

All the Boys Love Mandy Lane

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. GRAVLIN RANCH - DAY

A fence-line against the West Texas horizon.

GARTH, 33, clear-eyed and tan, walks toward the corral. He is handsome in a hard, unsmiling way. Small scar above his eye.

Behind him, an aging ranch complex: farmhouse, cabins and barn at the core of an 10,000 acre spread.

Garth carries an old bolt action Winchester pointed at the ground. He wears denim and leather. No hat.

Steers BELLOW in the corral. Many are marked with circular burns in their hide, like a mange.

Garth CLUCKS and several steers turn their heads.

Garth exhales softly. Stands back from the fence a bit. Then he brings the stock of the rifle up to his shoulder.

A steer turns to face Garth, a broad expanse between his large eyes.

Garth pulls the trigger.

BANG!

He pulls back the bolt to eject the spent cartridge, chambers another round. The metalwork of the old gun resists him, and the steers BELLOW and shift in confusion.

BANG!

He exhales, and methodically now, repeats the labored action.

BANG!

Another steer drops to his knees.

The cattle LOLL and MOAN. There is pain in the cowboy's face.

He doesn't let up. He ejects the cartridge and forces the bolt forward to chamber another round. Brings the gun to his shoulder -- CLICK -- the gun doesn't fire.

A fallen steer BELLOWS in pain, blood seeping from its side.

The unspent round jams. The metalwork is hot, hard to handle. Garth burns his finger as he tries to pry out the round.

GARTH
God-damn it.

He moves toward the door to the barn.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

In a dark recess of the barn, a work bench. Mining and ranch implements stand against the wall: a TWO-HANDED MACHETE, PICK-AXE, SCYTHE, PITCHFORK, and AXE.

Garth grabs the MACHETE in both hands.

EXT. CORRAL - CONTINUOUS

Garth ducks between the two rungs of the gate. The beasts are nervous. On the verge of panic.

Face stone-cold, Garth moves toward the fallen steer, grip tightening on the machete.

Garth raises the machete.

The blade comes down fast, a spray of blood comes up. The cattle BELLOW pathetically.

Blood splatters Garth's face.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR, AUSTIN, TEXAS - LATE AFTERNOON

A SCHOOL BELL rings.

High school STUDENTS pour into the corridor from classrooms. There is the CLAMOR of release after a long day of school as the student move like cattle down the hall.

EXT. SCHOOL ENTRANCE - SAME

The students move en masse through the front doors of the suburban school. Down the steps to the circular drive.

They form lines for carpools, lines for buses.

Parents wait in a line of family vehicles that extends as far as the eye can see.

It's rote: students and parents moving without enthusiasm through life, until we find:

MANDY LANE, 16, auburn hair, unadorned with make-up or jewelry, clear eyes scanning, keen, alert. She seems to be moving in a world of her own, distinct from the mass.

Mandy spots EMMET, 16, the boy with spiked black hair and wintery eyes, and she moves to him. Emmet's totally out of her league, a friend from before Mandy became so lovely.

EMMET

Good to go?

Mandy nods. They walk away from the lines, navigating their own path.

EMMET

(faux chivalrous)

Take your bag?

MANDY

Don't be stupid.

They cut across a field toward the main road. The grass is tall, dry. After a minute:

MANDY

Take your bag?

Emmet foists his heavy backpack onto Mandy's arm and walks ahead of her.

EMMET

Thanks.

Mandy quietly lets Emmet's pack slide to the ground. They're almost to the road before he notices.

Rolling his eyes, he jogs back to retrieve his pack.

EXT. SUBURBAN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Mandy walks along the road alone. She hears the POUNDING BASS of the stereo before she sees the JEEP: monstrous tires, padded roll bars, hunting lights - a vehicle as dangerous and arrogant as its driver, MIKE, 18.

Mike pulls the Jeep onto the gravel shoulder and rolls slowly along with Mandy.

MIKE
Hey, baby. Want a ride?

Mandy stops. Appraises her suitor.

MANDY
Sure. Thanks.

Mandy grabs a hold of the roll bar and puts a foot up on the running board, but doesn't climb in. She smiles at Mike.

Mike smiles back, cocky son-of-a-bitch. What's the hold up?

MIKE
Alright. Hop in.

MANDY
Just a sec.

And from nowhere, Emmet swings his backpack into the backseat and throws himself into the jeep.

MIKE
The fuck?

Mandy climbs into the passenger seat.

MANDY
Thanks a lot, Mike. You know where
I live?

EXT. AUSTIN SPRAWL - EVENING

Mike's driving fast, to impress. Emmet and Mandy sit smug as the wind tears through their hair. Mike turns down the SOUND.

MANDY
I'm up another mile, to the right.

Mike nods. Lifts his sunglasses to get a better look at her.

MIKE
Here. Have a sip.

He hands her a paper cup. Mandy smells it, potent, hands it back to Mike.

MANDY
No, thanks.

EMMET
Smells like Southern Comfort.

Emmet laughs. Mike doesn't offer him any.

EMMET

No, thanks.

Mike scowls at Emmet in the rear view mirror. Mike downs the contents of the cup.

They get to Mandy's intersection, and Mike slows down, but he turns left.

MANDY

No, I'm to the right.

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The road cuts across a meadow toward an enormous construction site: a sprawling housing development, only half completed. A sign: RANDALL LUXURY HOMES.

MIKE

Up for a little party?

EMMET

Where are you taking us, asshole?

Mike shoots a look back at Emmet. The Jeep swerves a bit on the gravel. Mike corrects, tries his game again with Mandy.

MIKE

You never been to the Randall site?
They're putting up some nice
places. I'll show you one.

MANDY

I don't want to see one.

EMMET

We'll walk from here. Stop.

Mike accelerates, pulling off-road and racing to climb a small mound of landfill.

MANDY

Don't.

Mike puts a hand on Mandy's leg. Emmet leans forward.

EMMET

Stop, you fucking idiot!

Mike turns to strike Emmet.

MANDY

No!!

AND MIKE LOSES CONTROL OF THE JEEP.

EXT. CRASH SITE - EVENING

The Jeep is upside-down in the shrubs and grass.

Mandy and Emmet have been thrown clear of the vehicle.
Emmet's face is cut; he's bleeding above one eye.

Mike WHEEZES with raspy breath. His back is on the ground,
his legs are mangled inside the overturned vehicle. His blood
is all over the jeep.

Mandy fights to keep her eyes open, but succumbs.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CRASH SITE - LATER

The gravel road appears to go on forever, nothing in sight.

It takes all of Mandy's strength to lift her head. Her eyes
flutter and close.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CRASH SITE - LATER

Shattered glass in the dirt. Mandy can HEAR her own heart.
She tries to move, but can't.

Mandy watches as Emmet pulls himself through broken glass,
oil, and coolant to the Jeep. He pulls Mike from the wreck.

A CELL PHONE lies several feet away.

MIKE

Call... for help.

Emmet places a hand on Mike's neck, feeling the thin pulse.
Mike bleeds badly. Coughs blood onto Emmet's hand.

Emmet remains eerily calm.

MIKE

I... can't... breathe...

And Emmet just holds him.

Mike struggles against Emmet's grasp. He looks wildly at Mandy, at the cell phone, at Emmet.

MIKE

Call!

EMMET

Shh...

Emmet places a hand over Mike's mouth, suffocating him.

When Mandy meets Emmet's gaze, there is a terrifying calm in his eyes, a brutal coldness. Mandy watches, unblinking, as:

EMMET KILLS MIKE SLOWLY.

On the dark horizon, now, the blue and red ROLLERS of emergency vehicles.

Mandy watches the lights approach, and then makes eye contact with Emmet one last time before she passes out.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. GIRL'S LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Row upon row of deep blue lockers divide the room. Girls in every state of dress and undress prepare for their sports: there are cheerleaders, swimmers, field hockey players.

At the far end of the room, we find Mandy, slightly older now and more beautiful. She sits on the bench in running shorts and a t-shirt, stretching forward to touch her toes.

Despite the locker room CHATTER, Mandy is peaceful, focused. There's a seriousness to her demeanor.

She straightens up and gathers her hair in a ponytail.

CHLOE (O.S.)

Was Jake wearing Diesel jeans today
or was I totally high?

MANDY

Hmm... Jake?

Mandy turns to look at CHLOE, 17, a blonde bombshell in white panties and a bra. Chloe is inches away from the mirror on her locker door: applying make-up for cheerleader practice.

CHLOE

It's like we finish Junior year and they finally graduate from Wrangler straight legs. Or Lees. Whatever. At least he's coming this weekend.

MANDY

At least that...

Mandy pulls on her running shoes.

CHLOE

Don't, like, bust a nipple with excitement.

MARLIN, 17, terribly cute and a little bit chubby, rushes in. She's a cheerleader and a friend.

MARLIN

'Sup. Girls ready to hit the ghost ranch with some strapping, brave cowboys?

Marlin slams open her locker. Chloe ignores her.

CHLOE

(to Mandy)

We're going, right? You clear it with your aunt?

MANDY

Yeah.

Mandy reaches up, stretching, and then pulls the shirt back down over her belly.

CHLOE

You better. I mean we only finish Junior year once.

MARLIN

Unless you're Red Gravlin.

Chloe laughs.

MARLIN

Check it!

Marlin shows Mandy and Chloe her BELLY-BUTTON RING. It's a gaudy number, a small crucifix in diamond.

MARLIN

Tasty, yeah?

Mandy smiles to be polite. Closes her locker.

CHLOE

Marlin, don't get me wrong. But you're all pudge. That thing's going to get lost in the folds.

MARLIN

Fuck you.

And Mandy leaves her friends to settle their differences.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD & TRACK - DAY

There's a ton of activity on the field, but as Mandy steps onto the track, her focus is extreme.

All SOUNDS die away. If we didn't notice before, we can see now that she's a serious athlete. She stretches, loosening her muscles, pacing her breath.

Several other RUNNERS assemble on the track. Among them, EMMET, small scar above his eye. Emmet's t-shirt reads: NATURAL SELECTION. Like Mandy, he's lean, powerful, focused.

The TRACK COACH watches Mandy intently. She's his star.

TRACK COACH

Mark. Set.

GUNSHOT! And they're off. Mandy and Emmet pull ahead of the other runners almost immediately.

ON THE FIELD (CONTINUOUS):

Spring football practice. The big boys scrimmage without pads. A FOOTBALL COACH blows his WHISTLE.

FOOTBALL COACH

Water up!

TYRONE, 17, the African-American quarterback, drops the ball where he stands, and turns to watch Mandy racing hard around the track.

JAKE, 17, Tyrone's best man, is Texas blue blood through and through. He drops in next to Tyrone.

JAKE
God-damn, look at her go.

TYRONE
Too fine.

IN THE BLEACHERS:

RED GRAVLIN, 17, red hair sculpted into a vertical shock, surreptitiously pulls on a joint as he watches his athletic classmates do their thing.

He's positioned directly above the entrance to the girl's locker room, so he's first to see it when Chloe and Marlin emerge with a couple other cheerleaders.

Red leans against the railing.

RED
Chloe!

Chloe looks up, shields her eyes against the sun.

CHLOE
Hey, Red!

RED
She in?

CHLOE
She's in.

RED
Yeah!

ON THE TRACK:

Emmet is gaining on Mandy. Sensing him on her tail, Mandy pushes even harder, sweating now, breathing fast.

ON THE FIELD:

Tyrone and Jake watch Red do a little dance in the bleachers.

JAKE
Looks like we've got ourselves a
weekend.

They punch it in. Jake's giddy.

JAKE
Which is also to say you, Mr.
Tyrone, have 72 hours to tame the
wild Mandy Lane.

Tyrone remains reserved. Looks Jake in the eye.

TYRONE
Little respect, man.

JAKE
Of course. It's all you, dude.

CHLOE
(distant)
Hey, guys!

Jake winks at Chloe. Then Jake sneaks a wink at Marlin when
Chloe looks away.

ON THE SIDELINES:

Emmet and Mandy streak past Chloe and the cheerleaders.

