

TEASER

OVER BLACK.

The SOUND of a hand-turned MUSIC BOX. 'Plink-uh-plinking' out the first few notes of an almost familiar melody.

EXT. THE UNIVERSE

Limitless, cold and dark. Until... there is LIGHT. A silent EXPLOSION momentarily blinds frame before subsiding. Then --

An ALARM sounds. Like you hear in those old-time prison break movies, a KLAXON whirring to life.

'uh-rrrRRRRRRRR...!!!'

SOMETHING zips through frame. Looks like... a multitude of stars clustered together. A furious SWARM of lights.

We're way out past SATURN and The Something is already 50,000 miles past, slicing through the planet's icy rings and plummeting fast towards... EARTH.

EXT. UGANDAN VILLAGE - OUTDOOR CHURCH - DAY

Choking dust, scorching heat and flies.

An AFRICAN PREACHER (intense, sheened with sweat) sermonizes.

AFRICAN PREACHER

... do yeh feel it? Something is coming.

This is one of those fire and brimstone denominations. CONGREGANTS calling out, speaking in tongues etc.

AFRICAN PREACHER (CONT'D)

War. The Light and The Darkness are at it again. Forge fires glowing hot as they ready their regiments for battle. Blood and sorrow will soon be ordinary as sand. But we are not afraid. We know that a deliverance will come. A gift from God. A prophet. A hero to turn the tide and save Day from Night.

(opening his Bible)

This is promised. This is written.

As he reads from Revelation... *things begin to happen.*

A dog wakes, begins barking... chickens cluck and pace... a herd of goats stir... and the flies.

Swarming, clouding all around the Preacher's face, his eyes, his hair. He waves them away as best he can as he reads...

AFRICAN PREACHER (CONT'D)

"... and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war... He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of --" Guh-GAAAAACK!

He suddenly grabs his throat, doubling over. The congregants rise and cheer in religious ecstasy. The Preacher writhes on the ground, eyes bulging, clawing his throat. The crowd only yells louder. Then...

His eyes gleam blue as a guttural SOUND escapes him. Like a bullhorn from the bottom of a miles-deep well. Two words:

AFRICAN PREACHER (CONT'D)

BE. QUIET.

And just like that -- everything GOES QUIET.

The people, the dog, the goats, even the chickens heed his command. The ONLY SOUND is the one the Preacher hears inside himself. '*Whish-whish-whish..etc.*' Like a fetal heartbeat.

He realizes "*I am the Prophet. I have been chosen*".

The sound becomes LOUDER and arrhythmic and EVEN LOUDER as the Preacher stands with streaming, beatific tears to share the Good News. He opens his mouth to speak once again, and --

'*Kaaa-FLAPPPHHHHHHH!*'

He explodes into flies. Thick angry streams, gushing out his eyes, ears and nose by the thousands. The swarm consolidates and moves off in search of a more suitable host...

Meanwhile, where the Preacher was standing is now just a PILE OF INNARDS AND VISCERA. Glistening, hot and ropey.

Only his gore-spattered BIBLE remains. A breeze kicks up, fluttering back the pages.

Off the SCREAMS of the congregants and the now blank, empty, wordless pages of the ancient book, we...

ROLL CREDITS

ACT ONE

EXT. ANNVILLE, TEXAS - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Small town in West Texas. Sun-bleached prairie... modest farmsteads... some with LAWN SIGNS for Sheriff election. "Root" v. "Villanueva"...

A HIGH SCHOOL banner shows a wild-eyed Apache holding a tomahawk in one hand and a pony tail of human hair in the other. "Go Screamin' Savages!"...

A DIVE BAR... a SLAUGHTERHOUSE... an APPLEBEE'S, and finally:

EXT. ALL SAINTS' - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A little ol' country CHURCH with RESIDENCE off to the side.

A SIGN reads, "*All Saints' Congregational*".

INT. ALL SAINTS' RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON: TWO FEET levitating an inch off the floor. Levitating?! *Seriously?! Okay -- not quite.*

They're dangling off a BED and belong to a soft-focus FIGURE with bowed head. But he's not praying, he's hungover.

As the man's feet finally hit the floor we kick in Willie Nelson's "*Time of The Preacher*" and follow him preparing for his Sunday Services in MONTAGE.

I/E. VARIOUS ALL SAINTS' LOCATIONS - MONTAGE - DAY

- . Dry heaving over the toilet...
- . Taking a shower...
- . Service guides being printed out...
- . Taking a fistful of aspirin... chasing them down with Crunch Berries cereal milk...
- . Pulling on a clerical collar...
- . Tossing liquor bottles into trash... Some are empty, some still half-filled...
- . Fixing the SIGN out front. Someone rearranged the letters from "Open your hearts and souls to Jesus" to "Open your ass and holes to Jesus." The "U", "R" and "T" are on the ground.

- . Half-assed Swiffer-ing of the altar cross...
- . Flipping the air conditioning switch up-down-up. WTF?!...
- . Checking the antique A/C unit: belching smoke, busted...
- . Pulling the half-filled bottles back out of the trash...
- . And finally... opening a BINDER labeled "Sermons - John Custer, 1985-89".

The Preacher removes a sermon but doesn't notice a PAGE slip to the floor as we FADE TO...

INT. ALL SAINTS' - CHAPEL - DAY

PREACHER JESSE CUSTER (30's, darkly handsome). He stands in the pulpit delivering "his" sermon.

JESSE
 (reading, flat)
 "... I can't go on. This is the
 best I can do." But for Coach Tom
 Landry, that wasn't good enough...

As Jesse continues we REVERSE to the only half-full pews and get our first look at his PARISHIONERS.

Shushing restless children... secretly checking cellphones... and fanning themselves in the un-air-conditioned heat etc.

In one way or another, no one is listening to Jesse.

JESSE (CONT'D)
 (still reading)
 ... now some of you might be asking
 what football has to do with
 Matthew's Parable of the Fig Tree?
 The answer is humility. We can't
 always expect praise from good...

Jesse frowns, noticing he's missing a sermon page. Emily watches from her organ bench. Sensing him falter.

JESSE (CONT'D)
 From... um... uh...

EMILY WOODROW (20's, single mother, church organist and Jesse's loyal right hand) whispers him a prompt.

EMILY
 We can't always expect praise...

JESSE
(covering)
Yes... we can't always expect
praise. So... have humility.
Alright then.

Jesse forces a smile and nods at Emily. *I'm done. Play.*

Cue the ORGAN MUSIC as Jesse sits down, looks at his shoes.

**** This is our hero. Blurred by alcohol, going through the motions. And yet, for all his deficiencies, we sense that Jesse Custer - just in the way he carries himself - is a man of coiled, dormant abilities. Moral as well as physical. ****

EXT. ALL SAINTS' - LAWN - DAY

CLOSE ON: the hiss/flumph of butane FLAME coming to life.

Sunday barbecue. Ribs, beer, gossip, kids running.

A BOY (10) moves through the picnic and we FOLLOW him in a P.T. Anderson/ Scorsese style steadicam one-er.

He is looking for someone. And as he searches, we'll take in the picnic and the church CONGREGATION through his POV.

The Boy passes: SHERIFF ROOT (50's, redneck lawman) standing with PATSY VILLANUEVA (30'S, lesbian activist war hero).

Root stares at a DRAWING that she's just handed him.

SHERIFF ROOT
(disgusted)
This is gonna end in tears.

PATSY VILLANUEVA
Board voted, Hugo. Announcing it
tomorrow night at the meeting.

SHERIFF ROOT
Good for them. The Board can man
the barricades and water cannons.

MILES PERSON (20's, earnest, baby-faced Mayor) comes up.

MILES
This the new mascot..?
(looks at drawing)
Aww. It's got a cute little tail!

SHERIFF ROOT
May be "cute" to some, Mr. Mayor.
To others it's another step into
the multi-culture-azational abyss.

PATSY VILLANUEVA
World's changing. Those "others"
might want to get on the right side
of history.

SHERIFF ROOT
Tears is the prediction. Tears.

Nearby, Emily's with HER KIDS (4, 6, 8). Her BOYS fight over
the iPad. Her GIRL cries for reasons she's investigating.

EMILY
... use your words. Is it your
tummy or your finger?

Miles comes over and scoops up the kid. To the rescue.

MILES
Hey, what's wrong mister man?

EMILY
It's a girl, Miles, and I wouldn't
pick her up.
(to Boys, re. iPad)
Hey take turns and work it out!

MILES
Aw, I don't mind. I love kids.
(to the Girl)
So, little lady, what seems to be
the troub -- ?

The Girl tips her head and barfs on his shoes.

Miles fights a gag as Emily takes her back without apology.

EMILY
Okay. So the tummy...

The Boy keeps moving, past...

VYLA QUINCANNON (50's, businesswoman) and her son, J.J (an
attorney of questionable abilities). They're looking at the
LAND that runs behind the Chapel. Vyla surveys like Rommel.

VYLA QUINCANNON
Consumables there... runoff by the
riverbed... extermination decks
sweeping from there to there.
(MORE)

VYLA QUINCANNON (CONT'D)
(notices)
You're not writing this down.

J.J. QUINCANNON
Yeah, I... don't have a pen.

F'ing idiot. Vyla checks herself. No need to make a scene.

VYLA QUINCANNON
You're a lawyer now, J.J. You need to carry pens. Why didn't you say something?

J.J. QUINCANNON
(sheepish)
I didn't want you to get mad at me.

VYLA QUINCANNON
Well, that didn't work out, did it?

CRA-ACK! of a rifle shot.

Everyone turns to see DONNIE SCHENCK (30's, trailer-trash thug) holding a Civil War era musket. He's excitedly pointing the gun up into a tree --

DONNIE SCHENCK
See that?!! I just Abe Lincoln-ed that squirrel! POP to the back of it's head! Haha!

Emily and a FEW OTHERS go over and yell at him. As the crowd parts, our one-er ends as the Boy finally finds:

Jesse.

He stands beneath an oak tree with TED RYERSON (30's, the most boring man in Texas). Jesse's wincing hangover expression tells us that Ted's been in his ear awhile now.

