needs her daddy. He asks what I know about higher callings, says even if I get out I gotta answer to god for the things I've done. Answer to god and the devil. I tell him, shoot. I tell him. I tell him I used to be the devil. Now I'm just a man.

(beat)

And the days tick by. Ten, nine, eight. Seven. And then just like that on the tenth day the bars open up and I walked out of my cell and before too long I was lost out in a dark wood. And by and by I found my way back here.

SWEETIE

The news said you jumped off a work truck.

MULDOON

Yeah. Well. You got anything to eat back there?

SWEETIE

I can find something.

He steps behind the bar. Muldoon returns to the jacket on the bar stool and reaches into the pocket and takes that picture of Sylvie out. He looks at it in his palm.

MULDOON

Have you seen Ruth at all lately?

SWEETIE

No. I play it safe. I know she's not living with her mom anymore. Got herself a new house.

MULDOON

A new house?

SWEETIE

Yeah. Skerritt gave her one of his old fixer-uppers.

MULDOON  
Skerritt, huh.

SWEETIE  
Yeah.  
(beat)  
Guess I should tell you he called  
the other day, asking about you.

MULDOON  
What'd you say?

SWEETIE  
I said I hadn't seen you. Which I  
hadn't.

MULDOON  
Shoot. I hope he doesn't call back  
tomorrow.

SWEETIE  
Ha. Don't you worry.

MULDOON  
You got the address of this new  
house of hers?

SWEETIE  
I can get it. She never told you?

Muldoon is quiet.

SWEETIE (CONT'D)  
Does she know you're out?

Beat.

SWEETIE (CONT'D)  
Does she know, Bob?

HOLD on Muldoon's face.

61 EXT. MAUDE'S - NIGHT

61

Sweetie and Muldoon walk out behind the bar. It's a veritable junkyard, full of detritus and old tools and such.

They head towards a rusty old truck, tucked under a tarp, held up by woodblocks. Sweetie reaches under the hood and finds the keys. He throws them to Muldoon and then kicks one of the woodblocks over.

Muldoon gets behind the wheel, puts the keys in the ignition. The engine SPUTTERS and then REVS TO LIFE.

SWEETIE

I put new plates on six months ago.  
Should be good to go.

MULDOON

Good. I want you to come with me up  
to my daddy's farm tomorrow.

SWEETIE

What for?

MULDOON

I gotta get something.

PUSH IN ON: the hood of the truck vibrates with whatever's rumbling underneath it...

CUT TO:

62 INT. MAUDE'S - UPSTAIRS - LATER

62

The one-room upstairs apartment, over the bar, is tiny and stripped down, gutted even, but it's cozy enough. There's a shelf against one wall chock full of books.

Sweetie sleeps on the bed, Muldoon on a pallet on the floor. He's clean now, dressed in new clothes. He stares at the ceiling and listens to the timbrous swaying of the trees in the wind. Low, moaning sounds...

63 INT. MAUDE'S - NIGHT

63

Muldoon walks back to the front of the bar. The lights are all out, and the moonlight drifts in through the windows.

He steps behind the bar. He feels along the underside of the counter until he finds what he's looking for.

A SHOTGUN.

It pops open with a sharp, clean CLACK. He looks inside the chamber and sees a single shell.

FADE TO:

64 INT. BEDROOM - RUTH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

64

Ruth is curled up in bed, Sylvie beside her.

She's awake. Staring at the wall.

After a time, she gets out of bed and goes to the window. Pulls back the curtain. There's a POLICE CAR parked across the street.

65 EXT. RUTH'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

65

Ruth steps out of her front door, a blanket wrapped around her shoulders.

She walks across the street to the car. Smalls is behind the wheel. He sees her and gets out. They stand on opposite sides of the car, regarding each other over the roof of the vehicle.

RUTH

They ask you to come keep a watch on me or are you just here because you want to?

SMALLS

A little bit of both.

RUTH

You want to come in?

(beat)

I'd like it if you came in.

66 INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

66

Ruth carries an old shoebox to the sofa, where Smalls awaits her.

RUTH

I was meaning to drop these by the station. These are all the letters he ever sent me. You can do what you want with them.

Smalls takes the box. It's full of ENVELOPES, their edges jagged and torn open. Dozens of them, maybe even 100. There are also photos, newspaper clippings, other odds and ends.

SMALLS

What's this other stuff?

RUTH

Just pictures and stuff. Things I've hung onto. We used to cut all the articles about ourselves out of the newspaper, hang 'em on the wall.

Smalls pulls out a thin chain, a necklace, with a SILVER RING hanging from the end of it.

SMALLS

What about this?

RUTH

Just something he gave me. It was gonna be our wedding ring, I guess.

SMALLS

Wedding ring or engagement ring?

RUTH

Both. We kept things simple. He had one too, but he lost it. I told him one was enough for the two of us.

SMALLS

Maybe you should hang onto this.

He hands the ring back to her, and then turns to the box. He pulls out a few random photos - a waterstained old print of RUTH AND MULDOON in happier times.

RUTH

Have you found out anything yet?

SMALLS

No.

RUTH

What happens when you catch him?

SMALLS

I guess he'll go back to jail.

There's another photo, of Muldoon with FREDDIE, the young man who was killed in the old farmhouse. And then a third of RUTH, all by herself, caught off guard.

SMALLS (CONT'D)

Is it weird for you to talk about this?

RUTH

No. I know what has to happen. I just don't want him to get hurt, is all.

SMALLS

Look. If you're worried about anything, maybe we could arrange for you to get away for a little while. Just until things blow over.

Ruth sighs heavily.

RUTH

I don't need to do that. I've got work. And Sylvie's got her things. I'll stay here. Everything's going to be fine.

SMALLS

Just maybe keep the option open.

RUTH

Where would I go?

SMALLS

Just out of town.

RUTH

...Would you be there?

SMALLS

Someone would go with you, yeah.

She sits back, thinking.

SMALLS (CONT'D)

You meant what you said, didn't you? About him not coming back for you?

HOLD ON his face as he waits for an answer.

FADE TO:

67

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAWN

67

Morning has yet to break. The sky is deep blue. The stars are mostly vanished.

A rolling meadow breaks out past the treeline on the horizon.

A dust devil stirs up in the distance. THAT OLD TRUCK is heading down the dirt road, cutting through the fields.

68 EXT. WOODS - DAWN

68

It's even darker in the woods, where Muldoon waits for a signal.

It comes. A sharp whistle, finger-in-the-mouth style. It's met with a dozen bird calls, chiming out in sympathy.

Muldoon lifts something from the ground - an OLD SHOVEL - and carrying it over his shoulder emerges from the woods...

...out onto FARMLANDS. He sees Sweetie waiting for him in the distance.

SWEETIE

It's clear.

They walk up the hill. CAMERA PANS with them, too, once again revealing that old FARMHOUSE.

69 EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

69

The slats of the front porch creak under Muldoon's boots. Sweetie follows him up the steps.

SWEETIE

...I think kids come out here sometimes, just to see where it all went down. I hear 'em talk about it. Talk about how the place is haunted.

They step through the front door...

70 INT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

70

...and into the house itself, kicking up dust as they do.

They both stop there in the foyer to look at the place. The roof is half-caved in, debris and bird shit covering the floor. Anything of value has been plundered, except for a HEAVY WOODEN TABLE, toppled to its side, that looks as if the house must have been built around it.

Muldoon wanders over to this table and looks at its underside. He finds some shaky INITIALS scratched in the wood - R.M.

He grabs the table by its edge and HEAVES IT back over onto its side. It hits the floorboards and the whole house shakes, kicking up dust so thick it fills the air like smoke...

...giving body to the rays of new morning light that are pouring through the HOLES in the wall. BULLET HOLES, riddling the slate gray wood. Hundreds of them. A sobering sight.

MULDOON

How much work do you think it'd be to get this place in ship shape again?

SWEETIE

I don't know. Gotta fix the roof for starters. Get new windows. This floor could go.

