

The Bright and Hollow Sky

By

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INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CITY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

CITY (12) wakes with a gasp...

He lays on the floor of his small bedroom near his *Star Wars* comforter adorned bed. Dried blood cakes his nostrils.

He lifts himself to all fours and shakes his head. He looks around, confused. He moves to his bed, sits on the edge, rubbing sleep from his eyes.

He's small for his age, blonde and blue-eyed, wearing long johns and a tanktop. He sighs deeply, wheezing a bit.

He puts his pants on and moves to the door, but first knocks over the little metal Indian figurine that sits atop his dresser.

HALLWAY/BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

City walks down the hall, stopping at the bathroom. He grabs a cup from the sink and tries to pour himself some tap water. The faucet doesn't come on.

He gives up and takes a look at himself in the mirror: his right eye is very red and he looks sickly. He wipes the dried blood from his nose, then urinates. When he tries to flush, the handle just wiggles.

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

City goes straight to the refrigerator, pulls out a carton of milk, opens it. He sniffs it. By his reaction it's obviously gone bad. He waves his hand through the refrigerator, notices it's not cold.

CITY

Mom!

He walks to the sink and pours in the thick, spoiled milk. He doesn't look up, but focuses with tunnel vision on his milk project.

CITY (CONT'D)

Mom!

He tries this faucet, nothing. He starts to force the milk down the garbage-disposal with a wooden spoon, the smell making him gag.

He tries the faucet a couple more times, panicking. Still nothing. He steps back from the sink, disgusted and fearful.

CITY (CONT'D)

Mom!

He finally looks up from his project and out the window. His face drops in horror and he runs out of the kitchen, still holding the spoon.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

HALF OF THE ROOM IS MISSING... an entire wall, destroyed. In the remaining half, the furniture and all bric-a-brac remains intact.

Through the huge opening left by the missing wall CITY sees the ruins of what used to be his town and beyond that, on the hazy horizon, a crumbled, ruined City. He drops the wooden spoon and stands in awe.

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. BUNKER - UNKNOWN

COUNTRY (16) lays in bed and stares at the ceiling, his arm up around his head, framing it.

He's kind faced, but stoic. His hair, shaggy and unkempt.

The room is dark, the only light cuts through a gap in a curtain that acts as his bedroom door.

His bed's no more than a couple of bales of dirty hay stuffed in a corner and topped with sleeping bags. He tilts his face up and squints, watching an ant crawl across the ceiling.

A woman begins to sing from the next room, almost in a whisper.

Country rolls on his side, turning his attention to the voice. He stares as the woman's silhouette moves across his curtain. He closes his eyes and exhales.

EXT. CITY'S HOUSE - DAY

City wanders the perimeter of his house. He steps into his front yard, a slice of his old neighborhood: Four mostly destroyed houses on either side of a piece of intact asphalt, lawns still green, but overgrown. A basketball hoop hangs above one of the garages.

Beyond that, complete industrial wreckage, a few buildings still standing, although barely. One such building is an old church with a bell tower.

Past all that, the distant, hazy ruins of the big city. What used to be skyscrapers, now just half girder skeletons.

CITY

Mom!

The sun beats down on him, so he takes off his shirt and ties it around his head.

CITY (CONT'D)
Mom...! Dad!

He walks toward the wasteland.

EXT. WRECKAGE - MOMENTS LATER

City wanders a short distance out. He's surrounded by cement ruins, metal scraps and debris.

CITY
Mom...! Dad!

No answer. He gives up and starts back home.

CLANG!

In the distance, an incredibly loud sound. Something large collapsing, echoing, cement on cement.

He looks toward the sound, sees nothing. He starts back toward the house. First walking, then running.

Just past where City stood is a broken, crumbled wall hiding a group of hideous corpses.

CUT TO BLACK:

TITLE: SOME MONTHS LATER...

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT WASTELAND - DAY

Wind whips through a bleak stretch of land. A small solitary desert plant sways a bit, caught in the breeze.

The earth around the plant begins to move, bobbing up and down. The movement ceases, then a moment later starts again.

A trapdoor is flung open. Whispers come from within.

FATHER (O.C.)
Can you see? Does it look clear?
Don't stay up unless it looks safe.

Country's head cautiously peeks out. He looks all the way around, then back down.

COUNTRY
Looks safe... I think it's safe,
now.

FATHER (O.C.)
Alright... um...

Country climbs out.

FATHER (O.C.) (CONT'D)
No wait!

Country dusts himself off, and looks around to get an idea of the terrain.

On wider inspection, the trap door sits at the center of a house's frame, a house gone missing.

FATHER pops his head up. He's a large and gruff looking man.

COUNTRY
See, it's safe.

Father sighs.

FATHER
It's gone.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - EVENING

City, whose hair has grown considerably, sits in a large chair at the center of his half destroyed living room. He's wrapped in a sleeping bag, his hands resting on his lap. In one hand sits the little metal Indian.

He stares off into the barren night. Behind him, the house is cluttered with trash. His eyes grow heavy. He falls asleep.

EXT. DESERT WASTELAND - NIGHT

Country and Father sit before a camp fire, warming themselves. Father moves over to hatch. Country watches him, eating from a can of beans.

COUNTRY
What is it?

FATHER
We should rest.

COUNTRY
Sure you're not hungry?

FATHER
No, kiddo.

Father walks back to the fire and sits. He starts playing with his Zippo, clicking it open and closed. After a moment, he takes another glance at the hatch.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - MORNING

City wakes by slapping a mosquito off of his neck. He shivers a bit and pulls the sleeping bag tight around him. He opens his eyes and stares, expressionless, into wasteland.

LATER

City lays on the floor, holding a TV remote, pretending to change the channels on the television. He gives up and throws it hard into the TV, smashing the remote to bits and chipping the screen. He makes a raspberry sound and chuckles.

EXT. DESERT WASTELAND - MORNING

Country climbs out of the hatch and stretches. He sees Father in the distance sitting on a hill with a shovel stuck in the earth near him.

Country walks slowly to Father, then stands over him silently. Father has started digging a shallow grave. Father turns and puts his arm around Country.

FATHER
Will you help?

COUNTRY
'Course, Pop.

EXT. DESERT WASTELAND - LATER

Father and Country climb out of the hatch carrying a garbage-bag wrapped corpse between them, MOTHER. They stumble a bit on their way to the grave-site. Once above it, they carefully lower her in.

Father stares into the hole, drained of expression. The garbage-bag comes partially undone in the wind, revealing the blank, gray-ish face of a beautiful dead woman. At the sight, Father covers his face, overwhelmed. Country stares at his MOTHER and tenderly takes Father's hand.

FATHER
Say goodbye to your mother, son.

COUNTRY
I already did.

Father grabs the shovel and starts to bury the body. Country gets on his knees and uses his hands to do the same.

EXT. DESERT WASTELAND - LATER

Father places a stone atop the sand mound. He takes one last emotional look and walks away.

Country follows, watching the back of Father's head. Father speaks, but doesn't look at him.

FATHER
Food's not gonna last. We gotta move on, okay?

COUNTRY

'Kay, pop.

FATHER

But... let's... we need to set rules.

Country nods.

FATHER (CONT'D)

First, you're not to eat or drink after me... not under any circumstances, not anymore. Second, you're to keep your distance, a wide berth got it? Don't hug me and even if it gets cold, you can't sleep near me, this is very important.

Father sighs.

FATHER (CONT'D)

The water your mother didn't finish, that's mine. You're not to touch it. Everything else is for you. I want you to understand that. Even if you're worried about me. If I get sick and ask you for food or water, don't give it to me... never. Got it, kiddo? You have to be the man here.

Father finally looks at Country.

COUNTRY

Yeah, Pop.

FATHER

Okay, let's pack up.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY'S HOUSE - DAY

City sits in a lawn chair, drawing spirals on himself with a pen. His designs are elaborate and seem to be all over his upper body. The pen runs out of ink, he breaks it in two and tosses the pieces, then he gets up.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

In the kitchen, City rifles wildly through drawers. He finds one full of candles, but continues searching. He stops at the knife drawer.

EXT. CITY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The disembodied drawer of knives sits in the dirt at City's feet. He picks some out and starts throwing them at anything, everything. He grabs the largest two and jumps around like a ninja, flailing wildly.

After an intense session, he collapses, exhausted and stares at the sky, watching the clouds go by. He looks at his chest, he's bleeding from multiple cuts.

EXT. DESERT WASTELAND - DAY

Country and Father are outfitted for a journey. Each has a large backpack and a long dowel where they've hung large bottles of water.

FATHER
Which way should we go, son?

Country looks around, then just points.

EXT. DESERT WASTELAND - NIGHT

Country and Father have built a fire and Country sits before it eating a can of beans. Father walks past.

FATHER
Careful with all that musical fruit
near the open flame.

Country giggles. Father smiles and moves to the far end of the campsite. Country's smile drops and he continues to eat, watching his Father begin to cough excessively.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Candles illuminate the house, propped around the living room. There are knives and scissors stuck in the walls and furniture.

City is bundled in his sleeping bag, which, much like his face, is now covered in gashes and mud.

EXT. DESERT WASTELAND - MORNING

Father and Country walk, sunburnt and utterly exhausted. Father looks especially weak.

In the distance, Country spots a half destroyed barn.

COUNTRY
We can camp there for a while, it's
a real shelter.

Father nods, seemingly unable to speak.

EXT./INT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Country drops his pack and water and grabs the shovel as a weapon, he cautiously makes his way around the barn. Father pulls a knife from his boot and hangs back with the provisions.

Country slowly creeps to the front, where a wall is missing. He peers inside: the barn contains an old thick and worn wooden table with a tiny model piano on top.

There are broken toys and farming equipment scattered about the blood speckled hay. On one of the walls is a smeared bloody handprint.

COUNTRY
It's clear, Pop!

Father doesn't answer so Country exits to see what's wrong. He walks back over to Father, who is on all fours. He's been vomiting.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
Dad.

Country starts over, but Father puts his hand up. Country drops his pack, sits, looks down for a moment, then around at the horizon.

Father begins to laugh weakly. Country looks over and smiles slightly.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
What?

FATHER
Oh... nothing...

Father shrugs and they both begin to laugh.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - PARENT'S ROOM - DAY

City jumps violently on his parent's bed, flinging mud everywhere. He falls off and onto the ground, hard. He's winded. In his mellowed state he peeks under the bed.

He pulls out a small briefcase and opens it up. Inside are a couple of videos and dirty magazines.

He cracks open a video, pulling out the tape. He lies on his back, holding the tape up to a slit of sunlight peering in.

CITY
Hmmm... that's a good one. Very interesting.

A moment later he casts the video aside and starts flipping slowly through one of the porno mags. He lingers on a centerfold, then suddenly tears it to shreds, with a savage glee.

He digs deeper into the briefcase and finds a large dildo. He jumps up and runs around playing "rocket-ship" with it, then he throws it hard into the wall.

He turns the briefcase upside down to be sure it's empty, then continues digging under the bed.

He reaches as far as he can and pulls out a shoebox. He becomes very calm with this treasure, setting it on his lap carefully. He pulls off the lid, reaches in, and comes up with a shiny snub-nosed revolver. He tests the weight in his hand.

INT. BARN - DAY

Father leans against a horse stall, alone, coughing, and looking very pale with brown circles under his eyes. He takes a few desperate sips of water, but starts coughing violently. Some blood spatters from his lips.