TED RYERSON
... 6 o'clock's suppertime and she knows that. She *knows*. I'm sitting down to my supper and my Sportscenter, when the phone rings and here we go again: bring on the criticism.

The Boy (okay, his name is CHRIS) stands and waits.

JESSE
Couldn't you tell your mother to call back after you've eaten? Again, just open your heart and be honest with her?

Ted nods as if listening. But he isn't really--

TED RYERSON

I mean what does she care what kind
of sandwich cheese I use?! It's up
to me what I like, you know?

Jesse rolls his eyes over at Chris, making fun.

JESSE

I hate to cut this short, but I
need to speak to Christopher here.

Ted nods, *Call you later.*

Chris steps up, offers him the beer. *Thanks.* Jesse accepts,
pulls up a folding chair and cracks it open.

JESSE (CONT'D)

What's up?

Chris freezes up a bit.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You don't speak, I can't listen.
(pushing)
Come on, Chris. What is it?

CHRIS

I want... you to hurt my dad.

Jesse begins to smile but stops -- the kid isn't joking.

JESSE

It's a sin just to ask me that.

CHRIS

But he sins too. He sins a lot.

JESSE'S POV: Donnie Schenck drunkenly plopping down onto a
blanket and throwing his arm around BETSY, Chris' mom.

JESSE

Does he hurt you?

CHRIS

N-not usually. Not me.

It looks like Donnie's whispering sweet nothings into his
wife's ear. But Jesse sees the white where he's squeezing
her arm tight.

Jesse would love nothing more than to get up and settle the
problem right there. But he can't. Or he won't.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
I know it's wrong, Preacher. But
if you do one sin to stop a bunch
of sins? Shouldn't that be okay?
(carefully)
And people said before you came
back here? Before you were a
preacher? You... did things.

JESSE
Look at me.

But Chris can't bring himself to look.

JESSE (CONT'D)
Kid, you come asking for something
like this, you damn well look.

He obeys.

JESSE (CONT'D)
It never stops at one sin.
Violence just makes more violence.
Can I make that any more fucking
clear to you?

Chris nods, scared shitless and in pain. In his black anger,
Jesse must've grabbed the kid's arm without noticing. Whoa.

JESSE (CONT'D)
(he lets go, softening)
Doesn't mean I can't you know,
still help. You, and the person
he's hurting.

CHRIS
How? What will you do?

JESSE
I'll do my thing. We'll figure it
out. Look, uh...
(he finds it)
"A man's heart plans his way, but
the Lord directs his steps."

Jesse finishes his beer. Chris watches.

CHRIS
Yeah, right.
("Fuck you")
Pray for me.

Chris goes.

Off Jesse: useless, empty beer in hand. As we, CUT TO --

EXT. UGANDAN VILLAGE - OUTDOOR CHURCH - DAY

Deserted now.

A LAND ROVER pulls up and two unsmiling MEN get out. For now we'll call them SMALL MAN and TALL MAN.

They're both in Africa-appropriate bush khaki. Small Man is carrying a worn LEATHER SATCHEL. A GUIDE points the way.

****For now, these two look as serious as a heart attack. The quintessential secret agents of mysterious affiliation. Over time we'll reveal them for what they really are: bumbling middle management who are in way over their heads.****

They move through the abandoned CHURCH like detectives at a crime scene. Overhead, something slides off a BAOBAB TREE and... plops down onto the Tall Man's shoulder:

It's the African Preacher's FACE.

Unphased, they share a look. *It was here.*

Off these two mystery men, we CUT TO --

INT. ALL SAINTS' - CHAPEL - DUSK

Empty.

Save Jesse sitting in the front, drunk.

JESSE

... I know, I know. I suck at this.

Jesse pulls out a pack of cigarettes hidden beneath the pew. We sense this conversation is a nightly ritual for him.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You gotta admit though. It's a tricky product you got me selling down here, Boss. Tough to get your foot in the door.

(then)

You heard what that kid said, right? People aren't buying it. No one's listening.

(then)

So maybe YOU suck too.

(then)

Thing is, it'd all just fly off the shelves with just a little bit of help from you.

(MORE)

JESSE (CONT'D)
Even the tiniest of- of
demonstrations on Your part would
make all the difference.

(then)
But you're the bigshot CEO. You're
too busy. Doing what? God only
knows.

Jesse stands, walks unsteadily towards the ALTAR CROSS.

JESSE (CONT'D)
(voice rising)
It's supposed to be hard. I get
that. I get the more-will-be
revealed stuff too. But it's not
like I'm asking you to meet me
halfway down here. I'm asking you
to meet me ANYWHERE AT ALL!
(then)
I'm SORRY, okay?! How many more
times do I have to say it,
asshole?! Sorry sorry sorry sorry!
(quiet, sincere)
... I'm sorry.

Jesse sags his head. He's all out of words. So we...

BACK AWAY and slowly CRANE UP...

RISING higher and higher over Jesse down below...

THROUGH the ceiling... and...

EXT. ALL SAINTS' - CHAPEL - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

OUT the roof...

And INTO the OAK TREE...

Where we come to a STOP and peer past the leaves at the
church steeple now well below us.

We RACK FOCUS to the FG where:

Dozens of BLACK SPARROWS keep vigil. They flit and flutter
restlessly, ominously amongst the branches, as we...

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

OVER BLACK:

Sounds of a STRUGGLE. GRUNTS and SHOUTS and THINGS FALLING.

UP ON:

A BOILING MASS OF ANGRY PEOPLE.

Clawing, grabbing, pulling, screaming at one another. More awkward scrum than fist fight. Some people trying to make peace, others war, but everyone's faces contorted in effort.

We've slowed-down our film speed so the effect is even more disturbing. "Hell" by Hieronymous Bosch.

We WIDEN to reveal we're not actually in Hell, we're at...

INT. ANNVILLE CITY HALL - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

... a school board meeting gone horribly wrong.

As we PUSH THROUGH the crowd we glimpse Donnie Quincannon... a NATIVE AMERICAN GUY... Patsy... Root... Miles... a guy in a PRAIRIE DOG costume. *WTF is the problem here?!*

TWO EASEL-MOUNTED POSTERS on a small stage tell the story:

ONE is of the high school's un-PC "Screamin' Savages" mascot that we glimpsed in the Act One opening. Beneath the wild-eyed Injun is written, "*Discontinued*".

The OTHER POSTER shows a cartoon figure. Like an anime version of Alvin & The Chipmunks -- only cuter. This caption reads: "*Introducing Annville High's Pedro the Prairie Dog!*"

Jesse's off to one side trying to make peace, but *no one's listening to him*.

Root shoves Patsy who accidentally PUNCHES Miles in the face. He WAILS IN (SUPER SLO-MO) PAIN.

MILES

(Super slo-mo voice)

Myyyyyyyy eyyyyyyeeeeee!!!!

Someone goes to the wall and RIPS the new poster off, tearing it to shreds. Out of breath, Jesse stands back.

Off Jesse: taking in all this stupidity. Powerless and disgusted.

INT. JESSE'S PICK UP TRUCK - PARKED - NIGHT

Outside CITY HALL, Jesse's paint-worn 1970 Chevy C10.

A FIFTH OF WHISKEY on the front seat. Jesse reaches in the window, unscrews and takes a pull. Bolstered, he climbs in. *Wait, where's the whiskey cap?* Before he can find it...

Sheriff Root's at his window. Shaking his head --

SHERIFF ROOT

Can't do it. You cannot just
expunge a beloved cultural figure
like that and expect it to not go
over like shit on cold biscuit.

JESSE

(hiding his bottle)
Well, maybe it's not the worst
thing that could happen?

SHERIFF ROOT

Considering I read the Japanese
just let a guy marry his own
pillow, I'm inclined to agree:
much worse is on its way.

JESSE

Pillow. Yeah. Ominous.

Jesse's had enough batshit crazy for one night. He wants to take his whiskey and go home.

But Root hovers. Something *uncomfortable's* on his mind.

SHERIFF ROOT

So Eugene? Left you some messages?

Something about "Eugene" makes Jesse uncomfortable too.

JESSE

No, yeah. I owe him a call. Yeah.

Root may be a fool but he's not stupid. He knows a brush off when he hears one. Time to cut the crap here --

SHERIFF ROOT

Look, I don't give a shit either
way. But he's been askin' for you
for weeks now. So I'm wonderin' if
you'd find a time to swing by?

JESSE

Tomorrow night?

Root touches his hat, *Much obliged*. He moves to go when Jesse spots:

Donnie & Co. tackling the mascot. One guy holds him down as Donnie and the others, laughing their asses off, pretend to fuck him. Prairie-doggie-style.

DONNIE SCHENCK
Tell me when you're close, Prairie
dog! We can cum together!!

This bit of tom-foolery reminds Jesse... he promised Chris he'd "do his thing" re. Donnie.

JESSE (CONT'D)
Sheriff? Can't say how, but I
heard Donnie Schenck might be
layin' hands on his wife. Figured
you might want to talk to her.

SHERIFF ROOT
(official)
I'll listen to a formal complaint
should the victim come forward.

JESSE
Coming forward's unlikely ain't it?
She's probably scared to death.

SHERIFF ROOT
I'll listen to a formal complaint.

Jesse understands now. And bristles a bit.

JESSE
'Course. Don't want to lose the
wife-beating, squirrel-murdering,
idiot redneck vote. Imagine that's
a key demographic for you.

Root leans in the window.

SHERIFF ROOT
Heard rumors 'bout what you been up
to out there in the world. Runnin'
with a rough crowd? Town gossip
I'm sure. Still, when I heard you
were comin' home to Annville..?
But you been quiet. Some say to a
fault, but I say *let it continue*.
(holding whiskey cap)
Yours, I believe.

Root tosses him the cap and goes. Jesse gears up his truck.
That was Jesse "doing his thing"? Yeah, it kinda sucked ass.

As he DRIVES FROM FRAME, we TILT UP... into the NIGHT SKY...

INT. CORPORATE JET - CABIN - NIGHT

Fancy. Gulfstream V or somesuch.

CASSIDY (30's, Irish rogue) and 4 or 5 HEDGE FUND TYPES.

