

SUNNY SIDE OF HELL

Written by
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INT. UNDERGROUND CHAMBER - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: "TEXAS PANHANDLE - 1930's"

Flickering candles cast dancing shadows across a cold, bedroom-sized chamber.

Sitting against the earthen wall, BERT (40's), shirtless, with pointy shoulders and a bird chest -- shakes nervously. Hands and feet bound with shackles.

ZIONN, out of view, addresses Bert in an eerily tranquil tone.

ZIONN (O.S.)

You know what you have if you don't have trust, Bert?

BERT

I'm not a rat, I swear.

ZIONN (O.S.)

Answer the question; what do you have if you don't have trust?

BERT

Nothing. You have nothing.

ARTHUR ZIONN (65), medium length salt-n-pepper hair and mustache, is dressed like a tenured Oxford professor and has gold wire spectacles over his intense brown eyes.

ZIONN

Wrong. If you don't have trust you have *problems*.

BERT

Zionn. You gotta believe me. I'm not a rat!

ZIONN

Well then, I suppose I should take you at your word and just let bygones be bygones.

BERT

I'm telling you the truth. Everything went as planned...

EXT. FOREST HILLTOP - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Bert squats next to a LARGE BOX TRUCK atop a hill, shrouded by trees, taking short anxious toke from a cigarette. The area abounds with rolling hills and forest.

HEADLIGHTS appear on the road below.

Bert stands up and walks to the back of the truck -- "GENERAL TRUCKING - HOUSEHOLD MOVING" is emblazoned across the side of the large box truck.

Standing guard at the rear of the truck, the infamous SLIP BROTHERS (Early 40's). The elder, impersonal, LESTER SLIP, is of medium height and build, with dark, beady eyes and a pointy face marred with acne scars.

Towering next to Lester is his HALF-WIT younger brother, ALLAN "TWEETS". Dressed in overalls that could house a normal man in each leg and a flat cap on top of his large, thick skull, the giant has ironically gentle eyes.

BACK TO:

PRESENT

BERT

Billy showed up on time and picked up the cargo...

BACK TO:

EXT. FOREST HILLTOP - FLASHBACK

A PICKUP TRUCK pulls up the hill, parks next to the box truck and cuts off it's lights.

The DRIVER, BILLY ZIONN (30's), handsome, dirty-blonde hair, jumps out of the pickup.

BILLY

(to Bert)

Everything good?

Bert nods, yes.

Billy hops in the driver seat of the box truck and is accompanied by the Slip brothers.

Bert gets in the pickup truck.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Tell Zionn we'll phone him once we
reach the border.

Bert nods understandingly.

INT. BOX TRUCK - MINUTES LATER

Tweets, the middle passenger, plays a mournful tune on his harmonica as the trio traverses through the dark, rugged landscape.

EXT. BOX TRUCK - SAME

An egg-shell hued moon hangs low over the windy road.

The longing notes from the harmonica trail lonesomely across the quiet expanse as the men proceed on their way.

INT. BOX TRUCK - SAME

Billy checks the side view mirrors often.

LESTER
(to Tweets)
Keep it down.

TWEETS
Aw, ain't no one for miles and I'm
bored outside my mind. Besides,
Billy likes my playing, don't ya,
Billy?

BILLY
Yea, Tweets. Real nice.

LESTER
Out of your mind.

Lester shakes his head in disgust.

ALL OF A SUDDEN...

Billy SLAMS THE BRAKES -- the truck LURCHES to a halt.

THREE POLICEMEN

with rifles and spotlights trained at the truck stand in front of their police car, pulled sideways across the road.

INT. BOX TRUCK

Surprise jolts Billy and the Slips.

They observe the situation.

Lester turns to Billy.

LESTER

What do we do?

TWEETS

Blast em' with our heaters?

LESTER

It's the law you idiot.

BILLY

Sit tight. I'll handle it.

EXT. ROAD

The Policemen strut towards the box truck flaunting their weapons.

INT. BOX TRUCK

Lester wraps his fingers around the wooden handle of the revolver sitting on his lap.

Billy takes notice.

BILLY

Don't do anything I don't tell you to. Got it?

Lester looks at Billy and nods.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You too, Tweets.

The doofus responds.

TWEETS

Got it, Billy.

A KNOCK on the window.

The LEAD OFFICER (40's), a lanky man with a thick handlebar mustache greets Billy with a splenetic, tobacco stained grin.

Billy rolls down the window.

PTHUU.

The Lead Officer spits onto the ground.

LEAD OFFICER

Evin'.

BILLY

How do ya do, officer?

The FIRST DEPUTY, middle aged, pants drooping low under his belly, approaches the passenger side cautiously. He eyes the vehicle's occupants nervously.

The SECOND DEPUTY, shoulders as wide as long horns, positions himself directly in front of the vehicle with his rifle ready.

LEAD OFFICER

Wher-yall-headin' son?

BILLY

Home. On the way back from a move.

PTHUU.

Another brown loogie squirts from the Lead Officer's lips.

LEAD OFFICER

Lots a that goin' on these days.
Dust storms scaring folks outa'
here faster than a bee-stung
stallion. Good for you fellers
though I suppose?

BILLY

Yes sir. An unfortunate situation,
but it is good for business.

LEAD OFFICER

Good. Mind if I check your rig?

BILLY

What for?

LEAD OFFICER

Just a matter of precaution, son.

BILLY

I'd prefer you didn't. We're
running late as it is and the
boss'll kill us if we're not back
soon.

Lead Officer RAISES his pistol -- the Deputies follow suit and Billy and the brothers suddenly find three barrels trained on them.

LEAD OFFICER
If you don't open the rig he wont
have the chance.

Billy pauses for a beat.

BILLY
Alright, alright, no problem here.

LEAD OFFICER
Real slow like. These boys are
jumpy.

Billy nods then reaches slowly for his door handle.

In the blink of an eye -- the barrel of Billy's '38 is at the end of his extended arm inches from the Lead Officers skull --

Lester and Tweets PULL THEIR GUNS equally as fast.

Lead Officer backs slowly away from the passenger window and motions for his deputies to hold steady.

The itchy trigger-fingered Deputies grip their rifles tightly.

LEAD OFFICER (CONT'D)
Come on, boy. Whatever's in there --
it worth dying for?

Billy calls back.

BILLY
You tell me.

A standoff ensues for several tense moments.

TWEETS
(whispering)
Should we pop em', Billy? We're a
bunch of monkeys in a barrel here.

BILLY
(quietly to Lester and
Tweets)
Fish. Fish in a barrel, Tweets. We
ain't getting out of a shoot-out
alive.

LESTER
I ain't going to Jail.

A beat.

BILLY
Judge Barron's got good reason to
keep us out of there.

Billy makes the call.

Put your guns down boys.

LESTER
I ain't going to Jail, Billy.

Billy gives Lester a grave look.

BILLY
Put your goddamn gun down.

Lester reluctantly obliges.

BILLY (CONT'D)
(to the cops)
Alright! ...We surrender!

LEAD OFFICER
Toss your weapons.

Billy and the Slips toss their guns out the window one by one.

EXT. REAR OF THE MOVING TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Lead Officer unlocks the large doors at the back of the truck as Billy and the Slips look on anxiously, bound in CUFFS.

The wide doors swing open with a CREEEAAK.

Lead Officer shines his torch inside illuminating

EIGHT TERRIFIED MEXICAN WOMEN (20's-30's), BOUND, GAGGED AND STRUNG TOGETHER WITH A CHAIN.

LEAD OFFICER
Mary, mother of God...

END FLASHBACK

INT. UNDERGROUND CHAMBER

Bert is really trembling at this point.

BERT

I don't know what happened. I swear
I didn't tip 'em off. It was just
bad luck.

Zionn nods. Sweeps his hair behind his ears, revealing a
gnarled, nickle-sized chunk missing from the right lobe.

ZIONN

Bad luck, huh...
(a beat)
You keen on history?

BERT

What?

ZIONN

History. The past.

Bert shakes his head no.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

Ah, that's a shame. We are the
past. The sum of all events --
good, bad, and indifferent -- that
have taken place up until *this* very
moment.

BERT

What the hell are you talking
about?

ZIONN

Everything that happens to us has
an effect on who we become. Take
yourself for example. Being a known
bootlegger could persuade you to be
compliant with the law.

Bert looses it and starts to sob. He retorts.

BERT

For Christ's sake. I'm telling you
the truth. I didn't tell anyone
anything. I didn't set em' up!

ZIONN

Please, calm down.
(a beat)

(MORE)

ZIONN (CONT'D)

Since you aren't a pupil of the past, I'd surmise that you've never heard of a nexum?

Bert looks confused.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

I am right?

Bert nods his head, incredulously.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

Lets say you are telling the truth. At present, *my* cargo and *my* men are in the hands of the law. So even if you aren't a rat, at the very least, you're indebted to me.

He pauses before continuing;

Now, the nexum was a contract used by the ancient Greeks where The indebted -- you -- would sign it and if you failed to make good on your debt, well, you'd become my slave.

The candle flames reflect off Zionn's corneas making his already wild gaze even more diabolic.

Fright pulses through Bert's veins.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

I'm a righteous man, Bert. And there isn't much righteousness in slavery. So I'd think of it more like a factotum of sorts.

Bert stares back quizzically.

Zionn explain's.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

A personal servant. Unfortunately, there's no way a fuddy-duddy like you's going to be of any real service to me. So this brings us to another point in history.

Bert looks incredulous as Zionn continues.

Medieval Europe. Chivalry and swords.

(MORE)

ZIONN (CONT'D)

Back then, if we found ourselves in this predicament you'd end up in a Debtors Prison. Locked in a cell 'til your *family* worked the debt off.

Zionn extends his arm and places something on BERT'S lap--

CLOSE ON: A PHOTOGRAPH OF BERT WITH HIS WIFE AND TWO YOUNG DAUGHTERS

BERT

(weeping)

No...NO! Not my family. Zionn, Please! Ill make it up to you. I wont talk to the law, I wont say nothing to nobody! Please!--

Zionn reaches forward and slaps the desperate man on his cheek a couple times.

ZIONN

Come on, hold it together now.

Bert's sobbing becomes a pitiful whimper as he drops his head towards the ground.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

You needn't worry. I'm a family man myself.

Zionn paces the dim cavern, loosening, then removing his tie.

Now, the Chinese, under the First Emperor, Qin Shi Huang...

(a beat)

They were pragmatic folks when it came to settling a debt.

Zionn puts on a GHOULISH BURLAP HOOD WITH AN **EYEBALL SKETCHED IN THE CENTER** ABOVE THE EYE SLITS.

BERT'S fear erupts into terror.

BERT

(trembling)

What are you doing!? You said you were merciful!?

Zionn walks over to the corner of the room where, sitting atop a couple stacked crates, various sadistic utensils for torture lay in wait for their next victim. Next to them, a PISTOL.

ZIONN

Indeed.

Picks up the pistol.

CLOSE ON: The flickering candles--

CUT TO:

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - MORNING

Golden stalks of wheat swaying gently from side to side, set against a great pale blue sky. The scorching sun roasts the fragile stalks.

A gust of wind rolls through and CANOES the crop.

In the distance, a faint RUMBLE, GROWING LOUDER as its origin nears.

As the roar becomes DEAFENING

a TRACTOR PASSES OVER US.

The DRIVER wears a large straw hat pulled low and a bandana wrapped around their face to shield them from the down-trodding sun and pestering dust.

Dragging behind the tractor, a MAN with a wide-brim tilted forward and a cigarette hanging from his lip, squats atop a COMBINE, sacking the grain as it's spit out from the bowels of the machine.

A BLUEBIRD SITTING ON A FENCE POST

catches the gaze of the man's PIERCING, GOLDEN EYES.

Much of the expansive field is seared, littered with patches of dead crop incinerated by the unrelenting sun and absence of rain. The dead stalks bend towards the depleted soil.

START TIME LAPSE

The sun tracks across the sky as the tractor CARVES methodically through the field, reaping the years yield. An exhaustive job for a team, being performed by two.

AT DUSK

The tractor becomes a phantasm in the distance, moving over the earth under a veil of dust, set against the blood-red streaks from the setting sun.

EXT. BARN - LATER

The tractor comes to a stop in front of a barn. The Driver turns off the ignition, silencing the persistent rumble, and dismounts.

The Man with the golden eyes jumps from the combine -- SAM (35) -- handsome and tall with a sturdy build. He removes his hat revealing his dark hair and then pulls the gloves off of his hands -- revealing open sores on his callused palms.

A LARGE GREYISH-BROWN CUR, "DAISY", approaches, wagging her bushy tail.

Sam walks over to the driver.

SAM

Less then last years. Again.

The Driver nods, then pulls the bandana down --

A WOMAN.

HANNAH (32) -- Sam's wife.

She takes off her hat and shakes the dust from her long blond hair. She's slender, with a pretty but hardened face. A perceptible brawn rests behind her pale blue eyes.

The pair, accompanied by their dog, walk towards the humble two story FARM HOUSE adjacent to the barn.

INT. SAM & HANNAH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER ON

Sam and Hannah sit at opposite ends of the small table in the kitchen, eating in silence until Hannah speaks.

HANNAH

My father offered us five thousand dollars for the farm. That'd be enough for us to leave here and go west.

SAM

That's very generous. But we don't take charity.

HANNAH

It's not charity. He'd be buying the fields.

A beat.

SAM

They ain't worth half of that.

HANNAH

But if he's willing --

Sam's eyes rise from his plate and fix on Hannah's. His stare grows cold.

SAM

But nothing. We're not taking any handouts, Hannah. That's final.

Hannah stands up from the table and carries her plate to the sink.

HANNAH

(shaking her head)

That's like you to say that.

INT. HOUSE - LATER ON

Sam sits on a rocker in the living room with Daisy sprawled out on the floor next to him. He gazes out the window onto the dark, rolling fields, sipping on a glass of whiskey.

He gets up from the couch and walks over to a bureau where he pulls out a nearly empty handle of whiskey and pours the remainder of the bottle into his glass.

INT. COURTHOUSE - JUDGE'S CHAMBER - DAY

The HONORABLE REGINAL BARRON (60's), a distinguished and consequential looking man with white hair, bushy white beard and round spectacles resting on his long nose, sits behind a large mahogany desk in his chamber. He's draped in a dark robe.

A REPORTER, a young kid in a sport coat, sits across from the Judge with a pen and pad.

REPORTER

You've been called the Protector of Prospect. Where do you think that name came from?

The Judge grins.

JUDGE

I'm unsure of it's exact origin but I'd like to think it's a credit to my relentless pursuit of justice.

The Hack scribes.

REPORTER

Why have you decided to run for Governor?

JUDGE

I'm sure you can appreciate that there was a great deal of factors and equations that had to be considered in the decision. Ultimately though, it comes down to my love for the great state of Texas. We've fallin' on hard times, the whole country has. But will rise again, make no mistake about that. The great people of this State are resilient folks. But we need strong leaders to help us along.

REPORTER

And you think your qualified for the position? This is your first time running for such public office.

JUDGE

The real qualifications for a leader aren't found in a resume. They're in one's character. For 15 years, I've been committed to upholding law and order in this county. If I'm fortunate enough to be elected Governor I'll bring that same unwavering commitment to this great State.

The Reporter nods as he takes notes.

REPORTER

The county's been abuzz with talk about those prostitutes found in the hills. Prospect county's been virtually crime free for almost two decades. Any comments on the events that took place?