Muldoon nods. He's looking down now, at a faded RED STAIN on the floor.

MULDOON

How much would something like that cost?

SWEETIE

I don't know. Show me eleven bucks and it might as well be a hundred.

MULDOON

I wish I could pick up this whole house and move it a thousand miles away.

SWEETIE

There are people who could do that for you. I've seen it done. A whole house on a big old truck riding down the road.

Muldoon nods. He's looking down at the floor now, at a faded RED STAIN on the floor.

He considers it silently for a moment, and then steps over it, on his way to the back door.

71

EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

71

Muldoon and Sweetie step out the back door. There's a small TOOL SHED about twenty yards away in an equivocal state of disrepair. And beyond that, about 100 yards down the hill...

...the remains of an OLD STONE COTTAGE, now just an outline of ruined masonry overridden by weeds and vines. Decaying timber from what used to be the roof lays fecund in the dirt. An old woodburning stove is rusted over within the toppled chimney.

The two men head down the hill towards these ruins.

HARD CUT TO:

An old SHOVEL sinks into soil at the base of the stone wall.

Sweetie watches as Muldoon digs. The clouds undulate behind them.

Finally, Muldoon casts the shovel aside and gets down on his knees.

MULDOON

Here we go.

He begins to scrape the dirt from the hole that he's dug. His fingers find what they're looking for - a hard surface. His hands trace the object's edges, and then pry it from the earth.

It's A SUITCASE. A rain of dirt cascades from it as Muldoon uproots it.

Sweetie steps closer as Muldoon flips the clasps and opens it.

SWEETIE

Woo-eee.

It's full of money. Stacks of bills - they look like hundreds.

SWEETIE (CONT'D)

Where'd that come from?

MULDOON

I put it there. Figured I could use it on a rainy day.

SWEETIE

How much is it?

MULDOON

I never counted it. I'd say it's a start.

SWEETIE

Who's is it?

Beat.

MULDOON

...Mine.

72 EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

72

A morning lull on the old Main Street. A few folks coming and going. Talking about things on corners.

On the corner of an old block is a red brick building with a sign hanging over its storefront - SKERRITT'S OLD HOME SUPPLY.

Behind that building is AN ALLEY, and in that alley...

73 EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

73

...Muldoon climbs out of his truck. He saunters quickly down the alley, stopping at its mouth to make sure no one is coming and then quickly, casually strolls around the corner, down the sidewalk, and into Skerritt's.

74 INT. SKERRITT'S - CONTINUOUS

74

Old home supplies, indeed, and curiosities, license plates, maps, furniture that's smooth with good use, bleached animal bones in eccentric arrangements, tools that predate the industrial revolution, an assortment of CIVIL WAR MEMORABILIA and a heavy front door that opens with the quiet sound of a vacuum being unsealed as Muldoon steps into the shop.

The store is dark and cool, like a cave, and its corridors of antiquities are almost labyrinthine. Somewhere in this space is a counter, and behind it sits SKERRITT himself. He's talking to a customer at this particular moment, a regular who's more interested in talking than shopping.

Skerritt notices the figure now making his way to the back of the store, hanging out behind shelves, waiting for the store to clear up. He wraps up the conversation with the other customer, who departs. Skerritt turns to his cash register and without looking up speaks out to Muldoon.

SKERRITT

That's something, you walking in here.

MULDOON

Guess maybe it is.

SKERRITT

You break out of Churchtown and head straight back to the town you were born in. Maybe not the wisest move in the book.

MULDOON

Long as you don't turn me in.

Skerritt laughs. He gets up and slowly approaches Muldoon. He puts his hands on his shoulders, squeezing his fingers deep, and then gives him a tight embrace that is as conflicted as a hug might be. Skerritt's eyes are shut tight. Years of strife wrenching themselves out.

Then he relinquishes his grasp, and goes to the front door and LOCKS it.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

Where's Miles?

SKERRITT

Miles is gone. So's Gladys. Ever since Freddy died, it's been just me.

MULDOON

You making the runs yourself?

SKERRITT

There are no more runs. I run this place now and sit back in the evening and drink my coffee. I go to the races the first Sunday of every month. That's about it.

(beat)

It's very good to see you, Bob. But I gotta tell you, there was about a year there where I could've killed you for what you did.

MULDOON

That why you called Sweetie looking for me?

SKERRITT

No. I called because I knew you'd be there, for one thing. And because I wanted to tell you something.

MULDOON

What?

SKERRITT

You first. Tell me what I can do for you. You need money?

There's a pause.

MULDOON

Money I got. I wanted to know if you'd heard anything.

SKERRITT

About what?

MULDOON

Me.

SKERRITT

I've got all last week's papers, you can take 'em with you.

MULDOON

I'm talking about anyone's got it out for me. I bet you've still got an ear and a half on the ground. You heard anything?

Skerritt bends under the table and rummages around for something, talking as he does so.

SKERRITT

Well. The whole police department came by the other day.

MULDOON

What'd you tell them?

SKERRITT

I told them I can think of at least six sons of bitches who've got a mind to see you dead, and that it'd be more fun to sit back and take bets on who gets you first.

MULDOON

Six people, huh?

SKERRITT

Maybe I'm exaggerating. But you and your girl, you fucked over a lot of people back in the day.

MULDOON

And then I got caught.

SKERRITT

Not by them you didn't.

He gives up looking under the counter for whatever he was looking for and moves to a cabinet a little further back.

SKERRITT (CONT'D)

But word trickles down slowly to a man like me. I haven't heard a thing. Hartigan up in Fort Worth, I heard he tried to have you done while you were put up, but guess that didn't work out. So there you go. You've got some time. What's your plan?

MULDOON

That's the other thing. You still got all that land up in Montana?

SKERRITT

It's not a lot.

MULDOON

Still got that bootleggers cabin up there?

SKERRITT

Why, you looking for a place to hide?

MULDOON

More like I'm looking for a home.

SKERRITT

A man in your position might find that a home is a luxury that's gotta be foregone.

MULDOON

I'm not looking for a handout, I'll pay you for it. I just need a place to disappear to.

SKERRITT

All by yourself?

MULDOON

No. Not by myself.

Skerritt finds what he was looking for under the counter. A box of monograms.

SKERRITT

Here. We passed these out at Freddy's funeral. Figured you might want one.

Muldoon takes one and looks at it. It's a photo of a little boy, dressed as a cowboy, printed up tintype style. There's a prayer inscribed beneath it.

MULDOON

That's him?

SKERRITT

Yep. You remember Sheehan? His wife, a year or two ago, she had the gall to ask me if I regret giving him that little tin pistol when he was so young. Can you imagine?

Muldoon can't but nods all the same.

SKERRITT (CONT'D)

So when you planning on getting going?

MULDOON

Soon. Gotta get some things in order but soon enough.

SKERRITT

Sorta sad to hear it.

(beat)

If I had a say in it, I might ask you to think about leaving Ruth and her little girl out of this.

A long pause as Muldoon susses out that request.

MULDOON

That's not part of the plan.

SKERRITT

I figure. You two kids were joined at the hip since you were yea high. I'm just saying, because I've been doing what I can here and there over the years to make sure they got what they need, that if there's any trouble coming your way, they sure as hell don't need that.

MULDOON

Well. I appreciate all that, but  
it's not really up to you.

SKERRITT

Not up to you either. You ever  
consider the fact that maybe her  
plans changed?

Another beat.

MULDOON

Is this what you called about?

SKERRITT

No.

(beat)

I just wanted to see you, is all.  
And now I have.

He smiles tersely.

SKERRITT (CONT'D)

What about Ruth, anyhow? She never  
tells me anything. Is she waiting  
for you? Have you seen her yet?

HOLD ON Muldoon's face as he hesitates.

75 EXT. SKERRITT'S - DAY

75

Skerritt stands by the loading dock in the back of his shop  
and watches as Muldoon's truck disappear in the distance.

Then he turns and walks back into the shop, back to the  
counter.