CHLOE
Go, Mandy!!

ON THE TRACK:

They're coming down hard. Mandy refuses to give up her lead.
She fights her way past the coach, who blows his WHISTLE.

It's Mandy's race.

EMMET
Fuck!

Mandy ignores the furious Emmet. Catches her breath.

EXT. FIELD ENTRANCE TO GIRLS LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

Mandy is walking off the field. Emmet is close behind her. Chloe prances up and takes Mandy's arm.

CHLOE
Nice run, girl.

MANDY
Thanks.

CHLOE
I told the boys we're coming.

Emmet calls to Mandy before the girls get to the locker room.

EMMET
Mandy.

Mandy rolls her eyes at Chloe. Both girls stop and wait.

EMMET
Hey, Chloe.

Chloe nods, impatient. Emmet turns to Mandy.

EMMET
Listen. How about this weekend?
Rematch on the river path.

CHLOE
Um, Mandy's, like, busy.

Emmet looks down, snubbed.

MANDY
I'm going out of town.

CHLOE
Come on.

Chloe gives her friend a gentle tug, leading her into the locker room.

CHLOE
(so Emmet can hear)
Creepy boy... You don't have to
explain yourself to him.

Emmet is left in the corridor as more cheerleaders flow around him.

INT. MANDY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dinner is over. Mandy straightens up with JEN, 21, her sassy cousin. Her lovely AUNT JO, does the dishes.

AUNT JO

I don't know, Mandy. If the ranch hand is a responsible adult and the Gravlins approve, I guess I think it's okay.

JEN

I did the same thing at the end of my Junior year. We were mellow.

Behind her mother's back, Jen winks at her younger cousin and pretends to give head.

MANDY

Jen!!

JEN

Is Tyrone going?

AUNT JO

Hold on. How many boys are going?

MANDY

Thirty, Aunt Jo! It's going to be a huge orgy, with serious drug abuse. We'll probably all get chopped up by inbred psychopaths, too.

Aunt Jo wipes her hands on a towel, studies her niece.

JEN

The place is kind of sketchy...

MANDY

I worked so hard all year. You know I wouldn't do anything stupid.

AUNT JO

Is Red driving?

MANDY

I promise I'll never get in a car that Red's driving.

AUNT JO

I just... worry sometimes.

Mandy waits: not impatient, not annoyed. This is nothing new.

AUNT JO

Still, it's nice to see you making friends with a new crowd. They seem, I don't know... Exciting.

JEN

Mom. Give her a break. She's asking for permission, not psychoanalysis.

AUNT JO

Okay, you have my permission. But I want you to use your judgment out there. I trust you.

Mandy smiles and kisses her aunt on the cheek.

MANDY

Thanks, Aunt Jo.

Jen grins at Mandy. Mandy sticks her tongue out at Jen.

EXT. MANDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The lights go off in the kitchen. The blue flicker from the TV in the den. And the warm bedside glow of Mandy's room.

INT. MANDY'S BEDROOM - SAME

Mandy throws her favorite jeans into an overnight bag. Her running shoes. A book: *THUS SPAKE ZARATHUSTRA*, by Nietzsche.

By the dresser, Mandy peels off her shirt.

EXT. MANDY'S HOUSE - SAME

PEEPING TOM POV: Mandy reaches back to unfasten her bra.

Suddenly, a flood light illuminates the yard. Jen steps out with a baseball bat in her hands.

JEN

Hey, you sick fuck!

A rustle in the hedges. Fleeting movement of a dark FIGURE.

INT. MANDY'S BEDROOM - SAME

Mandy presses her t-shirt to her chest and looks out the window. Jen looks at her from the yard.

JEN
 Heard of curtains much?

Mandy's not alarmed. She shuts the light and climbs into bed.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANDY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Two cars pull up in front of the house: Chloe's Lexus sedan and Jake's Bronco.

The kids all come up on the lawn. Marlin and Chloe have daisy dukes on. The boys wear UT jerseys and long, boy shorts. Red has his favorite cowboy boots on beneath his shorts.

Aunt Jo opens the door before Tyrone can knock.

AUNT JO
 Morning!

KIDS
 Hi, Jo.

INT. MANDY'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Jen pours Tyrone a cup of coffee. Smiles at him coyly. Jake, Marlin and Red already have theirs. Red turns to Aunt Jo.

RED
 We were hoping you and Jen would come along.

AUNT JO
 Well, Mandy didn't invite us.

RED
 What!? That's impossible. I gave her specific instructions.

AUNT JO
 You're sweet, Red.

Red tries to play it cool. Red is smitten.

EXT. MANDY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Tyrone carries Mandy's bag to Chloe's Lexus. Aunt Jo and Jen see the kids off.

JEN
Y'all have fun.

Aunt Jo embraces Mandy. Mandy lowers her eyes. A little girl on the threshold of something big.

AUNT JO
Go on. Have a great time.

Mandy kisses her and is off.

EXT. TEXAS HIGHWAY - DAY

The two cars fly west. America opens wide before them.

INT. CHLOE'S LEXUS - CONTINUOUS

Mandy is in the backseat. Chloe drives. Tyrone steals glances at Mandy in the rear view mirror. She smiles at him.

CHLOE
Did Jake dump her?

TYRONE
I think it was about fifty-fifty.

CHLOE
He cheated on Laura. I know he did.

TYRONE
Hey, now. I know nothing.

Chloe checks her lip gloss in the visor mirror. Likes it.

CHLOE
Has he said anything about me?

TYRONE
Not that I can think of.

CHLOE
Would you even tell me if he did?

TYRONE
No, ma'am.

CHLOE
Damn it, you're not helping! I'm
trying to fuck your best friend. A
little cooperation please?

Mandy laughs despite herself, prompting a wink from Tyrone.

INT. JAKE'S BRONCO - CONTINUOUS

Tinted windows, a fog of smoke. Jake drives, Red rides
shotgun, and Marlin sits in the back.

Red struggles to resuscitate a roach. Marlin exhales a huge
puff as she studies a map of the nation.

JAKE
Nice hit, Marlin.

On the map, small red x's mark most state capitals.

MARLIN
What's with these marks?

Red squeals with pleasure. Jake spits dip into a coke can.

RED
Jake's fucked a girl from each of
those states.

MARLIN
Right... You've got, like, forty
states accounted for here.

JAKE
Forty-two.

Puts his coke can back in the cup holder.

RED
And the fucker's parents are taking
him to Alaska in August!

Marlin rolls her eyes.

MARLIN
(to Jake)
So who gets it this weekend, Romeo?

RED
Chloe.

JAKE
And Mandy!

MARLIN
Yeah, right...

JAKE
At the same time!

Jake accelerates and passes the Lexus as Red reaches for the coke can. Red takes a sip of Jake's dip spit.

RED
Aarrgh!

EXT. WHATABURGER AND GAS STATION - DAY

The caravan halts for gas.

A sign: Last Gas for 150 miles.

Four rough HICKS leer at the Austin teens from atop a beat-up Chevy TRUCK. The rednecks WHISTLE at the babes.

Jake holds hands with Chloe and walks with the girls towards the bathroom. He tries to follow them inside, but Chloe stops him with a look.

INT. GAS STATION BATHROOM - SAME

Mandy washes her face. Marlin crushes a Ritalin on the counter and cuts it into lines.

Chloe rolls a \$2 bill and snorts. It burns.

MARLIN
Three wild boys. Think they can
handle us?

CHLOE
I know at least one of them can.

Marlin inhales the second line.

MARLIN
(nasal)
But can Tyrone handle the irascible
Mandy Lane?

Mandy smiles and presses the paper towels to her face.

MANDY
I'm not irascible.

CHLOE
Do you even know what irascible
means, Marlin?

MARLIN
Whatever, smarty-cunts. Question
remains, you gonna let Tyrone in
those iron panties or what?

CHLOE
You have got a mouth on you.

MARLIN
Gets me in every kind of trouble...

EXT. WHATABURGER AND GAS STATION - DAY

The rednecks approach Tyrone and Red. LYLE, the oldest and
biggest of them, addresses Tyrone.

LYLE
Where you going with those ladies?

HICKS
Go get 'em, Lyle!

Tyrone is cautious, reserved. Red is never cautious.

RED
Taking them out to the ranch. You
bubbas wouldn't know anything about
that, would you.

LYLE
The fuck did you say, skinny?

Jake joins them, puffs up his chest.

JAKE
You fucks late for the Klan meeting
or something?

The local kids move in closer.

LYLE
I'm gonna take your truck, city
boy, and your girls.

Jake reaches inside the Bronco door and pulls out a HUNTING KNIFE: 5.25" Gerber blade. Not shabby.

TYRONE

(soft)

Fuck is that, Jake?

JAKE

This is Little Elvis. Want to hear him sing?

LYLE

Think that can-opener scares me?

The girls come out of the bathroom. Chloe sees the boys and the impending fight.

CHLOE

No! You guys, Jake, knock it off.

Jake laughs. Puts the knife in his belt. Lyle backs away.

LYLE

You'll get yours.

Jake puts his arms around Chloe and Marlin.

JAKE

Yeah, I will.

RED

(quiet)

Suckers.

The local boys stare at Mandy.

LYLE

(to Mandy)

Sure you don't want to come with me, angel?

Not afraid to stare Lyle down, Mandy gets into the Lexus with Tyrone and Chloe.

EXT. TEXAS HIGHWAY - DAY

An infinite expanse of open range. Intersected, just up here, by a smaller, paved road.

The caravan slows and turns north.

The hicks ROAR past them in their beat-up TRUCK. The hicks pull over onto the shoulder but do not follow them.

INT. CHLOE'S LEXUS - CONTINUOUS

Mandy watches the truck recede with some relief.

EXT. RAILROAD CROSSING - DAY

An endless coal train passes by. Finally, the last car.

The caravan lurches forward.

INT. CHLOE'S LEXUS - CONTINUOUS

Mandy looks at the train tracks: seven dead pheasants have been laid out neatly by a hunter.

A young boy pulls up his pants as he emerges from the bushes. He begins collecting his pheasants.

EXT. GHOST TOWN - DAY

The road leads inexorably to the abandoned town. A rusted oil derrick. Old clapboard buildings.

INT. CHLOE'S LEXUS - CONTINUOUS

Mandy stares out of the window, fascinated, as they stop behind the Bronco at the old Grange.

EXT. OLD GRANGE - DAY

The kids stretch as they emerge from the cars. Jake and Red are now shirtless. Jake pisses against a rusted barrel, pants pulled low.

The wind. A cable somewhere BANGING against metal.

Chloe checks her cell phone: No signal.

Red passes Jake a hacksack, and they begin kicking it.

EXT. OIL DERRICK - DAY

The rusted structure stands like a prehistoric heron.

A joint, passed from Tyrone, to Marlin, to Chloe.

Mandy watches Red and Jake play near an old water tank.

EXT. WATER TANK - SAME

Red hands Jake a rusty length of pipe.

RED

This is just like the collapsed mine on the property. Give it a whack, see if you wake a ghost.

Jake offers the pipe back.

JAKE

You give it a whack.

Red backs away, deferring to the larger Jake.

JAKE

Fucking pussy. There are no ghosts on your ranch.

Jake BANGS the side of the tank with the pipe. A GHOSTLY HOLLOW sound, followed by:

RATTLERS... Two diamondbacks coiled beneath the tank.

JAKE

Nice!

Jake and Red LAUGH and punch it in.

INT. CHLOE'S LEXUS - AFTERNOON

Mandy stares out at the sagebrush and juniper. Wild horses run alongside the car, then veer away.

A dirt road. The ride's a little bumpy, and the car is lost in dust blown up by the Bronco. A pebble DINGS the Lexus.

CHLOE

My dad will kill me if I scratch up the car. I'm stopping.

They come to a cattle guard, and Chloe lays on the HORN.

EXT. CATTLE GUARD - MOMENTS LATER

Mandy and Tyrone carry their bags to the waiting Bronco.

JAKE
There's room. Sit on laps.

MANDY
I'd like to walk some.

RED
Couple miles to the house.