JUDGE

I cant comment on an ongoing case but let me just say that I wont tolerate any misconduct or criminal activity in this county what so ever.

(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

We will bring justice to anyone who thinks they can engage in these kind of deplorable acts in our community.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - MORNING

Sam leans against the bathroom door.

SAM

You've been in there for quite a while. Everything alright?

HANNAH (O.S.)

Stomachs just a bit unsettled. I'll be fine.

SAM

Want me to pick you up some Pepto Bismol from town?

HANNAH

No. I'll be fine.

SAM

Alright then.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Sam rides down the empty dirt roads, stretching across the flat landscape as far as the eyes can see.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - LARGE HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Sam pulls into the driveway leading to the house and parks.

Walks up the large four column porch and gives a knock on the heavy door.

After a few moments the door opens revealing Judge Barron, wearing a grey bespoke suit.

JUDGE

Mornin'

Sam nods.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

What can I do for ya?

SAM

Appreciate the offer but the farm's
not for sale.

JUDGE

Well that's unfortunate. It ain't
easy making a living off the land
these days.

SAM

Yea, well, we're doing just fine.

JUDGE

That's good news.
(a beat)
I'm running for Governor.

SAM

So I heard. Also, heard that Billy
was locked up. It'd be a shame if
anything unfavorable were to
surface before the election.

The Judge glares at Sam.

JUDGE

Sure would.

A beat.

Take the damn money and go out
west. Give my daughter the life she
deserves.

SAM

You know damn well this ain't about
your daughter. If you think you're
gonna buy me then you got something
else comin.

The Judge shakes his head.

JUDGE

You always were a stubborn
sunabitch.

SAM

Unless you got reason to be dealing
with Hannah, you leave her be.

JUDGE

I'll deal with my family on my own
accord.

SAM
You ain't got the right to use that
word.

Gets into the Judge's face.

SAM (CONT'D)
Keep out of our business.

JUDGE
Or else what?

SAM
Or else you'll regret the day you
ever tried to call my bluff.

Steps back and tips his hat.

SAM (CONT'D)
Have a good day now.

Sam gets into his truck and whips up a large cloud of dust as
he FLOORS out of the driveway.

INT. SALOON - A WHILE LATER

One of two patrons, Sam sits at the bar in the small, rickety
saloon with a glass of whiskey in front of him.

The BARTENDER, a port, sweaty man, addresses Sam familiarly.

BARTENDER
How's the crop this year?

SAM
Seen better.

Swigs the drink and taps the bar for another.

BARTENDER
We all have. These some bad times
here. Fields all dried up. Hardly a
job to be had.

A DRUNK at the end of the bar chimes in.

DRUNK
(raspy, drawn)
End of days...

BARTENDER
What's that you old kook?

DRUNK

It's in the scripture. "The fields will burn and besiege the sins of man."

A beat.

I've heard of whole towns being buried in ash.

BARTENDER

You've gone and lost your damn mind now, Mr.

SAM

No, he's right.

Bartender cocks his eye at Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)

Dust storms. They'll cover everything in it's path. Pass over a healthy heard of cattle and leave em all dead in seconds. We've been lucky here so far, save the drought.

DRUNK

It's in the scripture.

SAM

Yea, also in the farmers almanac. The land's been overworked and it ain't rained in a while so the soil's turned to dust. The winds just fanning it all over the country.

BARTENDER

Sure-as-shit these are tough times. I've seen the lines, farther then the eye can see. Families marchin' down the highway with a house worth of belongings stuffed inside a couple suitcases.

DRUNK

Deuteronomy. "The Lord will make the rain of your land powder and dust, from the heaven it shall come down on you unlike you are destroyed."

Sam looks at the bartender, smirks, and downs his drink.

EXT. SAM'S FARM - LATER

Sam parks his truck in the driveway and walks towards the house. Daisy, lying by the front door, greets her master with a steady wag. Sam kneels and strokes her head.

SAM

Not much of a guard dog these days
you old gal.

Sam rises and enters house.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Sam enters the kitchen and see's the side door open.

He walks to the sink to pour himself a glass of water and see's Hannah outside in the garden.

HANNAH

Take your boots off, please.

Sam looks as his wife swoops up a chicken -- stretches its neck across a stump and LOPS the birds head off with a hatchet unflinchingly -- blood spurts from the decapitated neck.

Sam complies with the request and places his worn leather boots by door.

INT. KITCHEN - DINNER TABLE - LATER ON

Sam sits at the table as Hannah pulls the roasted chicken from the oven.

SAM

How are you feelin'?

HANNAH

Better, thanks.

SAM

Good.

Hannah brings Sam a plate of the steaming bird.

SAM (CONT'D)

Smells good.

She walks back to the stove, prepares her own plate then joins Sam at the opposite end of the table.

They eat their meal with little acknowledgement of each other.

After several moments of silence, Hannah drops a bombshell.

HANNAH
I'm pregnant--

Sam's chokes on his food.

His usual squint comes agape.

SAM
Pregnant?

Hannah nods.

SAM (CONT'D)
With a baby?

Hannah nods again.

He stands from the table and walks right past Hannah -- into the hallway, where leans forward against the wall and stands silently.

BACK TO:

KITCHEN - TABLE

Hannah remains seated at the table staring into space stoically, immersed in her own pool of emotion.

The CRACKLE of a record player comes from the hallway.

Then MUSIC.

Sam saunters back into the kitchen wearing a wide smile.

Hannah looks surprised.

SAM
I do believe this occasion calls
for a celebratory dance.

He motions for her to join him on the dance floor in the center of the kitchen but she remains in her seat.

SAM (CONT'D)
Come on now, what's the matter?

HANNAH

Guess I didn't expect this kind of reaction is all.

Sam walks over to his wife and extends his hand. After some hesitation, she takes it and the couple makes their way to the center of the kitchen.

SAM

It's a blessing.

HANNAH

We're barely making ends meet as it is. Just the two of us.

SAM

Don't you worry now. You know I'll take care of us. Don't you?

Hannah nods.

Sam places one hand on her shoulder and the other around her waste and takes the lead, shuffling his feet. Hannah follows.

His eyes gaze fondly into Hannah's, eroding their tough facade.

A tear rolls down her cheek.

Sam gently wipes it away.

HANNAH

Do you remember the first day we met?

Sam thinks hard for a moment -- Hannah slugs him in the shoulder.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Yes you do. You'd just returned from the war. Arthur brought you along to the house to accompany him on some business he had with Daddy. He liked you right away and called you a hero. Remember what you said?

FLASHBACK

INT. JUDGES HOUSE - 1918 - DAY

Sam, in uniform, and Zionn (Arthur), wearing his normal coat and tie, stand in the Judge's foyer with a gorgeous, young Hannah and her father, Judge Barron.

SAM
(to Judge Barron)
I was just doing my job... The real
heroes are the ones who aren't
coming home.

JUDGE
(looking at Hannah)
And he's humble too.

Hannah blushes.

ZIONN
(to Judge Barron)
Told you we could use a man like
him.

END FLASHBACK

INT. KITCHEN

SAM
It was the truth. I'm no hero. Far
from it.

HANNAH
Yes you are.
(a beat)
My hero...

Sam smiles.

SAM
Can I ask you a question?

HANNAH
Of course.

SAM
I did look pretty handsome in that
uniform now, didn't I?

Hannah laughs.

HANNAH
You looked alright.

SAM
Alright enough for you to fall head
over heels.

HANNAH
Don't flatter yourself.

Sam smiles.

Hannah kisses her husband softly on the cheek then rests her head on Sam's chest.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER ON

Sam enters the bedroom and finds Hannah asleep in the bed. He's careful not to wake her as he takes off his clothes and crawls into bed.

Lying face to face with his sleeping beauty, Sam admires the calm set in on her normally tight brow. Her long golden locks are pinned neatly behind her ear by a LARGE SILVER BARRETTE engraved with a detailed ornament.

Sam runs his fingers gently across the top of her head.

Hannah's eye's OPEN.

SAM

Maybe we should reconsider your father's offer. Get the money for the farm and head west. Start a new life out there, the three of us.

HANNAH

(softly)
That'd be nice.

SAM

I'll talk to him in the morning.

Hannah smiles then closes her eyes again.

After a few moments, Sam does the same.

START DREAM

INT. DARK, SHADOWY SPACE - TIME UNKOWN

A man, beaten and bloodied, sits on a chair with his hands and feet shackled. His tense body glistens with sweat as he whimpers helplessly behind a gag.

Something catches his glance --

His eyes POP with fear.

END DREAM

INT. BEDROOM

Sam SHOOTs UP from his sleep, diaphragm contracting rapidly as beads of sweat trickle down his forehead onto his chiseled torso.

EXT. PORCH - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

The pensive farmer sits on the porch swing rolling a cigarette in his hands with a fresh fifth of whiskey tucked between his thighs. Daisy lays by his boots.

A bright gibbous moon sits just above the tops of the fields.

Sam finishes twirling the cigarette and steps down the porch with the bottle in tow. Daisy follows and the pair set off into the wide field.

EXT. FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

They reach a copse of trees atop a small hill about a hundred yards from the house.

In the middle of narrow copse, barely visible...

a lone GRAVESTONE.

Sam approaches the marker and bends to one knee.

A beat.

The STRIKE of a match illuminates the grave, revealing "ELLIE" carved into the stone.

Sam takes a hard pull from the cigarette and rises to his feet.

SAM

I saw a pretty bluebird today. You would have liked it.

He takes a swig from the bottle.

Got some good news. Looks like you're gonna have a lil' brother or sister soon.

Takes another pull from the cigarette and exhales a cloud of smoke that billows up through copse. Then another large gulp from the bottle.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

You always wanted a brother, but a
sister'll be good too.

Sam sits against a tree next to the headstone and holds vigil with the loyal mutt. He stares through the hazy canopy at the twinkling stars above.

EXT. COPSE - TWILIGHT

Daisy tugs on her unconscious masters jacket. Curled in a ball and clutching the empty bottle, Sam grumbles at the persistent dog.

SAM

(murmuring)

Get-outa-here-mongrel...

Daisy lets out a LOUD BARK --

Sam rattles awake.

SAM (CONT'D)

Alright...I'm up. I'm up.

He struggles to his feet and places his hand to his throbbing head.

Begins trudging back to the house in a stupor.

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sam Lumbers clumsily up the stairs towards the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM

He finds the bed empty, then walks to the bathroom door and gives a gentle knock.

SAM

You alright?

No response.

SAM (CONT'D)

Your stomach in knots again?

Nothing.

He opens the door -- the bathroom's empty.

EXT. HALLWAY

Concern furrows his brow.

SAM
Hannah?!

Sam walks hastily downstairs and checks the KITCHEN, then the LIVING ROOM -- both empty.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Sam bounds off the front porch and examines a fresh set of tire tracks in the driveway.

Something else catches his eye -- **Hannah's silver barrette** laying in the dirt.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S TRUCK

Sam tears down the road in his Model AA with urgency and fear seeping from his intense stare.

EXT. JUDGE'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Sam POUNDS on the front door.

After a few beats the door opens revealing Judge Barron.

He raises his brow.

JUDGE
Sam?

SAM
She's gone.

The Judge stares blankly for a moment.

JUDGE
...I know...

Sam steps closer.

SAM
You know? How?

JUDGE
I got word from the kidnapers.

SAM
Who are they?

The Judge doesn't answer.

SAM (CONT'D)
Who?!

JUDGE
Zionn.

Fright washes over Sam's face.

SAM
What did you do?

JUDGE
He's holdin' Hannah until Billy's released. He knew I'd have no choice but to free Billy if they took my little girl.

Sam stares in disbelief.

JUDGE (CONT'D)
I was just about to come find you.

SAM
What are we waiting for!?

JUDGE
I've contacted the sheriff. He's assured me that I have his full support. He's arranging for some of his men to make the exchange.

SAM
Where are they holdin' her?

JUDGE
She's at the cavern.

Sam steps swiftly to his car.

SAM
Get word to the Sheriff. I'll be at the jail by dusk.

Walks back to his truck and peels out of the driveway.

EXT. SAM'S FARM - DRIVEWAY

Sam RIPS into his driveway and comes to a hard stop in front of the barn.

Leaps out of the truck and enters the barn.

INT. BARN - STORAGE ROOM

Sam enters the room strewn with boxes of miscellaneous items and farm tools hanging from the walls. A trophy STAG hangs from the wall above a large safe. Sam reaches behind the Stag's ear and pulls a key from a hole in the mount.

He sticks the key in the safe and then spins the dial. The safe CLICKS open. Inside, RIFLES and a 1911 PISTOL. He tucks the pistol into his waistband.

He reaches into the safe again and pulls out another object -- a leather sheath with a knife in it. As sam pulls the six inch blade from the sheath we can see an **eyeball** engraved into the steel at the base of the blade.

Sam tucks the knife back into the sheath then stuffs it into a backpack along with a flashlight and a couple other items.

EXT. ROAD - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Sam's truck RIPS down the road. Outside, the muted hues of the parched landscape flash by.

EXT. JAIL - LATER ON

Pulls in front of the jail.

INT. JAIL - MOMENTS LATER

Inside, Sam is greeted by the SHERIFF (50's), a porcine man with a large, unpleasant mole next to his nose. A young, green DEPUTY stands dutifully by his side.

SHERIFF

Sam.

Sam nods.

SAM

Sheriff. Where's Billy?

The Sheriff motions for the deputy to retrieve the prisoner.

SHERIFF

You sure about this? You wanna do
this alone?

Sam nods.

The Deputy returns with Billy in shackles, grinning ear to
ear upon seeing Sam.

BILLY

Well I'll be damned. He lives.

SHERIFF

Shut up, boy.

The Sheriff looks at Sam who gives him a reassuring nod.

INT. TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Sam starts up the truck and turns to Billy, sitting in the
passenger seat.

SAM

Wipe that smirk off of your face or
I'll do it for you.

BILLY

Aw, what gives, Sam? It's been a
coons age. It's good to see you.

Sam ignores him and pulls away from the police station.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Well that sure does hurt my
feelings.

SAM

You better hope that nothing
happens to her.

He turns and looks Billy dead in the eye.

I'll rip you limb from limb.

BILLY

Hate to tell you, but I've no idea
what in the world you're talking
about, brother.

Sam turns to Billy and flares his nostrils, fighting back the
rage steaming from his pores.

EXT. SAM'S TRUCK - LATER

HOURS PASS as the two men travel down endless strips of road carved into the isolating landscape. The scenery becomes progressively more barren and sparse as they reach the areas more affected by the great drought.

AT SUN SET

SEVERAL DIRTY HITCHHIKERS

trudge along the side of the desolate road clutching suitcases and rucksacks, wearing soiled clothes and beaten brows. As the truck passes, the Hitchhikers raise their thumbs and HOLLER.

Sam has no choice.

He watches the hopeless men in his rear view mirror until they're no longer in sight.

BILLY

A damn shame.

CUT TO:

INT. KIDNAPPERS CAR

Hannah sits in the back of a car with a black hood covering her head and her hands bound with rope, bouncing up and down as the car drives along a bumpy road.

After a few moments she speaks from behind the hood.

HANNAH

My husband's going to find me.

We see the backs of the driver and passenger but nothing more as they remain silent.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

He's going to find me, and he's going to kill you.