76 INT. MULDOON'S TRUCK - DAY

76

Muldoon is driving now. Sweetie sits beside him. Muldoon is  
clearly agitated.

MULDOON

...thinks he can give her a house  
and that's that, there's her life.  
No sir. How far is it to your  
place?

SWEETIE

About forty miles.

MULDOON  
What time is it?

SWEETIE  
Almost 11.

Through the window, they see a POLICE CAR headed towards them.

SWEETIE (CONT'D)  
Maybe you shouldn't be driving.

MULDOON  
It's okay. It's okay. We'll just drive on by.

And he does so, driving right by the cop car.

MULDOON (CONT'D)  
Right on by.

77

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

77

Smalls walks into the police station, carrying that box of letters from Ruth. There's an ADVENT CALENDAR on the front desk of the station, and as he passes he pokes his finger into one of the little windows and fishes out a piece of candy. The SECRETARY eyes him.

SECRETARY  
No cheating, Pat.

SMALLS  
What, it's not Wednesday today?

He walks down the hall.

78

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - LATER

78

He sits at his desk, spreading the photographs and newspaper clippings out over his desk. A patchwork history of criminal folklore. Headlines and random phrases in the clippings popping out, telling their tales. Words like 'BONNIE & CLYDE' and 'SUSPECTED MURDER' and '18 BANK ROBBERIES' that paint a picture of who these folks were.

ECU PHOTOS:

There is a teenage boy who must be a young Muldoon. In some casual photos that seem plucked from a family album. Fifteen or sixteen years old.



SMALLS

No, no. I'm sure you saw the news.  
We're looking for an old friend of  
yours. You seen him?

SWEETIE

Sure haven't.

SMALLS

Mind if we take a look around?

SWEETIE

Well, hope you don't mind making it  
quick. Don't want to rile up my  
customers...

They continue to talk...

82      INT. MAUDE'S - UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS      82

Muldoon is pulling books from Sweetie's shelves, picking himself a tall stack of reading material. He flips open one of the volumes, scanning the text...

Suddenly he hears FOOTSTEPS on the stairs. More than one pair. He quickly grabs his things - knocking the picture of Sylvie to the floor in the process- and tosses them under the bed. He opens the window and ...

83      EXT. MAUDE'S - CONTINUOUS      83

...flings himself out, somewhat clumsily. He lands with a thud two stories down, taking the fall hard. He straightens up quick, into the shadows at the base of the building.

84      INT. MAUDE'S - UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS      84

Sweetie shows the cops around his living quarters. Smalls looks it up and down.

SWEETIE

...I haven't heard from him since  
last winter, he sent me a letter.

SMALLS

Did you write back?

SWEETIE

No.

SMALLS

Thought you were part of his gang.

SWEETIE

I stopped running with them. There wasn't much common ground for me to write about. I've got this business now.

SMALLS

Doing real good by the sight of it.

SWEETIE

Good enough. What about you? You look like you healed up okay.

Smalls zeroes in on the PICTURE OF SYLVIE on the floor. He halfway freezes...

85 EXT. MAUDE'S - CONTINUOUS

85

Muldoon darts from one tree to another, making his way further and further away from the bar. He can see the police cars out front now...

86 INT. MAUDE'S - UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

86

Smalls picks up the picture.

SMALLS

Been reminiscing?

SWEETIE

On what?

Smalls holds up the picture.

SWEETIE (CONT'D)

Oh. I'd been using that as a bookmark. I guess I lost my place.

SMALLS

Did Ruth give it to you?

SWEETIE

Yeah. She mailed it to me. Asked me to send it on to Bob.

SMALLS

You never did?

SWEETIE  
Like I said, I'm bad with  
correspondence.

SMALLS  
When'd you last see her?

SWEETIE  
Ruth?

SMALLS  
Yeah.

SWEETIE  
How old is her little girl?

SMALLS  
Four years old.

SWEETIE  
That's about how long then.

SMALLS  
Okay.  
(beat)  
Can I hang onto this?

SWEETIE  
...By all means.

SMALLS  
I guess you'll call us if you hear  
anything?

SWEETIE  
Sure bet.

87

EXT. MAUDE'S - CONTINUOUS

87

Muldoon watches from the trees as Smalls and the two cops  
leave the bar. One of them shines a flashlight into the  
woods. Its beam passes by him, grazing the top of his head.

Then it's gone.

They get into their cars and depart.

Muldoon rises. The red tail lights faintly illuminate him  
with their reddish tint, which in their passing is replaced  
by the pale glow of the moon above...

88      INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

88

Smalls sits down at his desk. Another cop passes on his way to the coffee maker.

OTHER COP  
Find anything out there?

SMALLS  
Nope. Long drive for whole lot of nothing.

OTHER COP  
Elmer caught those kids who were stealing copper down by the belt this morning. He tell you about that?

SMALLS  
How'd he catch 'em?

OTHER COP  
Easy. They were fused to the side of the wall. Idiots. Guess they thought they'd cut the power. Both of 'em wound up dead.

Smalls is half listening. He's looking at the picture of Sylvie. He opens his drawer and places it in his drawer, atop the old snapshot of Ruth he'd taken from the shoebox.

FADE TO BLACK.

89      EXT. WOODS - DAY

89

Muldoon's truck is parked in the woods, half-hidden by brush.

90      INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

90

Muldoon climbs into the rafters. The wind cuts coldly through the holes in the roof. The winter light is hard and white.

He curls up in the corner and pulls a blanket around himself. Poised so he can see out the roof, into the front of the house. Keeping watch.

Thunder rumbles.



SKERRITT (CONT'D)

Once I get going I don't want to quit. I could stay in here all day putting tags on shit.

The bell on the front door rings. Skerritt casually glances over his shoulder, out of habit, to see who's sauntered in - and looks just a little bit longer than normal at the THREE GENTLEMEN standing in the foyer: two of them fairly nondescript, and a third who with his big coat and matching beard somewhat resembles a BEAR.

They break up and begin to browse the aisles.

Skerritt gives them a look and then turns back to his friend. They continue chatting.

Bear looks over some antique guns in a glass case.

BEAR

Are these real?

Skerritt looks up.

SKERRITT

Say again?

BEAR

These real?

SKERRITT

You bet.

BEAR

How old are they?

SKERRITT

That pistol goes back about 125 years.

BEAR

You don't say.

SKERRITT

It's just for show. Part of my collection. You know what it's got with it?

BEAR

What's that?

SKERRITT

You see that scrap of parchment in there? That there's a list.

(MORE)

SKERRITT (CONT'D)

Of every poor son of a bitch who  
met their end at the barrel of it.

BEAR

How'd they keep track of that?

SKERRITT

That's just what they told me.

BEAR

Sounds like a bunch of bullshit to  
me.

SKERRITT

Yeah, it probably is.

Skerritt steps out from behind the counter and walks over to  
the cabinet.

SKERRITT (CONT'D)

Can I help you gentlemen find  
something in particular?

BEAR

Nah. We're just looking.

Skerritt narrows his eyes in their direction.

96 INT. SKERRITT'S - LATER

96

Some hours have passed.

Skerritt sits at his desk, his back to the door. He's  
cleaning something cold and metallic, some little antique  
mechanism.

In the background, OUT OF FOCUS, the door opens and someone  
enters. They approach the desk and place a SCRAP OF FOLDED  
PAPER on the desk beside him. He nods a thank you and waits  
for them to leave before he unfolds it. And reads it.

97 INT. MAUDE'S - AFTERNOON

97

Early afternoon at Maude's. A few regulars already there.  
Skerritt enters and sits down at the bar. Someone looks over  
at him, recognizes him, quickly looks away.

Sweetie approaches him.

SWEETIE

Been a long time since you've been  
out in these parts.

SKERRITT

Been a long time since I've had a reason. I've got a message I was hoping to deliver.

SWEETIE

I don't know if there's anyone here who can help you with that.

SKERRITT

What about you?

SWEETIE

I can do my best. Not really in the courier business.

SKERRITT

I'm sure you'll do fine. Give me something to write with.