CHLOE
Fuck that.

Chloe climbs in the Bronco.

TYRONE
I'm game.

Mandy smiles. He's here for her.

MANDY
Cool.

Jake grins.

JAKE
I'll drop them at the house and
come back. Meet you up the road.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - LATER

Gorgeous grasslands. Fence lines trace incomprehensible
vectors across the land.

They stop and look at goat skins drying on a fence.

TYRONE
Some country.

MANDY
I feel like I could be anywhere.

Tyrone moves closer, and Mandy looks up at his eyes.

TYRONE
I'll take you there sometime.

MANDY

Anywhere?

The first kiss. Tentative and very sweet.

But Mandy pulls back, uncertain.

TYRONE

Hey. Din' mean to spook you.

MANDY

No.

TYRONE

It's cool, baby. Anytime you want.

Tyrone moves in again, but Mandy hears the low DRONE of an engine and steps away. A trail of dust approaches. Eventually: an army surplus Jeep.

The Jeep passes them, turns bumpily off the road, and pulls up beside them.

A young cowboy at the wheel: GARTH from the opening. Sweaty, sunburned, he's been working hard.

GARTH

Climb up. The others are waiting.

Tyrone climbs in back, lets Mandy take the passenger seat. He admires a new Winchester .30/06 rifle in the back seat.

TYRONE

I'm Tyrone.

MANDY

Mandy.

Garth nods as the old jeep sputters forward.

GARTH

Best hold on...

Mandy holds tight and closes her eyes. The wind whips her hair against her face and she smiles.

EXT. GRAVLIN RANCH - AFTERNOON

The other kids sit in front of the old farmhouse, a two-story Salt Box built atop a gentle grassy rise.

Beyond the house, a small string of workers cabins.

Garth stops in front of the house.

RED
Whoo! Welcome to paradise!

Garth's German Shepherd, LANDOR, trots over to the jeep, takes cautious measure of Mandy and Tyrone as they get out.

RED
He's friendly! So's Garth.

The barn stands at a distance, half-completed or half-collapsed, with half its skeletal structure exposed. Wooden beams point at the infinite blue sky.

INT. SECOND FLOOR BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Mandy places her bag on a bed. Marlin throws hers on the bed beside it.

MARLIN
Don't worry. I'm not planning on sleeping in here.

MANDY
You're not?

MARLIN
Please! I'll find a room with a boy in it, thank you. Maybe go visit Garth: the cowboy babe.

MANDY
The ranch hand..?

MARLIN
Like you didn't notice. You're such a good girl.

Marlin swaggers a bit. Checks her cell phone: No signal. She throws it in her bag.

MARLIN
Useless piece of shit.

Red pops his head in the door.

RED
Let's go! Road was long, and I can't wait to see you two wet.

EXT. GRAVLIN RANCH - LATE AFTERNOON

Something moves silently through the tall grass, watching the teenagers as they walk between the windmill and the barn.

The boys are shirtless now. Chloe and Marlin carry towels.

Mandy is dressed for a run.

RED
We'll be up there.

MANDY
Cool.

TYRONE
Sure you don't want company.

Mandy smiles.

MANDY
I like to run alone. Not that you
could keep up.

JAKE
Doh!

Tyrone winks at Mandy as she sets off down the road.

EXT. SWIMMING HOLE - SAME

An old, wooden support structure towers above an abandoned mine shaft, which is flooded with beautiful, blue water.

Red strips to his boxers. He climbs up the wooden structure and jumps in.

Bursts to the surface.

RED
What are you waiting for? It's
great!

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SAME

A SCORPION scurries off the road as:

Mandy comes down at a fierce pace. Her sneakers kick up dust.

EXT. SWIMMING HOLE - LATER

All in their underwear. Jake emerges dripping and rests against a rock, in the full Texas sun.

Sweating and flushed from the work out, Mandy joins them at the swimming hole.

TYRONE

Come on, Mandy Lane, water's good.

Tyrone's eyes are reassuring.

CHLOE

Come in.

Mandy pulls off her top and her shorts, and in her bra and underwear dives gracefully into the water. The kids CHEER, and Jake dives in after her.

They all tread water. Red looks at Mandy.

RED

I'm in love, okay? Can I just say it. I'm in love with all of y'all. And your cousin Jen. And your aunt.

Mandy splashes him. Jake sneaks up behind Chloe and tugs down her panties underwater.

CHLOE

Hey! Jake!

Chloe pulls up her panties as she swims away from Jake. She scowls at him flirtatiously.

A SNAKE, glistening, black, glides from the wooden slats of the wall into the water behind Mandy.

MARLIN

Now I'm thinking about a bacon cheese burger with barbecue sauce, ranch dressing, and onion rings.

CHLOE

I bet you are!

Marlin ignores the jab.

MARLIN

Did nobody bring beer?

The snake closes in, shiny, seething, venomous.

RED
Fuck, dude. It's at the house.

CHLOE
Mmm... una cerveza!

A GUN SHOT breaks their reverie.

Mandy turns and sees the snake floating, DEAD, just four feet from her. The snake begins to sink as the kids make haste for the edge of the hole.

Silhouetted against the low sun, Garth watches, a rifle propped against his thigh. Landor stands at his side.

RED
Jesus.

JAKE
Nice shot, Garth.

GARTH
Gotta throw rocks before you swim.
Scatters the snakes, and lets the
miners know you're friendly.

Mandy emerges slowly, aware that Garth's watching, aware of her bra and underwear. Her clothes are in a pile near him.

TYRONE (O.S.)
The miners?

RED (O.S.)
Mine collapsed. Some drowned here.
But that was like 80 years ago.
Tell them about old Tuck, Garth.

GARTH
You can tell them later.

Mandy looks Garth in the eye. She walks confidently towards her clothes, not minding his eyes on her body.

MANDY
Thank you.

Garth nods and turns away.

EXT. CATTLE GUARD - NIGHT

The beat-up TRUCK rolls up to Chloe's Lexus, headlights off. Lyle gets out of the truck. CLIVE, another big hick from the gas station, gets out of the passenger side.

Clive grabs a BASEBALL BAT from the gun rack in the truck. Lyle gets a TIRE IRON from the back. Clive sizes up the Lexus. Nice target. He lifts the bat, but:

LYLE
Not the car, Clive.

Disappointed, Clive lowers the bat.

LYLE
That's mine once we teach these
fools a lesson. Let's go.

Lyle and Clive start walking toward the ranch in the dark.

INT. PANTRY - NIGHT

Jake sneaks up behind Marlin as she puts away groceries. He puts his hands on her breasts and licks her ear.

Marlin SCREAMS playfully.

MARLIN
Jerk!

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Mandy and Chloe come down the stairs, swaddled in clean clothes. An oil PORTRAIT OF WILLIAM TUCK, a stern, ancestral rancher, appears to watch their every move from the wall.

Mandy and Chloe share a nervous smile: the painting is scary.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The boys are making a mess out of hamburger meat.

TYRONE
Never seen a snipe.

JAKE
Few men have.

On the counter, Chloe and Marlin each roll a joint.

RED
Used to be a nest along the fence
by the far cabin.

MANDY
Nest of what?

Red looks at Mandy as if she were from Mars.

RED
Snipe, girl. What planet are you
from?

JAKE
Some snipe would be good.

RED
Hell, yeah.

Red looks thoughtful, considering options.

RED
Listen. I know where we can find
them. Let's do this thing!

JAKE
Now you're talking!

TYRONE
Sweet!

RED
Girls?

Marlin doesn't even look up.

MARLIN
We'll be right here, boys. Y'all go
bring us a big one.

Red steps out of the kitchen and comes back in with the old
bolt action Winchester from the opening. Hands it to Tyrone.

RED
Take my dad's. Jake and I will get
another from Garth.

TYRONE
Cool.

RED
Don't shoot if it's little. Looking
for snipe, not quail.

JAKE
Quail's a lot of work for a little
meat.

RED
And don't get greedy, Tyrone. A
single snipe'll do.

The boys walk out into the night. Chloe SIGHS grandly.

CHLOE
Finally some peace... Beer, ladies?

MARLIN
Hell, yes.

Mandy moves to the window.

EXT. WORKERS CABINS - NIGHT

Tyrone advances as quietly as possible, scanning the bushes
for movement.

EXT. GARTH'S CABIN - NIGHT

Jake and Red sit on a bench spitting dip.

JAKE
Okay. We're good.

Red looks at his watch.

RED
Maybe another two minutes.

JAKE
You're being a pussy.

RED
Tyrone won rights fair and square.

JAKE
Fuck Tyrone!

Jake punches Red playfully.

JAKE

Dude. You're being such a puss.
It's easy. Just get her upstairs,
and drop a line.

RED

Drop a line?

JAKE

Stumble a bit: 'Mandy, I thought...
You should know... I've had a crush
on you since fourth grade.'

RED

I didn't know her in fourth--

JAKE

I'm telling you not to be a pussy.
You want me to go in and Snake her?

RED

Come on, man.

JAKE

You got twenty-four hours before I
make my move. Now let's go. Stop
acting like such a damn lemon.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

Clive pauses and chugs a Lone Star longneck. He throws the
bottle in the grass, walks over to the fence line, and leans
his bat against a post. Lyle keeps walking.

CLIVE

Lyle.

Lyle ignores Clive. Clive unzips and begins to pee.

CLIVE

I said, Lyle!

But Lyle's gone around a bend. Clive turns back to the fence
line. The bat is no longer leaning against the post.

CLIVE

Huh?

CRACK!

BASEBALL BAT comes down hard, cracking Clive's thick skull.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jake and Red come in the back door. Red holds a finger to his lips. But he and Jake can't contain their mirth.

CHLOE
What are you two doing?

Jake's laughing too hard to answer.

Red moves in on Mandy, best attempt at suave.

RED
Listen, while Tyrone's indisposed,
I thought maybe you'd want...

MANDY
Oh, yeah?

RED
There are some really neat art
books upstairs. Why don't you come
have a look?

MANDY
Really..?

Red totally loses his game.

RED
I think you'll like them?

Mandy smiles, pats Red on the cheek.

MANDY
You're sweet, Red. Nice try.

And she goes and sits next to Chloe and Marlin.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

Lyle comes back down the road looking for Clive.

LYLE
Clive, the fuck are you doin'?

Lyle finds Clive lying prone near the fence.

LYLE
Drunk bastard.

As Lyle rolls Clive over, a shadowy FIGURE rises behind him.
The BASEBALL BAT makes a SICKENING CRUNCH as it meets the side of Lyle's head.

EXT. FENCE LINE - NIGHT

Tyrone hears a RUSTLE and freezes.

Slowly, he brings the rifle up to his shoulder.

The RUSTLE, again, but behind him.

Tyrone spins.

Then he hears the RUSTLE off to his left.

He aims as Landor emerges from the bushes, crouching, enormous, ready to pounce.

GARTH (O.S.)
Don't shoot.

TYRONE
(off dog)
Easy boy... Easy...

Garth emerges from the darkness and puts a hand on the dog's collar. Tyrone lowers the rifle. Exhales.

TYRONE
Sorry. I couldn't really see him.
He didn't bark.

GARTH
Doesn't bark. Won't even growl
unless he's scared.

TYRONE
What scares him?

GARTH
Nothing.

Beat.

TYRONE
Red said there was good snipe.

Garth can't help but laugh.

GARTH
Snipe.

TYRONE
Seen any?

Garth gestures back to the farmhouse.

GARTH
You have a girlfriend in there?

TYRONE
Yeah. I think so.

GARTH
I'd hurry back before you lose her.

TYRONE
(defensive)
What do you mean?

GARTH
There's no such thing as snipe.
You've been had.

Tyrone, smiling, embarrassed.

TYRONE
I'm going to kill them.

GARTH
Go on in. I'm sure she's waiting.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

The kids sit in the living room. The remains of a dinner and a case of beer clutter the floor. A joint and the bottle of whiskey make the rounds.

The large oil painting of William Tuck stares down at the kids with disapproval.

RED
Marlin.

MARLIN
No. What?

RED
Marlin.