The Hedge Funders are dressed in \$4000 suits while Cassidy's in a "Caesar's Palace" blackjack dealer uniform.

It's a strange pairing, yet everyone seems to be getting along famously as the bong hits, cocaine and champagne flow.

CASSIDY

(holding forth)

Okay. So. Tijuana. Any sod-eyed muppet in backpack and birkenstocks goes on about the donkey show. Tourists. No, the place *I'm* takin' you gentlemen is downright naughty.

HEDGE FUND GUY 2

Yeah baby! We know what you're talking about!

CASSIDY

No. No you don't, mate. To know what I'm talkin' about, you'd have to 'ad the type of night that lands you in the hospital tryin' to find the Spanish word for "hamster".

He's just met these guys a few hours ago but already he's their most wild-ass, bestest "bro". That's Cassidy. He has that effect on people. He stands --

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

Where's yer crapper? The white devil makes my arse leak like a broken faucet. Gotta make a manky.

The guys laugh and point Cassidy towards the restroom.

INT. CORPORATE JET - BATHROOM - DAY

Cassidy rises, but man he left a stink. He finds a DEODORANT CAN of "Easter Lilac" under the sink. Wait -- what's that tucked behind the toilet paper? He reaches, pulls out...

A BIBLE.

Worn from hundreds of readings and filled with notes in the

margins. Whoever's book this is? They're feckin' believers.
LAUGHTER from the cabin outside.

A sly, hooded, *dangerous* look as Cassidy sprays freshener.

INT. CORPORATE JET - CABIN - NIGHT

Cassidy rejoins the party. Putting on a big smile.

CASSIDY
Steer clear a the head a day or
three, gents. I just lost an
argument with some kobe sliders.
(then)
Now where's the giggle gun?
Startin' to feel my toes again.

Someone hands him a bong. Cassidy grabs a LIGHTER, but can't
help but notice out the CABIN WINDOW that the plane is
heading East towards THE BREAK OF DAWN. Offhandedly --

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
Thought T.J. was south of Vegas?

Tension. The cabin quiets as Cassidy fires up the bong.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
What do I know about directions?
I'm just another...

As he inhales, Cassidy spies a HEDGE FUNDER slowly edging his
hand towards... an unseen object.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
(exhaling)
... shit-faced Irishman.

Cassidy whips out the can of Easter Lilac and sprays it past
the lighter... SHOOTING FLAME at the NEAREST HEDGE FUNDER.

*Note: this guy'll be screaming and rolling around on fire
throughout the following fight sequence.*

It is ON. Close quarters, messy, hand-to-hand FIGHTING.

The Hedge Funder who was reaching, pulls out... a CROSSBOW!

He fires. The bolt WHIZZES past Cassidy and PINS the FLAMING
DUDE to another dude, setting him on fire as well.

The others pull out spears and wooden blades. Clearly,
trained soldiers. Another BOLT whizzes by...

Cassidy isn't trained but he's strong and fast and *creative*.

He takes them on using a handy ASSORTMENT OF LUXURY ITEMS. A Waterford ashtray... a cheese knife... a jeroboam of Pouilly Fuisse etc. Cassidy kills them all. Except...

... the PILOT! He emerges from the COCKPIT leveling a gun. Cassidy throws what's closest....

... the top of a broken champagne bottle! It sinks deep into his chest. Cassidy takes him by the collar.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)

So. How'd you wankers find me?

PILOT

(triumphant)

GO TO HELL, ABOMINATION!!!!!!

He dumps a plastic WATER BOTTLE over Cassidy's head. *Glug-glug... glug*. Cassidy stares, sighs.

CASSIDY

When will you eejits ever learn?

Cassidy bares his teeth and clamps down hard on the Pilot's jugular. Still biting, he frenzies his head back and forth like a terrier worrying a tennis ball. *RRRrrrRRRrrr...*

Cassidy's a vampire. Good to know.

INT. CORPORATE JET - COCKPIT - DAWN

Cassidy -- now covered in blood -- checks the COCKPIT.

The CO-PILOT's dead from the ARROW that pierced the wall... the back of his skull... and now peeks out between his teeth.

Cassidy sniffs. *Brilliant. Now what?*

INT. CORPORATE JET - CABIN - DAWN

Cassidy tilts the dead pilot so his blood flows out of the champagne bottle in his chest and into the WATER BOTTLE.

He roots around the dead pilot and finds... a pair of SUNGLASSES. Seriously? Oh, yeah. These are Prada.

Finally, he opens the FUSELAGE DOOR. *Jump?! From 30,000 feet up?! Cassidy isn't thrilled by the prospect either.*

He's about to take the plunge when he spies a fancy UMBRELLA in a stand by the door. *Hmm. This should help.*

Umbrella in one hand and a big bottle of blood in the other,
Cassidy JUMPS...

CASSIDY
Bloody hell.

... OUT INTO THE SKY.

INT. APPLEBEE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

CLOSE ON: a ketchup-splattered plate of SCRAMBLED EGGS.

It's the weekly meeting of the All Saints' Finance Committee.

Jesse sits with Emily. He's struggling to slow-drink his
lone Bloody Mary. She's in her waitress uniform, engrossed
Her kids, as usual, are glued to the family iPad.

Ted's in the next booth, leaning over Jesse's shoulder.

TED RYERSON
... it's the same old story.
Always my fault. Like I'm the one
making her wear a colostomy bag!

EMILY
(go away)
Trying to eat here. Thank you.

JESSE
(for the 46th time)
Just be honest with her, Ted. Open
your heart and tell her everything
you're telling me.

TED RYERSON
(nods, not listening)
Definitely. Call you later.

EMILY
(dubious, re. brochure)
A Starbucks in the lobby? Since
when did people require
Frappuccinos to come to church?

JESSE
How were our collection numbers?

EMILY
Good, good. I mean, you know.
'Bout the same as last week.
(mumbles)
Maybe a little less.

Miles strides up with a black eye, smiling.

MILES

I should order a steak, right? Put
it on my face? Heheh. Of course
I'm joking.

Miles clearly wants Emily to notice his heroic eye. She just
grunts, not looking up.

MILES (CONT'D)

That was some school board meeting,
huh? Next time I'm gonna bring my
brass knuckles. I'm joking again.
I don't have any. So you guys-

EMILY

We're working, Miles.

MILES

Ok. Cool. Don't let me interrupt.
If you need me, I'll be over there
drinking egg yolks like Rocky!
Ever see that? Great movie...

He trails off and moves on.

JESSE

Why are you like that to him?

EMILY

Like what to who?

JESSE

Three years since Kevin passed. No
shame in making yourself available.

EMILY

(looking up)

I'm completely available. Not
completely like a, you know. But
yeah. I'm available.

Emily's fluster tells us she has a thing for Jesse. But for
now he misses the hint. He nods. *Good.*

ASSISTANT MANAGER

(stressed)

So... just seated two eight tops.

EMILY

(takes it out on him)

Got eyes, Gary. Finishing up.

The Assistant Manager goes. Emily turns to Jesse.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Walter called in sick. Again.

She gives him an expectant, what-are-you-gonna-do-about-it? look. Jesse sighs. He hates that look.

JESSE
Maybe I should go check on him?

EMILY
Maybe you should.

Off Jesse: in no hurry as he finishes his breakfast.

EXT. APPLEBEE'S - PARKING LOT - DAY

Jesse goes to his truck.

An early-model ROLLS ROYCE is parked nearby. Its rear window rolls down and Vyla pokes her head out, happy to see him.

VYLA QUINCANNON
The California Cajun sausage wrap?
Is that as good as I'm hearing?

JESSE
Couldn't say. I had eggs.

Jesse's not a huge fan of Vyla. He moves to go.

VYLA QUINCANNON
Preacher, could I talk to you a
moment? Please? While I have you?

Off Jesse: sigh. With Vyla "please" means "fucking do it".

INT. ROLLS ROYCE - APPLEBEE'S PARKING LOT - DAY

Vyla Quincannon and Jesse in the roomy backseat.

VYLA QUINCANNON
(tear streaked, in pain)
... I know I shouldn't. I *know* I'll
feel bad if I go in there again.
But I go anyway. They try to run,
they aren't stupid. But where they
gonna go? All they can do is
scream. I need your help. For me
it's like an addiction, or love
or... I mean what do you call this?

Jesse makes no move to comfort. After what he's just heard, he's doing his best not to slap her.

JESSE
It may not have a name.

VYLA QUINCANNON
You never liked anything that was
bad for you, Preacher? Or anyone?

It's a good question. One Jesse doesn't answer. She laughs.

VYLA QUINCANNON (CONT'D)
Oh, I know. I've seen the movies.
I'm the villain. I'm the one you
root against.

JESSE
Sometimes the villain has a change
of heart. Gives up her evil ways.

VYLA QUINCANNON
Think we like different movies.

J.J. climbs into the front seat with the takeout order.

VYLA QUINCANNON (CONT'D)
(back to business)
I need acreage for my new plant.
So again, I'm asking for your land.

JESSE
And I'm saying "no" again.

VYLA QUINCANNON
You're halfway to losing it anyway.
J.J. ran the numbers.

Vyla lowers the car divider. To J.J. --

VYLA QUINCANNON (CONT'D)
Sweetheart? The prospectus for
Preacher Custer's church? Give me
the folder please.

J.J. turns back to her, thrown.

J.J. QUINCANNON
The folder's... at the office.
(off her furious stare)
... I thought we were just going to
Applebee's?

VYLA QUINCANNON
(to Jesse, never mind)
You know what it says.

Vyla holds on to J.J.'s tie as she closes the divider on it, cinching her son into an awkward, half-kneeling position. J.J. doesn't resist. He hangs patiently without complaint.

VYLA QUINCANNON (CONT'D)
I've been doing this a long time
and in the end people always seem
to give me what I want.

JESSE
My father never did.

VYLA QUINCANNON
Your daddy was... something else.
But he's gone 25 years and the town
hasn't seen anyone like him since.
(a dig)
Not even close.
(we're done)
Anyway. Don't want my breakfast
getting cold.