Sweetie passes him a pen.

SKERRITT (CONT'D)

What about paper?

SWEETIE

How about a napkin?

Skerritt takes a napkin and begins to write. A few quick sentences, dotted with a period hard enough to puncture the paper. He shoves the napkin back across the table.

SKERRITT

You can read that if you want.

He gets up and heads out, as brusquely as he came.

Sweetie looks down at the note.

98

EXT. FARMHOUSE - AFTERNOON

98

A blood-red sunset burns across the horizon.

Sweetie approaches the old farmhouse. As he gets closer, Muldoon appears in the doorway. He walks down the steps and goes to meet him.

It takes a moment for them to reach each other. When they do, a few words are exchanged and Sweetie hands him the note.

Muldoon reads it and then looks up, back up over his shoulder at the farm house.



MARY  
The stuff in the news, you know.

RUTH  
No. I don't.

Mary nods.

103      INT. RUTH'S CAR - AFTERNOON      103

Ruth hurries out of downtown, letting her hair down as she drives. The engine strains, groaning as she accelerates...

104      INT. PRESCHOOL - AFTERNOON      104

Sylvie sits in a playroom, building a house out of LINCOLN LOGS and other blocks. Her TEACHER is sitting behind her own desk; they're the last two left in the room.

Ruth comes to the door, clearly in a rush.

RUTH  
I'm here.

SYLVIE  
Momma!

She hurries to Sylvie's side while offering an apologetic glance to the teacher.

RUTH  
I'm so sorry.

TEACHER  
It's no problem.

RUTH  
Get your things, sweetie.

SYLVIE  
I'm not done.

RUTH  
We've gotta go, baby.

Sylvie responds promptly by destroying her house with a sudden swipe of her hand.

105      EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - AFTERNOON      105

A cloud of dust rolls down the narrow dirt road. It's Smalls, driving his police car. He's been this way before.

106      INT. CAR - AFTERNOON      106

Ruth buckles Sylvie into her car seat.

RUTH

We're going to the post office and then to the grocery store and then home. What do you want for dinner?

107      INT. POST OFFICE- AFTERNOON      107

Ruth, carrying Sylvie on her hip, approaches the counter at the post office and hands over a Missed Delivery receipt.

RUTH

I got this yesterday...

POSTAL CLERK

Hold on just a second...

As the clerk goes behind the counter, Ruth notices something on the bulletin board. The WANTED POSTER with Muldoon's face staring out of it...

108      EXT. FARMHOUSE - AFTERNOON      108

He parks the car at the end of the dirt drive and cuts the engine.

He gets out, looks up the hill towards that farmhouse, silhouetted against the sky.

He SLAMS THE CAR DOOR SHUT as hard as he can. Letting his presence be known. The sound reverberates like a gunshot, off the house and back again.

He takes his first cautious step forward. Noticing fresh tire treads in the dirt.

109      INT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS      109

Smalls' silhouette fills the doorway of the farmouse.

He crosses the threshold, his footsteps creaking on the floor.

SMALLS

Hello?

His voice echoes off the walls and drifts up into the rafters. He follows it...

...and then looks down as something catches his eye.

SMOKE, wafting from the old wood-burning stove.

Smalls pulls his gun out.

He cautiously walks down the hall, peering into the bedroom. There's a ruined bed in there, the remains of an upended boxspring and a frame.

He looks at the room until he's content that no one's in there.

Then he turns back out and looks UPWARD...

...at the ceiling, and the ladder leading to the attic. He can't see up there.

CAMERA PUSHES IN on his face as he looks upward...

110      EXT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER      110

Smalls leaves the farmhouse, heading back to his car.

111      EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - AFTERNOON      111

WHITE STEAM hisses from under the hood of Ruth's car. She's pulled it off the road, into the grassy shoulder.

Sylvie watches from inside the car as Ruth gets out and walk to the hood. She lifts it - wincing at the heat of the metal -

RUTH

Damn it...

- and looks at the fuming engine. She can't make heads or tails of it, and lets the hood fall. She walks back to the back door and opens it.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Come here, Sylvie.

She picks the little girl up in her arms, holding her tight as the traffic rumbles by. She looks around and spots a GAS STATION, just past the exit.

She steps up onto the grass and carries Sylvie up the hill towards it. The sky is darkening behind them.

112      INT. GAS STATION - AFTERNOON      112

Ruth carries Sylvie into the gas station. The grizzled patrons glance at her as she passes the counter.

RUTH  
Is there a phone here?

The old man behind the counter nods, peering at her over the rims of his glasses. A look of recognition passes over his face.

TRUCK STOP GUY  
There in the corner.

RUTH  
Thanks.

She can hear murmurs pass behind her as she heads towards the phone and lifts the receiver to her ear and drops a nickel into the slot. She dials a number.

113      INT. POLICE CAR - AFTERNOON      113

Smalls is driving back towards town.  
His radio crackles.

HARD CUT TO:

114      INT. POLICE CAR - LATER      114

Ruth and Sylvie are now seated in the front seat of Smalls' squad car. He smiles reassuringly at Ruth and then glances down at Sylvie, who is squeezed between them.

SMALLS  
Go ahead, press it. That one right there.

The little girl flips a switch, and the SIRENS atop the car begin to wail.

115 INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

115

The lock on the front door clicks and Sylvie enters the house.

SMALLS

...Carl did all the work on the first car I ever bought, back when I was in high school...

RUTH

(to Sylvie)

Go feed those kitties before you do anything else! They're gonna be hungry...

Sylvie throws her backpack down while Ruth sets the groceries down on the kitchen counter.

SMALLS

Want me to put those away?

RUTH

No, no you've...just hold on one second, I've got to change.

She walks down the hall to the bedroom, where she kicks off her shoes and throws her apron on a basket of dirty clothes...

...and then notices AN ENVELOPE resting neatly on the pillow.

She picks it up. Her name is written in handsome cursive on the front. She slips her finger under the seal and opens it.

There's a letter inside. She scans the words - 'Meet me' and a few stray mentions of 'Love' and 'Time' - before singling out the few that speak the loudest:

"I'M COMING"

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

116      INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - DAY      116

ECU on a piece of paper. The nib of the pen arcs across it, writing in a pretty script the words:

"DEAR BOB"

Ruth sits in her room, hastily writing a letter. The KITTENS are playing on the floor at her feet. CAMERA CONTINUES TO PUSH IN ON HER as she writes...

RUTH (V.O.)

*Dear Bob. I got your letter.*

117      INT. BEDROOM - RUTH'S HOUSE - DAY      117

Ruth is going through her things in the closet. Uprooting old boxes. Sylvie is watching.

RUTH (V.O.)

*I know you're near.*

She opens one. It's full of old baby clothes. She pulls out a gossamer dress, the kind a baby might be baptized in, and holds it up to the light coming through the window.

RUTH (CONT'D)

*This is the first dress you ever wore. Can you believe you were this tiny? I used to hold you and just love you...*

Sylvie reaches out, her fingers grazing the soft white material.

118      INT. RUTH'S CAR - DAY      118

Ruth is driving. There's a box on the seat next to her, and all the KITTENS are inside it.

RUTH (V.O.)

*I'm ready. We're ready to go.*

She comes to a stop. An indeterminate building appearing in her windshield.

She stops. She looks down at the kittens, snuggled up against each other for comfort...

PUSH IN on Ruth.

RUTH (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*I'm ready. I'm ready to go. I just  
 want to -*

119      INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - EVENING      119

Ruth crumples up the letter. She takes another piece of paper and begins again.

RUTH (V.O.)  
*Dear Bob...*

120      EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY      120

ECU on one of those WANTED POSTERS, pasted on the wall of a building. A whole row of them. Peeling and weather-worn by now.

RUTH (V.O.)  
*I got your note.*

Three LITTLE KIDS, 9 or 10 years old, are running down the street, brandishing toy guns from the dime store. One little boy is wearing one of those posters like a mask, with the eyes poked out so he can see.