MARLIN
 (off painting)
 I feel like we're being watched.
 He's creeping me out!

RED
 (stern)
 Marlin.

Marlin rolls her eyes.

MARLIN
 Fine! Dare.

Red smiles mischievously.

RED
 (Brando)
 "Go get the butter."

KIDS
 Jesus, Red! Come on!

MARLIN
 You're such a sick little fuck. We
 agreed to an R-rating, remember?

CHLOE
 That's, like, Triple X.

MARLIN
 He loses his turn. You lose your
 turn, stupid.

RED
 No, come on. I'll play by the
 rules. Promise.

Mandy watches quietly, smiling, comfortable, safe.

But then movement outside the window catches her attention: a
 fog of BREATH on the window pane.

MARLIN
 Fine. But I'm taking Truth if
 you're asking again.

RED
 Fine.

Mandy looks at the window again: the fog of BREATH is still
 there, but she can see nothing beyond it.

MARLIN
Okay then.

RED
Are you in love with Jake?

Chloe and Jake both shift nervously. Marlin, too. She lies:

MARLIN
No.

RED
(under cough)
Liar.

MARLIN
(covering)
Mandy. Truth or Dare.

Mandy's not certain.

MANDY
(soft)
Dare.

MARLIN
(thinking)
Okay. Go outside and invite Garth
to join us.

Mandy looks at Tyrone, whose face betrays no emotion. She glances to the window, and this time the glass is clear.

She tries not to be scared.

MANDY
Okay.

Mandy walks to the door and steps out into the night.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - SAME

The moon holds to the horizon. The windmill GROANS. Ever so faintly, Mandy hears a TAPPING.

The grass is trampled by the window where she saw the fog of breath. Inside, Mandy can see her friends.

A SHADOW moves in the darkness behind her. Mandy spins around, but she sees nothing. Her heart quickens.

EXT. GARTH'S CABIN - NIGHT

Mandy stands outside Garth's cabin.

MANDY

Garth?

No response. She hears a CANARY SONG from the barn and turns.

MANDY

Garth?

Scared, Mandy hurries back to the house. Landor stands outside the door, and then Garth appears.

MANDY

(to dog)

Hey, sweet thing.

GARTH

Nice night.

MANDY

Beautiful. And we're all inside.

GARTH

Looks like a good time.

Mandy stares up at the night sky: it's dazzling.

MANDY

Doesn't look like this in Austin.

They look up in silence for a beat.

MANDY

(summoning courage)

Join us for a drink?

Garth studies Mandy: There's a sadness about her, a wisdom.

GARTH

I better not. I don't think Mr.
Gravlin would approve. Thanks.

Garth watches Mandy go back into the house.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

The kids are still playing. Mandy sits down.

JAKE

We got bored. Went on without you.

MANDY

I wasn't gone that long.

MARLIN

Long enough... Was it good?

The kids LAUGH. Mandy blushes.

MANDY

You guys are full of shit.

Tyrone looks uncomfortable, jealous.

TYRONE

I was about to dare Jake, but you go ahead. Your turn.

MANDY

No, no, Snipe King. I don't mind.

Tyrone is put at ease by her teasing. To Jake:

TYRONE

Okay, Snake. Show Chloe that package you're always grabbing at.

JAKE

Nothing she hasn't seen already.

CHLOE

What?! Bullshit!

RED

Go on, man. Show her the Longhorn.

CHLOE

That's right.

Jake stands right in front of her face, and lowers his jeans for her to see.

Chloe bursts out LAUGHING!

JAKE

What?

RED

Hah!

CHLOE
(laughing)
Sorry! Sorry, Jake.

Jake takes his seat, red with shame and fury.

JAKE
Marlin. Truth or Dare?

MARLIN
Don't take it out on me, Twig.

TYRONE
Easy, Jake.

MANDY
Let's play something else, guys.

JAKE
No! We're just getting started!

RED
No big deal, Jake.

CHLOE
No! Definitely not a big deal!

The kids laugh again: cruel, teenage laughter.

Jake gets up and walks out.

MARLIN
Jake!

CHLOE
What are you so concerned about?

MARLIN
Whatever, bitch. You didn't have to
laugh.

CHLOE
Blow me, Chubs.

SPLASH! Marlin throws the remains of her beer on Chloe and
storms out after Jake.

CHLOE
What the fuck?! Whore!

Chloe wipes the beer from her eyes.

CHLOE
What's she care?

Red looks into his beer can. Chloe puts the pieces together.

CHLOE
Is Jake fucking Marlin?

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Marlin looks for Jake.

MARLIN
Come on, Jake. She was kidding.

She pauses by Garth's cabin. A haunting JERRY JEFF WALKER tune plays inside.

Through the dark window, she sees Garth opening a dead BIRD with an Army knife. There are stuffed birds on the wall behind him.

Garth looks up suddenly: right at Marlin.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mandy and Tyrone put up the dishes. Red pretends to help, but really he's dodging Chloe's fire. Chloe dries her hair with a dish towel.

CHLOE
Did he and Laura break up because of Marlin?

RED
I don't know! I can't help you!

CHLOE
You can't help shit, carrot sprout. You're his fucking lackey! You'll do anything for him, but you know what? He doesn't give a fuck about you. And neither do I!

Chloe gets up and stomps up the stairs.

Mandy dries her hands.

MANDY
I'll go find them.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Mandy steps into the dark night.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

The barn is lit only by moonlight coming through the open half of the roof. Marlin enters tentatively.

MARLIN

Jake?

In a dark recess, Marlin comes across the farm and mining implements: MACHETE, PICK-AXE, SCYTHE...

A STRANGE SOUND -- man or animal, she cannot tell. Marlin advances tentatively.

Something SCREAMS and dives at Marlin.

Marlin drops to the floor.

A BARN OWL settles on a rafter.

MARLIN

Jesus!

JAKE (O.S.)

Just an owl.

Jake leans against a stall door.

MARLIN

There you are. You okay?

JAKE

(deadpan)

I'm really suffering.

Marlin places a hand on his cheek. Then drops it to his belt.

MARLIN

Poor babe. Let's see if I can help.

Marlin kisses him and drops to her knees in front of Jake.

INT. SECOND FLOOR BEDROOM - NIGHT

Chloe sniffles as she pulls off her beer-stained shirt.

CHLOE
Assholes.

Chloe looks out the window: Garth stands in his cabin, looking up at her. JERRY JEFF WALKER drones eerily.

She lingers by the window and removes her bra.

Seeing Garth walk away, Chloe pulls on a dry shirt.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Something moves silently through the barn, watching Marlin go down on Jake.

Jake is deeply absorbed in the moment. He closes his eyes.

He climaxes loudly.

JAKE
Yarrrr!

Jake zips up and pulls Marlin to her feet. Runs his hands through his hair.

JAKE
Dang...

MARLIN
Better?

Jake nods.

JAKE
Guess I'd better check on Chloe.

Jake winks at the astonished Marlin and walks away, leaving her in the barn.

Marlin watches him leave, her lower lip beginning to tremble.

Then she hears a TAPPING from the dark end of the barn.

She gets up slowly and moves deeper into the barn. In the dark recess, the MACHETE is no longer where it stood.

MARLIN
Who's there?

Marlin passes under a rafter, and

A GLOVED HAND

reaches down and grabs the back of her shirt--

MARLIN
What!?! Hey!

With a FLASH, the MACHETE SLASHES DOWN FROM ABOVE.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Jake is halfway back to the house, PEEING on a bush, when he hears the THUD and WHIMPER from the barn. He rolls his eyes.

JAKE
Fuck.

He looks back at the barn.

JAKE
Fucking drama queens.

Jake walks back towards the barn.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

It's wicked dark.

JAKE
Marlin? Babe, sorry.

Something shining on a beam catches Jake's attention. He moves toward it carefully.

Jake steps into a dark PUDDLE at the base of the beam. He reaches for the shiny object, which rests on a rusty nail:

MARLIN'S diamond-crusted BELLY-BUTTON RING: covered with blood.

Sensing something behind him, Jake turns:

A looming FIGURE rises, backlit in the doorway.

Jake starts backing away. The FIGURE lurches toward him, the glint of the MACHETE held high.

JAKE
What the--

Jake sprints through the darkness to the opposite door.

EXT. JEEP ROAD - SAME

Running hard, Jake comes across a rutted jeep road. His pursuer is fast: gaining on him.

Jake BREATHES heavily.

He turns up the jeep road and continues to run.

In the moonlight, he can make out fence posts, the glint of wire, junipers.

Jake ducks beneath the wire, leaving the road for the dark shelter of a juniper bush.

Catches his breath.

Waits.

FOOTSTEPS on the jeep road suddenly stop.

Jake clenches his fists, preparing to make his stand.

The sound of a MACHETE scraping along the ground.

Just as the FLASHING blade strikes the juniper--

Jake runs!

EXT. OPEN FIELD - NIGHT

Jake runs across the grassland. Out in the open. He turns but even in the moonlight cannot see his pursuer.

The mine structure, like a gallows against the night sky.

Jake is running blind through the endless grass, and:

BANG! A gunshot.

HIS RIGHT FEMUR SNAPS from the impact of the bullet.

Jake stumbles and disappears into the grass:

SPLASH!

Cold, sickening darkness.

EXT. SWIMMING HOLE - SAME

Jake breaks the surface of the black water.

JAKE
(choking)
Argh!

He treads water, trying to be silent, as FOOTSTEPS circle around the top of the hole. The FOOTSTEPS stop.

Jake looks about in the darkness. SILENCE.

He moves toward the bank, gropes for the wall.

SPLASH! Something else enters the water behind him!

Jake struggles to pull himself up the slippery bank to safety. Cold, wet, unable to move his leg.

From the blackness behind Jake, the FIGURE rises bodily out of the water:

THE MACHETE COMES DOWN ON JAKE'S HEAD HARD.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Red gets the rifle down off the wall.

Tyrone, Red, Mandy and Chloe move toward the door.

CHLOE
Maybe it was a fire cracker.

RED
That's Garth's gun.

MANDY
Probably found Ty's snipe.

Chloe thinks that's funny. Red doesn't.

TYRONE
Jake and Garth are just fucking around.

RED
Garth doesn't fuck around.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Last one out, Mandy closes the house door.

RED

Let's split up. Mandy, see if Marlin's in the barn. Chloe, why don't you see if Garth knows what's going on.

CHLOE

Check.

RED

Tyrone, see if anything's behind the house. I'll peep the cabins.

MANDY

Meet back here?

RED

Five minutes.

The girls split off. Tyrone and Red walk to the side of the house. Tyrone starts to go behind the house.

RED

Ty, come with me.

TYRONE

What do you mean?

Giggling, Red holds up a fat joint.

RED

You got a light?

The boys walk over to the farthest of the worker's cabins, a simple shack, really. There's an old generator by the near wall, and Red sits on top of it.

TYRONE

Thing's ancient.

Red knocks on the side of the old generator.

RED

Old Jenny.

Red leans back against the diesel tank. There's a huge CAUTION: FLAMMABLE sign right behind his head.

Red strikes a match on the rusty sign.

TYRONE

You sure you should be doing that?

Red grins as he touches the flame to the joint.

EXT. CORRAL - NIGHT

Mandy approaches the corral, then moves toward the barn door.

EXT. GARTH'S CABIN - SAME

Chloe tentatively peers through the window of Garth's cabin. It's dark, creepy, cluttered inside.

SNAP! A branch cracks behind her.

Chloe turns, but sees nothing. Laughs at herself and starts back toward the house.

INT. BARN - SAME

Mandy scans the dark area around her and grabs a pitchfork that's propped against the wall.

Mandy moves through the barn.

MANDY

Jake! Marlin!

Nothing.

MANDY

Marlin!

A maze of vertical beams and shadows divide the barn.

She hears a faint WHIMPER. Scans the darkness.

The barn owl SCREAMS from a rafter, and Mandy takes off.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

The porch is dark. Mandy emerges from the shadows, and then the other kids begin to arrive. Chloe gets there last.

CHLOE

Oh, my god! What's that?