JESSE
(before he goes)
You need to stop hurting those
animals, Vyla. It's not your job.

VYLA QUINCANNON
(sincerely conflicted)
I know. You're right. But I
just... don't want to.

JESSE
Then you are the villain.

VYLA QUINCANNON
Well, lucky for me, there's not a
hero in sight.

Off Jesse as we, CUT TO --

EXT. RUSSIA - CREEPY HOUSE - DAY

Strange, gingerbread architecture out of Grimm's Fairytales.
Both impressive and spooky. What *is* this place?

POLICE and OTHER FIRST RESPONDERS are parked out front. A
COP questions a FREAKED OUT WITNESS dressed all in black.

FREAKED OUT WITNESS
(Russian, subtitled)
...
(MORE)

FREAKED OUT WITNESS (CONT'D)
one minute The Magister was leading
us in Mass and next thing His
Holiness... <gestures explosion>.

"His Holiness" leading "Mass"? Seriously what is this place?

An UNMARKED CAR pulls in, lights flashing.

Small Man and Tall Man step out wearing Siberian hats and
Cyrillic-lettered police bibs. Small Man has his satchel.

FREAKED OUT WITNESS (CONT'D)
Wasps. Hundreds of them
everywhere. Out The Magister's
nose... his eyes... his mouth....

As the Witness continues to unravel, no one stops Small Man
and Tall Man striding up the steps to the heavy FRONT DOORS.

FREAKED OUT WITNESS (CONT'D)
Everywhere! They were EVERYWHERE!

The doors shut heavily behind them revealing the ornate GOAT
HEAD PENTAGRAM emblem of the Satanic Church as we, CUT TO:

EXT. MODEST HOME - STREET - DAY

A LAWN GNOME. Smiling, half hidden in the unmowed lawn.

A NEW ANGLE SHOWS: Jesse knocking on the FRONT DOOR.

A MOAN from within. The door's open. Jesse goes in...

INT. MODEST HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

... and discovers WALTER (60's, African-American) lying drunk
and pantless on the couch. A mostly empty BOTTLE nearby.

WALTER
(stirs, slurring)
Jeshee... got a shurprise for you.

JESSE
Walter. Let's find you some pants.

INT. MODEST HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Jesse goes to Walter's dresser, rummages out some pants. He
turns to go, but suddenly freezes...

There's a HANDGUN lying on the bed.

He notes the SHOWER RUNNING through the BATHROOM DOOR. A WOMAN'S VOICE can be heard, singing --

WOMAN (O.S.)
*"... flew your learjet up to Nova
Scotia to see the total eclipse of
the sun..."*

Jesse listens, face etched with feeling. He knows this voice. *She's back.*

After a moment, he grabs Walter's pants and exits.

INT. MODEST HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Walter's passed out on the floor again. Jesse covers the old man's legs with his pants... then finishes off his bottle.

JESSE
(wiping his mouth)
You were right, Walter. I'm
surprised.

He walks out and we, CUT TO...

INT. MODEST HOME - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER - DAY

A NAKED WOMAN (African-American, 30's) with only a gun in her hand and a towel on her head, stands at the WINDOW. She's watching Jesse get in his truck.

As he drives off...

NAKED WOMAN
(quiet)
*"I had some dreams, they were
clouds in my coffee, clouds in my
coffee..."*

This is TULIP. More from her soon. Much more and very soon.

We leave her staring out the window, as we...

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. SINGLE LANE HIGHWAY - DUSK

Kansas. Corn country. Deserted.

A CHYRON reads: "Not That Long Ago".

Then -- a badass GRAN TORINO appears on the horizon. It's speeding towards us, swerving wildly.

INT. GRAN TORINO - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

Carly Simon's "You're So Vain" blares on the RADIO as...

A battle rages. Tulip is driving. One hand on the wheel and the other on a GUN trying to shoot the CARTEL GANGSTER.

Not the DEAD ONE slumped over her lap and whose brains are splattered all over the front window. The OTHER GANGSTER. The one in the backseat with a GARROTE at her neck.

She can't seem to get a good angle at this asshole. Blam! Blam! Click... fuck. She's out of bullets.

And the Gangster's wire at her throat is digging deeper...

CARTEL GANGSTER
I'll take this back now...

He keeps pulling with one hand while she reaches in her coat pocket and removes...

Looks like... a MAP of some kind. Can't see it clearly.

Tulip pulls out a Leatherman KNIFE, cluh-clicks it open and cuts the garrotte wire free...

She lets go of the wheel and piles into the BACKSEAT to take on her attacker. Unfortunately this allows...

... the CORPSE to slide into the foot well and slump face-down onto the accelerator. Revving the engine FASTER...

The G.T. veers off the road and into a CORN FIELD as...

Tulip and the Gangster struggle in desperate combat...

Tulip's a hellified fighter. Spitting... head butts... repeated knees to his groin etc...

But this guy must outweigh her by 100 lbs... and he's managed to turn her knife around and lay himself on top of her...

CARTEL GANGSTER (CONT'D)
(lascivious)
Such a pretty lady...

Outside, the corn rows beat at the speeding, driverless car with a frenzied 'thump-thump-thump' as...

CARTEL GANGSTER (CONT'D)
This is what happens to pretty
ladies who steal from us...

The tip of Tulip's knife inches towards her own chest as the Gangster leans in closer and closer... close enough for a kiss.

Or a bite.

Tulip suddenly snatches hold of his nose in her teeth.

CARTEL GANGSTER (CONT'D)
Ah. Ahh! AHHH!

Her eyes wild, squeezing harder and harder. Until...

Tulip bites his nose clean off his face.

CARTEL GANGSTER (CONT'D)
 AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!

The Gangster drops the knife, writhing in agony.

Tulip climbs in front, pulls the corpse off the accelerator, slows and brings the car to a stop in a CLEARING.

The Gangster staggers out of the car on hands and knees as Tulip grimly checks herself in the mirror.

TULIP
And that is what happens to guys
who drool on me.

OUTSIDE HER DOOR: the Gangster's nose-hole jets blood as he kneels and fumbles in his pockets for something...

CARTEL GANGSTER
(noseless wheeze)
Thtupid, crathy bitch...

... a GUN!

Satisfied with her appearance, Tulip opens her door...

EXT. CAR - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

... into his already ruined face.

CARTEL GANGSTER

AHHH!

Tulip gets out, kicks the gun free.

She grabs a COB OF CORN off the ground, steps on the Gangster's nuts. As he SCREAMS Tulip SHOVES the CORN into his mouth and HAMMERS it down with her fist, killing him.

She retrieves the map and returns it to her pocket. She fires up a post-coital cigarette. Then...

BOYS' VOICES (O.S.)

(in chorus)

AWE-some!

Tulip wheels round to discover she's ended up before a...

EXT. LITTLE FARM HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

Chipped paint and junk-strewn. Dust bowl poverty.

THREE KIDS -- a GIRL (10, smart, tough, capable), and her TWIN BROTHERS (7, dumbasses holding toy soldiers) staring.

TULIP

(flashing a smile)

Hey guys!

(explains, re. corpse)

Yeah, he was a *really* bad man.

(moving on)

Your parents around?

GIRL

Our mom's dead and our dad's at work. But I'm ten. I'm in charge.

TULIP

Hm. I bet you are.

'Beep-eep'. Tulip looks down at the dead cartel man. Picks up the cellphone by his hand... a G.P.S. screen blinking.

More dooshbags coming. Any minute now.

GIRL

You aren't allowed to just drive around wreckin' property and killing people you know.

Tulip looks at her car. Steam pours out from under the hood.

GIRL (CONT'D)
You're in like, really big trouble.

TULIP
(big grin, having a blast)
Yeah, no, I know!

Tulip clocks the STORM CELLAR in the side yard... signs of a BOOZE STILL by the garage... the Brothers' die cast SOLDIERS and... a trash bag overflowing with empty peach CANS.

TULIP (CONT'D)
Who likes arts and crafts?

Off Tulip.

INT. LITTLE FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A few moments later. Tulip and the kids are gathered around the TABLE. They're building some kind of...

TUBE-like mechanism out of peach cans and duct tape. A jug of CLEAR LIQUID and a big pile of TOY SOLDIERS are at hand.

TULIP
We want the joints extra tight.
Otherwise it won't compress enough.

The two Boys are eagerly pitching in on the project but the Girl is still wary of Tulip. Taking her measure.

GIRL
So more bad guys are coming?

TULIP
Um-hm.

GIRL
Coming to kill you?

TULIP
Well, they're coming to *try*.

Tulip takes a small sip from the jug. Strong.

TULIP (CONT'D)
Hee. Your daddy makes some
heckified corn shine.

She pours the high octane hooch into a perforation in the tube's bottom-most can.

GIRL
Don't you wanna call the police?

TULIP
Afraid the police won't be much
help here.

ONE BROTHER
What about your boyfriend or
someone? Get him to come help?

GIRL
A girl doesn't always need some
stupid guy helping her.

TULIP
S'right. A woman needs to know how
to be strong and stand on her own.
(re. the toy soldiers)
Thanks for this, guys.

Now, Tulip scoops handfuls of the metal die-cast soldiers
into the tube's top-most can.

TULIP (CONT'D)
Of course, boy or girl, if you're
lucky enough to fall in love, you
have to be even *stronger*. Fight
like a lion to keep it alive.
(gaze hardening)
So that on the day your love is
selfish enough or weak enough or
frickin' stupid enough to run away?
You have the strength to track him
down and eat him alive.

Uh, Tulip said too much here. The kids share uneasy looks.

She snaps out of it and growls playfully at them. *Roarrrr!*

Even The Girl laughs.

Okay, Tulip may be a vicious killer with anger and boyfriend
issues, but she's still the coolest babysitter ever.

She sets the tube on her shoulder.

TULIP (CONT'D)
Anyway, this is how you make a
bazooka.

(Note: *yes, a homemade bazooka. It's real. See You Tube.*)

TULIP (CONT'D)
I'd tell you not to try this at
home, but...

OUTSIDE: a 'thup-thup-thup' SOUND of a HELICOPTER is heard.
Distant but approaching.

Off Tulip setting the bazooka down. Here we go.