EXT. DESERT WASTELAND - CONTINUOUS

Country's on his belly in the sand watching a lizard. He stares at it intently and mimics it, darting his tongue and cocking his head.

Soon bored, he stands, picks up the pile of wood he's been collecting, starts back toward the barn.

INT./EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Country enters the barn. It's completely empty of life. He sets down the firewood and looks around. He steps back outside, Father is nowhere to be seen. He wanders out further.

Country spots Father in the distance, digging another grave. Country's face falls slowly. He looks down and kicks the sand, then wanders back into the barn.

EXT. WRECKAGE - EVENING

City raises his gun like *Dirty Harry* and takes aim at nothing in particular. He pretends to shoot.

CITY
POW! POW!

He tries to squeeze the trigger, nothing. He looks closely at the switches and mechanisms that make up the pistol. He looks down the business end of the barrel, holding it to his eye, for a second.

He finds the safety and flips it off. He takes aim again and squeezes the trigger.

CLACK!!!

The gun goes off in a flash and explosion of violent sound. It twists out of his hands.

He shakes out his hands, which are bright red, then picks up the gun and tries again. He lines up his shot and takes it. This time the gun jerks, but remains in his hands.

CITY (CONT'D)

Nice.

He smiles cockily, sizing up the world. He makes it to the other side of the wreckage and looks out into the wasteland. He lifts up the gun and places it to his face, his eye lined up with the sight, like a tiny rifle.

He spins around and his face fills with complete terror at what lies before him: A GROUP OF ROTTING CORPSES. He drops the gun and jumps back startled.

His shock subsides and he moves slowly to a corpse wearing a fedora. He inches in and snatches the hat from its head, then runs back to where he was standing.

He puts on the hat, which is way too big. He tilts it to a rakish, *James Cagney* angle. Once just right, he picks up the gun and aims it at the corpse.

CITY (CONT'D)

What are you gonna do? Huh? Want your hat back? Too bad, shit for brains, it's mine now! Mine! It didn't look good on you anyway.

City fires one into the newly hatless corpse, before moving onto the next in the row.

CITY (CONT'D)

This is for being ugly.

He fires a round into the second corpse, then moves on.

CITY (CONT'D)

This is for being a worthless piece of dead meat.

He fires a round into the third corpse, which suddenly LURCHES UP with a violent SCREAM of pain. The corpse has the voice of a young man.

City screams as well, completely shocked, before firing off another round directly into the corpse's forehead. The corpse's head blasts back and all becomes silent again. City stares with big eyes at the dead body, breathing heavily.

He bolts back the way he came, running full bore through the wreckage. He trips on a hunk of concrete and skins his knee, but quickly recovers and pushes on, face filled with overwhelming terror.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Country sits next to the fire watching Father shiver, slumped in the corner. Country eats beans from a can. He seems uncomfortable swallowing, uncomfortable eating in front of Father.

FATHER
Watch that fire around the hay.

COUNTRY
I know, I am, Dad. Don't worry,
just rest.

Country eats another spoonful, then sighs and walks over to Father. Country extends the can out to him.

FATHER
No.

COUNTRY
Take it.

FATHER
No.

Father knocks the can out of Country's hand.

COUNTRY
You've got to eat!

FATHER
I'm dying.

COUNTRY
I know. I know you're dying. I
know. Eat.

Father looks up at Country with a faint smile, before grabbing the can from the floor and wolfing it down.

EXT. CITY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

City walks in a circle around a pile of random wood: broken chairs, pallets, even the basketball hoop. He squirts lighter fluid on the stack, very liberal with his dousing, then flicks a match in.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - LATER

City stands before the absent wall, gazing out at the now raging fire. He wears large sports-coat with the sleeves rolled up *Don Johnson* style.

He juggles a duo of Hummel figurines, barely saving them from sudden death with each toss. One of his sleeves comes undone, throwing off his rhythm and a Hummel goes down, hitting the wood floor and bursting into a million pieces.

City looks at the mess for a long still moment, then tosses the other Hummel hard against the wall smashing it as well. He looks at his palms, blistered and shaking.

He slips a hand into his coat pocket and pulls out the revolver. He raises the gun and aims at the fire, then slips his other hand back down into the other pocket and comes up with the metal Indian. He runs his thumb across it.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Country wakes abruptly to Father screaming and writhing. The fire has smoldered, leaving only the red glow of coals. Father's speech is throaty and slurred as he thrashes.

FATHER
Oh God! I can't, I can't...

Father's covered in sweat, contorting. Country rushes to him.

COUNTRY
Dad?

FATHER
Why?! Oh god, it hurts! Please, I can't! It hurts!

Country curls up in a ball and rocks back and forth.

FATHER (CONT'D)
I can't leave you alone... here...

Father clenches his teeth and starts to foam at the mouth. Country watches in shock.

COUNTRY
What can I do?! What do you want me to do?!

FATHER
PLEASE!

The tension subsides and Father relaxes.

COUNTRY
Dad?

Country gets close to Father, who is mouthing something and staring off. He holds Father's head.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
(Crying)
I'm sorry, I'm sorry, Dad... I love you... I'm sorry... I don't know what to do.

Father continues to mouth and almost makes sound, then finally musters one last exhausted, audible string of words.

FATHER
(Almost smiling)
Oh no...

Father goes rigid, then limp.

COUNTRY
Dad?

Country restrains any other words or tears. He stands, face straining to suppress emotion. His hands become fists. He steps into shadows.

EXT. BARN - MORNING

Country suits up to move on, putting on his backpack and collecting his water bottles. He looks off into the desert.

On the hill where Father was previously digging is a mound of dirt and a shovel stuck in the earth next to it. Country stares off toward Father's grave-site. His gaze lingers.

Country wanders around the barn with a large box of matches. He strikes one, drops it in the hay, then continues on, doing it again and again.

LATER

Country stands before the barn, watching as it burns wildly.

EXT. WRECKAGE - MORNING

City, covered in mud, rushes through the wreckage, determined, gun in hand. He sinks quietly behind a scarred cement wall and waits. He peeks out, like a soldier in the trenches.

He spots a crow pecking at one of the random corpses strewn about. He jumps up and shoots, hitting the corpse, but the bird escapes unscathed. He sinks back out of sight. A moment later, he peeks over again.

He walks over to the corpse. It's wearing a pair of glasses with thick, cracked lenses. He reaches over and removes them, puts them on and looks around. Through the glasses, he spots something blurry and stark red against the gray distance.

He wrenches off the glasses, nothing's there, no red. He puts the glasses back on and all is gray. He looks around. Quickly bored, he drops the glasses to the ground and stomps them to bits.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Country walks through one last stretch of dry, sandy desert.

He steps through rolling grassy dunes and stands for a moment face to face with some grand body of water. The ocean or a huge lake.

Offshore about a mile is the ruined remains of an aeroplane, but no signs of life. He drops his pack and collapses. He closes his eyes and lets the sun kiss his face.

SNAP!

The sound of a branch breaking. His eyes fly open and directly in front of him stands an albatross.

He jumps back and startles the large bird, which quickly glides back to the waterfront. He watches as the bird follows the ebbing shoreline.

EXT. HILLS/GREEN VALLEY - LATER

Country walks along the crest of green hills. He enters a lush, shady group of trees and stops a moment. He drinks in a breathtaking view from his elevated vantage.

As Country pushes on, the landscape slowly reveals more and more trees. He comes to the other side of this shady land and pushes aside some thick bushes to see a rich, green valley.

In the distance black smoke rises from what looks like a large locomotive slowly chugging along. Country waves his arms and calls out, but is much too far to make contact.

COUNTRY

HEY!

He pulls a pair of binoculars from his pack, hunkers, and peers off after the train. He sees through his lenses a black engine towing two boxcars both brimming with long haired teenagers wearing bandanas and tattered clothing. So many that they cover the roof. Some hold rifles.

EXT. WRECKAGE - EVENING

City wanders lackadaisically through the wreckage, swinging his gun at his side. He begins whistling and kicking rocks as he walks.

He stops to check out something shiny on the ground. A coin. He picks it up and examines it, closely. It reflects the sun into his eyes. He looks up and notices a plume of smoke not far off.

He races to it, gun at the ready and stumbles onto campsite with a recently extinguished fire. A dirty, torn red sleeping-bag lies next to it. He cautiously looks around, nothing stirs.

EXT. WRECKAGE - MOMENTS LATER

City races through the debris toward a half crumbled concrete staircase standing like a column in the ruins, leading nowhere.

He climbs to the highest vantage and looks around as far as he can. Bits of concrete break off beneath his feet and tumble, making a huge echoing commotion.

Scanning the horizon he sees nothing and starts SCREAMING at the top of his lungs.

CITY
Show yourself, pussy! I know
you're out there!

He fires the gun into the air and looks around again, squinting, searching for a sign of life. Nothing.

CITY (CONT'D)
(Quietly)
Show yourself.

EXT. HILLTOP/GREEN VALLEY - EVENING

Country hides atop a hill, laying on his belly and peering through his binoculars. He's breathing heavily, completely engrossed in what he's observing.

Through the binoculars: A muddy clearing with an old burnt-out camper at its center. The camper has been draped with colorful quilts and blankets to create a temporary shelter. A FAMILY OF THREE emerges from the camper: A MOM, DAD, and little BOY.

Country watches as they mill about collecting fire wood. Their overall mood seems to carry great defeat.

He pulls the binoculars from his eyes and wipes them on his sleeve, then sets them down.

Something gets in his eyes and he gropes around and finds a water jug. He pours a little in his hand and wipes his eyes out. He blinks his eyes back to health, then looks to the slowly darkening horizon.

Far off, miles, he spies a red glowing dot. He ponders it a moment, as he lays back on his belly. He rests his chin on his arms and yawns, then looks again to the red dot and closes his eyes.

EXT. HILLTOP/GREEN VALLEY - NIGHT

Country awakens in the same position. He looks up to the crescent moon. The night is nearly black.

He puts the binoculars to his eyes: the family lights a fire and rejoices in their triumph, hooting and hollering.

They gather around it, open cans of food and place them near the flame.

In the distance, Country hears an odd, faint melodic chanting, almost singing. The voices of twenty or more men, together, reciting a dark marching song or hymn.

Country pops up like a meerkat and becomes rigid. He scans the black horizon, searching for the source. Nothing moves.

Slowly, the music grows closer, louder. It's coming from behind him. He turns to see a wide, red illumination within the forest, getting closer.

The singing stops abruptly, the only sound is that of Country's breathing and the voices of the family below, as they chat around the fire. Country lies out flat and covers himself in mud and grass, trying to camouflage.

Boots step silently past him on all sides. Country freezes. Dangling from the men's hands are deep red tinted lanterns. Country holds his breath. They don't seem to notice him.

As they pass him their lanterns dim. They head straight into the valley and toward the family's camp. All is quickly dark and the only sounds come from the family; weak laughter and the crackle of their flame.

Country lifts his head and dons his binoculars again: the Dad looks up and notices the wall of people standing just at the edge of the fire's light. He spins around and to see his family's surrounded. He huddles his little family behind him, acting as a shield.

DAD
Who are you?!

The silent horde does nothing. They stand silent and still. An abrupt WHOOSH sound and the Dad is hit in the head by a baseball sized rock. He falls to his knees, clutching his forehead.

He shakes it off and moves quickly back into a protective position, blood dripping from his hairline.

A black figure rushes through the clearing, too fast, just a blur, then all goes black and silent again. The only sound: the short burst of a woman's scream suddenly muffled. Then nothing.