Chloe points at a track of BLOODY FOOTPRINTS across the porch floor. They lead to Mandy's feet.

MANDY

Eww...

CHLOE

You're bleeding!

RED

What happened?

MANDY

I have no idea.

Mandy steps into the light. There is a long drop of blood on her cheek.

CHLOE

Your face.

MANDY

What?

Mandy touches her cheek, and looks at the blood on her fingertip. Then she checks her legs. Red inspects the prints.

MANDY

I'm not bleeding!

RED

It's definitely blood.

MANDY

I swear, it's not mine.

RED

(the opportunist)

Let me see your legs.

CHLOE

Shut up, Red.

TYRONE

Shut up, Red.

Mandy looks at the soles of her shoes: they're smeared with dirt and blood.

TYRONE

If it's not your blood...

Red steps back, considers the whole scene.

RED
I wouldn't expect that from you,
Mandy. That's not even funny. Jake,
maybe. Kind of stunt he'd pull.

MANDY
It's not a joke! I couldn't find
Jake and Marlin!

TYRONE
Let's double check the barn.

MANDY
I'm not going back out there.

RED
How do we know you weren't out
hacking chickens up? Or people?

CHLOE
Don't be fucking stupid.

RED
(dubious)
Where exactly did you go?

MANDY
Well, where were you? Valiantly
smoking a joint?

Tyrone and Red share a guilty glance.

TYRONE
It's okay.

Rifle in hand, Red chambers a round.

RED
(soft)
Show us.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Red and Tyrone enter first. Red shines a large flashlight
around the barn:

Nothing.

Mandy enters, afraid to look. Then she summons the courage.

MANDY

When I came back through here, I
could have sworn I heard a whimper.

RED

Where?

Mandy points toward a dark section of the barn.

CHLOE

If you're fucking with us, you have
to stop, like right now.

Mandy shakes her head.

MANDY

I wouldn't joke. Not like this. You
know I wouldn't.

Chloe leans against a beam with her hand. Her face registers
something wrong immediately. Chloe pulls back her hand and
sees it's covered with STICKY BLOOD.

Chloe SCREAMS!

Tyrone steps over to Chloe.

TYRONE

Give me the light.

Red shines the flashlight at the beam: BLOOD trickles down
the rough wood and pools in the dirt beneath the rafter.

Mandy's FOOTSTEPS cross the dark stain.

RED

Jesus Christ.

CHLOE

(quiet, scared)
I want to go home now.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

The kids run back to the farmhouse. Red looks at Garth's
empty cabin.

RED

Garth!! Hey, Garth!!

CHLOE

He wasn't there.

RED
I'm calling the police.

The front door is wide open, and a swath of light cuts across the yard.

Mandy stops, grabs Tyrone's arm.

TYRONE
It's okay.

MANDY
But I closed the door. I'm sure I did.

Chloe looks out at the darkness:

CHLOE
Who are you?! Leave us alone!

Red steps boldly into the house.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Everything looks the same, just as they left it. Old man Tuck watching stern and silent on the wall.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Red goes straight to the telephone.

No dial tone.

RED
The line. It's dead.

CHLOE
Let's just get out of here.

MANDY
We can't leave Jake and Marlin.

TYRONE
For all we know, Jake and Marlin spilled fake blood in there to scare us. They're probably on their way back already.

The kids look at each other, wanting to believe Tyrone's theory.

Outside, Jake's Bronco starts with a ROAR!

EXT. FARMHOUSE - SAME

Red and Tyrone rush out of the house. The tail-lights of Jake's Bronco recede into the darkness.

TYRONE
Jake!!

RED
Fuck!

INT. LIVINGROOM - SAME

The kids pace nervously.

TYRONE
I swear I saw Jake's keys here
before we left.

CHLOE
Fuck Jake and fuck Marlin. I hope
they crash and die.

RED
Dude...

TYRONE
I'll go check the phone line.

Mandy steps in front of the door.

MANDY
(soft)
Ty...

RED
I'll come with you.

TYRONE
Y'all stay put.

MANDY
I have a bad feeling about this.

Tyrone looks her in the eye. His gentle gaze.

TYRONE
Hey. It's going to be okay.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Red, Mandy and Chloe wait nervously for Tyrone. He comes back in through the back door.

TYRONE
Line's down.

CHLOE
Cut?

TYRONE
Looks like a branch fell on it. No sign of Garth, either.

RED
Listen. We're inside, we're safe together. Let's just chill, it's just a misunderstanding, bad joke.

Chloe takes a deep breath. SIGHS dramatically.

RED
Right? It's, what, 3am now? It'll be light soon. It's fine.

TYRONE
You've got a point.

CHLOE
Yeah.

They all look at Mandy.

Mandy nods, but she is scared, uncertain.

TYRONE
We stay together. No one goes anywhere alone.

MANDY
I have to wash up.

Red raises his hand.

RED
I'll come.

Tyrone smacks him.

CHLOE
(laughing)
Come on, Mandy. I'll go with you.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

The moon waits behind the windmill.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Mandy and Chloe sit on the couch. Tyrone sits in the rocking chair by the window, holding the rifle.

Mandy looks at the portrait of William Tuck: still staring at them, still mad. Red enters with a bottle of Jack and beers.

CHLOE
Hey, Red. I'm sorry about before.
Heat of the moment. I can be a
bitch. But deep down I'm just a
sensitive and scared little girl.

MANDY
Irascible, but insecure.

Red eyes her suspiciously.

CHLOE
Roll us up a joint, will you?

RED
I see how it is...

CHLOE
Let them do whatever it is that
they do. Fuck them. I'm over it.

RED
Here, then.

Red tosses Chloe a beer, which she snags out of the air.

TYRONE
Nice catch.

Chloe looks at Red with a new sense of appreciation. He's all right. Mandy sees the change in Chloe. Smiles.

The house emits a long, terrible GROAN like the hull of a ship. The kids cluster together, scared.

RED

It's just the house settling. The mine shaft runs beneath us. Just settling.

CHLOE

Oh, that's cool. Just a mine shaft full of trapped, dead miners! Cute.

MANDY

(off painting)

Was *he* trapped there with them?

Red looks up at old man Tuck.

RED

Nah... He never sent for help. The miners' relatives hanged him from the rafters in the barn after they killed his wife and son. They say he won't rest till his kin owns the land again.

TYRONE

Is your father kin?

RED

Old Tuck has no kin.

Tyrone and Chloe look up at the portrait with dread.

INT. LIVINGROOM - LATER

Chloe grinds up a Ritalin tablet on the coffee table. Red rolls a joint. Tyrone sets down four fresh beers. A new peace appears to have settled over the kids. A calm.

RED

A lot of guys were traumatized by the first Gulf War. I know Garth saw a lot of people die.

TYRONE

Bet that fucked him up.

RED

Seems okay. Same thing when his wife died. He just got real quiet and then said, 'Sometimes it's just better this way.'

CHLOE

That's so sad.

RED

She was real sick. I guess he was happy she didn't suffer much.

MANDY

What happens when your parents sell the ranch?

RED

The corporations that buy up these family ranches usually bring in their own crew. I think Garth'll just have to move on.

A SILENCE begins to creep over the room.

CHLOE

Hey, let's change the subject, right? I mean, we just finished junior year! We should be celebrating.

RED

Bottoms up.

Red takes a long pull from the bottle. He sits on the couch with Mandy and Chloe. Chloe considers the bottle, and drinks.

While Tyrone drinks, Mandy sees movement outside the window.

MANDY

Tyrone!

Tyrone spins: outside the window there's only darkness.

TYRONE

Nothing there.

Beat.

KNOCK, KNOCK!

The door.

CHLOE

Dead miners usually knock?

RED

Come on, Ty.

All four move towards the door. Tyrone aims the rifle and Chloe and Mandy stand behind him.

Tyrone nods, ready.

RED
Who is it?

GARTH (O.S.)
Who fucked up my jeep and stole my gun?!

RED
What?

GARTH (O.S.)
I want my gun back now! And whoever fucked up my jeep better have an explanation!

RED
What are you talking about?

GARTH (O.S.)
Someone ripped out the starter, made a mess of the cables. That's a work vehicle, not a toy your parents bought you!

Red looks to the others for help. Tyrone shakes his head: don't do it. Mandy and Chloe nod their heads: yes.

Red opens the door.

GARTH
(off Tyrone)
Christ, why you always pointing that gun at me?

RED
Garth, man...

Landor appears behind Garth, stares at Tyrone.

TYRONE
Dog.

GARTH
(to Landor)
It's okay.

Garth holds onto Landor's collar.

GARTH

(to Tyrone)

You're going to point that thing at the floor, nice and slow, and then you're going to engage the safety, and then you're going to hand it over to me. Any of you gets hurt, Mr. Gravlin'll kill me.

Tyrone breaks his fierce, manly gaze and shoots an inquisitive look at Red.

RED

It's okay. Come in.

INT. DININGROOM - LATER

They're all at the table. Landor lies by the door. Red, Mandy, and Chloe appear to feel safer with Garth in here.

Tyrone eyes him suspiciously.

TYRONE

Well, where were you?

Red shoots Tyrone a look.

GARTH

There's a place I go sometimes, that's all.

Beat.

CHLOE

The phone line is dead.

GARTH

I told your father we need a radio.

Red hands the bottle of whiskey to Garth: almost an apology.

Garth takes a slug from the bottle. Chloe reaches for it, brings it slowly to her lips. A bit too slowly. Whiskey dribbles down her chin.

Mandy goes into the kitchen. Garth watches as she passes by.

Chloe bats her eyes at the cowboy.

CHLOE

I feel a lot better with you here.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Mandy splashes water on her face. She notices a drop of blood on her arm, just under her sleeve. Confused, she washes her arm off, checks for any sort of injury. Finds none.

Mandy studies her reflection in the window. Red and Garth BANTER in the livingroom.

Mandy shuts the kitchen light so that she can see outside. Out there, in the darkness, she sees only shadows.

INT. LIVINGROOM - LATER

Mandy comes back in and sits on the floor beside Landor. Garth cleans the old rifle while he talks.

GARTH

This ranch has had a lot of bad luck. Gorgeous property, but it's cursed to hell.

Garth looks up at William Tuck's portrait.

RED

Tell them about the mine.

GARTH

Used to be an old mining outfit. Thirty-five miners disappeared here about eighty years ago.

Chloe WHISTLES.

GARTH

Mine flooded. Some were drowned. Some were trapped in air pockets deep beneath the ground. Times at night I could swear I hear them tapping, waiting for their rescue.
(beat)
Old Tuck never sent a rescue party.

The kids look scared. Garth chambers a round, checks the safety.

GARTH

They say that's why there are no songbirds on this ranch: Too many canaries died in these mines.

CHLOE
(she lies)
I noticed that...

GARTH
Helps to understand the will of the
land. And let me tell you, the will
of this place ain't nothing pretty.

RED
All that stuff might have been true
fifty years ago. But things are
different now.

GARTH
Nowadays you get illegal immigrants
moving across the land at night,
desperate, afraid. Sometimes they
set foot on the wrong property.

The kids watch Garth, transfixed. Mandy runs her hand through
Landor's thick coat.

GARTH
There are no laws against shooting
a 'trespasser' in the late hours of
the night. Not if that man's got a
Christian family to protect.

RED
That's politics, not the land.

GARTH
Seen what the land did to your
dad's herd. Lesions, dropping
calves.

RED
My dad sold the herd. He told me.

GARTH
(soft)
He didn't sell the herd, Red. Can't
sell them sick like that.

Red struggles to absorb this new information. Mandy watches
Garth with some quiet form of admiration.

TYRONE
What did you do to them?

GARTH

Can't cure cattle like that. All you can do is put them down. And try to be merciful.

RED

I'm glad we'll be done with this place soon, then.

GARTH

Another family ranch swallowed up by the corporation ranch.

RED

Not the wild west anymore.

Mandy returns to the couch. Chloe stretches, makes sure Garth can see the top of her panties.

CHLOE

I'm scared to go to the bathroom...
I'm so embarrassed.

Chloe looks to Mandy: Please?