EXT. LITTLE FARM HOUSE - YARD - STORM CELLAR - NIGHT

The 'whup-whup-whup' sound BUILDS as the kids huddle in the
cellar looking up at Tulip framed in the TRAP DOOR above.

TULIP
It's about to get pretty "R" rated
out here, so... just like a
tornado, okay? Don't come out
until the noises stop.

As the trap door SLAMS SHUT into BLACKNESS, we quickly cycle
through some COMBAT SOUNDS:

The CHOPPER BLADES deafening loud...

Heavy MACHINE GUN FIRE...

Thunk of BAZOOKA...

MEN SCREAMING... a CRASH... an EXPLOSION...

Then, we're UP ON:

EXT. LITTLE FARM HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

A crashed, still burning BLACKHAWK HELICOPTER.

CHARRED CORPSES of the CARTEL HELICOPTER PILOTS. Their faces
and bodies riddled with toy soldiers.

The Brothers peer through the flames of the wreckage.

BROTHERS
(in unison)
AWE-some!

Meanwhile, Tulip drags the first corpse out of her GT and
dumps it alongside the other.

TULIP
Sorry about all the...

Dead bodies, flaming helicopter and crop damage.

TULIP (CONT'D)
But fun, right?!

The Girl smiles. A complete convert now. *SO fun.*

GIRL
What's your name?

TULIP
Romalda Millicent O'Hare.

Tulip climbs in the front seat, clutching the MAP (or whatever it is) that started this mess in the first place.

TULIP (CONT'D)
... but my friends call me Tulip.

As her engine REVVVS in a mighty growl, we CUT TO --

JESSE. In a thousand-mile stare.

WIDEN TO SHOW:

INT. JESSE'S PICK UP TRUCK - DAY

We're back in PRESENT DAY Annville.

Jesse's waiting to make a left turn into the THE EL DORADO LOUNGE, the local gin joint. He stares off, remembering.

... Tulip. He's been trying to forget. About her and all the other shit that happened out there. Well, no better forgetter-er than a drink or nine.

He starts to turn when -- 'HONNNK'. A TRUCK hurtles past.

He checks his rear view. "Quincannon Beef" on the truck's rear panel. His expression turns. Oh shit. He still hasn't done his "right thing" for Chris. *Sigh.*

Jesse pulls a U-Turn and follows the truck as we FADE TO...

TURKEY BUZZARDS in the SKY, circling. TILT DOWN to a...

EXT. TRAILER HOME - DAY

In the FG a CLOTHESLINE. "Born To Run" t-shirt hangs, dancing in the scorching heat. BEYOND there's a...

PASTURE. Where Cassidy lies in a crater of his own making.

A broken, twisted, goopy stew. It looks like he was poured into the ground. And yet amazingly he's still alive.

Coming to under the shade of his torn umbrella he looks for his... BOTTLE OF BLOOD. Broken on impact. *Feck. Now what?*

He hears a BELL. *'Clink-clank'*. *What the hell's that?!*

A COW appears at the crater's rim, dully gazing down at him. Cassidy exhales, relieved. And hungry.

CASSIDY

Well, allo. Aren't you a sight for
sore eyes? C'mere and give ol'
Cassidy a kiss. Come on, closer...

As the stupid Cow obeys and moves closer, we delay the sound of its' TERRIFIED SCREAM until we CUT TO --

EXT. QUINCANNON SLAUGHTERHOUSE - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Some SIGNAGE out front reads: *"Quincannon Beef! Meat-ing
Your Family's Needs Since 1919"*.

INT. QUINCANNON SLAUGHTERHOUSE - OFFICES - DAY

We can't see the "killing floor" from here but maybe we faintly hear it?

Other than that, it's a typical BULLPEN. Coffee, Post-Its, maybe an EMPLOYEE or TWO in the BG.

There's a MODEL for a new slaughterhouse too. "Coming Soon!" Looks like Auschwitz. Or Warner Bros.

Jesse sits across a desk from Betsy Schenck (30's).

JESSE

...and so I've just been heading
around to the parishioners and
asking. Be especially nice to get
that air conditioner fixed.

BETSY SCHENCK

Money's always tight. But I'll see
what we can do.

JESSE

(readying to go, casual)
Thanks. How's everything else?
How's Donnie? How's he doing?

BETSY SCHENCK

Donnie's up in Pecos. Battle of
Fredricksburg. Donnie's... fine.

Betsy's meek, furtive and timid. Classic victim.

JESSE
(proceeding carefully)
If things weren't "fine" you'd come
to me, right? If Donnie ever hurt
you..? As a for instance.
(she looks down)
You could tell me.

BETSY SCHENCK
He hurts me all the time.

Wow. So far, so good. Jesse presses a little more.

JESSE
How does he hurt you?

BETSY SCHENCK
(affectless)
Well. He beats me.

JESSE
Okay. Tell me more.

BETSY SCHENCK
He punches me, he bites me, he hits
me with jump rope. Yesterday he
came home after work and scalded me
with the tea kettle.

Like a good social worker, Jesse hides his anger and disgust.
Donnie will get his due -- but only if he plays this right.

JESSE
Do you think you could tell the
Sheriff what you just told me?

BETSY SCHENCK
The Sheriff?

JESSE
To file a formal complaint.

BETSY SCHENCK
(tensing)
Oh, I don't want that.

JESSE
It's the only way we're going to
get him to stop, Betsy.

BETSY SCHENCK
Oh, I don't w-ant that.

Betsy shakes her head, starts to cry. Jesse takes her hand.

JESSE

I know you're scared. We talk with the Sheriff and that's it. It's over. Donnie will never hurt you again. You just have to trust me.

It's a nice moment for Jesse. Compassionate, strong, engaged. When he sets his mind to it, he's good at this.

JESSE (CONT'D)

(winks)

So let's go.

Jesse takes her arm to leave, but Betsy throws it off. She digs her heels in like a kid refusing to go to the dentist.

BETSY SCHENCK

I said no. I don't want to!

JESSE

Look, I understand --

BETSY SCHENCK

No, you don't! You don't understand at all what's going on with us!

JESSE

... going on with who?

BETSY SCHENCK

With me and Donnie.
(isn't it obvious?)
I like it.

JESSE

(not following)

You like.. what?

BETSY SCHENCK

It. When he hurts me. I like it.

JESSE

(still uncomprehending)

... n-no, you don't.

BETSY SCHENCK

(means it)

Yes. I do.

Jesse pales. A sick feeling coming on.

JESSE
No, no, no.

BETSY
I like it, Preacher! I LIKE IT!!!

Off Jesse, looking like a man who's come upon a nest of spiders as we, CUT TO --

EXT. HIMALAYAS - MONASTERY - DAY

POSTLAP: Betsy's "I like it" faintly echoing off the mountains, as...

Small Man and Tall Man climb towards a TIBETAN MONASTERY dressed as Ghurkhas.

The gates are opened. A group of ANXIOUS MONKS await them.

INT. MONASTERY - MAIN TEMPLE - DAY

Small Man and Tall Man are shown into the Buddhist temple. One of the MONKS speaks excitedly in Tibetan --

MONK
(subtitles)
... butterflies. By the many
hundreds. At first we believed it
to be a blessing. But then...

He indicates the altar of their (former) Head Monk. The Buddha statue, the gong, the flowers and fruit for offering... all Pollocked in blood and gore.

Tall Man waves the Monks out as Small Man opens up his satchel and removes an ANCIENT MUSIC BOX. He turns the handle and it plays a (TBD) popular music melody.

Tall Man sings it softly, as a lullaby. Moving about the room as he does. Checking corners, peering into shadows. His song imploring, coaxing, as if to say: *come back*.

Off this (not cute or funny but) *eerie* tableau we, CUT TO --

EXT. ROOT FAMILY HOUSE - NIGHT

A FRONT DOOR. Through which we hear...

SHERIFF ROOT (O.S.)
*Tellin' you what I heard! Red
China figured out a machine lets
'em drink saltwater.*
(MORE)

SHERIFF ROOT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*Now tell me that ain't a complete
gamechanger. 'CAUSE IT IS.*

REVERSE to find Jesse on the front step. He doesn't want to be here, but said he would come... so he knocks.

Root opens up, glaring. *What do you want?*

JESSE
Eugene wanted to see me?

SHERIFF ROOT
(remembers, softening)
Right. Upstairs... Here wait --

Root hands Jesse a cup with an oversized straw. A gelatinous smoothie. Indeterminate color. Ew. Smells like green pea and ground chuck.

SHERIFF ROOT (CONT'D)
His dinner.

Root lets Jesse in as we, CUT TO --

INT. ROOT FAMILY HOUSE - TRACKING - NIGHT

Spooky steadicam FOLLOWS as Jesse climbs carpeted STAIRS... to a 2ND FLOOR LANDING... down a HALLWAY... and to a CLOSED DOOR adorned with Nicholson's "Heere's Johnny!" poster.

Nirvana's "Rape Me" SCREAMS at a MANIACAL VOLUME from beyond.

Jesse takes a breath and steels himself for what's next.
Damn. Who or what is on the other side of that door?!

Jesse gives a little knock and the door's thrown open by...

A MONSTER.

Okay, not a *monster* monster but close enough. A KID with a horribly disfigured face.

Puckered, pinched, infundibular and freely drooling. Like he was punched in the mouth by a giant.

This is EUGENE ROOT (17), the nicest kid on the planet.

EUGENE
Preasher! Whashuuuuup! Great to
shee you!

Off Jesse: forcing a smile.

INT. EUGENE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Typical teenager room. (Music is off now.)

Eugene is excitedly sharing a magazine article.

(Note: Eugene has a severe speech impediment. A heavy, wet slur. It's so bad we may need subtitles.)

EUGENE

Anywaish, I wash thinkin what if
evry healthy kid in Texash gave a
weeksh allowansh to theesh sick
kidsh? Mebbe some of them wouldn't
die afterall?

JESSE

Maybe not. Either way, Eugene,
it's really considerate of you.

Jesse means it. Eugene's a sweet kid. But goddamnit...

EUGENE

(sipping his meat shake)
Ummm. Shuper delishious.