Country drops the binoculars. He breathes quick, shallow breaths, then rolls onto his back. He grabs the dowel he's used to carry his water and holds perfectly still.

The singing begins again on the other side of the valley, where red glow returns and moves farther and farther away.

EXT. GREEN VALLEY - MORNING

Country stands in the middle of the muddy clearing next to the family's camper. There are no bodies, just traces of blood and the ruins of the campsite.

He reaches into the fire pit and pulls out a half-cremated tin can. He looks at it, drops the can, and walks on.

INT./EXT. CITY'S HOUSE - PARENTS ROOM - MORNING

City wakes in his parents' bed. There's trash and destruction everywhere. He himself is also an awful mess, covered in mud and dried blood.

He starts jumping on the bed while he thinks. His face holds a "business as usual" expression. He jumps from the bed, stumbles slightly as he lands and exits the room.

City puts on a large pink robe which is hanging on a chair in the kitchen. He walks across the living room, robe dragging, and exits through the absent wall.

In the crisp morning air, he stretches, puts his hands together and lifts them high over his head, taking a deep breath. He twists his upper body and sighs which, due to the cold, makes his breath visible.

Behind him a RED HOODED FIGURE rummages quietly through a trash can in the side yard. The figure has its back turned. City doesn't notice. The figure is a small person wearing a dingy, oversized hooded sweatshirt.

City turns slightly and spots the figure. His face turns to shock. With wide-eyed determination, he rushes silently back inside.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

City blasts through the length of the living room, knocking over a chair. The pink robe lifts behind him, like a cape.

He races through the kitchen, slides a bit on the linoleum, and bumps the kitchen table with his hip, knocking a large pair of scissors to the floor where they land sharp-end stuck in the linoleum.

City rockets into his parent room, dives to the floor and grabs the shoebox from under the bed, in one swift motion.

EXT. CITY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

With the gun in his hands, City cautiously rounds the outer corners of his house, stalking through the side yards. He sees nothing, no trace, just some discarded food wrappers cast aside near the trash cans.

He opens the revolver and checks it for bullets, then removes his pink robe and smears mud over his face and chest.

EXT. WRECKAGE - MOMENTS LATER

City holds the gun over his head and runs through the wasteland, as if playing *Rambo*. He rounds each wall, blockade, and corner ready to shoot at the first sign of movement. He finds no one.

EXT./INT. OLD CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

City races through a small rusting playground to the side of an old church. His drive is dwindling, he seems to be getting bored.

The sound of GLASS BREAKING inside the church catches his ear. He barrels for the front door.

City enters the church, silently, slowly. He calculates every move with stealth and caution.

He wanders through the nave checking behind each pew for signs of life, that he can kill.

They're all clear, all empty. He moves on, past the pulpit, and through a hidden door behind the altar.

INT. OLD CHURCH - OFFICES & STORAGE - CONTINUOUS

City stalks down a long, narrow hallway with light at the end. The walls are lined with dark, lacquered wood panelling, which reflects the daylight eerily.

He reaches the end of the hall and four closed doors...

He opens the first and peers in: the walls are cracking and it's completely empty, save the broken figures of a life-sized nativity scene. He exits.

He moves to the second door, cautiously peering in: a nearly destroyed stairwell leading up to a second floor and above that, a huge hole in the ceiling letting in daylight. The stairwell is smashed to rubble. Even entering the room looks to be a dangerous undertaking.

City moves on to the third door, but pauses for a moment to contemplate the fourth. He moves to the fourth. It's locked. He presses his ear to it, but hears nothing and moves back to the third room and opens it.

The third room is filled with furniture and against the back wall is a giant wooden crucifix, haphazardly propped. He slowly enters.

In one corner of the room he spies a large office desk, the perfect hiding place. He starts toward it and readies his gun.

The red hooded trespasser jumps from behind the door and onto City's back. They both hit the ground and struggle, viciously. City tries desperately not to lose the gun.

City quickly pistol whips the attacker and the struggle stops.

He straddles his perpetrator and holds the gun and shakily, point-bank, at the hood-covered face. He pulls off the hood.

Everything comes into stark focus: laying in front of him at the business end of his barrel is the fear-filled face of a beautiful, raven haired girl in her early twenties, MARIAH. Shock devours City.

EXT. CREEK - MORNING

Country lies in a large corrugated-metal drainage tube within a sunken barranca, split by a small creek. He's laid a large piece of plywood out across the bottom of the tube, to both make his bed flat and to keep himself dry.

He stares up at a dew covered spiderweb. The only sounds are RUNNING WATER and MORNING BIRDS.

Country sits up, his hair matted in a funny way. He climbs down to the creek and fills up a gallon jug. He brushes his teeth.

BIRDS BURST FROM THE TREES, startling him.

He climbs up to view the path whence he came. He sees the branches of the trees shaking strangely. Something large is coming. He ducks and waits.

A couple of YOUNG MEN walk past holding guns, followed by a group of pale sickly looking BOYS, mostly preteens, carrying large backpacks.

One of the children, a PALE EYED BOY, turns and looks Country straight in the eyes. He smiles and continues on.

A huge, slightly DEFORMED MAN in overalls follows them, pulling along a huge round plastic Jerry can, bigger than he is, filled with water.

EXT. RIVERBED - LATER

Country's geared back up and hiking through a dry rocky riverbed under a large mostly destroyed highway bridge. He looks drained, using his trusty dowel as a walking stick and carrying his last, nearly finished, gallon of water.

EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

Country stumbles haphazardly along in a daze. He focuses downward, minding the rocks.

He looks up weakly to see that he's wandered into the middle of a group of large black, military-style tents.

He freezes, the sound of heavy breathing surrounds him. He continues on, lightening his step. The fear on his face is undeniable.

He passes a tent with great care, glancing in, but without turning his head: dozens of YOUNG MEN sleep on cots inside. At the foot of each cot is a footlocker, and placed atop some of these footlockers are lanterns with red tinted glass.

Country continues his tiptoe past, terrified. He passes a second tent and peers nervously inside. More sleeping men, many more.

He picks up the pace, as his weak breaths grow shorter. He finally reaches the end of the tents and sees some thick plant cover not too far off. He decides to run for it and speeds up his stride, but trips over a rock in his haste.

He looks back to see if he's being followed and there, on the backside of the last tent, is the excessively LARGE DEFORMED MAN in overalls, TEDDY. They lock eyes.

Country slides out of his back pack, drops his water, and runs full bore, retaining his dowel. Teddy makes chase erratically. Country doesn't look back, but Teddy is gaining on him quickly.

Country reaches the foliage and blasts through it. On the other side he tumbles into a small ravine and bumps his head on a rock. He quickly scampers into a small cave, brandishing his dowel as a weapon. He waits, out of breath.

A long moment passes and nothing comes. Country slowly makes his way back out of the cave. He hides at the edge of the foliage and peers into the clearing: Teddy collects Country's things and dusts them off as he makes his way back to the tent city.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - DAY

City's sitting at the kitchen table staring at Mariah, who is wolfing down the large amounts of food he's set out for her. His face holds an expression of wonder. Mariah notices.

MARIAH
(Her mouth full)
What?!

City's doesn't flinch, just shrugs slightly.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mariah sits in the living room, in the big chair staring at City, who's sitting on the floor, sharpening a steak knife.

MARIAH
Who are you?

City says nothing, just continues his business.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Who are you, boy?

Mariah pokes City with her foot.

CITY
I live here, who are you?

MARIAH
I'm, Mariah.

CITY
Nice to meet you.

Mariah continues to stare at him. He finishes sharpening his knife, sets it to his side, and wipes his hands clean with a towel.

CITY (CONT'D)
It's time for bed now.

Mariah smirks, amused by the bossy youngster.

MARIAH
Is it?

CITY
Yes.

City stands and takes Mariah's hand.

CITY (CONT'D)
I'll take you to your room.

City leads Mariah, by candlelight, down the hall, toward his parent's room. He hands her the candle, pulls another from his back pocket and lights it on hers. They stop just outside the door.

CITY (CONT'D)
Just a sec.

PARENT'S ROOM

City enters the room and shuts the door behind. He quickly shoves and kicks all the torn bits of porno magazine under the bed, then goes back to the door and opens it.

CITY
Okay... all set... come in.

Mariah enters the room.

CITY (CONT'D)
See, this is yours now... mine's on
the other side. The bathroom's
there, too, but it doesn't work
anymore.

MARIAH
This is fine, thank you.

CITY
There's more covers in the closet,
I think... but, I'm going to bed
now, okay? Good-night.

MARIAH
Good-night.

City leaves the room, Mariah smiles to herself. She sets the
candle on the night-stand and climbs into bed.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CITY'S ROOM - NIGHT

City is lying in bed and aiming his gun at the ceiling. He
stops and smiles, then places the gun on his night-stand and
blows out his candle.

INT. CAVE - MORNING

Country wakes in the dew-moistened cave, to the sound of
METAL SCRAPING ON GRAVEL.

Teddy stands at the mouth of the cave, breathing heavily.
Country jumps back with a start. He holds the dowel out in
defense.

Teddy pushes a metal plate toward Country with his foot. On
the plate is food: a large hunk of meat, mashed-potatoes, and
peas. Next to the food is a can of Coke and a bottle of
water.

Country relaxes slightly. He sets down his dowel and grabs
the plate. Teddy smiles and walks away.

COUNTRY
Hey wait...!

Teddy doesn't stop and disappears from view.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
Thank you.

Country looks down at his breakfast and starts eating
ravenously. Mid-way through chewing, he looks over to the
mouth of the cave and notices his backpack and a jug of fresh
water have been placed there.

EXT. CLEARING - LATER

Country peeks through the foliage to see what is happening at the tent city. Teddy is at his post at the back of the tent, whittling a small piece of wood with a large Bowie knife.

INT. CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Country sits inside the cave with a contemplative look. He cracks open his Coke.

EXT. CITY'S HOUSE - DAY

Mariah's lays on a rainbow colored lawn chair reading a copy of "Helter Skelter", while City practices his knife throwing.

City quickly grows bored and kneels down, stabbing the ground wildly. After this short lived moment of violence, he focuses on Mariah.

CITY
What are you doing?

MARIAH
Reading, silly. What's it look like?

CITY
Why?

Mariah dog-ears her page and sets the book to her side.

MARIAH
Are you serious?

City shrugs.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ, you are serious. Did you ever learn how?

CITY
Yeah.

MARIAH
So, why are you asking such a silly question?

CITY
I don't know... it always seemed boring, I guess... and stupid.

MARIAH
You've been reading the wrong books.

CITY
What's that book about?

MARIAH

It's a true story about a serial killer... well not really. It's about a guy who convinced some people to kill some other people. I think they even cut out a pregnant woman's baby, but I haven't gotten that far.

CITY

Wait... out of her stomach? That's sick... why would you want to read about that?

MARIAH

I find it interesting.

CITY

You're crazy!

MARIAH

Oh yeah?

Mariah jumps up, grabs City, and starts tickling him ferociously. He laughs and kicks like mad.

CITY

Stop it, crazy woman! I'm gonna pee!

Mariah doesn't let up, so City reaches back and pulls her hair as hard as he can. Mariah screams and shoves him down.

MARIAH

Ow fuck! That hurt, you little bastard!

City gets back up, dusts himself off. He's a little wild-eyed. He poises himself for attack. Mariah smiles.