MANDY

Come on.

Garth watches as Chloe and Mandy walk up the stairs.

INT. STAIRWAY - SAME

At the approaching FOOTSTEPS,
A BLACK WIDOW scurries up the wall.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - SAME

A long hallway. Several doors lead off on either side. Chloe opens the first door on the left.

CHLOE

Where's the fucking light?

INT. SECOND FLOOR BATHROOM - SAME

Chloe reaches around the door jamb. Her hand searches between the light switch and the BLACK WIDOW. Her fingers pass within an inch of the spider.

She moves her hand up and connects with the light switch.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - SAME

Chloe steps into the bathroom.

CHLOE

Do you mind waiting for me? I can't stand the thought of you downstairs with Garth while I'm up here.

Chloe winks at Mandy.

MANDY

I'll be right here.

Chloe closes the bathroom door.

INT. SECOND FLOOR BATHROOM - SAME

Chloe pulls down her pants as she sits on the toilet.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - SAME

Mandy emerges from her designated bedroom with her book. She hears a distinct CREAKING above her head.

She peers into the darkness of the hall.

MANDY

(to Chloe)
House. Settling.

INT. SECOND FLOOR BATHROOM - SAME

Chloe goes to the sink. Checks her figure in the mirror.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - SAME

Mandy sits with her back to the bathroom door. The WATER running behind her. The walls closing in all around.

She hears the CREAKING again, and stands.

Mandy takes a tentative step towards the far end of the hall.

MANDY

Anyone there?

INT. SECOND FLOOR BATHROOM - SAME

Chloe lets the hot water run. She breathes in the steam, and SIGHS deeply as the water soothes her nerves. Marlin's purse sits on the counter, and Chloe extracts a vial of pills:

Ritalin. Marlin's brother's name on the prescription label.

Chloe pops a pill and follows it with water.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - SAME

A history of the Old West is charted in sepia photos and maps along the walls. Mandy moves slowly toward the far end of the hallway, where one door stands slightly ajar.

She hears the WATER stop.

INT. SECOND FLOOR BATHROOM - SAME

Chloe is wiping her face when she hears the CREAKING above.

She looks up at the ceiling:

The BLACK WIDOW spins her web high in the corner.

CHLOE

Oh!

Chloe's heart accelerates, and she steps into the hallway.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - SAME

Chloe and Mandy both look up at the ceiling.

All it takes is a look, and they both run down the stairs.

INT. LIVINGROOM - SAME

The guys look amused at the speed with which Chloe and Mandy descend the stairs.

RED

Yeah?

CHLOE

Didn't you hear it?

TYRONE
Hear what?

Garth shakes his head. Red grabs the flashlight.

RED
Come on. Show me what you heard.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - SAME

Chloe, Mandy, and Red walk down the long hallway.

INT. LIVINGROOM - SAME

Tyrone eyes Garth suspiciously.

TYRONE
Red says you fought in the Gulf.

Garth is not anxious to discuss it.

TYRONE
Bet you saw some crazy shit.

Garth nods.

TYRONE
Must get lonely here. What do you
do for fun?

GARTH
I didn't come here for fun.
(beat)
Landor keeps me company.

CLICK.

POWER FAILURE. All of the lights in the house go out.

TYRONE
Oh, perfect.

GARTH
Hell, there's some candles in here
somewhere.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - SAME

Blackness. Red turns on his flashlight. Mandy stands close.

CHLOE
(scared)
What the hell?

The single window is papered over. Trunks line the walls, and sheets are draped over chairs and dressers.

RED
Don't worry. Power'll come back on
in a minute. Happens all the time.

Red shines his light at a trap door in the ceiling. A rope handle hangs from the door. He hands the flashlight to Mandy.

RED
Hold this.

Red pulls on the rope, and an old wooden stairwell descends from the ceiling.

CHLOE
That's clever.

INT. LIVINGROOM - SAME

Several candles create a small circle of light.

Tyrone stands and moves to the window. He pretends to look out, but is really watching at Garth's reflection.

GARTH
Power's not coming back on. I'll
start the genny. Don't want you
kids any more scared than you
already are. Stay with the girls.

Garth SNAPS his fingers to call Landor. Tyrone bristles at Garth's attitude.

TYRONE
Hey, I'll start the generator.

GARTH
Excuse me?

TYRONE
They're my friends. I'll take care
of this.

GARTH
You ever seen a generator?

TYRONE

Look, dude. I'm going to start the generator, and then I'm going to get the fucking car.

(beat)

You stay with the girls.

Garth watches as Tyrone heads toward the door. Tyrone grabs Chloe's car keys off the table and leaves.

INT. ATTIC - SAME

Red, Chloe, and Mandy stick their heads up into the attic. The BEAM of the flashlight cuts through the darkness.

The attic is bare: exposed beams, dark crawl space.

RED

(timid)

Hel-lo?

CHLOE

That'll spook 'em.

RED

Eat me. There's no one up here.
Let's get out of here.

As the three head down the stairwell, a ray of light falls across A PAIR OF WORK BOOTS STANDING IN THE SHADOWS.

EXT. WORKERS CABINS - NIGHT

Tyrone approaches the old generator. The CRICKETS are wild. As Tyrone bends down to study the old machine, the crickets suddenly fall silent.

Tyrone looks around. Grins at the fact that he's scared.

TYRONE

Come on, T. Fire it up.

Tyrone flips a switch, adjusts the choke.

TYRONE

I'll show you power.

SNAP! A noise, behind Tyrone. He turns, but sees nothing. The livingroom windows glow warm with candles in the distance.

Tyrone returns his attention to the generator.

He reaches down for the start-cord, gives it a hard lawn-mower pull. The thing turns, but doesn't start.

Tyrone adjusts the choke again.

INT. LIVINGROOM - LATER

Through the front door, Mandy watches Garth, who stands outside smoking a cigarette. He has the rifle with him.

On the couch with Chloe, Red rolls a joint by candlelight.

RED

Say Jake doesn't come back...

CHLOE

I don't care if we never see that jerk again.

(off the joint)

What the fuck are you doing?

RED

What's it look like I'm doing? Get off my back, Mom!

CHLOE

You're starting to stress my buzz.

The kids eye each other suspiciously.

MANDY

What if Jake does come back?

Beat.

Red offers the joint to Chloe. She accepts it and lights up.

RED

We've got a gun, Mandy. We're fine as long as we got the gun.

Garth enters and closes the door. He frowns at the joint. Red takes another hit.

CHLOE

Where's Tyrone?

GARTH

He left.

RED
(exhaling smoke)
He what?!

GARTH
He said he'd be back with the car.

RED
What happened?

GARTH
I was going to start the generator.
He said he'd do it.

MANDY
Why didn't you stop him?

CLICK! The POWER RETURNS. The house lights back up.

GARTH
Guess he's gonna get the car now.

Garth shakes his head. Mandy, annoyed, heads into the kitchen.

EXT. WORKERS CABINS - NIGHT

Tyrone grins at the CHUGGING generator.

TYRONE
Tha's right!

He stands: go on to the car or return to the house? Tyrone looks at the house.

TYRONE
Stupid fuck.

Tyrone starts walking away from the house. A sweet CANARY SONG stops him in his tracks. He looks at the farthest cabin.

TYRONE
Who's there?

He hears the CANARY SONG again, softer now.

Tyrone marches toward the third cabin.

TYRONE
Who's there?

He opens the door.

INT. WORKERS CABIN - SAME

The cabin is lit by moonlight. It is small, unfurnished save for a small cot. Tyrone enters cautiously.

TYRONE
Try that one more time I'll beat
your fucking ass.

Silence.

He hears the CANARY SONG coming from the next cabin over.

Tyrone turns to leave: and hears the CANARY SONG behind him.

He spins.

TYRONE
Come on, Jake...

Tyrone reaches down and flips over the cot: nothing there.

Moonlight cuts through cracks in the old wall boards. Tyrone puts his face to the wall and peers out through a crack.

His eyes widen:

JAKE'S HUNTING KNIFE SLICES THROUGH THE WALL.

Tyrone clutches his abdomen. When he holds his hands in the light, he sees they are covered with BLOOD.

Tyrone looks down to see the handle of the knife protruding from his gut.

He sinks to his knees. Falls to the floor. Hearing FOOTSTEPS outside, Tyrone lies still. The FOOTSTEPS recede.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Chloe enters the kitchen, finds Mandy seated at the table reading her book.

CHLOE
Come on, girl. He'll be back. Come
keep me from jumping the cowboy.

Mandy smiles.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

By a small light, Mandy reads Nietzsche. Everyone around her is sleeping, even Garth. Mandy senses movement outside.

Landor lifts his head.

Landor emits a WHINE that turns into a GROWL.

Mandy gets up, silent. She sees the gun resting across the arms of the rocking chair, where Garth sleeps.

Landor GROWLS low: there is something beyond the wall.

Mandy reaches for the gun and Garth wakes with a start. He grabs the rifle.

MANDY
(whisper)
Someone's there.

Garth's eyes glow like embers. Mandy can feel them.

Garth checks the window, then moves over to his dog.

GARTH
What is it, boy?

Landor licks Garth's hand. Garth is troubled, but tries to conceal this from Mandy.

He opens the door.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - SAME

Garth and Landor step out into the night. Garth looks around, gun raised. Landor sniffs the air.

GARTH
Tyrone? Tyrone!

Landor GROWLS at the darkness.

Garth clicks off the safety, but he can't see whatever is disturbing the dog.

He leads Landor back into the house.

MANDY
He should have been back by now.

GARTH
He'll be back. You'll see.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

Dawn comes up the eastern horizon in shades of plum and red.

INT. KITCHEN - DAWN

Garth pours himself a cup of coffee. Mandy enters and sits at the small table.

GARTH
You're not much of a sleeper.

MANDY
Tyrone should have been back
already.

Garth brings the two cups to the table and sits.

GARTH
You sleep at all?

MANDY
No.

He smiles. Mandy sips her coffee, watches the cowboy.

MANDY
I'm sorry about your wife.

GARTH
I still see her everywhere I turn.
There's a place I go, just up the
road a bit. I keep a little, I
don't know, an altar for her there.

MANDY
That's where you were earlier.

GARTH
I go out there every night. I can
talk to her for hours.

MANDY
What did you tell her last night?

GARTH
Secret.

Garth smiles. He inhales the steam off his cup.

GARTH

I was by her side when she died. It was quick. Better.

MANDY

My parents died in a car wreck when I was little. They were killed by a drunk teenager. I bounced around for a while before settling with my mom's sister.

GARTH

I'm really sorry to hear that.

MANDY

Guess it made me grow up fast.

GARTH

You're good. Strong. I can see that. Got a sister, say about ten years older?

MANDY

(smirk)

My cousin Jen. She's 21. She'd do a number on a nice guy like you.

The quiet between them is a little unsettling. Garth speaks just to break it.

GARTH

The kids will be back in the morning and we can have a real good laugh over all this. You hungry?

MANDY

No... God, my head hurts real bad.

Garth raises his cup.

GARTH

This'll help.

And then quiet.

GARTH

Nietzsche.

Mandy pushes the book towards him.

MANDY

I read this in school. It's meant a lot to me. After my parents died, it helped me see that guilt and grief can make a person weak.

GARTH

First time I read this, I thought the book might burst into flames right in my hands.

Mandy's eyes sparkle at the suggestion.

GARTH

'Equally hateful is your grinning death, which creeps up like a thief -- and yet comes as the master.'

She's impressed.

MANDY

I was just reading about the storm.

GARTH

Come shake the rotten fruit from the tree...

MANDY

Didn't know ranch hands liked Nietzsche so much.

GARTH

Or high school girls, for that matter.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

The blood red sky.

Mandy, Red, Chloe and Garth move outside slowly. Red holds the rifle.

CHLOE

Ty's got my keys.

GARTH

We'll find him.

The insects and animals are silent. Suddenly, Landor breaks into a run toward the barn.

GARTH
Landor! Shit.

Garth grabs a heavy rope leash off the porch. The dog barks and scratches at the closed barn doors.