BACK TO:

INT. SAM'S TRUCK

BILLY

What happened to you anyway, Sam?
Just up and disappeared.

Sam ignores him.

It was the old lady, wadnt it? I know how a woman like that'll do ya. Get a lick of somethin' that tasty and it'll drive you crazy. Man they'll do you dirty. Strip away all your manhood piece by piece until the only sign that you ever was a man is the thing danglin' in your pants. You still got one of those? She take that from ya too?

Sam raises his hand making Billy flinch.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Oh, come on now. What then?

Sam continues to ignore the provocateur.

You just couldn't stomach it anymore, could you? Lost your spine.

Sam JERKS the car to the side of the road and slams on the breaks. He reaches into the backpack and pulls out the knife, pulling it from its sheath, then raises its sharp blade to Billy's chin.

Sam slices into a sleeve on his shirt which he proceeds to tear off then wrap around Billy's mouth as a gag. He pulls the ends tight, causing Billy to wince.

SAM
There we are.

Billy mumbles something inaudible.

INT. TRUCK - SUNDOWN

Sam slows almost to a complete stop, checks the rearview, then takes a right turn -- off-road into the WOODS.

TRAIL IN THE WOODS

He kills the headlights and continues on the narrow trail, shrouded by dense forest and the veil of night. He reaches into his jacket and pulls out his pistol, placing it on his lap.

Billy takes notice.

INT. TRUCK - MINUTES LATER

Emerging from the treeline, we see a CAR parked in a GRASSY CLEARING ahead. Sam parks next to the other car and turns off the trucks engine.

EXT. GRASSY CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

Sam gets out of the truck cautiously and places his hand on the hood of the other vehicle -- still warm. Then peers into the window, shining his flashlight inside the vehicle.

His heart pumps hard at the sight of **Hannah's robe**, laying across the back seat in the car.

Sam pulls Billy from the passenger side. The bound and gagged man looks at the other car and mumbles another inaudible but Sam pushes him forward. Billy resists, digging his feet in the ground before acquiescing at the feeling of Sam's pistol pressing into the small of his back.

Sam steers his prisoner through the dark clearing. Moonlight dances off of a small stream running down the edge of the clearing; the men follow its path through the tall grass.

All of a sudden, Sam stops.

He shines the flashlight at the ground in front of Billy --

A SHARP DROP-OFF

overlooking a wide shallow creek below.

Sam prods Billy towards the left of the drop-off where the edge of the creek bed rises up to the rocky lip of the clearing, creating an accessible decline below.

The men step down to the creek bed.

Sam shines his flashlight behind the small, trickling water fall -- centuries of erosion have carved out the earth, creating a deep dugout beneath the clearing. In the middle of the dugout A RECTANGULAR OPENING the size of a narrow door, leads underground.

Sam scans his surroundings then nudges Billy towards the orifice.

INT. CAVERN - TUNNEL

Sam flicks on the FLASHLIGHT and continues behind Billy down the tight, declining tunnel. Even with the flashlight it's hard to make out much.

CUT TO:

INT. DARK SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Hannah sits against a wall in the dark, with her hands tied together.

BACK TO:

INT. CAVERN - TUNNEL

Sam shines his light ahead -- at the end of the tunnel -- a wooden door.

CUT TO:

INT. DARK SPACE

We see beams of light flickering beyond the door in front of Hannah.

BACK TO:

INT. CAVERN - TUNNEL

Sam readies his pistol and turns the doorknob pushing the door open --

CUT TO:

INT. DARK SPACE

A flashlight shines onto Hannah's black hood --

BACK TO:

INT. CAVERN - ROOM

Sam flashlight illuminates --

TWO GHOULISH BURLAP HOODS pointing a sawed-off and a rifle directly at him and billy --

Sam's eye's widen -- he pushes Billy back and ducks --

KA-BOOM!KACHOOM!

A chunk of earth explodes next to Billy's head.

SAM

Run!

Sam unloads his pistols clip behind him as the two men retreat out of the tunnel.

BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG!

A muzzle flashes illuminate one of the Hoods grabbing his belly as he falls to the ground.

EXT. CREEK BED - CONTINUOUS

Sam and Billy scamper up the creek bed to the clearing.

KABOOOM!

The bellowing blast from a shotgun rips through the trees next to them.

Sam RETURNS FIRE.

SAM

(to Billy)

Keep moving or you're a dead man!

Sam and Billy high-tail it through the grassy clearing until they reach the truck.

Sam shoves Billy into the passenger side then leaps into the driver seat and PEELS OFF -- back through the forest -- down the narrow trail.

SAM (CONT'D)

(to Billy)

You sons of bitches set me up!

Billy murmurs emphatically from behind the gag before..

Sam's fist SLAMS into his cheek -- his head cracks against the window -- rendering him unconscious.

Sam's truck barrels out of the forest -- back onto the main road.

INT. SAM'S TRUCK - MAIN ROAD

HEADLIGHTS appear behind the truck.

Sam looks into his rearview mirror at the car speeding towards him. He slams the pedal to the floor.

The interior of the truck is illuminated as the faster car gains on him.

Closer..

and closer..

CRUNCH!

The car SLAMS into the rear of the truck -- JOLTING Sam forward and sending Billy into the dashboard.

Sam squeezes the steering wheel firmly with both hands and PUNCHES the gas.

Another RAM JOLTS the truck forward again.

SAM
Son of a bitch!

Sam muscles the wheel to maintain control.

EXT. MAIN ROAD

The pursuing car maneuvers to the outside of the truck until it's neck-and-neck.

INT. SAM'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Sam looks to his left and see's HOOD 2, behind the wheel. He raises his sawed-off towards Sam --

Sam DUCKS --

KABOOM!

The blast SHATTERS the driver side window showering Sam with shards of glass.

The truck swerves right -- off the road -- Sam corrects.

He looks through the rear view mirror and see's Hood 2 making another approach and --

JERKS the steering wheel hard left -- sending the truck off-road into a CORN FIELD --

THUD-THUD-THUD-THUMP-THUMP! --

The stalks beat loudly against the windshield as the truck BARRELS through the field.

Sam glances over at Billy -- covered in blood, with a seeping wound on his neck from the shotgun blast. His complexion grows pallid.

Sam kills the headlights and continues blindly through the moonlit field.

The stalks continue to DRUM against the truck.

THUD-THUD-THUD-THUMP-THUMP...

All of a sudden --

CRUNCHH!

-- the truck FISHTAILS through the crop as Hood 2 SMASHES into the truck bed.

Sam corrects the spin then presses the gas, but the tires spin without traction, stuck in a ditch.

EXT. CORNFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Sam gets out of the truck and tucks his pistol in his waist band. Injured from the collision, he limps around to the passenger side door and pulls on the handle -- the door's jammed.

We can hear the other car and see its LIGHTS approaching through the stalks.

Sam tugs on the door handle with all of his might until it gives.

He rips off Billy's gag and pulls the crumpled, half-conscious man out and tosses his arm over his shoulder.

Sam muscles into the stalks with the head weight bearing him down. Billy's dripping wound leaves a crimson trail on the stalks.

EXT. CORNFIELD - SAM'S TRUCK

Hood 2 reaches Sam's abandoned truck and gets out his car. He peers into the empty vehicle then continues cautiously into the stalks with his rifle a tow.

He spots the blood on the stalks.

CUT TO:

Sam continues to trudge through the field with Billy's. His injured leg BUCKLES -- sending both men to their knees.

BACK TO:

Hood 2 continues to track the pair through the field when...

He spots ahead in the stalks. He creeps forward until he's able to make out Sam's HAT.

Hood 2 aims his shotgun...

BANG!

-- Blood explodes through the third eye on the burlap hood as a bullet rips through Hood 2's cranium.

Sam emerges from the stalks behind Hood 2 and walks over to Billy, slumped over in a seated position with Sam's hat on his head. His lifeless eyes stare blankly.

Sam puts his ear to Billy's mouth and nose.

Nothing.

SAM

Shit.

INT. HOODED MAN'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Sam rummages through the car looking for anything of use.

A SET OF HEADLIGHTS appears on the road in the distance.

Sam doesn't notice the lights as he continues to search through the car.

Something reflects on the passenger side window of the car -- Sam looks up and see's the car moving through the field towards him.

His eyes grow wide -- he jumps out of the car and rushes to his truck -- turns the key -- the engine STUTTERS. He tries again with the same results.

Sam LEAPS out of the driver seat and hobbles away from the scene as fast as he can.

EXT. EDGE OF CORN FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Out of breath and soiled, peers out of the stalks at the exposed land in front of him.

A LARGE BARN

sits on a field about 50 yards away.

Sam looks back into the field and see's the lights getting closer. He makes a beeline towards the barn.

INT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

A TRUCK is parked inside the dark barn. Sam try's the door but it's locked.

He scans for somewhere to hide.

A horse SNORTS startling him.

He continues towards the back of the barn when...

The barn door OPENS revealing the silhouette of yet another man wearing the same type of hood -- HOOD 3.

By his side, a SICKLE reflects under the moonlight. The masked man enters the barn.

Boots CLICK-CLACK against the wooden floor as the stalker searches for his prey.

The horse snorts again and sticks his head out of the stall.

Hood 3 runs the blade of the sickle gently down the horses muzzle.

HOOD 3

Eeeasy boy...

The CREAK of a door towards the back of the barn alerts the Hood 3 -- he rushes towards the noise and finds an OPEN DOOR leading out of the backside of the barn.

He Exits after Sam.

EXT. BARN - REAR EXIT - CONTINUOUS

Sam emerges from a LARGE PILE OF MANURE next to the barn and watches until the Hood is out of sight. He brushes off the pungent mess and ENTERS THE BARN again.

INT. BARN

Sam finds a lock box on the wall and pries it open with a screwdriver. Inside the box he finds a ring of keys.

Sam fiddles at the truck with the keys until he locates the right ones.

INT. TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Sam puts the key in the ignition and is about to turn it on WHEN...

Something outside the passenger side window catches his eye.

TWO MOTORCYCLES.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

VROOOOM!

Sam races out of the barn on a MOTORCYCLE. He comes to a skidding stop in front of the Hoods car and FIRES two shots into the engine block.

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Hood 3 turns in the direction of the shots.

EXT. WEIGH STATION - LATER

Sam pulls into the empty, one pump weigh station.

INT. WEIGH STATION

The ATTENDENT is startled by the disheveled, bloody man.

SAM

Do you have a telephone?

The attendant nods and points to the rotary style phone behind the counter.

Sam rushes to it and pulls the receiver off the block then turns the wheel. The line rings.

CUT TO:

INT. JUDGES HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Judge Barron awakes to the ringing phone. He walks into parlor and picks it up.

JUDGE

Hello?

SAM (O.S.)

It was a setup.

JUDGE

What do you mean? Where is Hannah?

SAM

She wasn't there. It was a setup.
Billy's dead.

JUDGE

Jesus. Where is she?

SAM

Only one other place Zionn would
have taken her.

JUDGE

Where? Where are you, Sam? I'll
send someone to pick you up --

SAM

No time. I'll phone you once I get
there.

Sam hangs up the phone.

He pauses for a moment then picks up the receiver and dials another number slowly on the rotary.

He listens as the phone rings...

CUT TO:

INT. SAM & HANNAH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

The phone RING -- Daisy, laying on the floor, perks up -- it rings again...

BACK TO:

INT. WEIGH STATION

Sam hangs up the telephone.

EXT. WEIGH STATION - MOMENTS LATER

He mounts the bike, turns on the grumbling engine, pops it into gear and speeds off.

INT. STRETCH OF DIRT ROAD - EARLY MORNING

Sam heads south down the everlasting road.

He's been riding for hours. His back aches and his golden eye's swell with tears from the irritating debris in the air - - but he keeps the throttle twisted to the max.

Nothing can stop him from saving Hannah. Not a man sent to kill him. Not the blistering sun above, nor biting dust below. And especially not the badgering symptoms of fatigue or injury.

AN ENORMOUS FLOCK OF BIRDS

soar through the sky, heading west. Sam watches the extraordinary flock as they blot out the sun momentarily.

ALL OF A SUDDEN...

At his 3 o'clock, something catches Sam's eye.

AN AMORPHOUS MASS

cresting over a hill, heading towards the road with frightening speed. Turbulent dusk masks whatever it is.

Sam attempts to download the sight and just as he does it's too late --

A STAMPEDE OF JACK RABBITS -- HUNDREDS, IF NOT THOUSANDS

of the small-dog-sized varmints BOUND across the road in an unbelievable display of fury.

BLOOD AND GUTS SPLATTER

up around Sam, painting a macabre, crimson mask on his face, as his motorcycle starts to mow down the frantic herd.

Like lemmings hurdling themselves off the edge of a cliff, the hares continue to SLAM into the motorcycle with reckless abandon...fleeing something...

Sam leans close to the bike, gripping the handles firmly as the CRUSHING and CRUNCHING continues.

BUT IT'S TOO MUCH...

The wheels seize from an overload of bones and fleshy parts -- the bike wobbles violently -- then swerves sideways into a slide -- pinned under the bike, Sam rips across the dirt road -- bowling through the mass of rabbits.

When he comes to a stop, Sam covers his head and face as the last of the rabbits cross the road.

HE sits up in the middle of the road, bloody and dazed. Large swatches of his shirt and pants are disintegrated from the road burn, exposing pussy, red burns on his skin.

He struggles to his feet before dropping to one knee -- his leg, already hurt during the car chase, is badly injured.

He gets to his feet once more and attempts to right the heavy bike, but cant.

FLASH ON

Hannah's angelic face. Her blue eye's dazzle under ambient light. Her expression is longing.

BACK TO:

A surge of adrenaline rushes through Sam's body and he's able to muscle the bike upright.

After a couple failed starts Sam gets the bike running and pulls away from the gruesome site, leaving the disembodied hares in his wake.

His tattered clothes flap in the wind as the wounded rider presses on.

EXT. THE TOWN OF JERICHO - NIGHT

A welcome sign reading "WELCOME TO JERICHO, A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE" greets Sam on the outskirts of town.

Sam pushes the motorcycle down the empty main drag, favoring his injured leg. Each step releases a waft of dust into the air, adding to the foggy haze that blankets the dead town.

The storms have come through here recently.

Not a light to be seen, every window black.

Sam parks the bike in an alleyway and proceeds gingerly down the sidewalks, peering inside various storefronts before coming to a PHARMACY.

He tries the door but it's locked -- looks right -- left and then breaks the glass above the doorknob with his elbow.

INT. PHARMACY

Sam rummages through the store shelves until he finds what he needs, disinfectant and bandages.

He exits the way he came when...

THWACK! --

SMASH CUT TO
BLACK

INT. UNKNOWN BEDROOM - SOMETIME LATER

As our weary traveler's vision clears we find a massive BLACK MAN "BEAR" sitting directly in front of us wearing a burning glare. We are inside in an ELEGANT BEDROOM.

Sam's hands are tied tightly behind his back. He looks around his surroundings confused.

BEAR
(intimidating baritone
voice)
Whatchu doing here?

SAM
Passing through.

BEAR
Where to?

SAM
Jackson.

BEAR
You a looter, ain't ya?

SAM

I'm a farmer. I'm headed to Jackson to check on some kin. Haven't heard from them since the storms hit.

Bear stares at the smattering of dried blood on Sam's clothes.

SAM (CONT'D)

Ran into a jackrabbit stampede on the way here.