MARIAH (CONT'D)

Alright, come on then.

City rushes over and tackles her. They struggle, rolling around on the ground trying to tickle one another.

Soon, they collapse into a breathless stillness and stare up at the sky. They watch the clouds pass.

Mariah rolls onto her side and faces City with an oddly longing look, then lays flat again.

MARIAH (CONT'D)

What are we going to do, boy?

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Country is huddled in his cave lying in a corner. He's looking at his tiny piano model and using Father's Zippo for light.

He pretends to play the tiny piano, then sets it down. He stares for a moment at the Zippo and its flame, then snaps it shut.

INT. BUNKER - UNKNOWN

The woman's voice is soft and pleasant as Country opens his eyes. He's in his tube-like room, laying atop the hay bales, and staring at a woman's silhouette as it passes his curtain and casts a shadow.

He looks to the foot of his bed; there's a wooden cowboy marionette dangling from a hook on the wall.

He looks back to the curtain, it's been parted and a woman's face, the face of his MOTHER, whom he buried, peers through the gap at him. She smiles and speaks in a whisper.

MOTHER

What are you doing awake?

Country whispers back.

COUNTRY

Can't sleep. It's cold here.

Mother enters the room, moves to the foot of his bed, and sits.

MOTHER

It's all the metal down here. Are you having nightmares still?

COUNTRY

I stopped dreaming, Ma. It's all just black now.

Mother touches Country's foot tenderly.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)

Ma?

MOTHER

Yes?

COUNTRY

When do we get to leave here?

Mother scoots behind Country.

MOTHER

Scooch over, baby.

Country complies and Mother nestles in behind him. They both lie still for a long silent moment.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Life's gonna be what it's gonna be, baby. It might not be good like it was, but it's gonna be yours.

Country closes his eyes.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Don't let anything change you.

INT. CAVE - MORNING

Country wakes abruptly. He darts upright, sweating. He slithers out of his sleeping bag, and stretches.

EXT. CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

Country moves back to the edge of the foliage and parts branches to peer through to the tent city.

It's gone, vanished. All that's left in its place are large square patches of matted, yellowing grass.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - EVENING

City and Mariah eat canned goods at the kitchen table. Mariah stops and looks down at a padlocked cabinet near the floor.

MARIAH
(With her mouth full)
What's that?

CITY
What's what?

Mariah swallows the rest of her bite and continues with a smile.

MARIAH
What's in the mysterious locked cabinet?

City looks at Mariah wide eyed and smiles.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

City and Mariah are on their hands and knees at the cabinet with a claw hammer. City tries to hit the padlock, but keeps missing.

MARIAH
Let me try.

City tries it again, to no avail.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Let me try.

City looks to her, annoyed. Mariah twiddles her fingers and makes grabby hands.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Come on, come on, come on.

City hands over the hammer and moves out of the way. Mariah gives it a couple of test swings, then busts the lock right off.

She sets the hammer down and opens the cabinet. Inside is a huge stash of booze. Mariah sits back in awe.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Damn.

She looks over at City.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Do you know how much fun we're gonna have?

EXT. FOREST CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Country's crouched behind a tree, peeking cautiously, watching a strange and unnaturally lit campsite not-too-far-off. He moves in closer.

Two men, OLIVER and STAN, sit in lawn chairs beside an old truck. They wear camouflage gear and heat cans on an overturned shopping cart in their campfire.

Around them are jury-rigged fluorescent light clusters, set up on stands and tripods and a large generator clunking away.

After a moment of hesitation, Country moves in. Oliver spots him and pops up, squinting and furrowing, trying to make out what he sees.

OLIVER
What is that, Stan?

Stan looks over. Now he's also squinting.

STAN
Can't say.

Country starts waving his arms in the air and smiling.

COUNTRY
Hello!

Oliver smiles back and waves, then reaches behind his chair and brandishes a large shotgun. Country sees it and very quickly drops.

BOOM!!

The scatter shot whizzes over and clacks against trees all around Country. Oliver reloads, then sets the gun against the back of his chair. Stan stands, still squinting.

STAN
Get him?

OLIVER
Pretty sure.
(Yelling)
Trying to freeload a meal?! Not on
my watch, you son of bitch!

Country rolls onto his back, wide eyed. He blinks and moves his hands over his torso to see if he's been hit. Finding he's not, he stays very still.

Stan turns to Oliver concerned.

STAN
You gonna check and make sure,
Ollie?

Oliver stuffs his face with beans straight from the piping hot can, which he holds with a flowery oven mitt.

OLIVER
(Mouth full)
Check what?

STAN
You know? Make sure.

OLIVER
Fucking, you do it!

STAN
Why me? Why always me, Oliver?

OLIVER
Look, if you ever got one, I'd go.

STAN
But, you've always got the gun.

Oliver caresses the shotgun.

OLIVER
That's right.

Stan turns away and bends over to pick something up. Oliver smacks him on the ass. Stan sighs and comes up with a huge homemade machete. He walks toward Country in a huff.

STAN
(Under his breath)
Fucking asshole...

Country starts to reach over for his dowel, which lies a few feet away.

OLIVER
Don't you be cursing me under your
breath, Stan. I don't need that
kind of negativity around me.

Stan rolls his eyes. Oliver takes another bite from his can of beans.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
See if he has any food... and you'd better not hold out on me, either.
I'm not afraid to strip search you.

Stan continues out into the bushes, getting closer to Country.

STAN
(To himself)
I fucking do everything, always.
Fucking asshole.

Along the way he steps over two sets of trip wires. Country almost has his dowel within his reach. Oliver finishes up his beans with a belch and tosses his empty can off into the woods.

OLIVER
Found him yet, Stan?

Stan stalks through the woods.

STAN
(Mimicking Oliver)
Found him yet, Stan...
(Yelling)
Not yet!
(To himself)
Fucking piece of shit, I hate you so much.

Stan is almost within eyeshot of Country. He takes a couple more steps and is right on top of him.

Stan looks down and spots Country laying still, his eyes closed. Stan turns back to call to Oliver.

STAN (CONT'D)
Found hi--

Country jumps up and clobbers Stan.

Country stands over Stan, who's exhaling deeply from the ground, looks close at him.

Country brains him with all his might. Stan doesn't move again.

Country crouches next to him and places his hand a few inches away from Stan's mouth to see if he's breathing, then looks over to Oliver. Blood starts to pool around Stan's head.

OLIVER
HEY!! Where are you, Stan?!

Oliver stands and looks to shadows. Paranoia starts to set in. Oliver brandishes the shotgun and fires into the air.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Hey, you'd better get your sweet
ass back here before I put new
holes in it.

In the distance, the melodic marching song begins, the voices of the horde. Country looks around wide eyed, fright overtakes his face. The woods behind him begin to glow red.

Oliver looks around, confused.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Is that a fucking men's choir?
Stanley, get back here, puppy!

Country scurries up a tree, panicking. He clamors over the low hanging branches and into thick green foliage. He clutches the bark and stares toward the nearing red glow. His breaths grow short and desperate, as the red dims to black.

Oliver becomes panicked.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Stan! Stanley! Where the hell are
you?

The singing grows louder, closer.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
ASSHOLE! GET BACK HERE! What the
FUCK is that singing? Who's there?
Stan?!

Oliver fires out into the darkness in four directions. Some scattershot tears into the tree near Country's feet. He glances at the damage, but stays totally silent.

Just beneath him, the shadowy shapes of men move as one. The singing stops abruptly. There is the occasional rustle of fabric or snap of a twig, but other than that no sound.

Oliver tries to fire again, but the gun is empty. He carelessly pulls out a box of shells and dumps them into his chair, many roll off onto the ground, but he secures two and tries to shakily reload.

He gets the shells in, cocks his gun, and aims into the darkness. Nothing, no sound, but Oliver's heavy breaths and the occasional whisper. He turns around and around pointing at nothing, waiting for anything.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
(Quietly to himself)
Come on you fuckers... Come on...

One of the fluorescent lights shatter. Oliver looks to it, then another explodes. They all start to break, pelted by a barrage of rocks or pellets, whizzing through the air from an unseen distance.

Oliver gets pelted as well and flinches, but takes the pain to stay in control. A large rock zips into the light and cracks Oliver in the ear. He clutches the wound.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Ouch, fuck!

Oliver raise his shotgun with one hand and tries to fire, but it just clicks. The pellets stop abruptly and everything is quiet again.

Oliver goes to work trying to unjam his gun. He smacks it as hard as he can and it goes off. He drops it in the dirt, but quickly recovers and reloads. He raises the gun again waiting.

Country is perfectly still, sitting atop the tree and watching the desperate scene. The wobbly sound of trip wires being cut, fills the darkness.

A twig snaps behind Oliver. He spins around and fires directly at the sound.

The flash of the gun blast momentarily illuminates the darkness and Oliver sees that he's just shot Stan in the chest. Oliver hears the delayed sound of Stan's body dropping in the darkness.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Stanley?!

Oliver's eyes well up. He has no fight left.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Stan?!

He drops to his knees, his face tightens straining with emotional anguish. Behind him, a YOUNG MAN races from the darkness and douses the flame of the campfire with a bucket of sand. All goes black and there's the start of a quickly muffled SCREAM, then nothing.

Country breathes heavily, fearfully in the darkness. The blackness lasts a long moment, then in the distance red lanterns begin to glow again. The singing begins, and becomes faint as the young men move into the distance.

Country can see from this vantage, that there are a great number of these young men. Country watches them intently.

All at once, the ground beneath his tree is bathed in red. Country, partially illuminated, looks down toward the source. It's Teddy, looking directly at him. Teddy smiles. Country panics, losing his grip, and plummets to the ground, hard.

EXT./INT. CITY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

City's house is dimly glowing from within, but as dim as the glow is, it's still stark against the black night.

City and Mariah sit on the floor passing a bottle of booze, something sweet and hard, back and forth. The room is filled with candles.

MARIAH
(Laughing)
Are you serious?

City nods his "yes" in a very sloppy manner. He's sweaty and squinting with one eye.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Oh my God, you are so plastered,
little man!

City shrugs nonchalantly.

CITY
Could be.

MARIAH
Oh my god. Wow! You are severely
fucked up.

CITY
And you're not?

MARIAH
Now, I didn't say that.

Mariah takes another swig. City stares at her, swaying back and forth with a big dumb grin. Mariah spits out her mouthful of booze and laughs at this sight.

CITY
(With a goofy smile)
What?

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CITY'S PARENT'S ROOM - LATER

Mariah lays in bed atop the covers. The sound of City vomiting can be heard in the next room.

MARIAH
(Loudly)
You okay?

City chimes in from the next room.

CITY (O.C.)
Yeah. I've got a bucket.

MARIAH
(To herself)
That's not what I meant.
(To City loudly)
Come in here when you're done!

More vomiting is heard.

CITY (O.C.)
Okay.

Mariah takes off her pants and long johns, revealing her panties. She slides into bed under the covers. A moment later, City enters.

MARIAH
Come here.

Mariah pats the bed. City climbs in. He sits staring forward and weaving.

CITY
I feel all whack-a-doo.

MARIAH
Get comfortable, you'll feel better.

City lies back, lets out a big sigh. He drapes his hand over his face like a sleeping mask.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
How you holding up?

CITY
I think my brain finally stopped spinning.

MARIAH
Jeez, that's gotta be the worst. From now on we stay away from the sweet stuff.

CITY
From now on... yes.

Mariah turns to City and looks at him. City doesn't notice.