GARTH
I'll catch up.

RED
We'll go slow.

EXT. WORKERS CABINS - DAWN

The house towers on the rise behind them as they walk away.

Mandy looks back at the house: Was that movement in the second floor window?

RED
Tyrone!

MANDY
Maybe we shouldn't call out.

Mandy looks back at the farmhouse. Sees nothing.

CHLOE
Oh, God. I'm scared.

Red holds his hand up, calm.

RED
We're okay. We're totally okay.

Chloe SCREAMS!!

She points down the road.

Several yards away, JAKE'S BODY SITS CRUCIFIED ON THE BARBED-WIRE FENCE, a jagged scar across his ashen face.

MANDY
Oh, God.

CHLOE
No...

EXT. BARN - SAME

Garth has Landor on the heavy rope, and is about to step into the barn when he hears Chloe SCREAM.

He and Landor run toward the kids.

EXT. WORKERS CABINS - SAME

Mandy embraces the sobbing Chloe, turns her away from Jake.

MANDY

(soft)

Hold on, Chloe. Keep it together.

But Chloe SCREAMS again. Mandy looks back and sees Tyrone.

He stumbles from the last cabin, clutching the HUNTING KNIFE to his abdomen. He's covered with blood, and only makes it a couple of steps before collapsing.

TYRONE

Help!

Garth and Landor appear behind Tyrone.

RED

Stop there!

Chloe and Mandy hurry to Tyrone's side.

Red drops to one knee and fixes his aim on Garth.

RED

(to Tyrone)

What happened? He do this to you?

TYRONE

(struggling)

I don't know...

Landor GROWLS and crouches, but Garth grabs his collar before the dog springs.

GARTH

Red, don't!

Red's almost in tears.

RED

What are you doing to us!?

GARTH
Easy... Easy... I didn't do
anything to Tyrone.

RED
Hold the dog!

GARTH
I got him, Red. I'd never hurt you.

MANDY
Garth could have killed us all last
night if he wanted to.

RED
Maybe it's more fun to play with
us, huh? Why kill us outright when
you can watch us squirm.

MANDY
Red, you're not helping!

Red stares at the wound.

RED
That's Jake's knife.

Red lowers the gun.

CHLOE
(crying)
Why can't we just leave?

Tyrone GROANS, and Mandy takes his hand.

MANDY
We've got to get him to a hospital.

GARTH
Get the car. I'll stick with him.

TYRONE
Keys. My pocket.

RED
We can run for it. Back in 20
minutes.

TYRONE
Go!

Mandy hesitates. Tyrone's eyes are red with pain and fear.

MANDY

You guys go. I'll stay with Tyrone.

GARTH

I have bandages in my cabin. We've got to slow this bleeding.

All eyes on Mandy. She nods.

MANDY

(to Red and Chloe)

We'll take care of Ty. Try to hurry.

RED

You'll be sitting ducks.

Red hands the rifle to Mandy.

RED

Know what to do with one of these?

Mandy nods her head.

MANDY

Texas chick.

(chambers a round)

Of course I know. Go, you guys. Be careful.

Tyrone tries to smile, but it's too much for him.

RED

Right back, buddy. Quick as we can.

Keeping low, Red and Chloe hurry down the road. Mandy watches until they're out of sight.

Garth and Mandy lift Tyrone off the ground. They do their best to carry him. Mandy has the rifle over her shoulder.

A short-cut leads from the dirt road through the tall grass to Garth's cabin.

EXT. GARTH'S CABIN - MORNING

A couple of yards behind the cabin and flanked on one side by a gas tank and a little shelter.

Garth spreads a blanket under the shelter. Carefully, they lower Tyrone onto the blanket. He's in great pain.

TYRONE

Picnic.

Garth wraps a shirt around the base of the knife.

GARTH

You just keep that sense of humor,
Tyrone.

(to Mandy)

And you keep gentle pressure.

Mandy takes Tyrone's hand.

MANDY

I'm right here, okay?

Garth ties Landor's rope leash to the base of the tank.

GARTH

There's something in the barn.
That's what Landor was after.

MANDY

Can we just wait?

GARTH

It's better if I check it out.

Mandy offers the rifle.

MANDY

Take this.

GARTH

I'll be right back. You'll be safe
with the dog. Landor, stay.

One last look at Mandy, and Garth leaves with the rifle.

Landor WHINES, and Mandy places a gentle hand on his head.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - SAME

Garth takes cover behind the jeep. He looks up at the windows
of the house. Scans the horizon.

Nothing.

Keeping low to the ground, Garth hurries toward the barn.

EXT. GARTH'S CABIN - SAME

Mandy applies pressure to Tyrone's wound. He's fading. Pale.

MANDY
I'm sorry if this hurts.

She strokes Tyrone's brow.

TYRONE
So thirsty.

Mandy looks over at Garth's cabin.

MANDY
Okay. I'll check inside.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Garth approaches the old structure.

Hears a CANARY SONG from inside.

INT. BARN - DAY

Garth steps inside. Eerie morning light cuts through the exposed beams and the open half of the roof.

He moves forward, checking each stall, and scanning the rafters as he advances.

Halfway through the barn, something moves behind him.

EXT. GARTH'S CABIN - SAME

Landor stares at the barn. His WHINE deepens to a LOW GROWL.

INT. BARN - SAME

Garth's attention is seized by a small, feathery object beside a bale of hay on the floor. He moves in closer:

The BARN OWL that spooked Marlin is dead. Garth bends to study the dead animal.

The owl is teeming with maggots.

A FOOTFALL behind Garth, but he turns too late.

BANG!

GARTH IS BLIND-SIDED BY A SHOVEL. He drops to his knees.

BANG!

Garth is leveled by another blow to his back.

EXT. GARTH'S CABIN - DAY

Mandy comes around the side of the cabin with a bottle of water in her hand.

Landor GROWLS and pulls against his rope. The rope is starting to fray at one end.

MANDY

What is it, dog? Hush...

Sweating, pale, Tyrone turns so that he can see Mandy.

MANDY

Shh... Don't try to talk.

She wets a cloth and presses it to Tyrone's lips.

TYRONE

Don't stay.

MANDY

I want to stay.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Chloe and Red at a full run.

Out of breath, Chloe stops. Offers Red the keys.

CHLOE

(quiet)

Go on. You're faster.

Red stops with her, and pockets the keys.

RED

No. We stick together.

CHLOE

I can't anymore. I can't breathe.

RED
We'll walk.

CHLOE
But they're waiting!

Red grabs Chloe's hand.

RED
Hey.

Tears streak down their faces.

Compelled by fear and passion, Red steps forward and kisses Chloe on the lips.

RED
I'm not letting you out of my
sight.

Without letting go of her hand, Red leads the stunned Chloe down the road.

INT. BARN - DAY

Garth lies on the floor, unconscious.

EXT. GARTH'S CABIN - DAY

WHINING, Landor paws the dirt and strains against his rope.

Tyrone opens his eyes. He looks at Mandy. The dog GROWLING.

TYRONE
I always. Liked you. A lot.

Mandy nods.

MANDY
You're alright, too.

Above her, a vulture circles slowly, waiting, it would seem, for Tyrone to die.

Just then, Landor's rope snaps.

MANDY
Landor, no!!

But the dog is gone, running full speed toward the house.

Mandy stands. Watches Landor disappear behind the house.

SILENCE,

and then the frightening noise of a DOG'S LAST CRY.

Mandy looks at the house: shocked, scared, full of dread.

MANDY

No. Oh, no..!

And everywhere, a horrible, dead stillness.

MANDY

(whisper)

Someone's there.

Tyrone winces.

TYRONE

You. Need. A weapon.

Mandy pulls back the bloody compress.

SLOWLY, MANDY PULLS THE KNIFE OUT OF TYRONE'S ABDOMEN.

TYRONE

Aargh!

The pain is intense. The bleeding worsens.

Mandy applies pressure to the wound. The bandage is soaked through. Blood on Mandy's hands, her clothes.

MANDY

There, there.

Blinded by the pain, Tyrone passes out.

MANDY

I'll be right back.

INT. GARTH'S CABIN - SAME

Mandy scans the small, dark room. The taxidermy.

A bookshelf, bearing Nietzsche, Sartre, Dostoyevsky.

Mandy tucks Jake's bloody hunting knife into her belt.

Her eyes come to rest on a small, framed photograph of Garth leading a young woman on horseback. Another photograph shows Garth in his Desert Storm uniform.

Above the frame, through the window, an endless sea of grass.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Holding hands, Chloe and Red come to a wide open plain.

They walk quickly, almost a jog.

FLIT! FLIT! FLIT!

CROWS stream off from a small hedge. Red and Chloe freeze.

Red scans the horizon in all directions.

Just quiet: the WIND in the dry grass.

Red squeezes Chloe's hand. They turn to proceed.

BANG!

A rifle shot.

Red looks at her, steady. His legs drop out from under him.

CHLOE

No!

RED

RUN!

Chloe kneels beside him. RED CAN'T MOVE. BLOOD seeps into the dirt from his back.

CHLOE

Come on, get up!

Red looks at her, panicked and paralyzed.

CHLOE

Red, get up!

A calmness passes over Red.

RED

Run.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SECONDS LATER

Chloe runs as fast as she can.

She cuts off the road, running through scattered sage brush and knee-high grass.

EXT. OPEN RANGE - SAME

Chloe runs in no particular direction, just away from the road, and fast!

She looks back, panicked, but cannot see what follows her.

The wide open range. Fear drives her on, heaving, stumbling, running for all she's got, until:

Chloe twists her ankle and falls.

Frantically, on her belly still, she looks around: nothing but the dry buffalo grass, the spinning sky, the clouds.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Red struggles, trying to crawl, barely able to move.

A SHADOW crosses over him.

Red's blood seeps into the dirt. The SHADOW stands still, watching, waiting. Red stops.

Red turns over.

EMMET towers above him, eyes silver and cold.

SCHWING!

EMMET BRINGS THE MACHETE DOWN ON RED.

When Red's body stops twitching, Emmet takes Chloe's car keys from Red's pocket.

EXT. OPEN RANGE - SAME

Chloe runs to the road as best she can on her injured ankle. She turns and looks back when she hears the distant ROAR of her LEXUS.

CHLOE

No!

Chloe struggles to run faster along the edge of the road.

EXT. GARTH'S CABIN - DAY

Mandy looks down the road. A distant DUST TRAIL appears.

Tyrone gasps.

MANDY

Here they come.

The DUST TRAIL grows closer, a rooster tail. She can't see the road, but knows the car is drawing towards them fast.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

THE CAR BEARS DOWN ON CHLOE LIKE A SHARK, chewing up dust and gravel as it guns for her legs.

In the nick of time, Chloe cuts off the road onto the narrow shortcut that leads toward Garth's cabin.

EXT. GARTH'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

CHLOE (O.S.)

Man-dy!

Limping, exhausted and panicked, Chloe stumbles along the shortcut from the road. The FEAR in her eyes is extreme.

CHLOE

Mandy!

A RUMBLE of tires on the dirt road. Mandy watches the DUST TRAIL of the vehicle as it passes by on its way around the cul-de-sac loop. She moves toward Chloe.

MANDY

I'm here! Chloe, I'm here.

Crying, Chloe throws herself into Mandy's arms. Mandy holds her, tight. The SHOCK is overwhelming for Chloe.

As Chloe and Mandy embrace, the world seems to spin around them. Chloe's eyes widen with fear.

MANDY

It's okay...

The Lexus turns past the barn. Chloe watches over Mandy's shoulder as the Lexus pulls up to Garth's cabin.

Chloe's voice is gone. She tries to speak, but a small line of blood comes out of her mouth as she watches in horror.

CHLOE

Nnnhh-!!

Behind Mandy, the ENGINE turns off.

MANDY

(to Chloe)

It's over now. It's almost over.

The car door SLAMS.

MANDY

(whisper)

Red's here.

Chloe tries to focus through the haze of pain as Emmet approaches behind Mandy.

Behind Mandy, Emmet walks toward them, covered in blood, the MACHETE loose in one hand, lips tight, eyes cold and hard.