Bear cocks his brow incredulously.

SAM (CONT'D)

Dumped my motorbike and injured my leg pretty good.

BEAR

And the gun?

SAM

Protection from the same people you're thinking I am.

BEAR

Sounds like a bunch of tales.

Bear stands up and steps towards Sam.

He raises his gigantic fist --

MAN'S VOICE

That's enough.

Bear obliges and takes a step back.

An ELDERLY, WHITE GENTLEMAN with a white beard, dressed in an expensive suit, appears in front of Sam.

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN

You with anyone else?

SAM

No sir.

The Gentleman motions for Bear to remove the ties. He obliges.

Sam rubs his wrists and looks at the old man inspecting him.

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN

You'll have to forgive us for the uncouth welcome. These days have made men desperate.

The man extends his hand.

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN (CONT'D)

Trufant. What's your name, friend?

Sam doesn't reciprocate the gesture.

SAM

Sam.

TRUFANT

Where are you from, Sam?

SAM

A little town outside of Prospect County.

TRUFANT

Well, Sam, certainly is a pleasure to meet you. I hate to start off so procedural but I'd be remiss not to tend to the important business we have at hand.

SAM

What business?

TRUFANT

You owe me twenty five dollars for the window you broke and the goods you stole.

SAM

That your pharmacy?

TRUFANT

No. But seeing as it's the towns pharmacy, I have the rightful authority to collect on the damage you inflicted on town property.

SAM

How do you figure that?

TRUFANT

This --

He HACKS UP A LUNG, then wipes his mouth with a handkerchief.

TRUFANT (CONT'D)

Pardon me. This is my town, son.

SAM

Not much of a town. I've only got a couple dollars 'n change. Take it and let me be on my way.

TRUFANT

Ah, keep your ones in your pocket. I'm sure we can work something out.

SAM

How do you figure?

TRUFANT

Well, for starters, you can join us for dinner.

SAM

Appreciate the gesture but I need to get back on the road.

Bear squeezes his fist.

TRUFANT

(re: Sam's appearance and stench)

Looks like you could use a bath too.

Sam doesn't respond.

Bear gives Sam a threatening glare.

Sam nods reluctantly.

TRUFANT (CONT'D)

Marvelous. I'll find you a change of clothes. We look to be a similar fit.

(pointing)

Bathrooms right there.

INT. BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

The filthy man enters the immaculate bathroom. Black and white checkerboard marble floors with white subway tiles and gold finishes.

Sam stands in front of the mirror and stares at the beaten visage in front of him. Clothes ripped to shreds, face caked in dirt and blood.

He pulls out Hannah's barrette and places it on the sink then turns around and draws the bath.

As the water fills the tub Sam returns to the sink and turns on the faucet, filling his hands with a crystal clear pool of water.

As he brings his hands towards his face he glimpses something in the reflection and stops -- spilling the water into the sink.

He brushes his bangs to the side -- his eyes widen at the sight of some sort of symbol, obscured by dirt and grime, etched in the middle of his forehead.

He rubs the dirt away and appears horrified as he discerns the symbol.

An EYEBALL.

He brings his face closer to the mirror and runs his fingers over the marking -- then grabs a towel and begins frantically rubbing at the marking.

It doesn't so much as smudge.

Sam turns the water hotter and dowses the towel -- continuing to rub. The steam from the water fills the room.

He dunks the towel again and RECOILS at the touch of the scalding water --

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sam JOLTS awake into the tub. A dream.

He stands up, steps onto the tile floor and stands in front of the mirror -- squinting his eyes and contorting his head until he's satisfied that the marking is gone.

Sam sits back down in the bathtub relieved and washes himself, occasionally cringing at the sting of soap entering the numerous scrapes and cuts on his body.

INT. BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Sam exits the bathroom with a towel around his waste and is greeted by Bear's hawkish stare. The ebony gigantor sits in a chair against the wall next to the bed.

He points to a beautiful charcoal suit and white shirt laying on the large bed.

SAM
 What, ya gonna watch me get
 dressed?

Bear doesn't flinch.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Alright, if your into that sorta
 thing...

Bear GRUMBLES and points to the clothes.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Alright, alright. No need to get
 nasty now.

Sam drops his towel.

Bear gives a slight grin and shakes his head. White guys...

INT. STAIR CASE - MINUTES LATER

Sam tucks the barrette into the suits cheat pocket and walks down the grand stair case with Bear towering behind him. He cleans up nicely and looks very handsome in the dress clothes. Perhaps in another life he'd be a business man or a lawyer.

At the bottom of the steps Bear ushers Sam ahead towards a set of doors then opens them revealing...

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A bizarre site.

SIX MEN OF VARYING AGE, dressed in formal wear and a GAGGLE OF SEDUCTIVELY DRESSED WOMEN (20's-40's) -- all wearing masquerade masks over their eyes -- sit around a large dinning table.

In front of the party, a magnificent spread.

The Guest's heads SWIVEL as Sam ENTERS the room.

Trufant stands from his seat at the head of the table and removes his mask briefly.

TRUFANT
 Ah, Sam, welcome. Please, join us.

Sam looks baffled as he's ogled by the women and inspected by the men.

Trufant addresses the table.

TRUFANT (CONT'D)
 Everyone, please welcome Sam. Who
 lucky for us, was passing through
 and graciously accepted my
 invitation.

The guests raise their glasses.

GUESTS
 Welcome./Here's to Sam.

Trufant pulls out a chair next to the head of the table or
 Sam.

TRUFANT
 A toast. To friends, new and old.

GUESTS
 Here, Here!

Sam approaches -- Trufant hands him a mask -- Sam hesitates.

TRUFANT
 I insist.

Sam looks in Bear's direction -- the mammoths unrelenting
 stare is more than enough reason to comply. He dons the mask.

INT. TABLE - MINUTES LATER

Sam gobbles and guzzles.

The MAN sitting next to Sam lets out a hard WHEEZING COUGH,
 spewing bits of food close to sam.

WHEEZY
 Forgive me, Sam.

SAM
 No problem.

TRUFANT
 (to Sam)
 Is it to your liking?

Sam looks at Trufant.

TRUFANT (CONT'D)
 The food. Do you like it?

SAM
Very much so.

TRUFANT
Good. So what do you do back at home for a living?

SAM
(with his mouth full)
I have a farm.

A PENCIL NECKED MAN (50's), with a befitting stork like beak protruding from his mask, chimes in from the other side of the table.

WEASELY
I could have told you that.

TRUFANT
Ah, you're a mind reader, Mr. Jones?

MR. JONES
Hardly. Our bronzed friends elbows haven't left the table since he sat down and he chews with the delicacy of a bovine. Not to mention...that's the salad fork.

The guests turns and look at Sam's fingers, indeed, grasping the Beef fork.

SAM
You funnin' with me, Mr?

TRUFANT
I think what my brother means to say is that we've been around our own for a while now and it's refreshing to have a guest with a fresh perspective.

SAM
That's good cause if he was trying to have a go at me I'd be obliged to familiarize your brother with some of the etiquette from where I come from.

MR. JONES
Ah, yes. Please, enlighten me.

SAM

For one, where I come from we respect our women.

Sam looks at the women to his right.

SAM (CONT'D)

No disrespect ma'am.

(to Mr. Jones)

You've been ogling this lovely women's endowments since I sat down.

A resounding silence falls over the table.

Mr. Jones BLUSHES. The LARGE BREASTED WOMAN gives Mr. Jones an offended look and SLAPS him on the shoulder him with her napkin -- he flinches like a little girl.

MR. JONES

(to Sam)

How dare you make such a crude accusation.

SAM

Only thing crude is the way you've been looking at them. Like two ripe canteloupes.

The rest of the table looks on uncomfortably.

Jugs covers her chest.

MR. JONES

Trufant, I must declare, your guest is a *scoundrel!*

Sam proceeds.

SAM

But the number one rule from where I'm from is that you don't fun with someone unless you know exactly who it is you're funnin' with.

MR. JONES

So tell me, Sam. Who is it that I'm *funning* with?

Sam stands and removes the mask.

SAM
 Someone who'll erase that
 highfalutin attitude faster than
 you can blink, Mr. Jones.

Sam stares Mr. Jones' dead in the eye -- the cantankerous man
 looks away nervously.

TRUFANT
 All right, gentlemen. That's
 enough.

INT. DINNING ROOM - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Sam and Trufant -- masks off -- are the only two left at the
 table as the rest of the eclectic guests carry on the
 bacchanalian festivities in the parlor, dancing and drinking.

Sam gulps the rest of the wine from his glass. Trufant pours
 him another.

Bear walks into the room.

BEAR
 I'm going to patch up the pharmacy.

Trufant nods.

TRUFANT
 Thank you, Bear.

Bear exits.

TRUFANT (CONT'D)
 (to Sam)
 Where are you really headed?

SAM
 Pardon?

TRUFANT
 Please don't insult my hospitality.
 Bear may not be the most loquacious
 of men but he's smart enough to
 recognize a bullshit lie.

Sam pauses for a moment.

SAM
 My wife was taken...

TRUFANT
 Taken? Kidnaped?

Sam nods.

TRUFANT (CONT'D)
My word. By who?

SAM
A very sick man.

Trufant shows genuine concern.

SAM (CONT'D)
Her father's a judge back in Prospect. A real big-wig who pulls a lot of strings. The kidnapper took her as a bargaining chip to get his son outa' jail.

TRUFANT
What happened? Was he released.

Sam nods.

TRUFANT (CONT'D)
And...

SAM
He was killed before the exchange could be made.

Trufant shakes his head and twirls his fingers through his beard.

TUFANT
Oh my. So what do you plan to do now? Surely her father knows people who can help you.

SAM
No time to wait for help. The man that took her has a grudge against me and ain't no tellin' what he'll do when he finds out his son was killed...if he hasn't already.

A beat.

TRUFANT
(nodding)
I understand. Clearly time is of the essence and your facing extraordinary circumstances, Sam. But I must ask a favor of you before you leave.

SAM
What's that?

TRUFANT
I need to get word to my daughter.

SAM
Why can't you send word yourself?

TRUFANT
You ever heard of a sanitarium?

FLASHBACK

INT. A HOSPITAL - SEVERAL YEARS EARLIER

SICKLY LITTLE BOYS AND GIRLS

in nightgowns, lie on beds in a large room, tended to by nurses and doctors.

At one end of the room, Sam and Hannah stand over one of the beds -- ELLIE, blonde, skinny and with the same blue eyes as her mother, lies frightened on the bed.

The young girl squeezes Sam's wrist.

ELLIE
Don't leave me, Daddy. Please don't leave me.

END FLASHBACK

BACK TO:

PRESENT

Sam nods affirmatively.

SAM
People who get Consumption go there.

Trufant rises from his seat and motions for Sam to follow him. They walk into a hallway off of the dining room where Trufant opens a door --

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A FRAIL MAN lies stricken in bed with a WOMAN tending to him.

Sam queries anxiously.

SAM

Is everyone affected?

TRUFANT

You needn't be worried. That's why we protect the pharmacy. We've stockpiled treatment...but it's just a bandage on top of an incurable wound I'm afraid. And there isn't much left.

SAM

Why don't you leave and get help?

TRUFANT

There was an outbreak of the cough last year. When the storms hit, most of those who could travel left town. Some couldn't leave because of their condition and the rest of us, we chose not to leave them behind.

(a beat)

So we obscure death and celebrate what life we have left.

(Trufant looks around at the surroundings)

This place is more than a sanitarium, it's our **sunny side of hell.**

Trufant hands an envelope to Sam.

TRUFANT (CONT'D)

In here are all of our names and, more than likely, our last expressions of love to those we hold close. Please. Get this to my daughter.

EXT. TOWN OF JERICHO - STREET - CONTINUOUS

Bear walks down the sidewalk towards the pharmacy. He turns the corner and see's the pharmacy door wide open.

INT. PHARMACY

Bear creeps through the dark pharmacy gripping his club tightly.

A NOISE in the back gets his attention.

He steps carefully towards it's source, ready to bludgeon anyone else foolish enough to tread on the giants man's territory.

As he walks towards the back of the room he hears ANOTHER SOUND.

Bears turns a corner with his club raised high --

FRIGHTENING EYES

behind Hood 3's burlap mask startle him --

Before Bear has time to react -- a lightning quick SWING drops his headless body to its knees.

CLOSE ON: the bloody SICKLE hanging from the killers hand.

INT. TRUFANTS HOME - FRONT STOOP - CONTINUOUS

Sam and Trufant stand on the front stoop of the building.

SAM

Appreciate the hospitality.

TRUFANT

The pleasure was all mine.

Trufant hands Sam his pistol and back pack then lets go a terrible HACK.

TRUFANT (CONT'D)

(pointing diagonally
across the street)

Your motorbike is in the alley
there.

SAM

Alright now, you take care of
yourself, Trufant.

TRUFANT

God speed, Sam. God speed.

Sam extends his hand to the old man when something catches his eye...

He discerns a FIGURE, walking down the middle of the road towards the men, blurred by the rising dust.

Both men watch for a few moments until Sam recognizes Hood 3 -

-

SAM

Get inside and lock the doors.

Sam BOLTS toward the alley --

The assassin does the same --

Trufant watches frightfully for a few moments, then slams the door shut and turns the lock.

Sam and Hood 3 stay fixed on each other, matching each other pace for pace as they sprint towards the alley.

Sam empties his cartridge at the sprinting hood but misses.

BODIES COLLIDE with neck-braking force as they reach the alley at the same time and wipe out in the dirt.

Sam gets to his feet and limps towards the motorcycle as the henchmen shakes himself out of a daze.

Our guy starts the bike and throttles out of the alley just as...

Hood 3 latches onto Sam's back, clawing at him for a few moments until loosing hold and taking a spill in the dirt.

EXT. ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Sam speeds down a steep hill into a long stretch of road. He breaths heavily as adrenaline pulses through his veins.

A HEADLIGHT appears at the top of the hill behind him.

Sam sees the light in his mirror and twists the throttle harder.

The single lamp gains rapidly on Sam until his bike is shrouded in the other bikes beams.

Sam peers into the mirror again and sees HOOD 3 atop the second motorcycle from the barn.

Hood 3 accelerates, bearing down on his prey.

Sam pushes his bike to its max -- a fall would be the end.

Now, floodlit from the assailant's bike -- mere yards away-- Sam SWERVES just as...

Hood 3's SICKLE TEARS through his coat, deep into his shoulder -- the bike wobbles as Sam struggles to keep it upright.

Recognizing he cant out race his stalker, Sam DARTS off road -
- busting through a thin line of dead saplings -- into

a WIDE OPEN PRAIRIE and suddenly...

finds himself in the air -- soaring head overs heels before
slamming hard on the ground back first.

He gets to his feet and attempts to pull the bike from a
ditch.

Hood 3's motorcycle GRUMBLES close by, searching for Sam.

Unable to free his bike, Sam limps into the dark prairie,
scanning the empty landscape for a place to hide. He spots a
WELL nearby and makes a break for it.

EXT. PRAIRIE -- WELL - MOMENTS LATER

Wooden boards cover up the old well. Sam pries until one
gives and then ducks behind the well with the long board in
his grasp.

ALL OF A SUDDEN...

Hood 3's motorcycle illuminates the well as he speeds towards
it.

Sam hold's steady, breathing hard as the whining motorcycle
nears.

Just as it's about to pass...