MARIAH
What were your parents like?

City moves his hand from his face and looks to Mariah.

CITY
What?

MARIAH
Your parents.

CITY
They were like... parents, I dunno.

Mariah jostles City a little.

MARIAH
C'mon.

CITY
Please don't shake the world.

MARIAH
What did they do?

CITY
Um, Dad was a businessman... or
salesman or something. He went on
a lot of trips. I think it had
something to do with plastic or
plastics. I don't know. He was
really tall and had, like, this
really shiny gold hair.

City yawns and puts his hand back over his face.

CITY (CONT'D)
Mom just went to church a lot. Dad
never went. She did a lot of
church stuff... work. Lots of
charities, rummage sale stuff.

City smiles slightly.

CITY (CONT'D)
She had these bright red shoes
she'd always wear. The other
church ladies hated her shoes. She
was a really good cook, too... when
she had the time. I can't remember
everything. They both hated video
games.

City yawns again. Mariah just stares at him.

MARIAH
You miss them?

City starts to breathe heavily and Mariah realizes he's
fallen asleep.

She quietly slips out of bed, struggles to pull the blankets
from under him. Finally succeeding, she drapes them over
him. While covering him she caresses his shoulders. She
looks at him longingly, then turns away from the bed.

She wanders over to his mother's vanity and starts to look at
some of the items set upon it. She runs her fingers across a
pearl necklace nestled within a collection of jewelry on a
silver tray.

Next to the tray she finds a small framed picture:

An image of City, at five years old or so, at the beach,
laying in his mother's arms as she sits in the sand. She's
wearing a bathing-suit and sunglasses and smiling at the
camera. She's very lovely, in her mid-thirties, blonde. She
looks happy and City looks completely content in her embrace.

Mariah struggles to open the vanity drawer. It finally gives
with a mild ruckus and a jangle of keys. She looks to City
in the mirror, he doesn't stir.

Inside the drawer is assorted make up and accessories: compacts, brushes, etcetera and a large ring of keys. She removes a make up brush and slowly runs it across her cheek.

She climbs back into bed and lays there for a moment staring up at the ceiling. She turns to the sleeping City and places her hand on his chest.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
(Quietly)
Am I going to have to repopulate
the planet with you, boy?

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CITY'S PARENT'S ROOM - MORNING

City wakes up alone. The sound of heavy rain can be heard. He climbs out of bed but pauses, clutching his head.

After getting oriented, he moves slowly to the window and peeks out through the blinds. Rain pours violently.

INT. SMALL TENT ROOM - MORNING

Country sleeps on a cot in darkened tent. His face is badly bruised and swollen. There are cuts and dried blood around his nose and lips.

He opens his eyes, one is swollen shut. He looks around the small, bare, black canvas room. It's completely empty.

Wind whips against the canvas, creating an audible RIPPLE. He closes his eyes again.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. SMALL TENT ROOM - DAY

Country opens his eyes again, slightly. Outside, the VOICES of many men moving about can be heard. Country looks around the room again, this time finding a metal plate of food and a bottle of water sitting nearby.

He slowly and painfully rises and he touches his face gently, wincing. He limps as he makes his way to the food. He collects it and moves back to the cot. He sits and examines it: mashed potatoes, peas, and a vitamin tablet. He picks up the vitamin tablet and looks closely at it before pocketing it.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. SMALL TENT ROOM - EVENING

Open once again on Country's face. He begins to slowly open his eyes and face fills with terror.

Inches from his nose is the hulking Teddy sitting on the edge of the cot. He has propped his torso over Country, an arm on each side.

COUNTRY
What do you want?

Teddy panics, jumps up and grabs his own head, before trying to shush the boy. Country tries to scream, but Teddy covers his mouth firmly with one hand. There's a large METAL CRASH outside the tent.

The struggling stops and they both listen. Footsteps draw nearer. Teddy removes his hand from Country's mouth, then raises both, saying "I surrender" before pointing downward.

Country gets the point, slides off the cot, and hides underneath. Teddy, quickly and haphazardly, drapes a sheet over the edge of the cot to conceal Country's whereabouts.

From his new vantage under the cot, Country can see that his belongings and dowel are now in the room. A gruff and cocky young man, CHARLIE, enters the tent.

CHARLIE
What's all the commotion, Teddy?

Teddy shakes his head. Charlie looks past Teddy at the cot and smiles.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Oh Come on, Teddy-boy. You can tell old Charlie about it.

Charlie walks over and grabs Country's dowel.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You got yourself a little pet?

Teddy shakes his head again. Charlie walks to the cot, sits on it and sighs.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
This is a nice cot, Teddy boy.

Charlie bounces a little.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Very firm, very nice. So, where's your new pet?

Teddy cowers. Charlie stands and paces.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You don't want it to end up like your puppy, do you?
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You need help caring for little
pets, Teddy-boy. Lets see... where
in the world could it be?

Charlie kneels at the edge of the cot. Teddy grabs his head
and cringes. Charlie pulls away the sheet revealing the
battered Country.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
That was a fun game, wasn't it?

Teddy crouches in a corner, still holding his head. Charlie
shakes his head and paces the room. He grabs and holds up
Country's dowel, examining its blooded end. He scrapes at
the blood with his thumbnail.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(To Country)
You've got a bit of the darkness...

Charlie kneels and looks closely at Country.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Let's grow you up, boy.

FADE OUT:

TITLE: SOME WEEKS LATER...

FADE IN:

EXT. WRECKAGE - MORNING

Rain pours hard upon the wasteland outside of City's home,
creating tiny rivers through the debris. A corpse floats
facedown in a large puddle.

EXT./INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mariah's silhouette stands stark before a green plastic
translucent tarp covering the absent wall.

Inside, Mariah stands in the halved living room transfixed
for a time, staring through a tear in the tarp and out into
the wreckage.

CITY'S ROOM

City's eyes open. He lays in bed and stares at the ceiling,
listening to the rain. He sits up and shivers. He moves to
the closet and pulls his dirty matted pink robe from it.

KITCHEN

City enters the kitchen, wrapped in his robe. Mariah stands by the sink and staring out the window.

MARIAH

Hail stopped.

City sits at the table.

CITY

That's good, right?

Mariah moves from the window and hands City a tin mug of water, then continues on to her bedroom. She slams the door.

EXT. TENT CITY - DAY

Country slaves away in the pouring rain, pounding a long tent stake into the soft earth with a sledgehammer.

Camp has regrouped within the large matted center of a dying corn field. Country stands in a row of other young men doing the same or similar tasks.

THUNDER CLAPS loudly as he finishes. He looks to the sky.

INT. TENT BARRACKS - EVENING

Country walks into a vast tent room filled with military style cots. Raindrops beat aggressively against the canvas. He wades through other boys, none of whom are interacting. He passes cot after cot and stops at his own.

At the foot of his cot is a footlocker. He opens it. Inside sits the little wooden piano, his Father's Zippo, his now-broken binoculars, and various sundries.

He lingers on his dad's lighter, running his fingers across its reflective body, then replaces it and picks out a bar of soap and a large rag.

EXT. TENT BARRACKS - MOMENTS LATER

Country walks out under a large awning attached to the sleeping tent. He removes his clothing and hangs it and his rag towel from hooks attached to the ceiling of awning. He steps out into the cold rain and lets it rinse the mud from his body.

INT. TENT BARRACKS - MOMENTS LATER

Country finishes dressing, buttoning his last couple of shirt buttons, just as Charlie enters the tent.

CHARLIE
(To everyone)
Time to eat....!

The droves of men start to migrate out of the tent, orderly, single file. Country hangs back. Charlie spots him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You too, boy....!

Country sighs and joins the migration. As he passes Charlie, Charlie slaps him on the back of the head.

INT. MESS TENT - MOMENTS LATER

Country sits at one of many long mess tables and eats the usual fare: meat, veggies, coke, water, from a metal tray. He sits quietly scarfing his meal, surrounded by many other young men and boys doing the same. No one interacts.

Country looks around the tent. The Pale Eyed Boy he saw before watches him. Country smiles and the boy quickly looks down.

Just past the Pale Eyed Boy, Charlie sits with two other YOUNG MEN, equally cocky. They laugh. They seem to be the only ones enjoying themselves.

Charlie looks to Country, eyeballing him. They lock eyes and Charlie smiles in a superior manner, Country looks down.

Another man enters the tent, mid-twenties, very fit, handsome, and with a definite charisma, TOM. At Tom's side is Teddy.

Charlie becomes noticeably serious and nervous at the sight of Tom. Tom approaches Charlie and leans over his shoulder, whispering something. Charlie looks confused and points to Country.

Country and Tom lock in a gaze. Tom smiles and nods a greeting toward Country who reciprocates.

Tom turns his attention back to Charlie and they discuss something intensely, then Tom and Charlie leave together.

Teddy looks to Country, smiles and starts over to him. As Tom and Charlie exit the tent, Charlie shoots a vicious glare at Country. Country's expression turns to a glazed over worry.

Teddy approaches, takes Country's free hand and holds his own over it. He pushes something into Country's hand, then lumbers away.

Country looks down at his closed hand and slowly opens it. In his palm is a small hand carved wooden COWBOY. Country smiles slightly.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - DAY

City sits on the floor of his living room, holding a small cheerleader's megaphone wide end to his face. With his other hand, he's rotating a record on a turntable.

The tapping of the rain rages on against the plastic tarp, making the barely audible, miniature sound of the record even less audible.

Mariah enters the room. She seems annoyed. City looks to her and smiles.

CITY
You can hear it like this.

Mariah doesn't respond. She moves to the liquor cabinet and removes a bottle of wine. She grabs a wine glass from the counter, pulls out the cork, and pours herself some.

MARIAH
We need more stuff to do, I think.

She sets down the bottle and gulps her glass quickly. City stands and sets down the megaphone.

CITY
Okay.

MARIAH
Yeah well, how are we going to do that? Is there a Walmart near by you're not telling me about?

City looks down at the turntable, then starts stomping it to bits. After it's fairly destroyed he looks up to Mariah with a smile. She looks back at him unimpressed and bored.

CITY
My mom said there's a bunch of rummage sale stuff in the upstairs of the church. It's where they keep the valuables.

MARIAH
Well that's something, right? Let's do that.

CITY
Okay.

INT. OLD CHURCH - OFFICES & STORAGE - EVENING

City and Mariah wade through the half flooded, wood-paneled hallway. They are dressed in makeshift rain slickers made from black trash bags.

They wander to the end of the long shiny corridor, which sits at such an angle that, the further down it the two venture, the shallower the water becomes. They reach the four doors and are once again on dry land.

City pulls a pair of gloves from his back pocket and puts them on. Mariah looks at the doors, which are all shut.

MARIAH
Which door is it? I only ever went
through the one.

City gestures to the proper door. Mariah opens it and peeks in.

The floor of the stairwell is covered in rubble. Water pours from a hole in the ceiling. The metal staircase that once gave entry to the upper floor, now rests in shambles: collapsed and rusting. Above is a ledge leading into a darkened room.

Mariah rejoins City and positions herself casually against the wall by him.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
So what's in the other rooms?

City points and speaks without looking up.

CITY
(Points to the first door)
Plastic baby Jesus and some
animals.
(Points to the third door)
...you.

Mariah looks to the fourth door.

MARIAH
That one?

City shrugs.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
I'm gonna check it out.

Mariah heads over and tries the handle, it's locked.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
It's locked.