Chloe's body shakes with violent sobs.

CHLOE

(whisper)

Run! Run!

Mandy steps away from Chloe, seeing, for the first time, the blood-drenched Emmet.

Then Chloe looks down at her abdomen: Jake's HUNTING KNIFE PROTRUDES FROM HER STOMACH.

She looks at MANDY'S HAND: covered in fresh blood, still holding the knife's handle.

STEM-TO-STERNUM, MANDY RIPS THE KNIFE THROUGH CHLOE.

Chloe falls to her knees.

Mandy stares at her with cold pity.

And then Mandy swings her gaze over to Emmet.

MANDY

What took you so long?

Chloe collapses in the dust. Mandy reaches down and rips the knife from Chloe's gut.

EMMET

Had to borrow the keys from Red.

MANDY

She gave him the keys. That's almost sweet.

Emmet steps closer.

EMMET

Look how bloody you are. You're a god-damned, one man slaughterhouse.

MANDY

Tyrone's a real gusher.

EMMET

That the knife you killed him with?

MANDY

I'm not sure he's dead.

EMMET

The idea was to kill them, not torture them.

Mandy squints at Emmet.

MANDY

Like you killed Chloe?

EMMET

Thought I'd share.

MANDY

Very sweet.

Emmet walks over to Tyrone. He squats beside him.

EMMET

He's breathing. You shouldn't have let him suffer so long.

MANDY

He shouldn't have kissed me.

SCHWING!

MANDY BRINGS THE KNIFE DOWN ON TYRONE FAST.

EMMET
So long, tiger.

Tyrone lies still, dead in the dust.

Emmet grins. His teeth white behind the blood on his face.

EMMET
Guess we're done.

Mandy looks Emmet in the eye. A cold look. Hard to read.

EMMET
That's everyone, right?

MANDY
Don't know. Sure you got Red?

Emmet laughs nervously.

EMMET
Red's dead.

MANDY
And this?

Mandy reaches into her pocket and extracts Marlin's bloody, diamond-crusted BELLY-BUTTON RING.

EMMET
Thought you'd want a souvenir.

Mandy hands the ring to Emmet.

MANDY
No, really. You keep it.

Emmet rips the knife out of Tyrone. Admires the blade.

EMMET
Can I keep this, too?

MANDY
All yours.

Emmet stands. Flips the knife in his hand.

EMMET
Let's hit it. There's a motel about
an hour from here.
(MORE)

EMMET(cont'd)

You can call the police from there.
Got your story straight?

MANDY

Sure.

EMMET

Then we can rest.

MANDY

You look like you need it.

Emmet's stung, taken aback that Mandy would insult him now.

EMMET

Come on. Let's get out of here.

Emmet tucks the hunting knife in his belt and holds out a bloody hand to Mandy.

Mandy looks past Emmet. Her gaze hardens.

MANDY

Oops. Maybe I did leave one.

Emmet looks confused.

GARTH (O.S.)

Mandy, run!

Garth stands by the Lexus, makeshift bandage around his head, the old rifle aimed at Emmet. From Garth's point of view, Emmet towers over Mandy with a machete in his hand.

Mandy starts to back away from Emmet.

MANDY

(soft)

I left him alive for a reason.

Emmet looks at Mandy, utterly bewildered.

EMMET

What?

MANDY

Garth, help!

Emmet steps toward Mandy.

Garth FIRES the rifle. A bullet tears flesh off Emmet's shoulder, but does little more than surprise him. Emmet spins on Garth.

In full rage, Garth lumbers toward Emmet, chambering a new round. Emmet grins and charges with the machete.

GARTH
Kill my dog, you sick fuck?

Garth raises the gun to his shoulder, and:

CLICK! The gun doesn't fire.

Emmet moves toward Garth, relentless, MACHETE raised.

Garth deflects the blow of the machete with the barrel.

Emmet swings, and Garth hits Emmet on the back with the stock of the gun. Emmet sprawls forward in the dust.

EMMET
Aargh!

Garth clears the chamber and starts to reload the rifle.

EMMET
(quietly)
You're going to have to work faster
than that.

MANDY (O.S.)
NO!

Emmet and Garth both look up:

Mandy is still there, watching.

GARTH
Mandy, run!

Mandy takes off!

Emmet is back on his feet, and the MACHETE flashes.

HE CUTS INTO GARTH'S SIDE.

Slowly, Emmet pulls the MACHETE out.

Garth falls to his knees.

Emmet turns and runs after Mandy.

EXT. SWIMMING HOLE - SAME

Mandy sprints past the gallows-like structure.

EXT. GARTH'S CABIN - SAME

Emmet holds his shoulder, then looks at his bloodied hand.

EMMET

Argh!

He sets off in pursuit.

EXT. WINDMILL - SAME

Daylight weighs down hard upon her. A narrow path extends away from the windmill.

Mandy scans the site for a weapon. Seeing none, she races for the path.

There's a stillness out here, as if the landscape were already dead and Mandy the only living creature for miles.

The windmill GROANS miserably.

EXT. SWIMMING HOLE - SAME

Emmet races past the swimming hole.

EMMET

Mandy. What the fuck!?

EXT. SMALL PATH - SAME

Mandy flies through tall grass and sage brush.

The small path leads south, away from the house, which looms on the rise in the distance.

Mandy reaches a rutted, two-track road, and follows its gentle downward grade.

EXT. THE PIT - SAME

Mandy is running at top speed.

Several large brown mounds offer shelter, and Mandy dives between two, gulping hard for oxygen.

But it's not just the run - there's a smell that steals her breath, too. Mandy's face twists with disgust.

She's lying in a sludge, wretched and caked, almost mud, but far more hideous.

Mandy focuses on the large brown mounds and sees that they are flesh and hide, bloated, rotting, and decomposing in the fierce sun:

DEAD CATTLE.

Slowly, Mandy lifts her head above the cows.

Vultures lift their beaks from their gory labor in unison. Some dry their wings in the sun, unmoving.

Mandy's hand lands on something hard:

The horn of a cow SKULL.

Mandy SCREAMS, scrambles to her feet, when:

Emmet tackles her with a dive. They land hard in the dust at the edge of the cattle pit.

Emmet pins Mandy to the ground. His machete is beside them, but Emmet grabs her hands before she can reach it.

EMMET

Stop! Stop!

He chips her across the chin with his elbow, knocking her head back in the dust.

EMMET

Stop!

Mandy struggles for breath. Spits a spray of blood.

EMMET

Why are you doing this to us?

Her eyes are pure fury.

MANDY

What, Emmet? What am I doing to us?

EMMET

You set me up! You'll never get away with it!

MANDY

'Local track star. Never touched alcohol. Never experimented with drugs. Never touched a boy.'

EMMET

Bullshit.

MANDY

They always believe the virgin.
Everyone's going to feel so bad
that I had to live through this.

EMMET

You can't do this without me.

MANDY

I've got my alibi.

EMMET

I just killed your cowboy alibi.

MANDY

Hope you killed him better than you
killed Chloe.

Mandy tries to grab the hunting knife from Emmet's belt, and the tip of the knife digs into Emmet's thigh. He quickly regains control of Mandy's hand.

EMMET

I did it for you. When Mike flipped
the jeep and I killed him, that was
for you. Our whole plan? I did that
for you.

Mandy breaks a small grin. Her perfect teeth are bloody.

MANDY

You didn't do it for me. You killed
them because they were weak. 'To
rid our generation of the weak.'

EMMET

That was just talk. Fuck Nietzsche,
I did it for you, Mandy! I'll do
anything for you! I love you.

Mandy's demeanor softens. There are tears in Emmet's eyes.

MANDY

Emmet...

EMMET

(guard down)
You knew that!

MANDY

You're the same as all the rest.
Pathetic. Vulnerable. And weak!

Mandy knees Emmet hard in the groin. She's out from under him and on her feet in a flash.

She reaches for the machete but Emmet's already grabbed it.

So Mandy runs.

EXT. FENCE LINE - SAME

Mandy runs along the fence line that leads to the barn.

Emmet moves quickly in pursuit, despite his wounds.

They're racing in the same direction, bound to intersect before Mandy can reach the farmhouse.

EMMET

Hey!!

Mandy runs past a fallen FENCE POST, and picks it up without slowing down. It fits nicely in her hand: like a staff. She turns to face her adversary.

EMMET

Mandy!

He's yards away now, holding the machete with both hands, swinging it slightly as if to propel himself along.

MANDY

You want more?

EMMET

Leave with me or die here.

Mandy raises the FENCE POST like a baseball bat.

MANDY

That's more like it.

EMMET

What's it going to be?

She raises the fence post higher, ready to strike.

MANDY

I've already destroyed you.

CRACK!

Mandy swings the fence post hard against Emmet's shoulder.

MANDY

Now I'm going to kill you.

Emmet stares at her, dazed, unable to comprehend that she would hurt him. The anger surfaces quickly.

EMMET

Have to hit harder than that.

Lightning fast, he swings the MACHETE.

Mandy blocks the blow with the fence post.

She stumbles backward, but does not lose her balance.

EMMET

Fast! But not strong!

SCHWING! Emmet swings again.

Mandy deflects the blow, but the blade slides along the fence post and cuts her left hand badly.

MANDY

Argh!

EMMET

I was going to show you Paradise.

Emmet stands upright, gaining strength from a place of absolute hatred. He raises his gaze to meet hers.

EMMET

But now I'm going to show you Hell!

He raises the machete above his head, hands slick with blood.

Mandy swings the fence post hard against the machete.

The machete digs deep into the wood and slips out of Emmet's hands. MANDY'S FENCE POST IS NOW A LETHAL WEAPON WITH A HIDEOUS BLADE PROTRUDING FROM ONE END.

BAM!

EMMET

Argh!

BAM! She swings the weapon again and again, cutting Emmet's shoulder with his own blade.

MANDY

I may see you down there yet.

Emmet drops to his knees, no longer resisting, a broken boy staying upright only by an unnatural force of will.

Mandy raises the weapon again, the executioner stance:

MANDY

But I think I'll finish high school first.

SCHWING!

Mandy plants the blade deep into Emmet's neck, releasing the fence post once and for all.

Emmet collapses forward, propped up at an angle by the machete blade and the fence post.

Mandy stares at her awful handiwork for a moment... And then she runs.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Mandy opens the door of the Lexus.

In the ignition: the keys.

INT. CHLOE'S LEXUS - SAME

Mandy slams the door, floors the clutch, cranks the key.

MANDY

Come on. Come on!

The engine TURNS, FALTERS, and then

MANDY

Come on!

ROARS to life.

MANDY

Thank you.

Mandy throws the car in reverse and backs onto the drive.

She wipes the blood and sweat from her brow and peers through the window as she drives past the barn, past the farmhouse, and past the string of three workers cabins.

Mandy slows to drive around Jake's body.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SAME

The Lexus approaches the shortcut to Garth's cabin.

INT. CHLOE'S LEXUS - SAME

Mandy accelerates, but:

A BLOODY FIGURE bursts from the tall grass and hurls itself recklessly at the car.

Mandy's about to plow through him when she recognizes:

Garth.

Mandy slams on the brakes, and Garth collapses against the hood. She throws open her door and runs out to help him.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SAME

Mandy helps Garth up off the ground. She struggles to bring him to the passenger door.

GARTH

Thank god. You're okay.

Garth pulls himself into the car, and Mandy slams the door behind him.

INT. CHLOE'S LEXUS - SAME

Mandy shuts her door and puts the car in gear. They're off.

EXT. FENCE LINE - DAY

The bloody fence post. The machete protruding from the tip...

Emmet's body impaled on the weapon...

INT. CHLOE'S LEXUS - SAME

Mandy pulls recklessly onto the paved road.

Tears streak her face as she accelerates.

GARTH

You did it.

Mandy looks at Garth, who is peaceful, breathing softly, watching her as she drives.

GARTH

You saved us.

She shifts into fifth gear as...

EXT. THE HIGHWAY HOME - DAY

Mandy and Garth fly towards what small form of salvation they might find...