RUTH (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*The thought that you were here in  
 my house - it makes my heart stop.*

The sound of CAPS firing crackles in the air.

RUTH (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*I need just a little more time. To  
 get my things in order. And  
 Sylvie's. Can I ask for that?*

Smalls watches from the corner. Behind him, Christmas lights are being strung across the main square.

RUTH (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*I just have to figure everything  
 out. And then...*

The boy in the Muldoon mask clutches his heart and falls down dead, riddled through and through with imaginary bullets.

RUTH (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*We can disappear. Just like we  
 planned. Just like...*

121      INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - DAY      121

Ruth hesitates, her pen hovering over her paper.  
 And then Smalls appears in the bedroom doorway.

SMALLS  
 Ready to go?

HOLD ON RUTH'S FACE and...

122      EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY      122

A picturesque winter's day. Pockets of light stitched across  
 a cloudy sky.

Muldoon, shirtless, pumps water from the well and washes his  
 face. He shivers in the cold and then stands and looks out  
 across the land...

123      EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - DAY      123

Acres upon acres of Christmas trees, as far as the eye can  
 see. Trudging over the hills comes Ruth and Sylvie, and  
 Smalls as well, carrying a hacksaw. They're dressed in  
 heavier coats; winter is setting in.

Smalls points to a tree.

SMALLS  
 What about that one over there? Is  
 that a good one?

Sylvie considers the tree he's pointing to.

SMALLS (CONT'D)  
 You've gotta make sure you find the  
 very best one. That's important,  
 you only get one shot at it. At  
 least until next year.

124      INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY      124

Muldoon pulls open a piece of floorboard and retrieves from  
 under the house the satchel full of money.

125      EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - DAY      125

A SAWBLADE cuts into the trunk of a tree...

126      INT. MULDOON'S TRUCK - DAY      126

Muldoon pulls out of the woods, onto the main road.

127      EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - LATER      127

Smalls and Ruth trudge up the hill, Smalls dragging the best Christmas tree ever behind him.

Sylvie hurries ahead, running to and fro amongst the trees. Ruth follows her, careful not to let her out of her sight...

RUTH (V.O.)

*Dear Bob. I got your note.*

...until she suddenly realizes that she has lost her. Her smile fades, and she quickens her pace, calling out her daughter's name as she climbs higher, weaving amongst the trees.

RUTH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*Anything I say now is going to be so unfair after what you did for us. But we were kids, Bob. We were so little when we made those plans. I can hardly remember them.*

She finds her at the top of the ridge, looking out into the distance, where a giant PLUME OF SMOKE is spilling up into the sky.

Its coming from a neighboring plot of land, where a giant brush pile is being burned. From this distance, the smoke seems a fuming tether, pulling the grey sky closer to the earth.

128      INT. MAUDE'S - UPSTAIRS - DAY      128

Muldoon stands in the corner and changes clothes. Brown corduroy slacks. A pearl snap shirt.

MULDOON

I told her to meet me at my daddy's place tomorrow morning. Sunrise. We'll take back roads in case they still got that road block on the interstate...

SWEETIE  
What if she doesn't show up?

MULDOON  
She'll be there.

He buttons his sleeves and looks at himself in the mirror.

129 EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE FARM - LATER

129

Now they're back at the base camp of the farm - an old red barn. The farmhands are bagging up trees and tying them to the tops of cars.

RUTH (V.O.)  
*It's not just the two of us  
anymore.*

There's a small bonfire going, and some kids are roasting marshmallows. Hot cider is being sold for 25 cents a cup. Ruth helps Sylvie take a sip.

RUTH (CONT'D)  
You'll burn your mouth if you take  
big sips like that.

She looks over at Smalls, and notices him quickly paying for the tree with cash from his own wallet. He thanks the men working there, and points to his car...

SMALLS  
Yeah, that one right over there.

And then heads over to Ruth and Sylvie. She pretends not to have seen him pay for the tree.

SMALLS (CONT'D)  
We're all set. How's that cider?

He drops a quarter in the jar and takes a cup for himself.

130 INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

130

Smalls is helping Sylvie decorate the Christmas tree, winding a string of lights around it. The Little Drummer boy is playing on the radio, crackling through old speakers.

RUTH (V.O.)  
*I still love you.*

PUSH IN ON: Ruth watches from the kitchen, where she's stirring a pot of hot chocolate.

The smile fixed on her face fades as soon as they're not looking at her, and returns whenever they do.

RUTH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*But when I think of those times now that we had together, I still see you as a little boy. I want to hold you and keep you from harm. But I can't. I can't carry you both. I can't -*

Smalls rummages around in one of the boxes.

SMALLS

(to Sylvie)

Where's a star? We need a star for the top.

He turns to Ruth.

SMALLS (CONT'D)

You have any more ornaments?

RUTH

What?

SMALLS

For the tree?

RUTH

Oh...

She looks around, looking for a non-existent box of ornaments.

131 INT. MAUDE'S - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

131

As always, the sound of music emanates from the bar, stifled by the walls between the front and back of the building.

CAMERA PUSHES IN ON Muldoon, sitting at the table in Sweetie's back room. He's holding a DRIVERS' LICENSE up to the light, inspecting it. His picture is on it, but the name is different.

MULDOON

Warren Miller. Who makes up the names?

SWEETIE

They're not made up. They're real folks. They're dead, but they're real.

MULDOON  
Really?

SWEETIE  
So I'm told.

MULDOON  
Ruth and Sylvie's too?

SWEETIE  
Yeah.

MULDOON  
Huh.

He picks up two birth certificates from the table, both of which bear girls' names.

MULDOON (CONT'D)  
No one's gonna be asking after them?

SWEETIE  
They're dead.

MULDOON  
Okay. Warren Miller.  
(beat)  
I think I look more like a Sam. But Warren it is.

He folds the papers and slips them into his breast pocket.

132     INT. RUTH'S HOME - NIGHT     132

Ruth carries her sleeping daughter to the bedroom.

133     EXT. MAUDE'S - NIGHT     133

Muldoon gives Sweetie a hug.

SWEETIE  
I guess I hope I never see you again.

MULDOON  
Maybe. Maybe you'll come visit Montana sometime.

SWEETIE  
That's not part of my plan.

MULDOON

All the same. Thanks for  
everything.

Sweetie nods. That's all there is to say. Muldoon heads  
towards the truck.

SWEETIE

Stay warm out there. Don't get into  
trouble.

MULDOON

(shaking his head)  
Not gonna be any trouble anymore.

SWEETIE

Say hi to Ruth for me.

MULDOON

I'll tell her.

He gets in the truck, shuts the door, starts the engine. The  
truck heads off, its red tail lights rounding the bend and  
vanishing from view.

Sweetie heads back towards his bar...

134 INT. MAUDE'S - CONTINUOUS

134

...and walks through the front door. Business is in full  
swing. Too loud to hear anything but music.

Sweetie passes by several regulars on his way behind the bar,  
exchanging words and pats on the back. There's a girl at the  
bar, asking him to dance. He turns her down at first, and  
then acquiesces and spins out onto the dance floor.

In the corner of the room sit the same THREE MEN who came in  
to Skerritt's shop earlier. They sip their drinks and watch  
Sweetie dance.

135 INT. MULDOON'S TRUCK - NIGHT

135

Muldoon drives. Changing the stations on the radio and then  
switching it off altogether and listening to silence.

He comes to a 4-way INTERSECTION. Stops at the stop sign, and  
then pulls on through, continuing on...

...and then he stops again.

A moment later, he puts the truck in reverse and backs up, back through the intersection...

...and turns LEFT.

136      INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - NIGHT      136

The Christmas tree stands completed. A makeshift star made of paper perched atop it.

137      INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS      137

Ruth is standing in the kitchen, looking out the window.

Smalls passes behind her, out of focus.

SMALLS

I'm gonna get going...

She doesn't hear him.

SMALLS (CONT'D)

Ruth?

She turns now and sees him.

RUTH

Wait.

(beat)

Do you think...do you think you could stay?