City moves into the ex-stairwell, far too enthralled by his current project to pay her mind. Mariah follows him.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
It's locked from the inside, I
think.

CITY
I'm gonna climb up.

MARIAH

I can make the climb if you want...

City starts to climb the wall of debris.

MARIAH (CONT'D)

Or not.

City grabs hold of jagged pieces of rebar, crumbled cement, and wrought-iron railing, poking from the heaped mass. He haphazardly scurries up straining and slipping along the way. Hunks of dangerous debris collapse beneath his feet and plummet toward Mariah, who moves quickly to avoid them.

He reaches the protruding lip of the upper room and strains to pull himself up. He pulls his stomach across a jagged piece of metal, gashing his belly. He lets out a pained moan.

MARIAH (CONT'D)

Are you alright?

City stands and pulls back the trash bag and shirt from his stomach. He dabs the wound with his hand and cringes.

CITY

I'm alright!

He looks to his hand, it's covered in blood. He replaces it against the wound and holds it there as he wanders into the black room. With his free hand he retrieves a flashlight from his pocket. It doesn't seem to work at first and he struggles with it, giving it a couple of good smacks.

Mariah stands below looking around and shivering a bit. She looks up at the darkened ledge waiting for word. Light flickers on from above.

MARIAH

Hey...! Find anything?

No reply. A scurrying sound emits from the locked room. Fear consumes Mariah. The sound subsides and Mariah stands shivering in silence, staring at the door.

Something hits the ground in front of her and she jumps back. It's a rope leading up to the ledge. She looks up to find City's smiling face looking back at her.

CITY

I think you're gonna like this.

INT. TENT BARRACKS - DAY

The rain has stopped. Country lays in his cot with a black cloth draped over his face acting as a makeshift sleeping mask.

The young men around him all sleep, some snore, all do what they can to block the light. The air is cold, indicated by everyone's visible breath.

Country removes the cloth from his face and looks around the tent. He quietly moves across the cot to his footlocker and begins going through it.

He picks up the tiny piano and lays back in his cot, placing it upon his chest. He stares at it, sighs, then begins to inspect it closer. His face fills with determined curiosity as he notices a compartment in the back. He slides it open.

Inside: an old tattered photo of a nude woman posing. He studies it a while, then laughs quietly to himself and carefully replaces it.

He hears a CLICK coming from the entrance of the tent. He looks and spots Teddy clicking his tongue. Teddy beckons him, then moves away from the tent.

Country rises from his bed, confused, brow furrowed. He slips on his shoes. He reaches the entrance of the tent and peers out.

EXT. TENT CITY/CORN FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Teddy has cleared camp and heads into a large dying corn field. He looks back to Country and signals for him to follow.

Country wades through the brown stalks of corn, following the sound of Teddy's tromping. They come to a clear patch of land, home to a weathered wooden shack. Teddy stands before it, still beckoning Country over. Country reaches him and Teddy puts his hands up as if to say "wait here".

Country waits and Teddy smiles before moving back into the corn and disappearing.

A clear, kind VOICE emanates from the shack.

VOICE (O.C.)
Teddy likes you a lot.

The screen-door of the shack opens with a creak revealing Tom's smiling face.

TOM
He's a good judge of character.

Country seems confused.

TOM (CONT'D)
You're wondering who I am.

COUNTRY
You're the one in charge.

Tom nods.

TOM
And you're different from the
others.

Tom moves out of the doorway and sits on the front steps.

TOM (CONT'D)
Have a seat.

Country sits in the dirt Indian style. He subtly spies a wooden, padlocked shed attached to the side of the shack. It reads "Danger" in red letters. He quickly turns his attention back to Tom.

TOM (CONT'D)
You have questions?

COUNTRY
One or two, I guess.

TOM
So, ask.

Country sighs.

COUNTRY
Why?

Tom smiles again.

TOM
You mean why have an army? Why
kill people?

COUNTRY
Innocent people.

TOM
Innocent? Those hillbilly twins
would have raped you for breakfast.
You or anyone else they came in
contact with.

Country shakes his head slowly.

COUNTRY
I saw a family slaughtered.

TOM
No, you didn't.

COUNTRY
I did. I saw these... men of yours
murder an entire family.

Tom shakes his head.

TOM
You saw an inevitability. A mercy
killing at best.
(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)
 That family, like every family in
 this, was the walking dead. We
 aren't murderers, we're the
 Ghostbusters.

Country becomes frustrated.

COUNTRY
 Could've helped them instead of
 what you did, you could've done for
 them like you did for me.

TOM
 Difference is, they lost the
 ability to adapt. You haven't.

Tom smiles.

TOM (CONT'D)
 You're trying to reason with me. I
 love that. There's no reason here.
 Nothing here is sound or okay.
 This...

Tom raises his arms indicating the whole world.

TOM (CONT'D)
 ...this is fucked up.

Tom stands again and looks off into the corn, then starts to
 pace. Simultaneously, Country looks down a large rock within
 grabbing distance. He ponders his options, then returns his
 gaze to Tom.

TOM (CONT'D)
 I'll explain it to you the way I
 explain it all to myself and you
 can decide whether you continue
 this, or...

Tom makes a vague gesture with his hands and pauses a moment
 moving in closer to Country.

TOM (CONT'D)
 I don't think we were given this
 clean slate just to raise from the
 ashes an instant welfare state.
 This is the will of evolution. Our
 skin has to thicken. We have to
 strengthen as a race, battle the
 forces of nature... or... or...
 (Beginning to rant)
 A child should emerge from the womb
 prepared to murder his Father in
 self defense or we are destined to
 live out the same pathetic fate
 again and again. A planet of lame
 horses and here... here we shoot
 horses. We shoot them deader than
 those barren, sandy wastelands
 where nothing grows anymore.

COUNTRY
You murder helpless people.

Tom seems confused by Country's inability to get his point.

TOM
Yes... yes I do... I've made
myself, myself and these men a
strong force of nature... death
incarnate.

COUNTRY
That's insane.

Tom locks eyes with Country and shrugs.

TOM
Then stop me.

Tom's gaze lingers, then turns again to a smile.

TOM (CONT'D)
Stop me or join me. Do something.
Become your own force of nature.

Tom moves to Country, places his hand on his shoulder.

TOM (CONT'D)
Have you seen the train?

Country looks up to Tom who is staring into the corn.

TOM (CONT'D)
The train tells me it's working.

Tom lifts his hand from Country's shoulder and walks behind him. Country stares down in frustration, then turns around. Tom is gone.

Country quickly grabs the rock at his side and makes his way over to the shed that reads "Danger". He stands before it and raises the rock over his head.

EXT./INT. CITY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Rain pours, muddying City's backyard and playing a sloppy rhythm on the translucent green tarp. Through it, the distorted silhouettes of Mariah and City.

Music blares in tinny, single speaker mono from a dirty tape-player. Next to it are stacks of caseless cassettes and an economy pack of AAA batteries. All this sits atop one of many stacks damp pre-consumer, warehouse style of boxes: some of booze, some of canned peas and Spam.

Around the room, flashlights have been duct-taped to shelves and boxes. Candles have been placed on every free surface. There are heaps of clothing, much of it still price-tagged.

Mariah stands behind City, trimming his hair with professional salon sheers. She's smoking a cigarette.

Next to them is another stack of boxes, sitting atop: a small purple spray bottle, with which Mariah occasionally spritzes City's hair as she snips away.

She's wearing a tight red evening dress and a fur coat. City's wearing a karate Gi and a puffy parka.

Mariah finishes the back of his head and moves around to the front. She runs her fingers through his hair and messes it.

MARIAH
Looking better, much more
respectable.

Mariah straddles City's thigh. She snips off the hair she gathers between her fingers. Her breasts linger near City's face. City looks at them and takes a deep nervous breath.

Mariah turns away to set down the sheers and pick up the spray bottle and City quickly snatches a nearby book and places it squarely upon his lap.

Mariah turns back and subtly looks down at the book. She smiles, spritzing and spiking City's hair. She steps back to look at her handy work.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
All done... you clean up nice,
handsome.

City sits silent and serious faced. He looks her up and down and sighs. Mariah snuffs her cigarette and moves across the room. She grabs some lipstick off one of the boxes starts to apply it. City watches.

She saunters over to him, removes the book, and sits sideways across his lap. She slowly kisses his forehead, then his cheeks. She giggles and so does he.

She moves in and gently kisses his lips. When she pulls away they lock in a gaze for a an extended moment.

CITY
You taste like cigarettes.

Mariah laughs, caught off guard by the comment. She stands again and brushes her hand across City's cheek, then moves to the kitchen.

MARIAH
I need more wine!

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - PARENT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mariah sleeps alone. She jarringly GASPS to life.

She stands, lights a candle, and dresses hurriedly.

She opens the vanity drawer and collects the ring of keys.

EXT./INT. OLD CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

Rain fiercely tears against the church's face and muddy ground.

Mariah is geared up in a clear plastic poncho and hood. The ring of keys dangle from her hand. She makes her way through the church's entrance.

Inside, water pours like a waterfall from a hole in the ceiling, above altar. The water gushes down hard over the large crucifix.

Mariah wades through knee high water on her flashlight illuminated journey through the nave of the church. She tromps down the aisle, past the pews and pulpit, and toward the small door behind the altar.

OFFICES & STORAGE

Mariah wades through the long hallway to the four doors. The end of the hall is cluttered with stacks of boxes that they've pillaged.

She stands before the locked door and places her flashlight under her arm. She takes the knob and tries a few different keys before one fits and turns. She hesitates a moment, then slowly opens the door and enters.

A moment later she exits looking distraught. She slams the door behind her and places a hand over her mouth. She shakes off the shock, then quickly fumbles to lock the door again.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CITY'S PARENT'S ROOM - LATER

Mariah lays on her side weeping. There is a soft knock at her door. City enters slowly, rubbing his eyes. He has a large bandage taped to his belly. Blood has soaked through it slightly.

CITY
You okay?

Mariah sits up, wipes away her tears, and puts her arms out toward City. He climbs into bed with her, lays on his side, being spooned by her. She puts her arm around him and squeezes him. He closes his eyes and sighs. She stares off.

INT. TENT BARRACKS - NIGHT

Country sits on his cot, backpack on his lap. The men and boys around him either sleep or silently look at pictures or objects. They are all serious and minding their own affairs.

Country's footlocker is open and mostly empty. He has packed his belongings. He stares into his backpack. On top are two sticks of dynamite.

He looks around to make sure no one is spying, then snaps the sticks in half. He opens the back of his tiny piano, removes the nude picture, letting it fall to the floor, and shoves the dynamite inside. He places his pack inside his footlocker and closes it just as Charlie enters.

Charlie walks down the rows of cots carrying a cricket bat. Every so often he whacks the foot of a cot and that cot's occupant, jumps up, scurries to get dressed, then hurriedly exits.

Country watches Charlie as he swaggers around the room hitting only a select few cots. He comes to Country's and without looking at him whacks it hard, then continues his round.

Country jumps to it, like everyone else, and within a moment is dressed and quietly racing out of the tent.

EXT. TENT CITY - CONTINUOUS

Country and the other selected young men march in single file, illuminated only by moonlight.

A flashlight blinks three times in the slight distance. The group heads over to it quickly. Behind them Charlie's voice chimes in, curt and assertive.

CHARLIE

Line up. Be still. Be silent.

The young men do so and do so quickly. Before them, a much larger group of young men is barely visible.