Sam jumps from behind the well and sticks the board in the
ground like a pike -- catching Hood 3 with a direct shot to
the chest -- sending him violently off the back of the bike --
which narrowly misses Sam as it ghost-rides ahead before
wiping out in the dirt.

Sam walks over to the motionless villain, laid out on his
back, motionless. He kicks away the sickle lying nearby then
kneels by the man's side and reaches for the hood --

WHACKK!

Sam takes a blow to the side of the head -- then is SWEPT to
the ground.

VICIOUS BLOWS are exchanged as the men wage a tumbling, no
holds barred war in the dirt.

FISTS. KNEES. HEAD-BUTTS. ELBOWS.

When the battle comes to a halt at the base of the well, Sam finds himself under Hood 3, staring directly into the cold eyes behind the burlap as the masked man's hands squeeze his throat.

Sam's brain screams for oxygen as his vision grows dim and he teeters on the edge of consciousness. He spots the ROPE from the well's pulley dangling within reach and stretches...

SNAGGING the rope and using the last of his strength to loop it around Hood 3's neck --

Sam's eyes close -- his arm thumps lifelessly to the ground.

FLASH ON

Hannah -- her figure radiant -- standing amidst the long golden stalks in their field. Her luminous blue eye's are comforting and inviting, making a surrender not so bad.

BACK TO:

Sam surges back to life with a ROAR!

His legs explode into the masked man's torso -- sending him head over heels -- CRASHING through the boards covering the well -- SNAP -- breaking his neck.

Sam leans against the base of the well, panting heavily as he gazes up at the starry night. A silent night once more.

MINUTES LATER

Sam ties the end of the rope to the back of the dead man's motorcycle and pulls his corpse out of the well.

He kneels next to the body then pulls off the hood; a lifeless, handsome baby face stares back at us. Sam's expression makes it clear that he doesn't recognize the man.

He stuff's the burlap mask in his coat pocket.

EXT. PLAINS - DAWN

Our lonely rider's journey picks up on yet another long stretch of road as the cool reprieve of dawn gives way to another blistering sun.

INT. DRIED POND - ROADSIDE - DAY

Sam kneels over the dried bed, pressing his lips against the tiny patches of mud, not yet sucked dry by the sun.

Before mounting the motorcycle, he reaches into his pant pocket and takes out Hannah's hairpin, rubbing it gently as it reflects brightly under the sun.

EXT. ROAD - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

A GUST of wind hits Sam from the side nudging the bike to the edge of the road.

Sam turns back and THERE IT IS...

NOT BIG...

NOT HUGE...

GALACTIC.

The horrifying DUST MONSTERS; fabled for swallowing bustling metropolises whole and shitting their lifeless skeletons out in their wake.

SOARING WELL INTO THE HEAVENS, the dark reddish/brown burgeoning mass rolls towards Sam at a blistering rate.

Several whirling columns of dust drift up like cigar smoke in front of the monster, feeding the voracious beast, making it

BIGGER.

STRONGER.

No sound, and for a brief moment no fear.

FIFTY YARDS and closing fast...

Sam snaps from his trance and twists the throttle, spurring the bike back to life.

The SKY BLACKENS as the galactic cloud covers the sun.

Sam floors ahead, looking for safety.

On the horizon --

a HOUSE

Sam points the motorcycle towards it.

The dust nips at the back tire of the motorcycle.

The throttle is at full tilt -- but it's not enough.

In an instant we're engulfed in

INKY BLACKNESS --

SMASH CUT TO
BLACK

INT. HOUSE ON THE HORIZON - LATER

Drifting in and out of consciousness, Sam's eyes open and shut several times revealing the BLURRY VISAGE OF A WOMAN.

When he finally comes to, we see a RIB-SKINNY BRUNETTE (30's), with a bob haircut and sunken brown eyes -- soaking a rag and placing it on Sam's forehead.

Sam is haggard, pale and sweaty. He summons the strength to speak.

SAM

Wh...where am I?

BRUNETTE

You're safe now. Get some sleep.

Sam sits up and winces in pain.

SAM

I've got to go.

BRUNETTE

Not with that fever. And it looks like your leg might be broke. Get some rest.

Sam ignores the woman and stands to his feet before quickly dropping back onto the cot.

The Brunette places her hand on Sam's shoulder and hands him a glass of something;

VIVIAN

Drink this and get some rest. Your body's weak.

Sam sips the drink and lays back down, quickly finding sleep.

INT. HOUSE - LATER ON

Sam opens his eyes again, this time to

FIVE DIRTY, GAUNT LITTLE FACES

staring curiously at bedside. TWO LITTLE GIRLS, a LITTLE BOY and an INFANT held in the hands of one of the girls.

Sam stares back at the cadaverous little gawkers.

The ELDEST GIRL, MOLLY (8), addresses the battered stranger.

MOLLY
What's your name?

SAM
Sam.

MOLLY
Got any food?

Sam shakes his head no.

The Little Boy steps forward and bravely POKES the bandage on Sam's leg.

SAM
Sunabitch! Don't do that.

The boy scampers back.

MOLLY
My mommy said that sunabitch ain't
a word for a lady.

SAM
I'm not a lady.

The Brunette from before enters the room. Her worn blouse and slacks hang off her skeletal frame.

BRUNETTE
How do you feel?

SAM
Been better.

The woman grins.

BRUNETTE
I'm Vivian.
(re: the children)
This is Molly, Lilly, Joseph and
the little one's Nathaniel.

SAM
Pleased to meet you. I'm Sam.

The precocious one speaks up.

MOLLY
Mommy, mommy!

VIVIAN
Yes, darling?

MOLLY
Sam said "sunabitch".

VIVIAN
Young lady. What've I told you
about using words like that?

MOLLY
It isn't lady like.

VIVIAN
That's right.

MOLLY
But he isn't a lady.

Vivian cant help but chuckle.

VIVIAN
No, no he's not. It isn't
gentlemanly either.

SAM
Yes ma'am. Apologies.

JOSEPH
He smells funny.

Sam's slightly embarrassed by the assertion.

VIVIAN
Children, leave us for a moment.

The bony crew scurries into the next room.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
Lucky we found you out there.

SAM
I'm very grateful you did. Thank
you.

ALL OF A SUDDEN...

The front door SWINGS OPEN

A GAS MASK WEARING FIGURE

appears in the doorway clutching a rifle --

Sam sits up and reaches for his pistol but quickly realizes that it's not on him -- Vivian grabs his hand.

VIVIAN

Easy.

The figure in the doorway pulls off the mask; a WOMAN, older than the first, gangly, with cropped dirty blonde hair and a strictness to her thin face addresses Vivian;

GAS MASK WOMAN

Nothing. Dead or alive.

VIVIAN

That's Pearl.
 (to Pearl)
 This is Sam.

Sam nods in recognition;

SAM

Ma'am.
 (to Vivian)
 Where's my pistol?

VIVIAN

Somewhere safe so the kids cant get at it.

Pearl shuts the door and steps into the room, addressing Sam with the rifle still in her clutches.

PEARL

You nearly died out there. What are you doing traveling these parts alone? You a scavenger?

SAM

No ma'am. Headed to Jackson. The storm chased me off the highway.
 (A beat.)
 My motorcycle, is it ok?

PEARL

Didn't find a motorcycle. Must've been swallowed up by the dust.

SAM

I need to find it.

PEARL

We'll look. Even if we do find it, the chances of it starting again are none to good.

(MORE)

PEARL (CONT'D)

(a beat)
Jackson, huh?

Sam nods.

PEARL (CONT'D)

Nothing down there, same as here.
You sure you ain't a scavenger?

SAM

My kins there. Haven't heard from
them in weeks so I'm going to check
on them. Make sure they're safe.

PEARL

God willing.

Sam notices a BLACK & WHITE PHOTOGRAPH OF PEARL WITH HER
HUSBAND AND FAMILY hanging from the wall. Her face is much
fuller and gentler in the picture.

SAM

This your house?

Pearl looks at Vivian;

PEARL

Ours now.

SAM

Where are your husbands?

VIVIAN

They headed West to pick up work.

SAM

How long ago?

PEARL

Been a while now.

Sam pushes aside a dusty sheet covering one of the windows
and beholds the

BARREN HELLSCAPE

Post-apocalyptic. An occasional smattering of dead trees and
bushes poking provide the only hint that there was once life
outside these windows.

A WINDMILL, once powering a well below, protrudes out of a
mound.

VIVIAN

We were always off the beaten path.
Now there ain't a path left.

Pearl peers out the window.

PEARL

Everyone in the bedroom!
(a beat)
Looks like another one's comin'.

Vivian ushers the children into the bedroom then returns to help Pearl lock the house down. They place a plank across the front door and then make sure the locks and sheets covering the battered windows are secure.

The WIND SHRILLS outside.

SAM

Two in one day?

PEARL

You must've brought some kinda luck
with you.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The women help Sam into the bedroom where they meet the children, huddled together on the bed.

The wind picks up its ferocity outside.

Baby Nathaniel starts to cry.

Just as quick as it came, the wind ceases and an eerie quiet falls over the house.

The timorous children clutch their dolls and mother's tightly as darkness creeps over the house, through the windows, casting spooky shadows across the room.

MOLLY

I don't like this mommy?

VIVIAN

It's OK, darling. I don't like it
much either.

JOSEPH

(to Pearl)
I'm scared.

Pearl places her hand on the boy's head.

PEARL
You remember what Daddy said don't
you?

Joseph nods.

PEARL (CONT'D)
What did he say? Tell mommy.

JOSEPH
Um, he said that I'm the Man of the
house and I cant be scared.

PEARL
Why?

JOSEPH
Because my sister and brother need
me.

PEARL
That's right.

Vivian lights a candle as the room grows dark.

SAM
I used to be afraid of the dark
when I was little too. When I'd get
scared my mother would tell me a
story. Do you want to hear it?

The children nod.

Pearl and Vivian look at Sam.

He addresses the kids;

SAM (CONT'D)
There once was a tiny creature --
the size of a mouse -- who lived
under a little boys bed. His name
was Theo. One night, Theo heard the
boy crying so he leapt on his
pillow and asked him what was
wrong. At first the boy was
startled by the little monster, but
he quickly learned that Theo was
not scary at all.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE

DARKNESS drapes the landscape as the insidious monster converges upon the house.

BACK TO:

INT. BEDROOM

The little boy told Theo that he was afraid of the dark and couldn't sleep. Theo, being the kind-hearted little guy he was, promised to help. You see, Theo could eat whatever he wanted, even the dark.

(a beat)

The little boy was ecstatic when he learned about these special powers and begged Theo to get chomping. Theo jumped back under the bed, opened his mouth wide...

(Sam stretches his mouth open)

And took a gigantic bite out of the shadows that lurked underneath. Sure enough, a speckle of light filled the space. Now, Theo was happy to help the little boy, but he was even happier to learn that the dark tasted like apple pie!

A couple smirks appear on the scared little faces.

So he kept chomping away. First, filling the space under the bed with light and then chomping away at the scary darkness in the closet. The little boy and Theo were both very happy. But there was a problem. Theo liked the taste of the dark so much that he couldn't stop eating. With each bite he was growing and growing and growing. By the time the room was bright with light, Theo could barley fit inside.

Dust begins seeping into the cracks of the house, wafting up through the room as the house begins to TREMBLE.

Sam works to hold children's attention;

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

Eventually, Theo had to leave the little boys room to satisfy his hunger. First, he ate all the darkness in the town. Then the city. And then Theo went to the darkest corners in the world, devouring the shadows from the caves, volcanoes and everything that blocked the light, until... their was no more darkness.

The house begins to CREAK and GROAN.

One very bright night, Theo returned to the little boys home and found him crying in his bed. Theo asked his old friend what was wrong, to which the little boy replied that he "could no longer sleep because it was too bright". So Theo, being the kind hearted friend he was, did what any good friend, or Mommy and Daddy would do in this situation -- he sung the little boy a lullaby.

The noises grow LOUDER as the house really starts to SHUDDER.

Eventually the little boy started to grow tired, until his eyes started to close and he fell asleep. The next morning the boy woke up and thanked Theo for what he'd done. "I guess we do need the dark after all," he told Theo. "Yes, I guess you're right", Theo said. "There's something I can do..." "Be careful", the little boy said. "Don't eat it all." So, Theo carefully ate the light, leaving it where it needed to be, shrinking as he ate, until their was just enough light and just enough dark and he could return to the spot under the bed. From that day on the little boy had many wonderful nights of sleeping and dreaming and was never afraid of the dark again.

On queue, the turbulence subsides and sunlight starts to poke through the bedroom windows once again. A feeling of relief falls over the clan.

SAM
Theo, is that you?

The children giggle.

JOSEPH
I liked that story.

MOLLY
Me too.

SAM
I'm glad. I like it too.

Vivian gazes fondly at Sam.

PEARL
Light *and* dark both have their
place in the world.

Pearl exits the bedroom.

VIVIAN
(to Sam)
Thank you.

Sam smiles.

PEARL (O.S.)
Damn it!

A beat.

One of the boards gave way. I need
to go outside and fix it.

SAM
I'll give you a hand.

PEARL
No. I can manage. Thank you.

Pearl locates a hammer and nails and exits into the sandy
tundra.

INT. HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Sam sits around the dining-room table with the ill-nourished
family. A hard-as-rock loaf of bread and scraps of dried meat
and moldy cheese create a pitiful charcuterie.

VIVIAN
Not much, but it's something.

Pearl rations the food to the table. Vivian pours the water.

SAM
How much water do you have?

Vivian nods to a couple barrels nearby.

VIVIAN
Pumped the last of it last week.
Had to get it all out before the
dust fouled it up.

Sam shares his portion with the children, taking little for himself.

SAM
How far's the highway from here?

PEARL
Couple miles.

SAM
And the nearest neighbor?

PEARL
Five.
(a beat)
No one's there.

Sam contemplates his options.

VIVIAN
You'll never make it out there.
Especially with your leg like that.
Stay the night at least.

SAM
I wouldn't want to impose. You all
have been plenty kind to me
already. I really should get going.

PEARL
She's right. Your best bet is to
wait till morning. If you feel up
to it then we can set you off in
the right direction. With the
storms and all, I cant say--

SAM
I understand. It's a risk I've got
to take.

Pearl nods understandingly.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Vivian and Sam sit at the dinning room table. Vivian, in a robe and nightgown, pours Sam a glass of whiskey and one for herself.

VIVIAN

No food. Barely any water. But we've got plenty of this stuff.

SAM

Not a bad thing to have.

VIVIAN

Not at all. Vivian's old man did a little bootlegging on the side.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pearl peers out of the bedroom door, eaves dropping on the conversation. She looks displeased.

BACK TO:

INT. DINING ROOM

Vivian takes a sip of her drink and simpers at Sam.

VIVIAN

So, do you have a Misses, Sam?

Sam nods.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

What's her name.

SAM

Hannah.

VIVIAN

I don't like that name much.

SAM

Pardon?

VIVIAN

Nothing personal. This wretched creature I went to school with when I was little; Hannah Beauvais. Thought she was so fancy because her parents were from France.

(MORE)

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
Used to tease me...call me flat as
a board.

Vivian pulls her robe back slightly, revealing ample
cleavage.

Sam seems taken aback by the salacious gesture when Vivian
pulls her gown completely open, showing her bare breasts and
protruding ribs. She takes Sam's hand and places it on her
breast.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
I was what you'd call a late
bloomer.