SMALLS

...Yeah.

She approaches him. Without a word, she puts her arms around him and holds him.

138      EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT      138

Muldoon parks his truck on a dark patch of street in Ruth's neighborhood.

He gets out quietly, pulling his coat collar up around his neck.

No one is out. A car passes through a crosstreet in the distance.

Muldoon waits for the sound to fade. Then he walks down the sidewalk. Casually, out for an evening stroll...

He reaches a particular CORNER and stops, standing by the lamp post.

Looking down the street he can see RUTH'S HOUSE, and the lights glowing from within. A police car parked out in front of it.

He walks back the way he came...

...until he comes to an ALLEY, which he disappears into.

139 INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

139

Ruth is still in Smalls' arms.

She pulls back slightly, and then looks up at him, and then leans in and kisses him. Gently, at first. Tentatively. He's a bit taken aback, but then he reciprocates.

She puts her arms around him again, her hands fluttering like hummingbirds, not sure where to come to rest on him.

Suddenly, a cry rings out. It's SYLVIE, her voice ringing out from the bedroom.

Ruth pulls away from Smalls.

RUTH

Oh...I'll be right back.

She withdraws, disappearing into the darkness in the back of the house.

Smalls sits down on the couch, waiting for Ruth to return.

CAMERA PUSHES IN on his profile. Lit by a halo of light from the Christmas tree.

Ruth returns, carrying Sylvie with her. She sits down beside Smalls.

SMALLS

(to Sylvie)

What's wrong? Having a bad dream?

140 EXT. RUTH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

140

FROM OUTSIDE, the three of them can be seen sitting on the couch in the warm, dim light of the living room.

That same light shifts across Muldoon's face as he stands there at the side of the house, watching through the window.

HOLD ON HIS FACE for a long time as he stares through the window...

...and then slips away.

141      INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - NIGHT      141

CAMERA PUSHES IN on Ruth, sitting on the couch, cradling Sylvie in her arms. The little girl is asleep once more. Smalls sits beside her.

142      EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT      142

Muldoon's truck cuts through the country. The lone car on the highway. Driving from one side of the frame to the other.

And then pulling off on the side of the road.

Muldoon climbs out and slams the door.

He walks across the shoulder, shuffling his feet, kicking up dust and muttering to himself.

143      INT. BEDROOM - RUTH'S HOUSE - NIGHT      143

Sylvie is asleep in bed again.

In the wastebasket by the side of the bed are pieces of paper, crumpled and torn. Attempted letters, never finished.

144      INT. RUTH'S HOME - NIGHT      144

Ruth lays against Smalls, on the couch.

SMALLS

Can I tell you something?

RUTH

Yeah.

SMALLS

When I was in the hospital - I wasn't sitting there making plans, or anything. I got nothing against Bob. What happened, that was my job, that was the risk, and beyond that I didn't hold it against him to be who he was or to do what he was doing, and I still don't. I'm glad to be alive.

(MORE)

SMALLS (CONT'D)

And if you weren't who you were or had never been involved with him, and yet we still found ourselves in this room right here right now, I wouldn't feel any different.

RUTH

Okay.

SMALLS

You understand what I'm saying?

RUTH

Yes.

SMALLS

Are you okay with that?

She nods. A heavy pause. She looks like she wants to say something, but she holds her tongue.

SMALLS (CONT'D)

Do you miss him?

RUTH

Sometimes.

(beat)

Is there any news? Anyone heard anything or...

SMALLS

No.

(beat)

I went out to the old farmhouse the other day.

RUTH

Why?

SMALLS

Just...routine, you know. There was nothing there. That place is falling apart.

There's a long beat there. Ruth thinks about this.

RUTH

Do you remember that day there?

SMALLS

Yeah.

RUTH

Like really remember it?

SMALLS

Yeah.

RUTH

Did you hear what I said after?

SMALLS

I read the case file. They got your deposition in it.

RUTH

It wasn't all true, you know.

SMALLS

I figured.

RUTH

I wasn't just some innocent little girl got dragged in over her head. I knew what I was doing.

(beat)

What do you think about that?

SMALLS

I think...I don't know what was true and what wasn't, but all things considered, when it came down to it, you did the right thing.

(beat)

And so did he.

RUTH

We thought we had it all figured out back then. We were just kids.

A long beat.

SMALLS

Remember what I said about leaving town?

RUTH

Yeah.

SMALLS

If I left here, would you come with me?

Beat.

RUTH

Where do you want to go?

SMALLS

I figured I'd ask you that.

RUTH

Are you gonna get a transfer?

SMALLS

No. Maybe, but...I don't want to do this anymore. I want to quit, I wanna quit carrying a gun. I've got some money squirreled away.

RUTH

You want to go now?

SMALLS

I want to know if there's anything keeping you here.

Another beat. Ruth's eyes shoot off to the shadows of the room before she answers.

RUTH

No.

A smile flickers across Smalls' face. Warm and genuine. For a moment, the years melt away and he looks like a little boy.

145 EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

145

The truck door shuts - the sound thuds against the matted foliage.

Muldoon trudges through the woods, leaving his vehicle in its hiding spot.

146 EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

146

Muldoon emerges from the woods and heads up the hill towards the farmhouse. His breath trailing behind him in little silver drifts.

147 INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

147

He steps inside. Shutting the door, rubbing his hands against the cold. He walks over to the stove, looks for the matches, doesn't find them. He turns towards the table and it's only then that he notices, with a start that stops him dead in his tracks...

...that someone else is in the room with him.

A figure sitting at that old table. Impossible to make out the details. That man with the beard and the big coat. Sitting like a bear carved from wood. Perfectly still, except for the silvery exhale of breath that now drifts from his shadowed, whiskered face.

Muldoon hesitates for just one second - just long enough to see the figure move and to see the glint of silver in dark -

MULDOON

Wait -

- and then he TURNS and -

148 EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

148

- leaps through the door just as a deafening GUNSHOT goes off behind him, flashing light lightning and catching the door jam and SPLINTERING IT.

He ROLLS down the porch and into the cold soil and sets off running. More gunshots follow, a quick staccato succession, spurring him on as he finds his legs and runs out into the darkness. Stumbling, scarcely making his footing, barreling forwards. Further and further and further...

Finally, he hurls himself forward and lands behind the STONE EMBANKMENT of the ruined cottage. He huddles down, pressing himself to the wall.

Silence, for a moment.

He peeks up over the edge, and gets the lay of the land.

The moonlight is caught by the curtain of gunsmoke wafting through the air, illuminating the scene and silhouetting the figures walking down the hill from the farmhouse. There are THREE OF THEM.

He backs up, sticking close to the ground, and then scurries across the grass towards the TREELINE.

He PLUNGES INTO the WOODS...

149 EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

149

...and runs downward, managing to keep his balance at first and then TRIPPING and tumbling head over heels down the hill, into a stream.

He looks upward, eyeing the treeline above for signs of life. He can hear what sounds like footsteps, but it's impossible to tell from where. He skirts behind a tree -

- just as a WHOOP echoes out from above, like a wild Indian. It's followed by a dark figure, crashing down through the brush, gun in hand.

Muldoon leaps up and TACKLES the intruder, taking him down to the ground.

The two men roll, down into the creek bed, in and out of the water, struggling in the moonlight.

The assailant has a gun in his hand, and Muldoon strains every muscle in his body to push it away, to pin it down.

He manages to get his finger over the trigger and -

BLAM, BLAM BLAM, BLAM

- five shots, six, out into the darkness. Animals scamper in the brush, disturbed by the sound. Another few shots and suddenly Muldoon has WRESTED THE WEAPON from its owner's hand. He leaps back, raising the gun and SHOOTING AGAIN. The muzzle flare is matched a split second later by a thin ARC OF BLOOD, caught for a second in the vanishing light of the gunshot. The sound of wet hitting the leaves.

The shot knocks him back, off his feet, almost as if he'd never fired a gun before and wasn't expecting the recoil to hit so hard.