A red lantern lights. It's held by Tom. The horde behind him silently slips back into the shadows. Tom sets the lantern before Country's group.

TOM

You're all maturing into warriors... in the coming weeks, you few, each of you, will be approached by me. You'll be asked to choose between graduation and exile. Join us and you'll be expected to sacrifice all trace of your former selves to the fire. You'll become a part of the solution. No longer orphans. Now, angels of death. Choose to leave and you leave without your tongues. It's a simple choice and it's each of yours to make. But, know, if you abandon this family, you become a stranger and will be dealt with like a stranger, wiped clean from the face.

Behind Tom dozens upon dozen more red lanterns light almost simultaneously, revealing the menacing size of Tom's army.

TOM (CONT'D)
Take the tools I've given you.
Make the right choice.

Tom looks to Country and nods. Country with a bewildered expression nods back as subtly as he can.

Charlie catches the exchange and furrows his brow as the lanterns all fade to black in unison.

EXT./INT. TENT BARRACKS - NIGHT

Charlie stands at the entrance of the tent barracks, in a veil of half shadow. In the distance the marching song begins and slowly fades from earshot.

Charlie stares at Country, who is lying on his cot, worried. Charlie's face fills with disdain, as he steps back into the shadows and disappears into the blackness.

INT. BUNKER - UNKNOWN

Country opens his eyes. He's lying in his hay bale bed alone. He sits up and around the room, confused.

He pushes aside his curtain door, looks around the main room of the bunker. It's empty. His nose starts to bleed. He doesn't notice.

COUNTRY
Mom?

He takes another step and smashes a snail under his bare foot, with a crunch. He lifts his foot and looks at the bottom. He becomes distraught.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
Oh no.

There's a cough directly in front of him. He looks to its source. Father has appeared, pale and helpless, slouched on the floor at Country's feet. He stares up at Country with terrifyingly wide eyes.

INT. TENT BARRACKS - TWILIGHT

Country wakes with a start. Sitting on the edge of his cot is Tom, who shushes him. Country is shocked. He looks around the room. All the other boys and men are sleeping.

Tom drinks from a bottle of whiskey and seems a bit tipsy. He looks to the ground and snickers, he picks up the picture of the naked woman and stares at it smiling for a moment, then licks the back of it and sticks it to his forehead.

There is blood on Tom's hands and some of it smears onto the picture.

TOM
Do you believe in mercy, boy? In
killing in the name of mercy?

Tom takes another swig.

TOM (CONT'D)
He's an imbecile you know? He's
been like that his whole life,
wrongheaded like that. Teddy, I
mean... my little brother...

Tom pauses a moment, filled with emotion. The nude picture
to fall onto the cot. Tom takes a shallow, emotion choked
breath, then another drink.

TOM (CONT'D)
He got sick. It twisted him up
like that. I don't know how,
but... I nursed him, I came close
though, you know? Real close.
Probably should have done it. Do
you think you could do that? Kill
someone you love in the name of
mercy.

Country just stares at Tom, then looks down.

TOM (CONT'D)
I know you understand... I can tell
it. I couldn't do it, but now,
even with him able bodied or
whatever he is. I wish I'd... I
wish I'd done it, done for him.
You know, to protect him...

Tom gestures around the room and to the world, swinging the
bottle slightly.

TOM (CONT'D)
...from this.

Tom swigs again, hard.

TOM (CONT'D)
I leave him behind... most times,
let him guard the camp. The only
time he comes with us, is when
there are bad men to be dealt with.
Something to justify my
ruthlessness in front of him. I'm
not even sure what he comprehends.
I have no clue. You believe that?

Tom sets his bottle on the floor.

TOM (CONT'D)
You understand. I know you
understand.

Tom opens Country's footlocker and sees the packed bag. He sighs and looks to Country with a serious expression, then back to the locker. Country freezes like a deer in lights.

Tom pulls out the pack and sets it on his lap. He leaves bloody marks everywhere he touches.

TOM (CONT'D)
Well, you're the only one who understands. That's why I need you here. You give me pause... you... you're my conscience.

Tom smirks.

TOM (CONT'D)
My Jiminy Cricket.

Tom opens the backpack and starts gently picking through it. He removes the tiny wooden cowboy and sets it on Country's knee, then looks to Country's face and smiles, tears filling his eyes.

TOM (CONT'D)
You're right, you know? You're right and I'm wrong.

Tom removes the tiny piano from the pack, pulls it tight to his chest and reaches down and picks up the whisky bottle. He stands and takes another drink.

TOM (CONT'D)
I'm the angel of death... but you...

He wipes the mouth of the bottle in the crook of his arm and holds it out to Country. Country hesitates a moment, until Tom makes a forceful motion toward him. Country takes the bottle and drinks, cringing after.

TOM (CONT'D)
You're the angel of mercy.

Tom takes back the bottle and turns to leave, stumbling a bit, piano still in his hand. As he walks away he mutters.

TOM (CONT'D)
You understand. I know that you do.

Country watches him go, then sighs deeply, nervously.

EXT. CITY'S HOUSE - MORNING

City stands at the edge of his muddy yard, bundled in warm clothes. Next to him is a box of ceramic plates.

He removes them one at a time, throwing them like frisbees and watching them smash or bounce as they hit the ground. He's in a daze. His breath is visible in the cold.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mariah walks out from the bedrooms shivering. She walks through the kitchen and a bottle of wine. She sits in the big chair, lights a cigarette, and bundles herself in a dirty sleeping bag, staring at the wall.

EXT. CITY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

City continues throwing plates, but is suddenly distracted. He looks to the ground intently. After a moment he looks to the sky. He stares for a long moment. Snow flakes begin to fall. He puts out his hand and catches one, his face brightens.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

City burst into the house, startling Mariah.

CITY
It's snowing!

MARIAH
What?

City jumps up and down with elation.

CITY
It's snowing, it's fucking snowing
outside.

He points outside. Mariah smiles at his uncharacteristic child-like excitement.

MARIAH
I've never seen you like this.

CITY
Like what?

MARIAH
All cracked out, giddy. And about
snow? What's the big deal?

CITY
It doesn't snow here. I've never
seen it snowing for real.

EXT. CITY'S HOUSE - DAY

Mariah sits in her lawn chair bundled and insulated in layers. She's trying to read a *People* magazine, but her gloves are giving her grief.

City wanders around skimming at the top of the thin layer of snow cover, trying to make a snowball.

What he gets is mostly mud. He starts to form a mud ball with a tiny bit of snow in it.

Mariah continues to fumble with her gloves.

MARIAH
Shit! I'm all mongo hands with
these stupid gloves on.

She puts one of her gloved hands in her armpit trying to get the leverage to remove the cumbersome puffy thing.

City stops what he's doing. He puts one of his arms behind his back and watches Mariah intently as she continues to struggle. He begins to slowly inch toward her and starts to smirk.

She catches him and starts to smirk herself.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Give me a break! I've gotta find
out who America's beefiest beefcake
is.

City continues to smirk. Mariah starts to pick up on the fact that he has something else on his mind. She looks to him quizzically.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
What?

City quickly brings his hidden arm around. In it, the giant snowy, mud-ball.

Before Mariah can react, he flings the monstrosity squarely at her face. It nails her hard in the forehead and she's knocked back and out of her flimsy chair.

City poises himself to run away, but waits for a reaction. He's wild-eyed and giggling.

Mariah lays for a moment on the muddy ground in shock, brown goop covering her hair and starting to drip down her face.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
What the fuck...! Oooh, you're
dead, shitbird!

City makes a break for it fiercely. Mariah jumps up and bolts after him, full bore.

City banks to the left and Mariah covers the space quickly, closing the gap. City slips, loses some footing.

Mariah takes the opportunity, but doesn't slow to catch him and instead leaps into a flying tackle.

She takes City down hard and they both smack dangerously against the earth and slide across the muddy yard. She climbs atop his belly, pinning his arms and starts packing mud on his face.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Who's Queen Bitch?! Who's Queen
Bitch?!

She stops packing the mud and starts wiping it from City's face. He chokes and gags.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Who's Queen Bitch?! Huh?

City turns his head and spits mud, then gasps for air, getting some he responds.

CITY
You are! You are!

Mariah puts her face close to City's.

MARIAH
I'm what?

CITY
You're the Queen Bitch!

Mariah jumps up off of City and pounds her chest.

MARIAH
Never forget it, fucker.

Mariah turns and starts walking back to the house. City sits up and catches his breath.

After a moment he stands and starts to follow Mariah, but suddenly and with laughter, he rockets toward her, tackling her from behind and knocking them both to the ground again.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - LATER

The tiny pink cassette player blasts some fast paced 80's top-forty hit. Mariah has her hair in a dried-mud-covered side-ponytail and is doing "The Pony".

City runs and jumps around the living room banging on a small tin drum to the beat. He finally busts through the drum and, seeing it's broken, flings it hard across the room and into the wall. Once it hits the floor, he stomps it into a deformed heap.

The song slows to a distorted end, due to lack of battery, and they both collapse to the floor out of breath. After a long moment of heavy breathing, Mariah sits up abruptly.

MARIAH
Let's have a fashion show.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - LATER

City is alone in the living room. He opens a can of soda and chugs about half of it down, then picks up a bottle of booze and haphazardly pours some in. He takes a swig of the concoction and cringes, then yells back toward the bedrooms.

CITY
You ready yet?!

Mariah chimes in from her room.

MARIAH (O.C.)
Almost! Keep your panties on!

City fidgets anxiously.

MARIAH (CONT'D) (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Okay, okay! Go!

City jumps up, grabs a nearby flashlight, clicks it on, and holds it under his face like a microphone. He begins to speak to an imaginary audience...

CITY
Ladies and gentlemen, in our first
fashion show ever. I present for
you... the man about town...

He throws his arm outward toward the bedrooms in presentation, shining the flashlight in that direction like a spot lamp. Mariah doesn't appear for a moment.

CITY (CONT'D)
Come on, don't keep everyone
waiting!

Mariah emerges from the bedrooms wearing an oversized tuxedo and a hand-drawn marker mustache. She saunters around the kitchen arrogantly. Speaking in a fake foreign accent.

MARIAH
'Allo, 'allo... ladies, ladies, 'ow
you zay, take ze number for a fling
in zah sack wiss ziss piece of man-
cake.

City starts cracking up. Mariah blows kisses to the fake audience, then stops at the kitchen table and pours herself a drink in an exaggerated manner, still in character. She knocks back the drink, then turns her attention to City.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
'Oo is ziss? Is ziss supposed to
be my competition? Hah!

Mariah rushes over to City and starts to tickle him, making him laugh even harder.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Ziss is just a little girly boy!

EXT. CITY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The scene continues to play out from a distant vantage through the translucent tarp. The dialogue is inaudible, but the laughter can be heard.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Mariah, alone, still dressed as a man sits the big chair, drinking.

MARIAH
C'mon, fair's fair!

City calls out from the bedroom.

CITY (O.C.)
I don't want to!

MARIAH
C'mon!

City sighs loudly, then emerges in a dress, long blonde wig, and sloppy make up. He looks severely unamused. Mariah starts cracking up.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Oh my God!

City huffs and turns back to the bedrooms. Mariah rushes over.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Oh no, come on. You look beautiful, don't be like that.

She grabs him by the shoulders and turns him back around. He looks miserable. Mariah reaches over to the kitchen table and grabs his drink and hands it to him.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Here. Take a big boy sip, okay?