... it's almost impossible to look at him. He holds out his
smoothie to Jesse.

EUGENE (CONT'D)

Wanna ship? It'sh goood.

JESSE

Um. Maybe later.
(then)
So, is the article what you wanted
to see me about?

EUGENE

Yesh... and... well... thorry
haven't bin to chursh. Dad saysh
I'd be a dishtraction. Hesh
ushually right about thosh things.

JESSE

I don't know about that. If you
want to be there, you should be.

EUGENE

I want to be there but I don't
think God does. Hesh mad at me.

JESSE

Why do you think that?

EUGENE
(quiet)
Becaush what I did.

JESSE
What you did was wrong. But are
you sorry about it?

EUGENE
(voice cracking)
Sho sho shorry.

JESSE
Then He forgives you.

EUGENE
(shakes his head)
I don't think sho. 'Cuz I doan
hear Him anymore. I ush to pray
and He'd talk back. Not anymore.
Hesh quiet. I think some thingsh
are sho bad even He won't forgive.

For Jesse that hits home. He hasn't been hearing back
either. Still, he does his best to rally and reassure --

JESSE
God doesn't hold grudges. If
you're not hearing Him just, you
know, listen harder.

EUGENE
He doesn't hold grudgesh?

JESSE
Of course not. He's there for
anyone who needs Him.

EUGENE
You promish?

JESSE
(lying)
I promise.

The grateful Eugene hugs him. Drooling on his shoulder.

Off Jesse, deep down uncomfortable. For a whole *bunch* of
reasons, as we...

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. OVERLOOK - NIGHT

A little PARKING AREA on a small bluff overlooking the town.
Where the high school kids come to make out.

JESSE'S TRUCK pulls in alongside a few OTHER CARS.

But Jesse's interested only in... the GRAN TORINO. He eyes
it warily. *Anything could happen here.*

He climbs out of his truck, approaches the car cautiously.
Takes note of the recent (bullet hole) body patchwork.

The window slides down and a VOICE emanates.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
*Bless me father. For I have sinned
like you wouldn't believe.*

Off Jesse. He can't help but smile as we...

INT. GRAN TORINO - PARKED - NIGHT

Jesse and Tulip. She, with joint in hand, tells a story.

TULIP
... the cop just has to take like
maybe three steps and I'm busted.

JESSE
Where's the ounce at this point?

TULIP
It's shoved down my pants, which
are tight-

JESSE
That's a shock.

TULIP
So the way it's bunched up, it
looks like I have a huge... you
know. The cop shines his light
right on the bulge, I'm like shit,
he's gonna make me pull it out.

JESSE
You're busted.

TULIP

But he just looks at me and says,
"Dude, I don't care if you're
turning tricks, just go do it in
Boys Town."

They both laugh a little.

Civil. Polite. For reasons we'll someday come to learn,
things ended badly between these two.

TULIP (CONT'D)

Thanks for checking in on my uncle.
Lord knows he's needed it.

JESSE

Always fond of Walter.

She offers the joint. He declines. She stubs it out.

TULIP

(resuming)

So. Anyway. Think about it.

JESSE

No thanks. Not doing jobs anymore.

TULIP

Come on. I already got the map.
Trust me, that was the hard part.

Jesse notices something on the floor. Picks it up.

JESSE

Wait, is this...(a nose)?!

TULIP

(vague)

Oh, that's just... lunch. Little
piece of shawarma. I'll just...

Tulip takes the nose, tosses it out the window.

TULIP (CONT'D)

Look, this isn't just *any* job.
This is a *big* job. This is King
Kong in high heels.
(trying to tempt)
I kept Archie and Veronica...

JESSE

I said no. I'm not doing it.

TULIP

Right. You got this preacher thing going. How's that working out for you?

JESSE

S'fine. Good.

TULIP

Yeah? I hear you pretty much suck at it.

Tulip fires up a cigarette and looks out at THE TOWN. A scattering of light surrounded by miles of jet black prairie.

TULIP (CONT'D)

Why would you ever come back here?

JESSE

Oh, you know. Culture and cuisine.

Tulip chuckles at that. Takes him in.

TULIP

You cut your hair.
(the verdict)
... I sincerely hate it.

Jesse laughs. Directness is one of her best qualities.

TULIP (CONT'D)

No, I'm serious. You look like
Beaver Cleaver on a bender.

Their laughter soon fades into a silence. Then --

TULIP (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Jesse.

JESSE

Me too.

It's a tender moment and we catch a glimpse of the deep and ancient love that used to be. And maybe still is..?

TULIP

But I'm done crying about it. You know? We are who we are and that's it. Why waste another minute wishing we were different?

JESSE

(cold)
Yeah. Your time bein' so precious and all.

She hits him in the face. Hard.

TULIP
It's good we still hate each other.
It'll make everything go easier.

JESSE
There is no "everything". Okay? I
said I'm not doing it.

TULIP
Yes, you are.

JESSE
Or what?

Her silence is her answer.

JESSE (CONT'D)
I don't hate you, Tulip. I
wouldn't know how.

TULIP
Don't make me teach you then.

Wow, that sounded like a serious fucking threat. Does she mean it? For now, we don't know and neither does Jesse. But it's definitely time to go. He opens the door and gets out.

TULIP (CONT'D)
We are who we are, Jesse Custer.

The car door slams shut.

TULIP (CONT'D)
(flat, to herself)
... we are who we are.

Off Tulip, staring off into nothing as we, CUT TO --

LIQUOR being poured into a GLASS. We're at the...

EXT. EL DORADO LOUNGE - BAR - NIGHT

Jesse's half-shitfaced.

Cassidy -- in the t-shirt and overalls from the clothesline -- sits nearby, looking much better from last we saw him. He just *really* needs a drink. He nods to the BARTENDER.

CASSIDY
Laphroaig 10 year. Otherwise, I'll
choke down a bottle of Macallan.

The Bartender plunks down a glass and bottle of Old Grand Dad. Cassidy frowns, *It'll have to do.* He cracks the bottle and drinks half of it down like it was spring water.

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
(off Jesse staring)
Evenin', Padre.
(looks around)
Where am I then?

JESSE
A bar.

CASSIDY
Meant to say what's our location?
What's the state, county or town?
(Jesse doesn't follow)
Or. Maybe there's a phone box
handy? Back by the loo perhaps?

JESSE
(through the haze)
... I can't understand a word
you're saying, pal.

CASSIDY
Nevermind, Padre. As you were.

Cassidy walks off in search of a payphone, passing...

Donnie Schenck. Dressed in Confederate Army cavalry uniform.

Mud-spattered tunic, riding boots and plume-y hat. He's coming in hot and headed for Jesse.

A few of his GOONS -- TWO OTHER REBELS and a UNION MAN -- are there as back up.

DONNIE SCHENCK
Preacher.

JESSE
Lieutenant, how'd the war go? We
win this time?

DONNIE SCHENCK
Nice try and it's *General*.

Donnie punches him off the bar stool.

DONNIE SCHENCK (CONT'D)
Talk to MY wife?! Without talkin'
to ME first?
(gets in Jesse's face)
(MORE)

DONNIE SCHENCK (CONT'D)
Whole town's been hearin' stories
'bout you're a tough guy. Show us.

JESSE
(pulling himself up)
Gentlemen... this is no time for
fighting. We're at war.

Donnie punches him again. From this we, CUT TO --

INT. EL DORADO LOUNGE - BACK BY THE BATHROOMS - NIGHT

Cassidy's on the PAYPHONE. We stay on Cassidy throughout.

(Note: in the BG, the fanboy may notice the FRAMED CARTOON
DRAWING of a grizzled, shadow-faced COWBOY pointing a gun at
us -- courtesy of "Preacher" illustrator Steve Dillon?)

CASSIDY
Seamus, I don't understand. How do
they keep findin' me?!

MAN'S VOICE (OVER PHONE)
(Irish accent also)
*I'll look into it. Meantime, stay
out of trouble. Get rid a your
credit cards, hole up and lay low.*

Cassidy notes Johnny Russell on the juke... PUKING NOISES
coming from the LADIES ROOM... and a POSTER, "Welcome To
Texas: Bigger, Better and More Punishable By Death!"

CASSIDY
Oh, I'm layin' low all right. But
I need you to wire me some--

The phone clicks dead.

Off Cassidy, *Great. Feckin' marooned*. As we, CUT BACK TO --

INT. EL DORADO LOUNGE - BAR - NIGHT

Jesse's bleeding on the floor as Donnie crows to the bar.

DONNIE SCHENCK
So the moral of this sad-ass story
is: don't believe what you hear.
(leans low, to Jesse)
I know the little snitch who told
you too. Looks like I got another
whippin' to attend to.

Donnie & Co. start to leave. Jesse darkens, a fuse lit.

JESSE
Don't touch him.

DONNIE SCHENCK
What did you say?

JESSE
The boy. Don't touch him.

DONNIE SCHENCK
Or? What would happen?

JESSE
Donnie, don't make me do this.

DONNIE SCHENCK
"Don't make you do this"? Ooo,
scary stuff.
(to the room)
Everybody watch! I'm gonna beat
the living shit outta the preacher!

Donnie takes the first swing. But it's the *last* swing he's
gonna take as we finally get to meet the badass Jesse we've
been hearing about!!!

He's exactly as advertised. Moving coolly, expertly as he
DUCKS and STRIKES Donnie's throat... SLAMS his head into the
bar, and then PUNCHES him repeatedly, viciously in the face.

One of the Goons cold-cocks Jesse and the Other Two pile on,
and begin kicking him....

This is when Cassidy appears and starts pulling them off.

CASSIDY
Gentlemen please! Have some
decorum! He's a man of God.

Free again and seeing red, Jesse spots Donnie crawling away
in fear. Jesse walks over, puts him in an arm lock and
starts to turn back his forearm...

DONNIE SCHENCK
Ah! AH! Okay! OKAY!

REVEAL: Root standing in the bar doorway.

SHERIFF ROOT
Preacher. That's enough.
(re. Cassidy)
Your friend too.

Jesse pauses, breathing hard. He's won. He should stop.