Vivian pulls Sam in close -- the pair lock lips for a lustful
kiss -- Sam pulls away --

SAM
I'm sorry. I cant...

Vivian looks at Sam incredulously, then pulls her robe closed
and rushes out of the room.

INT. PEARL'S HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Sam wakes up to a COMMOTION coming from the bedroom. He gets
up from the cot and approaches the room cautiously.

From outside the bedroom he hears the women in the middle of
an argument;

VIVIAN (O.S.)
You're going to wake the children.

The door creaks open -- Pearl is surprised to see Sam
standing there.

PEARL
Sam. Everything alright?

Vivian can be seen sitting on the bed wiping tears from her
swollen eyes.

SAM
Couldn't sleep.

PEARL (O.S.)
Well if you're feeling up to it,
perhaps you can give me a hand.
Damn boards on the side of the
house keep givin' way.

Sam locks eyes with Vivian for a moment -- they are swollen and red as though she's been crying -- she looks away.

SAM
Not a problem.

PEARL
Great. I'll get dressed.

Sam nods.

Pearl shuts the bedroom door.

EXT. HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

The moon shines across the still expanse.

Mounds of dirt and sand pile up to the dusty windowsills on the exterior of the house; each storm slowly burying the home and it's occupants.

SAM
What did it used to look like?

PEARL
Beautiful.

SAM
It's takes a different kind of strength to do what you and Vivian are doing.

PEARL
We do what we have to.

Pearl points to a section of siding that's been damaged by the storms.

PEARL (CONT'D)
I've tried to secure it a few times but it keeps busting free.

Pearl hands Sam the hammer and nails.

THWACK --

He drives the first nail into the board.

SAM
I don't want to wake the children.

PEARL
They're deep sleepers.

THWACK -- raises the hammer for another strike WHEN...

KABOOM!!

An EXPLOSION OF WOOD in front of his face sends Sam FLYING BACK onto his butt.

He looks back towards the front of the house, stunned, and sees Vivian pointing the smoking rifle at him. The gun tremors in her hands.

SAM

What are you doing, Vivian!?

PEARL

Take care of it Vivian!

Sam's head swivels to the Alpha, standing out of the line of fire behind him.

SAM

(to Pearl)

What the hell is going on?!

Tears begin to stream down Vivian's face.

KABOOM!!

a shot hits in front of Sam's feet.

SAM (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ, what the fuck are you doing?

PEARL

Damn it, Vivian.

Pearl starts toward Vivian -- Sam grabs the hammer and SLINGS it at her -- striking the side of the head -- sending her hard to the ground.

Sam springs from his position and swoops up Pearl, holding her in front of him as a shield.

SAM

Drop the rifle Vivian, you'll kill her.

The quivering woman starts to cry.

VIVIAN

The babies... they haven't had a proper meal in weeks.

(MORE)

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
Cant make it much longer this
way...they need to eat...I'm sorry.

SAM
What are you saying, Vivian?

And then it hits him. Our guy's unknowingly found himself on
the menu. A last, unimaginable resort to keep the hopeless
family alive.

SAM (CONT'D)
You don't want to do this. We'll
find something to eat. I'll help
you.

The desperate woman really starts to bawl.

VIVIAN
I'm sorry. We don't have a choice.

SAM
Yes, you do. Someone's going to get
hurt real bad. The children need
their mothers. Both of them. Your
husbands need their wives.

VIVIAN
They're not coming back.

Sam looks at her quizzically.

SAM
What are you talking about?

VIVIAN
They're not coming back.

SAM
Sure they are. They could be on
their way right now.

VIVIAN
No! They're dead.

Pearl mumbles something.

SAM
Dead? You said they headed west to
pick up work.

Vivian shakes her head.

SAM (CONT'D)
How?

A beat.

VIVIAN
 Pearl's old man caught a fever.

SAM
 And yours?

Vivian stares at him despondently.

VIVIAN
 He took the cowards way out. Left
 us to fend for ourselves...

SAM
 I can help you.

Little Molly, awoken by the shots, hollers from the front
 door;

MOLLY (O.S.)
 Mommy!? Mommy are you there? What's
 going on?

Vivian turns her head towards the front of the house -- in an
 instant Sam is upon her ripping the rifle from her clutches.
 He wraps his arm around her neck.

SAM
 Tell her to go inside.

Sam tightens his grip until Vivian acquiesces.

VIVIAN
 Molly, go inside! Everything's
 fine. Mommy will be right in.

MOLLY
 I heard gun shots, I'm scared.

VIVIAN
 There's nothing to worry about,
 honey. Now be a good girl and do
 what I say.

The front door closes.

Sam pushes Vivian to the ground and points the rifle at her --
 she shields her face with her hands.

SAM
 I should shoot the both of you. God
 damn savages!

VIVIAN
(sobbing)
I'm sorry.

INT. PEARL'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sam gathers his belongings hurriedly while Vivian tends to Pearl in the bedroom.

He enters the bedroom;

SAM
My pistol?

Vivian opens a drawer near bedside and hands Sam his side-arm. He tucks it in his waistband.

VIVIAN
You wont make it out there.

SAM
Maybe so. I'll take my chances.

INT. HOUSE - MAIN ROOM

The children, now all awake huddle around Sam.

JOSEPH
Are you leaving?

SAM
Yea, Joseph, I am.

JOSEPH
How come?

SAM
I need to get to my family.

Joseph hands Sam a wooden toy knife.

JOSEPH
Take this.

Sam smiles.

SAM
Keep it. Protect your brothers and sisters.

Sam pats the boy on the head, and looks at the rest of the children, watching on as their new friend prepares to leave.

MOLLY
You aren't coming back are you?

Sam mulls over the heartbreaking question, then shakes his head no.

Molly nods disappointedly.

Sam forces a smile as he proceeds to pat each of the children on the head.

He opens the door and pauses at the sight of the rifle leaning by frame. He contemplates taking it...but EXITS without it.

As he steps into the tundra Sam's eye's well at the thought of the doomed children.

EXT. OPEN PLAINS - DAWN

Sam limps across the barren landscape using a long stick as a cane.

MONTAGE OF: SAM MARCHING FOR HOURS UNDER THE OPPRESSING SUN.

- 1)Through large dunes of dust.
- 2)Passed an abandoned house.
- 3)Passed a buried car.
- 4)Passed the dried carcasses of fallen livestock.

EXT. OPEN PLAINS - NOON

Our guy continues to lumber, melting under the sun. Weary and dehydrated, he battles exhaustion and the occasional hallucination.

He's come too far and been through too much, to succumb to the sun and end up immortalized as a set of bleached bones in the middle of nowhere.

But there's no more strength for the determined man to summon.

He drops to his knees, defeated, gazing into the sun, concededly.

A vulture circles above, taunting its soon to be next meal.

Something catches Sam's eyes. In the distance --

A VEHICLE

Probably just another passing illusion.

But it doesn't fade.

Sam WAVES HIS ARMS WILDLY, HOLLERING at the top of his lungs and HOPPING on his one good leg, trying to capture the illusory drivers attention. They don't seem to notice and continue on.

In a desperate, mad moment, Sam pulls out Hannah's silver barrette and angles it to reflect the sun in hopes that the driver will see the glint and come rescue him.

But the car is too far away and there's no chance in hell they'll see a reflection from this distance...

Sam angles the barrette under the Sun, catching the light.

The truck doesn't notice the futile attempt and continues as Sam continues to cast the light of the glistening barrette.

ALL OF A SUDDEN...

The truck pivots and begins heading in Sam's direction.

He HOOTS AND HOLLERS and WAVES HIS ARMS WILDLY again.

After several moments the driver pulls up to Sam in a pickup truck with a canvas covered bed.

A MIDDLE-AGED MAN with dark skin and a smoldering corn pipe in his mouth rolls down his window. The inside of the truck is filled to the been with boxes and various belongings.

He addresses the pitiful, sunburned man in front of him.

DRIVER

Looks like you could use a lift,
friend.

SAM

Sure could.

DRIVER

Where you headed?

SAM

Jackson.

DRIVER

I'm passin by that way. Hop in the
back.

The man hands Sam a canteen. Too good to be true? Too good to question. Sam hops in the bed.

EXT. TRUCK BED - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Sam sits under the canvas in the bed of the truck, sipping from the canteen. He knocks on the rear window. The driver opens it.

SAM

Hate to trouble you further but you wouldn't happen to have a pen in there wouldya?

DRIVER

Matterafact I do.

The driver reaches into his coat pocket and then hands Sam a fountain pen.

Our guy reaches into his vest and pulls out the letters from Trufant. He peels off the envelopes then begins writing something on it.

As he writes:

SAM (V.O.)

"My Angel,
I'm writing this hoping with every part of my body and soul that I will look into your eyes once more. Hear your calming voice...feel your gentle touch. If I am so lucky I swear to you that I will never let go. But I'm afraid my luck may have run out. If it has then there are truths that I must leave you with. Truths about how we got here. The truth of my past, a past I hid from you to protect you...from the truth of me..."

CUT TO:

EXT. TRUCK

Clouds of dust rise behind the truck as Sam sits in the truck bed writing the letter.

EXT. A ONE ROOM BUILDING ON AN OPEN PLAIN - JACKSON -
AFTERNOON

Sam hops out of the back of the truck and leans into the
passenger side window.

SAM

Wish there was a way I could repay
you. You saved my life.

DRIVER

Do something good with it.

Sam nods.

The truck pulls away.

"JACKSON PRIMARY SCHOOL" is emblazoned above the front door.
Sam approaches the door -- then pauses -- cocking the pistol
in his waste band.

He opens the door --

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE

ZIONN...

stands in front of a room of ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN.

He's visibly surprised to see a scorched, depleted Sam.

ZIONN

Sam? Welcome. Class, say hello to
Sam.

The bright eyes of the sparse class turn to the guest and
offer a resounding welcome;

CLASS

Hi, Sam!

ZIONN

Feel free to join us.

Sam steps to the back of the classroom and sits at one of the
many open desks. A few of the students inspect the stranger.
The students are ragged and thin, casualties of the times.

Zionn continues with the lesson.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

At the height of its reign, Rome was the most powerful empire in the world. They had a mighty military, a prosperous economy and the most advanced technology. But as we see time again in history, civilizations that experience periods of great power tend to form an exaggerated sense of themselves.

STUDENT

What does that mean?

SAM

They forget who they really are.

ZIONN

Precisely, Sam.

Zionn continues...

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HOUSE - A WHILE LATER

The last of the children exit the school.

Sam stands from his seat and approaches Zionn at the front of the room.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

(genuine)

It's nice to see you again. Didn't think I'd be so lucky.

He looks around the room then brushes his hair back behind his ear revealing his mangled lobe.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

This is the first classroom I ever taught in. I was a young man back then, full of ideas and plans. Surely I've told you this already, since you found me here.

(a beat)

I got word that the teachers fled the storms so I came down.

Sam pulls out his pistol.

SAM

Where is she?

ZIONN

Now, now. Is that the greeting I'm deserving of? You're under quite a bit of stress no doubt, but show some respect, boy.

SAM

Respect? That what you call the men you sent to hunt me down?

Zionn shakes his head;

ZIONN

You can thank your father-in-Law for that. That wasn't part of our arrangement.

(a beat)

Frankly, I'm offended you think I'd stoop so low.

SAM

What arrangement?

Zionn sits in a chair behind the desk.

ZIONN

I wanted my boy back and the Judge wants Governorship. But his fraudulent past haunts him, threatening to destroy everything he's worked for.

A beat.

Billy knew just as much as we do about him. The Judge couldn't trust that he wouldn't pull his card and use what he knew about him as a bargaining chip with the DA. It was simple, the kidnapping was the only way no one would question Billy being set free.

Sam pulls out the BURLAP HOOD from his coat pocket and tosses it at Zionn who catches and inspects it.

SAM

So you had your pawns kidnap my wife and then come after me.

Sam cocks the gun and points it at Zionn's chest.

ZIONN

Seems like we both underestimated just how treacherous the old man really is.

SAM

What the hell are you talking about?

Zionn holds up the hood.

ZIONN

It's not that difficult to cut holes into burlap, son.

(A beat.)

It's just Billy and a couple other boys doing the Code's work with me these days. And I'm gettin old.

(a beat)

The men who kidnapped Hannah and came after you were sent by the Judge.

SAM

You expect me to believe Barron kidnapped his daughter and put a hit on me?

ZIONN

Is that hard to believe? The plan was for his men to pick up Hannah and scare her a bit, just enough to make it authentic.

(a beat)

I'd get Billy and in return, Barron would have our guaranteed silence. Our dealings and the reality behind his ascent to sainthood would go with us to the grave.

SAM

And what did he say he was going to do about me when they picked up Hannah?

ZIONN

I didn't inquire.

SAM

Course not.

ZIONN

We've got our discords, Sam, no doubt.

(MORE)

ZIONN (CONT'D)

But I've got no use for your death. When Billy wasn't delivered as planned Barron said that there were complications and he needed more time. Then I got word that...

(solemnly)

...they found Billy's body... and it dawned on me that the Judge had played me like a game of chess.

(a beat)

There was only one way Barron could ensure his secrets would never get told.

(a beat)

Exterminate everyone who knew them
.....

SAM

So then where is she?

ZIONN

Boy, you always did have a thick skull. She's probably back in prospect mourning your tragic death.

Sam is speechless for a few beats before growing IRATE and PRESSING the pistol hard against Zionn's forehead;

SAM

Liar! Tell me where she is?!

ZIONN

Either go ahead and pull that trigger or back your obstinate ass away from me. I told you, I didn't take Hannah.

Sam stares deep into Zionn's eyes, gripping the pistol tightly.

After a few moments he drops the gun to his side;

SAM

So what's next?

ZIONN

We go back to Prospect and get what's ours.

SAM

We?

ZIONN

You get Hannah and I get reparation
for my loss. For Billy.

SAM

I'm not going anywhere with you.

ZIONN

For God's sake, can't you look past
your blind rage for just a moment.
Barron's got two loose ends now and
is sure to be on the hunt. I can
get us to Prospect safely.

SAM

How's that?

ZIONN

A train's leaving here tonight and
running supplies through there.

SAM

Why should I trust you?

ZIONN

Because I know how much you love
Hannah.

INT. RAILROAD TRACK - JACKSON - NIGHT

Sam and Zionn, clutching a small tan leather duffle, wait by
the tracks under the cover of night.

Sam, still uncertain about Zionn's motives, stands alert.

SAM

Where is it?

ZIONN

Patience, my boy.

Sam's anxiety burgeons.

A TRAIN HORN BLOWS in the distance.

Then the PLUME from the train's smokestack becomes visible as
it nears the station.

INT. TRAIN - EMPTY CARGO CAR - A WHILE LATER

Zionn and Sam sit against opposite sides of the wall looking
out the open doors at the passing scenery.

Zionn opens his duffle and tosses a crisp button down to Sam.

ZIONN

Can't go back to your pretty little wife looking like a vagabond.

Sam puts on the shirt but says nothing.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

Cat got your tongue? All these years and nothin' to say?

SAM

Yea I got something. A question.

ZIONN

By all means.

SAM

How do you sleep at night?

ZIONN

Soundly.

SAM

Well I don't. I have nightmares every time I close my eyes. Of the things you made me do...the monster you turned me into.

ZIONN

Monster? I taught you how to be a man of righteousness and justice.