The other man goes down too. Hit somewhere, hit badly, but not fatally. He's already trying to find his feet. Muldoon levels the gun at him again.

MULDOON

Wait - goddamn it -

He shoots again. The man goes down, face down in the turf.

Muldoon runs to him, rolls him over. Not expecting him to be as dead as he actually is.

There's a harsh, horrible, gasping sound filling the air now - it's his own breathing. Sharp and desperate.

He reaches into the man's pockets, first in his pants and then in the breast pocket of his coat, until he finds the man's BILLFOLD. A tattered thing made of cloth.

Then he hears more footsteps, up above. He looks about but can't see anything.

He buckles down and begins to creep through the woods, gun in hand, until he reaches...

...HIS TRUCK.

He hurls himself into the chassis, fumbling for his keys, inserting them into the ignition with shaking hands. They stick, won't turn at first. He pushes on them...

...and then they catch and turn and the engine KICKS UP and the HEADLIGHTS COME ON and -

BAM!

A DEAFENING GUNSHOT, matched almost instantly by the sound of GLASS SHATTERING as the truck's windshield explodes inward.

Shards hit Muldoon as he ducks down, and then looks up to see the second nondescript man stepping out from behind a tree with a shotgun.

Muldoon sees him raising the rifle once more and LEAPS out of the car just as he fires...

BAM. The bullet hits the hood of the truck, just as Muldoon hits the ground. The sound of the hammer pulling back as he rises and runs and then BAM again, a third shot, another flash of light brightening the forest around him and -

It HITS. Catching him in the shoulder, tearing flesh and cloth, whipping him around, off his feet. He cries out gruffly, sharply as he falls.

He rolls over, in pain. Leaves stick to his shoulder where the blood is already running freely. The man approaches him and Muldoon lifts his own gun and FIRES ONCE. The man staggers back, hit somewhere. He loses his balance and falls backward.

He crawls to his feet and limps towards the man, who is backing up, trying to lift his gun. He's been hit in the arm. Muldoon grabs the rifle out of his hand and looks down at him with bloodshot eyes, leveling at him.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

You shot me. You goddamn shot me.

The man coughs. He's in as much pain as Muldoon.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

I've never even seen you before.

RIFLE MAN

No sir.

MULDOON

What'd I ever do to you?

The man looks at him but says nothing.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

If this is about money, I don't got any.

RIFLE MAN

Maybe your girl does, then.

Muldoon freezes.

RIFLE MAN (CONT'D)

You gonna shoot, you better do it.

Muldoon looks at him. His fingers tensing on the gun...

...and then he backs up. Grabbing the shotgun and backing up to the truck.

The man watches him, breathing heavily...

Muldoon climbs into the truck, which is still running. Steam is leaking from the bullet hole in the hood. The headlights still shining into the woods. Two unwavering fingers.

He lays his guns down on the seat and pulls the door shut with his one good arm. Then he revs the engine, puts the truck in gear and steps on the gas.

The engine sputters and then roars, and the tires turn and it rolls through the woods, following the path it made.

150 EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

150

Muldoon's truck emerges from the mouth of the woods, swerving back onto the road.

151 INT. MULDOON'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

151

He drives, as fast as he can, still breathing hard, wincing from the pain, covered all over in blood. Smudged on his face, all over his hands.

HOLD ON MULDOON as he speeds forward, his breathing gradually slowing, his eyes fixing on one spot.

A car gradually bears up behind him, its headlights diluted by the morning light. He tenses up, but then it switches lanes and passes him.

Then the engine begins to choke up.

MULDOON

Come on. Come on, come on...

He steps on the gas, but the little needle on the speedometer is beginning to drop.

152 EXT. HIGHWAY - DAWN

152

Muldoon coasts over to the side of the road. White steam billowing from his truck.

A ghostly daylight is beginning to break.

The sound of the ignition straining and failing barely resounds against the trees. After a few futile tries, Muldoon gets out of the truck, gun in hand.

He looks off down the highway.

153 EXT. SERVICE STATION - MORNING

153

A dingy gas station on the side of the highway. Two cars are filling up.

Muldoon watches from the side of the building as one of them finishes up and departs.

The STATION ATTENDANT finishes with the other car and puts the cap back on the tank and replaces the nozzle. He goes to the driver's side window, names a price. The driver hands him a bill, the attendant goes to make change.

Muldoon makes his move.

He strides towards the car -

- grabs hold of the passengers' side door and YANKS IT OPEN -

DRIVER

(flustered)

What are -

Muldoon slides into the seat. The driver sees the glint of steel in his hand.

MULDOON

Drive.

DRIVER

Who the -

MULDOON  
Drive or I'll shoot you right here  
and drive myself.

He glances over his shoulder and sees the attendant  
approaching -

DRIVER  
I can't -

MULDOON  
Step on the gas, man. Now.

The man acquiesces. He steps on the gas and PEELS OUT onto  
the road.

154 EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

154

Muldoon looks out at the road, squinting in the sunlight.

MULDOON  
Stay on the highway. You'll take  
the exit at 63.

The driver looks at him nervously.

DRIVER  
Where are we going?

MULDOON  
We're just going, my friend. We're  
just going.

He pulls off his jacket and begins to fashion a tourniquet.  
He pulls it around his shoulder and makes a large knot. He  
holds one sleeve.

MULDOON (CONT'D)  
Pull that.

DRIVER  
What?

MULDOON  
Pull it!

The driver reaches over and takes the sleeve and tugs on it,  
pulling the tourniquet tight. Muldoon winces, keeling over  
slightly as he pulls on his own end and cinches the bleeding.

MULDOON (CONT'D)  
That'll work. That'll do.

They keep driving.

DRIVER

I don't want any...I'm just trying  
to go see my family.

MULDOON

What's that?

DRIVER

I said I've got a family.

MULDOON

Keep driving.

DRIVER

I'm just trying to get home for  
Christmas.

MULDOON

Christmas...

DRIVER

I'm not gonna put up a fight. I'll  
do what you want, I just want to  
make sure I get home to them.

MULDOON

What's your family?

DRIVER

What?

MULDOON

What do you have? You have a wife  
and kids?

DRIVER

...no. I'm going to see my parents.

MULDOON

...Your parents. Mom and dad. Where  
are they now?

DRIVER

Up in Oklahoma.

MULDOON

Well Oklahoma can wait. Just keep  
driving. Exit on 63, exit when I  
tell you.

They drive on.

Muldoon leans back. Exhaustion coming over him in great waves.

The driver looks at him. Notices that the gun is resting limply at his side.

He stares at it for a long time, thinking about the logistics of it. Long enough for Muldoon to notice him and grasp it tightly again.

MULDOON (CONT'D)  
I see what you're thinking. Don't.  
(beat)  
You need to step on that gas.

DRIVER  
We'll get pulled over.

MULDOON  
Look at me. Look.

The driver looks at him.

MULDOON (CONT'D)  
Do you know who I am?

DRIVER  
...No.

Muldoon stares back, his eyes turning flinty and piercing.

MULDOON  
I guess you aren't from around here.

He leans back in the seat.

MULDOON (CONT'D)  
What's your name?

DRIVER  
I don't -

MULDOON  
Just tell me your name.

DRIVER  
Ben.

MULDOON  
I am hurt. I guess you can see that.

DRIVER

Yeah.

MULDOON

I got shot. These men came looking for me. They wanted to send me packing and they got me good.

He looks at the gun again, seemingly lost in thought...

MULDOON (CONT'D)

You're going to see your family.

DRIVER

Yeah.

MULDOON

Me too. So am I.

He leans back.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

You tell your dad who you gave a ride to today.

The driver nods to this.

They drive on...

155 INT. BEDROOM - RUTH'S HOUSE - MORNING

155

Two little eyes open. Sylvie sits up in bed, yawning, turning around in the sheets. She realizes she's all alone in bed.

156 INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

156

She slides off the bed, and makes her way down the hallway, and then stops when she sees her mother lying on the couch, wrapped in Smalls' arms, a sheet draped over their bodies.