This is where the hero cracks a joke, stands aside and lets the sheriff take over. But sometimes... being a hero's hard.

Not to mention seriously fucking *boring*.

Jesse's throws Cassidy a lopsided "fuck it" look, and...

Ku-SNAPP! goes Donnie's arm. A jagged shard of ulna bone poking clear through his forearm. "*Violence makes violence.*"

Off: Jesse, somehow managing to look both exhilarated and self-disgusted, as Donnie SCREAMS and SCREAMS...

INT. SHERIFF DEPARTMENT - DRUNK TANK - NIGHT

Small single window above. Jesse and Cassidy in a cell.

CASSIDY
(impressed)
Jaysis, what kinda preacher are
you?

JESSE
The lousy kind.

CASSIDY
Sorry, mate. Seen the lousy kind.
As long as you're not wearing a
kiddie's arshole round your finger
like a bloody wedding ring, I'd say
you're ahead of the game.

JESSE
Failing preacher, failing church.
Can't even pay to fix the air
conditioning...

CASSIDY
Sounds like the first verse of the
worst country song ever written.

Cassidy has the easy, irreverent air of a man who's seen and heard it all. People talk to him. Jesse's no exception.

JESSE
She was right about one thing... I
never should've come back here.
She was right about that.

CASSIDY
(playing along)
Of course she was. *Annville*,
Texas? Why would a guy like *you*
come back to a place like this?

For the first time, Jesse takes a good look at Cassidy.

JESSE
Finally figured out where you are,
huh?

CASSIDY
I'm not great with directions.

JESSE
Hm. Yeah, I'm sensing that.

CASSIDY
But we're not talkin' about me,
we're wonderin' about you.

JESSE
I came back to... I made a promise.
Years ago.
(shakes his head)
But I broke it. Broke it a
thousand times.

CASSIDY
Promises right nasty things. I try
to steer clear of 'em.

JESSE
That's wrong. Promises matter.
It's the currency of faith.

CASSIDY
No offense Padre, but in my view,
the world'd be a much better place
if all you "faith" types packed it
up and called it a day.

*(Note: this begins theological argument No. 1 of many for
these two. Spirited but with no lasting bitterness.)*

JESSE
Without faith we'd still be hitting
each other with dinosaur bones.

CASSIDY
Have you seen the news lately?
We're hittin' each other with much
worse things than *bones*, boyo. And
we're doing it *because* of faith.

JESSE
So you're sayin' if we all just
agreed the universe is indifferent
and that our lives are essentially
meaningless, we'd get along better?

CASSIDY
Of course! Then we'd all be in it
together. Misery loves company,
it's the hope that sets men at one
another's throats.

That hits home for Jesse. Whatever his hopes have been as a
preacher, they've come to nothing. Well-meaning Cassidy's
just finalized a decision for Jesse: *Fuck it.*

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
Look at me for instance. I have
zero hope in this world, mate. And
I'm bloody *fantastic!*

A DEPUTY appears and opens the cell.

DEPUTY
Bail's up, Preacher.

Jesse stands, turns to Cassidy.

JESSE
Thanks for your help back there.

CASSIDY
Grown men playin' at make believe.
It's sorta a pet peeve of mine.

JESSE
(offers his hand)
Jesse Custer.

CASSIDY
(takes it)
Cassidy.

Jesse goes. Cassidy addresses the Deputy --

CASSIDY (CONT'D)
(re. the window)
Officer, any curtains lyin' around
by chance? I'm a late sleeper.

Off Cassidy as we, CUT TO --

I/E. EMILY'S MINIVAN/ALL SAINTS - NIGHT

Emily pulls in the DRIVEWAY. Jesse's in back playing on the
iPad.

Her kids were taken out of bed and so they're all in Pj's.
They crowd around Jesse like moths to the Apple Co. flame.

Emily's been doing all the talking. No matter what the latest Preacher Custer incident might be, her role is to keep things *positive*.

EMILY

... obviously, we can't afford an actual barista. But a weekly volunteer position? I know I was opposed to it at first, but...

JESSE

(let's get this over with)
I'm leaving, Em. I'm quittin'.

EMILY

(cool mask)
Okay.

JESSE

Gonna take Vyla up on her offer.
I'll announce it Sunday service.

EMILY

Okay.

JESSE

Thought I could make this work. I really did, but...
(he shrugs)
I guess I am who I am.

EMILY

Clearly.

JESSE

I wanted to let you know I appreciate all that you've done. You've been a real asset. So...

She pushes a button... and the door slides open. Jesse gets out... but hovers.

EMILY

I'm not gonna beg and cry or try'n talk you out of it, if that's what you're waitin' for. You were never really here in the first place, Jesse. So what difference should your leaving make?

What can he say? She's right. He hands her back the iPad.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Get some sleep.

He goes. She presses the button... door slowly closes.

BOY #1

Mom. iPad.

BOY #2

Sorry, it's MY turn!

GIRL

WHAT?! No it isn't!

Emily smashes the iPad once, twice, on the steering wheel, then hands it back to them.

EMILY

Share it.

Off Emily, head bowed, mask falling, as we FADE TO --

INT. ALL SAINTS' - RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: the MISSING SERMON PAGE is poking out from underneath the bureau. A HAND reaches INTO FRAME...

Jesse stands there, looking down at his father's words.

Then -- a NOISE OUTSIDE. A strange *rustling* sound.

He goes to the WINDOW: the YARD is empty, except -- that SHAPE beneath the trees, like... a shadow in the shadows.

Suddenly -- his phone goes off, startling. Jesse answers.

TED RYERSON (OVER PHONE)

Good, you picked up. I know it's late but she's just outdone herself. Told me I never would've contracted eczema in the first place if not for my own --

JESSE

... gotta call you back.

Jesse hangs up, fixed to the window. *Is something out there?*

EXT. ALL SAINTS' - RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Wind is up, tree branches click-clacking overhead. It's a scary, haunted house night.

Jesse peers around with his flashlight but... nothing.

He turns to go back inside, but then -- that NOISE again.

Like a giant sheet rustling... coming from the CHAPEL.

INT. ALL SAINTS' - CHAPEL - NIGHT

Jesse cre-eaks the FRONT DOOR open. He flips the lights but, 'puh-p-POP!'... they short out.

He moves down the aisle, flashlight playing over the pews. Again, nothing. Whiskey visions? *Oh well. Wouldn't be the first time.*

While he's here, may as well have one last visit. He sits, reaches beneath the pew for his hidden stash of cigarettes.

JESSE

I know, I know. Disappointed.

That makes two of us.

(lights up a smoke)

But like I said, I needed you to meet me --

Wait. That SOUND.

He turns his beam to the WOODEN CROSS over the altar. *What the?! It's pulsing! Alive! Jesse stands. Moves closer...*

... the cross is covered with SPARROWS. Dozens, maybe hundreds of them, bunched thick like bees on honeycomb.

As Jesse steps back, trips and stumbles into the aisle, ONE OF THE BIRDS flies off and lights onto the pew next to him.

The bird considers Jesse with alien, black eyes. Jesse stares back at it, trying to understand this phenomena.

The OTHER BIRDS begin to agitate, their strange fluttering noise GROWING LOUDER. After a charged beat...

JESSE (CONT'D)

What--?

... the bird CHIRPS, signaling.

All of the other birds fall off the cross and come at Jesse, knocking him onto his back.

The sparrows rise high, form a stream and then pour themselves down Jesse's throat. As we...

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

UP ON: Right where we began...

EXT. THE UNIVERSE

... limitless, cold and dark. Only now... THE LIGHT slams us into:

A series of FLICKERING IMAGES.

Specifics TBD but the images will be encyclopedic in variety. Scenes from Nature... Science... War... Sex... History etc.

Also images of places and beings too abstract -- and blurring by too quickly -- for us to identify.

Over these we hear that scary 'whish-whish-whish' fetal heartbeat from the opening teaser.

As it BUILDS AND GROWS...

We continue to spin through the images like stations on a radio dial until -- everything screeches to a stop on:

JOHN CUSTER. Jesse's dad! It's 25 years ago and we're in...

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Springtime in West Texas. Wildflower-strewn.

John Custer's on his knees. His preacher collar bloodied, his face beaten. He speaks to someone OFF-CAMERA.

JOHN CUSTER

This is just the beginnin' for you.
Big things are comin'. Much bigger
things than this here. So you
gotta be one of the good guys. No
matter what. 'Cause there's way
too many of the bad. Promise me.

We REVERSE TO: 8 YEAR-OLD JESSE.

8 YEAR-OLD JESSE

(nods, fighting tears)

I'm sorry, Dad. It's all my fault.

JOHN CUSTER

Hey now. Stop that. We Custer's
don't cry...

A MAN'S HAND ENTERS FRAME. It's wearing AN ALLIGATOR SKIN

BRACELET and holding a GUN... that points at Custer's head.

JOHN CUSTER (CONT'D)
(smiles, unafraid)
... we fight.

BLAMMM!!! goes the gun as we, CUT TO --

INT. ALL SAINTS' - RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Jesse wakes with a start, very much alive. (For reasons not yet known to us, he has been spared.)

Emily's there, sitting by him.

EMILY
Hey. You were out awhile this time. But...
(touches his forehead)
... fever's down, so we weren't over worried.

Offers some water. He nods thanks, drinks. Looks around --

JESSE
We?

We hear BANGING and CURSING coming from the Chapel.

CASSIDY (O.S.)
Screw with me?! I can screw with you right back, ya langer!!!

EMILY
He's the one who found you...

Emily clearly has questions about that. But they can wait.

EMILY (CONT'D)
How do you feel now?

Jesse looks around. Is it the lingering fever or..? Sounds and colors, shapes, smells: everything's sharp and more new.

JESSE
I feel... (different).

CASSIDY (O.S.)
Bloody knob eating plonker!!!

EMILY
He said you were "mates"?

Jesse nods. *Yeah. Guess we are.*

EMILY (CONT'D)
Good, because he moved into the
basement three days ago. Fixing
the air conditioner as a surprise --
or tryin' to.

JESSE
Three days?!

EMILY
It's Sunday morning.