Zionn pauses for a few moments.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

I tried to tell you the truth when you were ready, but you just wouldn't listen. Let your anger command you and you left.

A couple beats.

SAM

What is the truth? The *real* truth.

A beat.

ZIONN

There was a brothel spreading disease, drugs and filth across our county.

(MORE)

ZIONN (CONT'D)

We told them several times to pack up and go but they didn't take heed. Then one night, a townsmen was tortured and beat to death there over a debt he owed. We had no choice but to take action...

FLASHBACK

INT. BROTHEL - DECADES EARLIER

A gaggle of prostitutes gather in a room, drinking and gabbing around the bar.

The door BURSTS OPEN

FOUR MEN IN BURLAP MASKS

rush into the brothel with their guns drawn. They look around, expecting to see more than just the women.

WHEN...

THREE MEN rush out of a side room and OPEN FIRE on the Hoods.

SHOTS are exchanged as terrified screams fill the air -- the women duck and dive for cover.

The Hoods gun down the pimps.

INT. BACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

One of the Hoods enters a room and finds a LITTLE BOY --

SAM (7), frightened, and cowering in the corner of the room.

The Hood pulls off the burlap mask revealing Zionn. He walks over to the boy and kneels next to him.

ZIONN

It's OK. We're the good guys.

The little boy's frightened, piercing hazel eyes stare deeply into Zionn's. Zionn scoops up the boy in his arms.

INT. BROTHEL - PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Zionn and the boy enter the room. One of the hooded men is kneeling next to a WOMAN lying on her back with blood trickling from the corner of her mouth. The dark woman reaches up towards the little boy;

INJURED WOMAN
Samuel...mi nino...

END FLASHBACK

INT. TRAIN CAR

Zionn looks into Sam's eyes.

ZIONN
It was an accident...

Sam digests the account for a few moments.

SAM
So you took me in and fed me lies.
Your sick, twisted "code". Same for
Billy. Turned us into your
soldiers, into criminals.

ZIONN
Criminals? We protect people from
criminals. From the wicked,
iniquitous scum that plague our
cities and towns.

(a beat)
Those prostitutes that Billy was
caught bringing back to Mexico --
how many diseases were prevented
from scourging our towns? How many
families will remain whole with
them off of our streets? He was
doing the public a service. That's
what the code is all about.

SAM
You move twenty hookers off the
street today, they'll be fifty
tomorrow. You cant change that.
That's the laws job.

ZIONN
The law? Like good ol' Judge
Barron? Where was the law when my
family was ripped apart? When my
wife and my little girl were taken
away from me? The Code was created
to make sure that folks didn't have
to rely on a corrupt, broken system
for justice. And that's what we
did. We brought justice. And the
Judge, he helped.

(MORE)

ZIONN (CONT'D)

Saved him a mess of trouble and
built his reputation without having
to get his hands dirty.

SAM

None of those folks got a fair
trial. They had families. They were
sons, daughter, mothers and
fathers. They weren't all monsters.
Not all of them were broken.

ZIONN

Things can always have been done
differently after the fact. The
indecisive don't get the luxury of
hindsight. We handed down justice,
instant and unapologetic and it
saved a lot of innocent people. The
code is fair; Eye for an Eye.

Sam sits in the corner of the car, thoughts racing through
his head. Past memories that have become haunting nightmares
flash through his mind, sending him spinning.

DAY DREAM

INT. A DARK, SHADOWY SPACE - TIME UNKOWN

We replay the dream from the beginning of the story.

The Bound Man squirms wildly...

A blade runs across his throat, splitting it open...

We see the killer. Hooded.

He pulls off the hood revealing Sam (20's). He watches the
man bleed out with a hint of uncertainty in his eyes.

A few other HOODED MEN gather around in the underground
chamber. One of the men, recognizable as Zionn through his
stature and typical attire, nods at Sam approvingly.

END DAY DREAM

ZIONN

You cant --

SAM

ENOUGH!

Zionn respects Sam's demand and falls back quietly. He takes
off his blazer and rolls it into a ball then rests his head
on it.

Sam sits in silence against the wall of the train car, spending the night thinking, regretting and hoping.

INT. TRAIN CAR - MORNING

ZIONN

We'll need to get to a safe place when we get to Prospect. Cant go straight to the Judges or to your farm.

SAM

I know a place.

EXT. TRAIN - PROSPECT STATION - AFTERNOON

The train comes to a grinding stop at the station.

Zionn and Sam leap out of the car and maneuver stealthily, ducking into alleys and taking back routes to remain out of site from the Judges men.

Eventually they come upon a car parked outside of a house. Zionn opens the car door and proceeds to hot-wires the car with ease. He motions for Sam to get in. After looking around he does.

Zionn starts the car and they drive off.

EXT. HOUSE - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Zionn parks the car in the driveway. Sam exits the vehicle and walks up onto the front porch.

ZIONN

You sure this is the one?

Sam nods.

He opens the screen door and gives the doorbell a BUZZ.

After a few moments the door opens, a MAN, STERLING (40's), jet black greased hair and a thin mustache inquires.

STERLING

May I help you?

SAM

Yes sir. Is Adaline home?

STERLING

And you are?

SAM

A friend of her fathers.

STERLING

Trufant's a very gregarious man,
perhaps you could be more specific?

SAM

He asked me to deliver something to
her.

The door's pulled open further, a BRUNETTE, ADALINE with
soft, pretty features appears in the doorway.

SAM (CONT'D)

Adaline?

ADALINE

When did you see him?

SAM

A couple days ago. I was passing
through and he took me in...saved my
life. Said he's hadn't spoken to
you in some time and asked me to
get this to you.

He hands her the letter.

Adaline grabs the letter and stares at it.

SAM (CONT'D)

If it wouldn't be to much to ask,
my partner and I've been traveling
for quite a while and could use a
spell, maybe a glass of water?

Adaline looks at Sterling...

ADALINE

Of course, come on in.

Sam motions to Zionn who exits the truck and approaches the
trio on the porch.

ZIONN

Evenin' folks.

He extends his hand to Sterling.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

Arthur.

STERLING

Sterling.

ZIONN

Pleasure.

Zionn looks at Adaline and nods;

ZIONN (CONT'D)

Ma'am.

INT. STERLINGS OFFICE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

A small office cluttered with books and stacks of papers. An type writer sits in the middle of the desk.

Sterling motions for Zionn to have a seat in front of the desk then walks behind it to a shelf holding various spirits.

STERLING

Care for a drink?

ZIONN

Is the Pope a Catholic?

STERLING

Last time I checked.

Sterling pours whiskey into a beveled glass and hands it Zionn.

ZIONN

Thank you.

STERLING

My pleasure.

Sterling pours one for himself then sits at his chair behind the desk.

STERLING (CONT'D)

Sam said you gentlemen have traveled a long ways.

ZIONN

Quite. All the way from Jackson.

STERLING

What brings you here?

ZIONN

Work.

STERLING

What line of work are you in,
Arthur?

ZIONN

Teaching.

Sterling takes a sip of his drink.

STERLING

Fantastic. What subject do you
teach?

ZIONN

History.

STERLING

Ah, a man consumed by the past.

ZIONN

Indeed. And yourself? What do you
do?

STERLING

I'm a journalist.

Zionn raises his brow.

ZIONN

Is that so?

Sterling nods.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

Well now. That's serendipitous.

STERLING

Sorry?

ZIONN

Just so happens I have a whale of a
story that needs to be told.

STERLING

That so? What kind of story?

ZIONN

The kind that could make national
headlines and a career for whoever
tells it.

STERLING

I'm sure you can imagine that this isn't the first time I've heard such a thing, Arthur.

ZIONN

No doubt.

Zionn takes a long sip then rubs his finger along the lip of the glass.

Sterling's curiosity is peaked by the unusual man.

STERLING

I suppose you'd expect something in return for this exclusive?

Zionn takes his time to respond.

ZIONN

Just an ear and a careful voice.

STERLING

Turns out I have both...

ZIONN

Serendipitous no doubt.

INT. PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Adaline sits on the couch, eyes welling as she reads the letter from Trufant. Sam sits uncomfortably in front of the weeping woman.

Adaline finishes reading and then looks up at Sam.

ADALINE

How did he look?

Sam measures his response.

SAM

Well. He was in good spirits.

A tear drops down her cheek.

ADALINE

Was he alone?

SAM

Oh no, he was with friends.

(a beat)

He seemed...content.

She smiles.

SAM (CONT'D)

How long has it been since you've seen him?

ADALINE

Twenty three years.

Sam's taken aback.

ADALINE (CONT'D)

It's got nothing to do with the storms...or his sickness. We haven't spoken in quite sometime. I wasn't sure I'd ever speak to him again.

SAM

Well at least you know he cares about you.

ADALINE

What about you? Do you know your parents?

SAM

No ma'am.

ADALINE

You have a family of your own?

SAM

I do. My wife is expectin'.

ADALINE

That's wonderful. Congratulations.

SAM

Thank you.

Adaline fixes in on Sam's captivating eyes.

ADALINE

You should stay for dinner.

SAM

Wouldn't want to trouble you.

ADALINE

No trouble at all. It's the least we can do. You came a long way to bring me this. He trusted you would, and you did.

SAM
I'll ask my partner.

ADALINE
Good.

INT. STERLINGS OFFICE

Sterling leans forward, transfixed by the story Zionn's telling him.

STERLING
You realize the gravity of these accusations, don't you? A powerful Judge and candidate for Governor using a group of vigilantes to keep his district crime free and make a name for himself.

ZIONN
Accusation supposes probability of truth.

STERLING
And how do I know your telling the truth. With all due respect, I'm not in the business of trust, Arthur. Claims like these need substantiation.

ZIONN
You give your word that you'll go to the presses with this and I'll give you all the proof you need.

A KNOCK interrupts the conversation;

Sam stands in the doorway.

SAM
Excuse me. Arthur, can I have a quick word with you?

ZIONN
Excuse me, Sterling.

STERLING
Of course.

EXT. PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

SAM

Adaline invited us for dinner.

ZIONN

Wonderful. We'll go to Barron's after dark. Take some time to gather our senses. And a few drinks.

Sam nods.

INT. STERLING'S OFFICE

Sterling sits alone in the office on the telephone.

STERLING

He said his name was Arthur. He's a history teacher.

He listens to the party on the other line.

STERLING (CONT'D)

Will do.

Then hangs up.

Zionn appears in the doorway.

ZIONN

Looks like your lovely wife has invited us for dinner, if you don't mind of course.

STERLING

Not at all.

INT. DINING ROOM - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Sam and Zionn sit at opposite sides of the table while Sterling sits at the head. Adaline finishes preparing dinner.

Adaline brings a couple steaming platters to the table.

ZIONN

Smell's delectable. You're a lucky man, Sterling.

Adaline looks at her husband.

STERLING

That I am.

Adaline sits at the other end of the table.

ADALINE

Sam. Would you like to lead us in Grace?

SAM

Ah, I don't know, I'm not really the religious type.

ZIONN

Ah, come on, Sam. Just tell us what your thankful for.

Sam glares at Arthur.

SAM

Alright.

The table bows their heads.

SAM (CONT'D)

Thank you for this generous meal, for welcoming us into your home... and for reminding us about the importance of Family.

ADALINE/ZIONN

Amen.

Sterling nods.

Zionn raises his glass;

ZIONN

(looking at Sam)
To Family.

The table cheers.

INT. DINING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Sam and Zionn chow down on their plates. Adaline eats politely and Sterling pecks at his plate.

ZIONN

A HARD KNOCK at the front door interrupts dinner.

Zionn and Sam lock eyes -- Zionn turns to Adaline.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

You expecting company?

She shakes her head, no...

STERLING
I'll see who it is.

Sterling stands from the table and exits the dining room.

The front door CREAKS open and we hear some talking.

Sam and Zionn stare anxiously at each other.

Adaline see's the uneasiness on her guests face and grows weary herself.

SAM
We should get going.

ADALINE
What's the matter?

Sterling enters the dining room accompanied by
LESTER and TWEETS.

Zionn and Sam are surprised to see the pair.

ZIONN
The brothers, Slip? What are you
doing here?

LESTER
Need you two to come with us.

ZIONN
Traacherous sons of --

Zionn REACHES for his pistol but the Slips draw faster,
causing him to stand down.

Sam looks at Adaline, bubbling with fear.

ADALINE
What is this about?

LESTER
Just come with us, Zionn. No reason
to make the situation any worse.

ADALINE
Sterling, what is this?

TWEETS
These two are wanted men, ma'am.

SAM
Bullshit. Wanted by who?

TWEETS
We said we don't want no trouble...

Sam looks at Zionn, he nods. The men stand from the table -- the Slips approach them and shake them down. Pulling a pistol each from them.

Sterling approaches his wife --

ZIONN
(to Sterling)
You foolish sunabitch.

And wraps his arms around his wife.

ADALINE
What's going on?

STERLING
Shhh...It's alright.

Lester and Tweets escort Sam and Zionn out of the room. Sam locks eyes with Adaline and glances pointedly at the seat he was sitting in.

The brothers nod at Sterling and then escort their prisoners out of the house. Sterling follows.

The front door slams shut.

Adaline looks at the chair Sam was sitting in and sees a folded piece of paper with the name "HANNAH" written on it. She picks it up and slides it into her sweater.

Sterling re-enters the room.

ADALINE
What was that?

STERLING
He reeked of danger, Adaline. I rang Judge Barron and he confirmed my suspicions.

EXT. ADALINE'S HOUSE

The Henchmen bound their captive's hands in front of them with rope and then order them into the back of their car.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The car pulls out of the driveway and heads down the road. Outside the window, FIELDS, and the occasional FARM HOUSE in the distance.

ZIONN
How'd he flip you?

The brothers don't respond.

CLOSE ON: Sam's hands, pulling and twisting in the rope attempting to free themselves.

Zionn (CONT'D)
Let me guess. He promised to expunge all charges against you. You may be out of that cell right now, but you're the farthest thing from free. The moment you accepted whatever offer that old tyrant spit off that slithering tongue of his, your wrists were bound tighter than ever.

(a beat)
Gentlemen...Lester, I'd expect you to be smarter than that. No offense, Tweets.

TWEETS
None, taken, Boss.

LESTER
He ain't our boss no more, Tweets!

ZIONN
Ah, loyalty is a hard trait to rub out. Treason though, that's easily fixed.

Lester looks through the rearview mirror at Zionn.

Zionn chuckles.

ZIONN (CONT'D)
He's going to use the two of you up until he's got no more use for you.

LESTER
I've had enough of your yappin, Zionn. Always forcin' your wild ideas on people, confusing them into believing you.

(MORE)

LESTER (CONT'D)
 I'm done listenin' to your
 nonsense. Tweets, play something
 nice so we don't have to hear him
 no more.

Tweets takes out his harmonica and begins to play "Yellow
 Rose of Texas".

To Lester's chagrin, Zionn chimes in with the lyrics.

ZIONN
 There's a yel-low rose in Tex-as
 I'm go-ing there to see.

Tweets stops playing.

ZIONN (CONT'D)
 Oh come on now. Let an old man go
 home with a tune. Doesn't have to
 be *all* serious.

Tweets looks at Lester who rolls his eyes.

Tweets continues.

ZIONN (CONT'D)
 No oth-er fel-ler knows her,
 No-bod-y else but me.