She stands there and watches, processing this information.

Ruth's eyes open. She sees her daughter standing there, and regards her.

Then, gradually, she smiles at Sylvie, letting her know that everything's all right.

Sylvie doesn't reciprocate.

Suddenly the crack of a GUNSHOT resounds through the air, sucking up the silence, seemingly loud enough to shatter the windows in the house.

Everything happens very quickly.

Ruth jumps up, startled, gasping loudly and at the same time realizing exactly what that sound was, leaping for Sylvie and pulling her to the ground. Smalls wakes, disoriented at first, grabbing around for his gun, his clothes -

ANOTHER SHOT. Echoing from outside. Sylvie is sobbing loudly on the floor now....

Smalls finds his gun on the chair where he's laid his coat and takes it and goes to the door...

157

EXT. RUTH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

157

...and sees BEAR in the middle of the street, on his knees, clearly wounded, trying to level his gun...

...at SKERRITT, across the street, who's leaning against the porch, his Winchester drooping in the crook of his arm.

Smalls doesn't waste a moment. He raises his gun and PULLS THE TRIGGER once.

His aim is true. The shot hits Bear in the back of his head. His head jerks forward, his grizzly face frozen in a look of surprise.

Smalls runs across the street and finds Skerritt on his front porch, leaning against the balustrade, shot somewhere in the torso.

SMALLS

Hold on. Hold on...

ECU ON: Skerritt is putting all his energy into breathing and doesn't respond. Smalls jumps up and disappears into his house.

Skerritt's eyes readjust, gazing across the street...

...to the doorway across the street, where Ruth is standing, holding her crying daughter in her arms, holding her head down so as not to see what's happening.

Smalls returns.

SMALLS (CONT'D)

There's an ambulance on its way...

Skerritt reaches up a bloody hand. Just like he used to extend in a wave from his front porch. He talks now.

SKERRITT

You remember...

Smalls crouches down. He takes Skerritt's hand.

SKERRITT (CONT'D)

You remember the first run you ever did for me?

SMALLS

(confused)

No.

SKERRITT

You and Freddy.

SMALLS

What run are you talking about exactly?

SKERRITT

The very first one. You were just a boy. I asked you what you'd do if you got caught and you said something young and stupid like, anyone touches me, they'll drop down dead. You're sitting here now and I'm thinking, you don't even realize you got touched. You've been wrestled to the goddamn floor.

FADE TO BLACK.

158

EXT. RUTH'S HOUSE - DAY

158

Police cars surround both houses, and an ambulance.

A sheet covers the body in the middle of the street.

Smalls is speaking to Cowboy Hat.

Ruth sits with Sylvie in a police car. Still holding her tight, whispering in her ear, letting her know things are going to be okay.

FADE TO BLACK.

159 INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

159

Ruth sits in the police department, in the same chair she sat in when she was brought in for questioning about Muldoon. Sylvie sits on her lap. She's looking at the passing police officers, waiting, waiting...

...for Smalls to emerge. He comes to her.

SMALLS

I can take you home now.

RUTH

Wait. Wait. I'm worried...

She speaks quietly, just about a whisper, drawing Smalls closer so he can hear her.

RUTH (CONT'D)

About Bob.

She instantly tears up as she says his name.

RUTH (CONT'D)

I'm so worried. I know. I know where he is. Can you please...can you please not say anything...

SMALLS

Okay.

RUTH

Can we go find him. I just want to make sure...to make sure he's not...

Smalls nods.

160 INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

160

Smalls ducks his head around Cowboy Hat's office.

SMALLS

Hey Gene. I'm gonna take Ruth on home. She's gonna pack some bags and then head over to her mom's place.

COWBOY HAT

Okay.

SMALLS

Any word on who that guy was?

## COWBOY HAT

No. I mean yeah. He was just some son of a bitch from near Burleson. Who knows.

161      EXT. SMALLS' CAR - AFTERNOON      161

Smalls drives. Ruth sits beside him, Sylvie nestled in between.

All is quiet. They don't speak.

Something wet hits the windshield. A snowflake.

162      EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY      162

TEXAS SNOW is falling. Light enough not to be effervescent, heavy enough to be gradually turning the landscape white.

The farmhouse is tiny against the landscape.

SMALLS' CAR, parked out front, is even tinier.

Ruth and Sylvie are sitting in the car. The farmhouse is reflected in the window, mingling with their faces on the other side of the glass.

She sees Smalls step out of the farmhouse. He motions to her.

Ruth gets out of the car and carries Sylvie up towards the farmhouse one last time.

163      INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY      163

Everything is cold and empty. The light snowfall is drifting through the hole in the ceiling.

Ruth carries Sylvie down the hall, peeking into the bedroom.

There's not a sign of life in the house.

164      EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS      164

The snow falls on the body of the man Muldoon shot dead by the creek.

It falls too on the other man, who seems to have expired as he attempted to crawl his way out of the woods.

165      INT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS      165

Ruth returns to Smalls and looks at him and nods. She's ready to go.

They turn towards the door. She goes first. He takes one last look around the room before he steps out the door, and as he does...

166      EXT. RUTH'S HOUSE - EVENING      166

The snow is falling on Ruth's house as Smalls' squad car pulls back up outside. No accumulation, just a layer of white frost.

167      INT. RUTH'S HOUSE - EVENING      167

The click of the front door unlocking.

Smalls enters first. Ruth follows and sets Sylvie down. One of the kittens runs up to greet her, and then runs back from whence it came. Sylvie follows it. CAMERA MOVES WITH HER...

...down the hall...

...towards the BEDROOM.

Where she stops.

Back at the front of the house...

RUTH  
Sylvie, stay by me, sweetheart...

She suddenly stops in her tracks at the sight of a BLOODSTAINED SHEET OF PAPER on the kitchen table.

She grabs it. Sees the first line, the familiar handwriting...

"DEAR RUTH"

In the BEDROOM, Sylvie looks straight ahead with wide curious eyes...

...at MULDOON, who is leaning against the bedroom door. His face pale. His torso soaked in the blood that's running out from around his tourniquet.

He's awake, though. And he smiles at her and reaches out a hand to touch her cheek.

She lets him.

MULDOON  
(softly)  
Hey, little girl.

IN THE KITCHEN, Ruth is still holding the letter, pacing back a bit.

Then she looks around, notices Sylvie isn't around, and walks down the hall...

...to the bedroom, where she turns the corner and comes face to face with Muldoon.

He looks up at her, and she down at him. He holds her gaze.

She crouches down beside him and takes him in her arms. He slips into them gratefully. She cradles him there, like a child, and smiles at him.

FADE TO:

168

INT. CAR - NIGHT

168

Back to the very beginning. That summer night again.

Ruth runs a finger through Bob's dirty hair. He hums a tune into her skin.

RUTH  
Stop it. That tickles.

MULDOON  
Thought that's what we were  
supposed to do. Sing 'em songs.

She laughs.

RUTH  
Just talk.

MULDOON  
Okay. Let me tell you about  
something. Let me tell you about  
the future.

He lays there thinking for a bit.

MULDOON (CONT'D)  
Here's the problem about how I see  
the future. I skip just about  
everything.  
(MORE)

MULDOON (CONT'D)

In the future I'm a very old man.  
I'm standing in the door, and your  
mother is by my side. We're at a  
house. It's our house, somewhere  
far away from here, where  
everything is green and the sun is  
almost set. We've got some land.  
You've grown up on it, probably.  
And where we're standing, the way I  
see it, we're waving to somebody.  
There's someone coming to see us  
and we're waving hello to them.  
Maybe that person's you, come home  
after a long time gone. If it is  
we're very happy to see you.

RUTH

Tell me more about this house.

MULDOON

I'm not talking to you.

RUTH

Either way.

MULDOON

It's big. Maybe a farm. It's old,  
older than us. But at the same time  
I feel like maybe I built it.  
There's no telling.

(beat)

There's just no telling.

He leans his head against her belly.

She smiles.

FADE TO BLACK.