Sunday?! He quickly hops out of bed and starts to undress.

EMILY (CONT'D)
I thought of canceling, but your
temperature was down and I know you
wanted to make your announcement.

He turns, now naked. *Announcement?* Emily averts her eyes.

EMILY (CONT'D)
That you're leaving?

Jesse deflates a little. He'd forgotten all about that.

JESSE
Oh. Right. After the sermon.

EMILY
Jesse, I'm sorry about...

JESSE
No, no, you were right.
(then)
I'm late. Set out the programs?

Emily nods and goes.

EXT. ALL SAINTS' - RESIDENCE - MORNING

Jesse emerges holding ONE OF HIS FATHER'S SERMONS. We see
the printed pages as he slips it into his pocket.

He heads for the CHAPEL where the LAST STRAGGLERS are making
their way in for Sunday services.

As Jesse passes the PARKING LOT, Ted Ryerson appears.

TED RYERSON
Hey, we got cut off the other day.

JESSE
You know what, Ted? Now's not the
time.

Jesse keeps moving. Undeterred, Ted falls in right behind.

TED RYERSON
I'll walk with you.
(then)
So I "smell like sweat all the
time". That's the latest. Not sure
how she knows that living all the
way in Sarasota, Florida, but
that's not the point. She wants me
to feel like I smell. My own
mother actually wants me to --

Ughhhh. Jesse's finally had enough of this man's sniveling.

His eyes flare blue as he turns on Ted and speaks in a VOICE
that is his. Only *different*. A mine-deep rumble that from
here on out we'll call...

JESSE
TELL HER THE TRUTH. BE BRAVE.
OPEN YOUR HEART.

... "THE WORD OF GOD".

Jesse flinches at the sound that just came out of him. Not
alarmed or freaked out -- he's just *confused*.

JESSE (CONT'D)
... did you hear that?

But Ted doesn't look confused. Just the opposite. Ted looks
clear. Ted looks enlightened.

TED RYERSON
(nods, repeating back)
Tell her the truth. Be brave.
Open my heart.

Without another word, Ted turns and marches purposefully back
to his car.

Jesse watches him go. *Weird. What just happened? And what
got into Ted?*

The CHURCH BELL tolls.

Jesse lets it go and heads in to church.

INT. CAIRO TEA HOUSE - DAY

Tall Man sits in Bedouin robe as a WAITER brings him tea. He sips it. Hm. Un-enjoyably hot. He pulls out the tea bag, pops it in his mouth and begins to chew. Hm. Better.

He notices an EGYPTIAN MAN staring. Tall Man stares back. The Egyptian looks away.

The Small Man rejoins. *Time to go.*

TALL MAN

Where?

Small Man holds out a map. Tall Man leans in to read it.

TALL MAN (CONT'D)

(sounding it out)

"Tecck-saaaas".

SMALL MAN

(gravely)

It found someone.

The Tall Man goes pale. *Oh, no.*

They hurry out as we CUT TO --

INT. ALL SAINTS' - CHAPEL - MORNING

Sunday service.

A GOTH-Y TEENAGE GIRL plays an electric guitar version of "Amazing Grace". She isn't very good.

Pews are half-empty as usual but our PRINCIPALS are here. The Quincannons... The Schencks... The Roots (Eugene too)... Miles... even Cassidy in back, dozing behind his Pradas.

Tulip's a late arrival. Cassidy stirs, *Good morning, gorgeous.* She once-overs him. Grease-stained overalls and t-shirt? *No, thanks.*

Cassidy shrugs. *To be continued...*

Jesse sits by the ALTAR. Gathering himself for his last and final sermon. He brushes something off his lapel:

A BIRD FEATHER. *Huh. Where did that come from?*

Jesse stares at it, trying to remember... when --

The guitar screeches to an unsteady end. He's on.

Jesse approaches the LECTERN. The MICROPHONE 'whiiines' feedback. He adjusts but it only 'whiiines' more. So he turns it off. Not a great start.

Jesse pulls out his father's sermon. But the pages are blank. *S'weird. He could've sworn... must be the fever.*

JESSE

Uh... no sermon today.
(self-deprecating smile)
You're welcome for that.

Polite titter from the congregants.

JESSE (CONT'D)

But I do have an announcement.
Something I wanted to let you know.

Without his usual scripted sermon as a crutch, Jesse stops and starts. Eloquently, *honestly*, feeling his way through.

JESSE (CONT'D)

The other night someone asked why
I'd come back to Annville. What
was I hoping to accomplish being
here? I didn't have an answer for
him. Least not a convincing one...

(then)

I've let you down. Week after week
I've been just another man that
hurts by not helping.

(then)

I haven't had a single morning when
I didn't wake up and have to force
my feet to the floor to face you.

(then)

Bottom line is I've been a bad
preacher. And for that, I'm sorry.

(then)

But "I'm sorry" doesn't change
anything. And my shortcomings
aren't news to anyone. What is
news, what I have to say is that I
think you all deserve better...

Jesse lifts his gaze and looks out at the pews... and is
thrown. Because for the first time: everyone is listening.

Jesse's whole weird-ass-edly, heartbroken-edly, fucked-up-
edly *human* congregation is hanging on his every word. Like a
flock looking to their shepherd.

As Jesse stares back at his parishioners it's suddenly all so
crystal clear: *THEY NEED HIM.*

Something stirs in him now. And (as far as Jesse knows) it isn't witchcraft or magic or heavenly possession.

No. This is nothing more than a man...

JESSE (CONT'D)
(half to himself)
... you deserve a good preacher.

... changing his mind.

JESSE (CONT'D)
And that's what you're gonna get.

As he continues, Jesse's confidence, his authority, his power seems to grow right before our eyes.

JESSE (CONT'D)
As of today, as of right now, I'm going to try -- no, I'm going to fight to be better. I'm going to do what all good preachers have done since the Serpent and Man's Fall: Pray for the sinner. Offer peace to the restless...

As Jesse continues we MONTAGE and get glimpses of Annville's locations and the lives of its most notable inhabitants:

JESSE (V.O.)
Reward the virtuous...

EMILY and her KIDS having dinner. Emily harried until the YOUNGEST sneezes milk. Laughter. An almost happy family...

JESSE (V.O.)
Set free the prisoner...

Outside, MAYOR PERSON peers through her window. Looking on longingly...

JESSE (V.O.)
Cool the wrathful...

The local HIGH SCHOOL. The SIGN outside now has the silly Pedro cartoon on it. "Go Prairie Dogs!"

A TRUCK zooms through frame... leaving behind a gaping shotgun hole where Pedro's head used to be.

JESSE (V.O.)
Avenge the innocent...

EUGENE ROOT in his front yard getting taunted by BULLIES. SHERIFF ROOT watches from inside the house. In pain but

doing nothing, as he turns away...

JESSE (V.O.)
Save Light from the Darkness...

VYLA QUINCANNON at the slaughterhouse. The WORKERS stand aside as she wades through the CATTLE PEN with a STUNNER GUN and a look of wild intoxication. Her pretty print dress mists with blood as she drops the cows one after another...

JESSE (V.O.)
Retrieve those who are lost...

WALTER'S BEDROOM. Tulip's stolen MAP lies open on the bed. Complex schematics and enigmatic hieroglyphs. To us, it's unreadable. Except for...

... the "X" scrawled on it with Sharpie. X marks the spot.

(Note: the fanboy paying close attention may notice the map heading that says, "Eyes Only: Grail Industries".)

The map's four corners are held down by Tulip's knife... her gun... and TWO MASKS: "Veronica" and "Archie".

Beyond is the BATHROOM. Its door slightly ajar and leaking steam from the scalding hot shower running within.

JESSE (V.O.)
Welcome the wanderer...

CASSIDY in a lawn chair behind All Saints' with a bottle of Old Grand Dad (his new favorite) watching the sun rise.

He leans forward from the shadows and sticks his hand into the shaft of creeping sunlight. His hand bursts into flame.

Cassidy stares hypnotized. A masochist. Finally, the pain too much, he turns for the garden hose...

JESSE (V.O.)
*And last but not least, to speak
forth the Word of God...*

The MONTAGE ends as we, CUT TO --

INT. COMMERCIAL AIRPLANE - CABIN - DAY

Ted staring out from his window seat. Murmuring quietly.

TED RYERSON
Tell her the truth... Be brave...
Open your heart...

INT. SARASOTA AIRPORT - RENTAL CAR DESK - DAY

Ted waits in line. His mantra never stops.

TED RYERSON
Tell her the truth...

INT. RENTAL CAR - DRIVING - LATER THAT DAY

Ted drives. Continues.

TED RYERSON
Be brave...

He pulls up in front of a NURSING HOME.

INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Ted walks through the facility, goes into a KITCHEN AREA.

TED RYERSON
Open your heart...

He pulls something from a drawer... walks into --

INT. NURSING HOME - LOUNGE - DAY

Canasta... needlepoint... a gaggle of OLD PEOPLE around a TV.

Ted approaches an OLD WOMAN. She looks up, confused.

OLD WOMAN
Ted? What are you -- ?

TED RYERSON
(to himself)
Tell the truth:
(to her)
Mom, I'd like you stop calling at
all hours to criticize me. I know
I'm not perfect. I know at times
I've disappointed you. But I'm
your only son and it would make me
so happy if you treated me with
some kindness and consideration.

Mrs. Ryerson just stares. Shocked by his honesty.

TED RYERSON (CONT'D)
Also your meatloaf tastes like cat
food. That's the truth. Now...

He pulls out a CARVING KNIFE and without hesitation he stabs himself in the chest and begins cutting.

TED RYERSON (CONT'D)

I'll open... m-my... hahrrr...

OLD PEOPLE SCREAMS and GEYSERS OF BLOOD as Ted, with almost superhuman determination, manages to pull his heart free... ... before flopping forward onto his mother, dead.

Off this horror we, FADE BACK TO...

INT. ALL SAINTS' - CHAPEL - DAY

Jesse finishing his sermon.

JESSE

... for all this I am responsible.
I am that preacher. This is my
answer. This is why I've come
home. To save you.

Off this simple promise, we...

END PILOT.