Zionn nudges Sam who joins him in song.

ZIONN/SAM
 She cried so when I left her
 It like to broke my heart.
 And if we ev-er meet a-gain
 we nev-er more will part.
 She's the sweet-est rose of col-or
 a fel-ler ev-er knew.
 Her eyes are bright as dia-monds,
 they spark-le like the dew.
 You may talk a-bout your dear-est
 maids and sing of Ros-a-lie,
 but the yel-low rose of Tex-as
 Beats the bells of Ten-nes-see...

ZIONN
 Tweets you're quite skilled on that
 thing.

Tweets grins ear to ear, pleased with himself until a
 disapproving look from Lester erases the shit-eating grin.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

The car rolls to a stop next to an expansive field in the middle of nowhere.

The twins exit the vehicle, pull their captives from the back and march them onto the field.

A GRAIN ELEVATOR sits in the middle of the field.

EXT. FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

A cool breeze rolls through the field as the four men plod through the knee high grass. Sam gazes up to a spectacular starlit sky -- its arresting magnificence renders the tense moment moot for a few brief moments.

Zionn takes notice.

ZIONN
A beautiful night.

Lester interrupts.

LESTER
Stop.

Sam and Zionn take a couple more testing paces until the COCK OF THE HAMMER causes them to acquiesce.

They turn and face the twins.

The two sides share a few moments of silent uncertainty as they stare into each others eyes.

ZIONN
Surely, there's something we can work out here, boys.

LESTER
Get on your knees.

SAM
Wait a minute now.

Sam turns towards the softer of the two, Tweets.

Sam (CONT'D)
Least you could do is give the decency of one last smoke.

Tweets looks at his brother who stares back stone-faced.

Sam (CONT'D)
Come on now. Men to men. One last
smoke while I think on my family.

ZIONN
Have to agree, not an unreasonable
last request.

Tweets looks at Lester again and shrugs his shoulders. Lester
looks indignantly off into the distance.

The lunk reaches into his breast pocket and picks out a pack
of cigarettes. His sausage fingers pluck two from the pack --
he hands one to Sam who nods his head thankfully. Tweets
hands the second to Zionn, who shakes his head, no.

ZIONN (CONT'D)
Have a suspicion that those things
aren't beneficial for the
pulmonary.

Tweets gives a smile recognizing the irony and/or recognizing
the fact that he processed it. He fumbles for a lighter and
lights Sam's cigarette.

The cigarette CRACKLES as Sam takes a hard pull with his eyes
closed...

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE

SAM (10) dashes through tall grass in a field.

Head tilted toward the sun -- arms stretched out parting the
stalks around him.

An innocent moment devoid of all worldly care.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

Sam opens his eyes to the stars.

SAM
A man once told me that it is not
in the stars to hold our destiny,
but in ourselves...

Sam pulls the cigarette from his lip and FLICKS -- the torch
soars through the air against the cosmic backdrop -- STRIKING
Tweets's eye -- sending him backwards, grabbing at his face.

Before Lester has time to react -- Zionn DIVES HEAD FIRST
into his chin -- staggering him backwards onto his rear.

By the time either brother realizes what's happened, Sam and Zionn are SPRINTING towards the Grain Elevator.

Lester and Tweets rip SEVERAL WILD SHOTS after them.

CUT TO:

Sam and Zionn TEARING through the field, nearing the Elevator. Sam grimaces at the pain in his leg.

SAM (CONT'D)
(re: the elevators large
wooden doors)
Hit em as hard as you can.

The two men sync strides and close fast on the door -- feet away they LEAP INTO THE DOORS SHOULDERS FIRST...

THUDD!

And bounce off -- eating shit.

They squirm on the ground for a few moments and quickly get to their feet.

ZIONN
Try the back!

They run to the back and find the loading dock WIDE-FUCKING-OPEN. They look at each other in disbelief, then hop onto the dock.

INT. GRAIN ELEVATOR

A two level wooden labyrinth of narrow corridors, closets and trap doors where massive amounts of grain is stored, cleaned and distributed by heavy, grumbling machinery.

They locate a pair of sheers hanging from the wall and use it to snip the ropes from Zionn's hands.

All of a sudden...

We can hear the car outside, ROARING towards the elevator...

SAM
Split up!

Zionn nods and BOUNDS up a staircase to the second level of the structure.

Sam ducks into one of the narrow corridors JUST AS...

The front doors EXPLODES INTO THOUSANDS OF PIECES as the car comes CRASHING through and LURCHES to a hard stop.

The Goons exit the vehicle.

Tweets's eye is swollen shut while Lester has a seeping gash on his chin. They look around their surrounding then motion to each other to split up.

LESTER
Dead. Both of them.

Tweets nods obediently.

Lester tip-toes around the main room with his pistol aimed, scouring the area for his targets.

CUT TO:

Tweets squeezing his massive shoulders into one of the narrow corridors.

BACK TO:

Lester approaches the man-lift towards the back of the main room and peers up the shaft--

INT. SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Zionn slices the pulley rope --

The lift PLUMMETS --

SNAP!

Breaking through Lester's left arm --

He lets out a BLOOD CURDLING CRY.

BACK TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Tweets reels towards his brothers scream JUST AS...

a large plank of wood SLAMS into the back of his skull -- sending the gargantuan CRASHING headfirst into the opposite wall.

Sam makes a move for the revolver...

Tweets YANKS him to the floor.

The hulk stands and buries his foot into Sam's side, sucking every last breath from his lungs.

Tweets's steps on the writing man's skull -- squeezing it to the brink of implosion.

Desperate, Sam grabs a shard of wood from the broken wall and SWINGS HIS ARM -- burying the shank deep into Tweets's leg and bringing him to one knee.

Sam gets to his feet and delivers an impressive punch to the side of Tweets's face --

Tweets cracks his neck, unphased --

Sam winds up for another punch and lets it go --

Tweets CATCHES HIS FIST and squeezes -- crunching the bones.

A sadistic smile appears on his face before he SPITS a red loogie onto Sam's face and sends him FLYING into the wall behind him.

INT. SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

BLOW AFTER BONE-CRUNCHING BLOW

splatter the area with blood, sweat and saliva.

Sam's eats a wallop of a punch better than the average man, but after a

FURIOUS 1-2 COMBO

Tweets's massive fists, leave our guy prostrated on top of a trap door with the number "four" painted on it.

Sam snaps in and out of consciousness.

Tweets raises his clasped fists over his head for the finishing blow --

Sam rolls just in time --

CRUNNCHHH!

The powerful blow BREAKS THROUGH THE TRAP DOOR --

SWALLOWING Tweets whole.

CUT TO:

INT. GRAIN ELEVATOR - MAIN ROOM

Lester grimaces in pain as he looks incredulously at his milky wrist bone, poking out from his deformed hand.

Zionn bounds down the steps towards the injured man --

Lester sees his attacker and looks around for his gun --

he DARTS for it --

But Zionn SNATCHES it up and points the barrel at the wounded Man's head.

BACK TO:

Sam hurries to the LEG CONTROL (*the machine that lifts and distributes the grain into the various bins*) -- at the end of the corridor and flips the switch ON --

the machine starts CHUGGING.

Sam spins the wheel designating the grain to be distributed to BIN #4.

INT. BIN #4

Tweets struggles to his feet and leaps futilely for the opening, twelve feet above.

He see's a ladder on the opposite side of the bin, scaling the wall to the opening, fifty feet above.

Tweets starts to climb JUST AS...

A SPRINKLING OF GRAIN

bounces off his head from above.

He continues up the ladder as the falling grain turns into a

STINGING DOWNPOUR

pushing against the ascending hulk and filling the bottom of the bin rapidly.

Eventually the deluge of grain is too much for the powerful man -- ripping his grip from the ladder--

Tweets falls into the mound of grain below.

He FLAILS WILDLY as he's sucked deeper into the grain.

Sam watches from above as the grain reaches the struggling man's chest.

Tweets' terrified eyes meet Sam's -- Sam gets to his feet and limps down the corridor away from the desperate man.

BACK TO:

TWEETS BURIED UP TO THE CHIN

Struggling as the grain continues to pour into the bin reaching the buried man's neck. He takes one last deep breath just as...

CUT TO:

Sam SHUTS DOWN the legs and limps into the main room.

INT. GRAIN ELEVATOR - MAIN ROOM

Zionn stands over Lester, now crouching in pain, with the pistol still pointed at him. Sam see's the gruesome injury.

SAM

Tough break.

ZIONN

I do believe that was a joke.

(to Lester)

In all my years of knowing him he's told about as many jokes as a tongue-tied nun.

LESTER

Where's my brother?

SAM

(to Zionn)

What now?

ZIONN

We finish what we've started.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Sam speeds down a dirt road with Zionn sitting turned around in the passenger seat, his pistol trained on a MOANING Lester in the back.

EXT. SAM & HANNAH'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

The car comes to a stop at the top of the driveway.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sam see's a loan candle flickering inside.

His heart thumps.

He looks at Zionn with baited breath.

ZIONN

Your princess awaits...

Sam EXITS the car.

Zionn follows and meets Sam on the driver side. The two men look into each others eyes for a few poignant moments.

ALL OF A SUDDEN...

A reverberating CRACK of LIGHTING and FLASH from the Bolt.

Sam nods his head at Zionn and jogs down the driveway towards his house as the first RAIN in a long, long, time DROPS from the sky and splatters into the parched dirt.

EXT. PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Sam turns and looks out as a SHOWER begins to fall over his thirsty fields.

He steps to the front door and pauses for a moment, then gives a gentle KNOCK.

Daisy let's out a fierce BARK on the other side of the door.

SAM

Daisy. It's me girl. It's Daddy.

The dog's protecting bark turns into a submissive WHIMPER, AND THEN...

The door OPENS --

Hannah's eyes BUG OUT OF HER head.

She FOLDS AT THE KNEES --

Sam catches her before she hits the ground. Daisy goes wild for her master.

CUT TO:

INT. ZIONN'S CAR

RAIN POUNDS THE WINDSHIELD

blurring the view ahead. Zionn looks in the rearview mirror at Lester, sweating profusely and groaning in agony in back seat.

ZIONN

You know, Lester, the Japanese lived by a code too. The Bushido code. They sought honor unto death. If at any point they felt like they had failed the code or had done something dishonorable, they regained their honor through harakiri. You do know what that is, don't you?

Lester doesn't respond.

Zionn turns and points the pistol at him.

Lester nods submissively.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

Do you wish to regain your honor, Lester?

LESTER

What did you expect us to do? Rot in a cell for the rest of our lives. Or be hanged? For what? The code? What fuckin code? Just a bunch of bullshit created by a fucked up school teacher after seeing his old lady get raped --

BOOM!

Lester's brains explode through the backseat splattering the windows and interior with a clumpy red mess.

ZIONN

That's where you're wrong. I'm well aware that nothing will mollify me.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Hannah lays across Sam's lap in their living room. Sam gazes upon his sleeping beauty.

HANNAH'S LUSTROUS BLUE EYES OPEN

to Sam's battered and bruised face -- she DARTS up and grabs at him.

HANNAH

This cant be! You're dead. They told me you were dead.

SAM

They had good reason to think so. But I made it. I'm here, darlin', I'm here. Are you OK? Did they hurt you?

Hannah shakes her head.

HANNAH

No, I'm OK.

The couple squeeze each other ever so tightly.

EXT. JUDGE BARRONS HOUSE - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Zionn pulls into the Judge's driveway and puts the car in park.

INT. JUDGE BARRONS HOUSE

The Judge sits in front of a mirror in the bathroom trimming his nose hairs and admiring his looks.

The DOORBELL RINGS -- startling him.

He ambles to the front door, opens it and is greeted by the butt of Zionn's pistol CRACKING his skull --

SMASH CUT TO
BLACK:

INT. PITCH BLACK SPACE - LATER

The lapping sound of water provides the only clue that we are indeed somewhere and not just staring into a black void.

JUDGE'S VOICE

He-Hello??

A beat.

We hear what sound like chains cling and then shake violently.

JUDGE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
What is this!! Where am I?!

A beat.

JUDGE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Goddamnit. Do you know who I am?!

The question echoes through the dark void as the chains continue to clink.

THEN...

A MATCH STRIKES illuminating the Judge's terrified face, then his body sitting against the earthen walls of

ZIONN'S UNDERGROUND CHAMBER

Holding the match, Zionn's maniacal eyes stare from behind his ghoulish burlap hood.

ZIONN
Indeed, Judge. All to well.

Zionn lights the candles illuminating the chamber. The Judge's hands are bound by two pairs of handcuffs, stretching his arms above his head to metal hooks secured to the ceiling. Both men stand waist deep in RISING water from the overflowing creek outside.

JUDGE
Zionn, you son of a bitch. What are you doing?! Why are we here?!

ZIONN
Ah, you know why we are here. You know what this place is for. Judgement.

Zionn picks up a long thin knife.

This is where we turned you into the Protector of Prospect.

JUDGE
You crazy sunabitch. You cant just kill me like the others.

ZIONN

Tsk, tsk. Unlike you Barron, I am a man of honor.

Zionn takes out a key and unlocks one of the cuffs from the hook, then places his hand in the open cuff and LOCKS it tightly.

JUDGE

What are you doing?

ZIONN

You know, when the Greeks found you guilty of a crime the prosecution and the guilty party were both able to suggest a punishment that the jury could vote on. You know what Socrates proposed as his punishment when he was found guilty for not recognizing the Gods acknowledged by the state?

JUDGE

You are mad, Arthur. Mad I tell you.

ZIONN

Free meals for life.

Zionn chuckles.

ZIONN (CONT'D)

So what do you propose, Judge?

JUDGE

For what...I'm a man of the court. I demand justice!--

Zionn takes off his hood and places it on a ledge next to him.

ZIONN

I accept.

He gazes into the Judge's fearful eyes and TOSSES the key into the murky water --

JUDGE

NOOOO! What are you doing!

A replete smirk falls over Zionn's face just before a gust of wind blows out the candles, filling the room with black.

EXT. CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

The DELUGE rages on outside, filling the creek with water at a furious pace causing it to spill down the tunnel and into the chamber.

Over the fierce drumbeat of the rain we can hear the Judge's SCREAMS echoing through the chamber.

EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - SEVERAL MONTHS LATER

A beautiful sunny day.

Sam EXITS the house looking healthy and rested and steps down the porch towards the driveway.

He reaches the mailbox at the top of the driveway and opens it, pulling out a few pieces of mail that he flips through before stopping at one;

Written on the envelope -- just "SAM".

He opens it and pulls out a note --

ADALINE (V.O.)

"Dearest Sam,
Someone once told me that man is
born into a world of sin, forced to
survive by any means necessary.
Life is cruel, without reason and
shaded in pain. It's up to us to
find our **sunny side of hell**.
--Adaline"

Tucked in the envelope -- a folded piece of paper. Written across it -- "*Some truths are better left untold*".

Sam unfolds the note and sees that it's the letter he wrote Hannah in the bed of the truck. He folds it back up and tucks it into his back pocket.

When he looks up we see a very pregnant and beautiful Hannah, ambling towards the mailbox with Daisy at her side.

HANNAH

Everything OK?

Sam places his hand on his wife's swollen belly.

SAM

Perfect.

Sam closes the mailbox.

CLOSE ON THE SIDE OF THE MAILBOX: "**ZIONN**".

A BLUEBIRD flutters into view and lands on a fence post.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END