City takes a huge gulp, cringing after.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Okay.

Mariah steps back.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Now sell it. C'mon you have to sell it. I did.

City sighs and starts to smile in a puckered girly way, playing with his hair. Mariah falls to floor in restrained laughter.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Oh shit... oh no, it's too good.
I'm gonna piss my pants.

City bats his hand at her in a limp wristed mock-feminine manner, going totally into character.

CITY
(In a falsetto)
Nope, no peeing allowed, not in that tux, it's a rental and we just will not get the deposit back.

Mariah cracks up again.

MARIAH
That's good, that's so good. Oh my God.

She stands and composes herself, takes a deep breath, then looks at City for a time.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
You really are beautiful.

She switches to the man voice again.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Zo beautiful. I must have you. I must have you, now!

City starts laughing as Mariah lunges at him, chasing him around the room.

CITY
Oh God, stop it!

The chase continues on, like a *Pepe Le Pew* cartoon. They both laugh uncontrollably.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CITY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

City lays in his bed being spooned by Mariah. They're both still dressed in drag and Mariah is snoring.

City's eyes are open and he's staring up at his little metal Indian with a half-smile. He sighs a happy sigh and closes his eyes.

EXT. TENT CITY - TWILIGHT

Country digs a ditch in the mud between tents. He's slaving hard and is covered with filth as a heavy wind whips across him. He strains to lift each shovelful of heavy sopping mud. His hole is already about three feet deep.

In exhaustion he collapses back and sits on the edge of the hole out of breath.

Teddy approaches with two other YOUNG MEN. The other men stand, heads down, seemingly drained of will or personality.

Teddy directs them to the hole, then he helps Country up. Teddy leads Country toward the mess tent.

As they walk away, Country watches the other men take up his job, expressionless and zombie-like. Teddy and Country enter the tent.

INT. MESS TENT - MOMENTS LATER

Country and Teddy open can after can of food with old WWII style hand can-openers. Country cuts his finger.

COUNTRY

Ow!

He quickly puts his finger to his mouth. Teddy laughs slightly.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)

Hurts.

Teddy smiles and soon Country smiles as well.

The table before them holds the fruits of their labor, at least fifty open cans of various types of food.

Teddy grabs a rag and a water bottle and, with the bottle, wets the rag and tosses it to Country. Country wraps his finger.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)

Thanks, Teddy.

Teddy lumbers into the corner of the tent and digs into the earth. He pulls from it a Ziplock bag full of something obscured by dirt. He opens the bag, removes an item that resembles a shiny hockey puck, then re-seals and re-buries the bag.

He moves back to Country with the retrieved object hidden behind his back. He places the gift in Country's open palm. It's a foil wrapped Hostess Ding Dong.

Country smiles wholeheartedly, Teddy does as well. Just then, Charlie chimes in aggressively from the other side of the tent.

CHARLIE

Teddy!

Teddy recoils in fear. Charlie, with his two cronies, rushes toward Teddy and lunges at him. Teddy flees from the tent. Country blocks Charlie's exit.

COUNTRY

Leave him alone.

Charlie's two friends start to laugh. Charlie's not amused. He sends his friends away with a gesture. They leave and Charlie turns his rage-filled attention to Country. He knocks the Ding Dong out of Country's hand.

CHARLIE
What the fuck did you say to me?

Charlie quickly reaches out and grabs Country by the throat stepping on the Ding Dong in the process.

Country wrenches back, pulling free, but falls, knocking over the table holding all the cans of freshly opened food. The food spills out into the dirt.

Charlie rushes Country who avoids him by quickly clamoring to his feet.

Country poises himself for a fight, putting up his fists. Charlie looks at him, wild eyed, and beckons him over.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
C'mon! C'mon you fucking insect.
Give me a reason to tear you the
fuck apart.

Charlie fake-lunges at Country, making him flinch, then kicks him full force in the shin.

Country buckles in pain and grabs his leg. Charlie takes the moment, kicks Country again, knocking him onto his back, then shoves his boot against Country's throat.

Country grabs and claws at Charlie's leg to no effect. Charlie puts more pressure on Country's neck and Country stops fighting and starts gagging.

Charlie pulls a large handmade knife from the back of his pants and points it at Country.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You see? It could be so easy.
Fucking easy. Just...

Charlie adds pressure to Country's throat. Country's eyes bulge and water and he is no longer able to make sound. Charlie lets up slightly and Country gags again.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Just like that... Done. What
makes you so fucking special, huh?
Raggedy faggot like you. You're
nothing! Fucking nothing!

Charlie removes his foot altogether and wanders away from Country. Country rolls onto his side and gasps, taking in all the air he can. Charlie without another word, puts away his knife and exits the tent.

Now alone, Country slowly sits up, coughs, and spits. He collects himself and becomes silent. He rests his head on his knees.

EXT. TENT CITY - MOMENTS LATER

Country emerges from the mess tent, limping. He makes his way over to the ditch tears running down his cheeks.

Behind him Charlie watches.

Country approaches the two men digging his ditch. He wrenches a shovel away and starts digging feverishly. He pulls out shovelful after shovelful.

Country notices Tom standing before him. They lock eyes, Country gives him the thousand yard stare, all the while digging and digging. Tom stares back bewildered, then moves his eyes to Charlie. Charlie turns and walks away.

INT. TENT BARRACKS - LATER

Country sits on his cot with his pant leg rolled up. He's examining the massive, purple and yellow bruise left on his shin. He touches it, it's so tender he cringes.

Teddy's tongue clicking starts again. Country looks over, Teddy beckons him again. Country slowly stands and he makes for the exit.

Someone tsks. Country looks to the sound. It's the Pale Eyed Boy, sitting in his bed and shaking his head. Country furrows, then continues out of the tent.

EXT. CORN FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Country follows Teddy through the dying corn field, face filled with frustration and purpose. Suddenly, he stops following.

Teddy notices and desperately, through physical gestures, demands and pleads with Country to follow, to hurry. Country's face is stone-serious as he shakes his head.

COUNTRY

Why, Teddy?

Teddy whimpers, begs and pleads. Country looks down in frustration, then looks back to Teddy whose expression resembles a sad puppy. Country sighs and pushes past Teddy.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)

Go back to camp. I know the way.

Teddy watches as Country pushes past, then turns back toward camp.

Country wades through the last bit of corn field and comes to the clearing with the shack. All is still and quiet.

Country paces: determined, frustrated. Finally he stops and looks to the house in anger.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
 What do you want with me? Huh?
 What? There is nothing special
 about me! Why don't you just
 fucking kill me... or let me go.

Country looks up to the darkened shack intently.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
 You gonna say something, Goddamn
 it?

He throws up his hands in frustration and turns to leave.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
 Fuck this!

Tom's voice rings out from the shack.

TOM (O.S.)
 You're wrong. This time you're
 wrong. You're destined for great
 things, boy.

Tom doesn't show himself. Country shakes his fists.

COUNTRY
 What? Like what? Killing people?
 Am I going to be your most
 celebrated murderer? I'd rather
 fucking die.

Tom opens the screen door and finally emerges, smiling and shaking his head.

TOM
 What? What is it? Is it Charlie?
 You won't have to worry about him
 soon enough and we can move this
 whole thing in a different
 direction.

COUNTRY
 (Frustrated)
 What?

TOM
 The train. Those boys on the
 train. They are fortified and
 moving toward someplace new. They
 have a purpose. They're the hope
 and we're the detriment. But, with
 you, we can be like them.

COUNTRY

You're insane... you change your mind like a child. You're preaching hope and new beginnings to me, meanwhile going on nightly death marches, coming back covered in innocent blood and... and filled with pathetic guilt about shit that you can stop. You're... I don't know what you are... a monster, a fucking moron, just plain Goddamn nuts. I don't care, I'm through with you.

Tom smiles a large impressed smile at Country and moves toward him.

CLACK!

A loud gunshot rings out. Tom's head flings back in a red mist and he collapses, undeniably dead.

Country quickly turns toward the endless brown corn field, the source of the shot, with a face of strained shock.

CLACK!

Another shot! This one grazes Country's cheek and he goes down. A split second later, he's up clamoring, racing desperately for the shack and clutching his face.

INT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Country flings himself through the flimsy screen-door, breaking it. He slams the proper door hard behind him.

A bullet rips through just above him, casting a small beam of light into the darkened room.

Country slides flat onto the floor and waits in silence, breathing heavily, face still filled with unbelievable shock.

A another shot and another hole in the wall, then silence.

Country lays, a long moment on his belly, waiting for anything to happen. Nothing does.

He peers around the room. It's mostly empty save a wooden rocking chair and small wooden end table with a large paper map haphazardly draped across it.

Country slowly rises and cautiously moves to the window. He peers out and into the distance. A rustling in the corn, one man, moving away quickly. Country watches the man go as blood runs down his cheek.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CITY'S BEDROOM - DAY

City wakes in his bed, alone, still dressed as a girl.

BATHROOM/HALLWAY

City urinates in the bathroom with the door mostly shut. He exits and moves through the hallway.

CITY

Mariah!

He rubs his eyes and moves into the kitchen. Mariah is not in the house. He grabs his tin mug from the kitchen table.

CITY (CONT'D)

Mariah!

City moves to the translucent tarp, which ripples in the wind as he pulls it back and gazes out at the vastness. Snow has carpeted the horizon.

EXT. CITY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

City wanders out into his backyard and continues to gaze at the horizon while sipping at his mug of water. A cold wind whips across him and he shivers.

Suddenly behind him, on the side of the house, a large figure comes into view. City doesn't notice. It's a very tall man in grey trench coat. He's maybe thirty, fit and dashing in a rugged sort of way, this is FRANK. Frank steps on a broken piece of ceramic plate and snaps it under his boot.

The sound alerts City, who spins around expecting to see Mariah. Instead he is met with Frank, who greets him with a smile. City bolts for the house, startled out of his skin.

FRANK

Hey, kid!

City races inside.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

City blasts across the living-room and kitchen and back toward the bedrooms.

CITY'S ROOM

City bursts through his bedroom door and slides under his bed. He scurries around underneath, then pops back out, pistol in hand. He heads out of the room, newly confident.

KITCHEN

City moves across the kitchen, gun swinging at his side.

Frank pulls back the tarp to enter the living room.

FRANK

Hey, kid!

City's face fills with rage as he pulls the blonde wig from his head and tosses it to the ground. He raises the gun to Frank's face, just as Mariah enters behind Frank.

MARIAH

Don't!

City starts to squeeze the trigger, Mariah throws herself between them. She snatches the pistol by its nose and wrenches its aim away from Frank's face.

BANG!

The bullet hits a wall and Frank's face fills with shock. City drops the gun and Mariah collapses to the ground clutching her hand.

The intensity of the moment passes and City, still confused, moves to console Mariah. She shoves him away aggressively as tears fill her eyes.

MARIAH (CONT'D)

Get away from me, you little psycho!

She rushes to her bedroom. City watches her go, bewildered. Tall, dashing Frank stands by, dumbfounded, but soon begins laughing.

FRANK

Fuck! You guys are crazy.

City doesn't look at Frank, instead collects his pistol and takes a seat at the kitchen table.

CITY

Who are you supposed to be?

Frank smiles.

FRANK

Frank. I'm supposed to be Frank.
What's your name, kid?

City ignores his question.

CITY

You hungry, Frank? 'Cause I'm
fucking starved.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - LATER

City and Frank sit at the kitchen table, eating canned peaches in syrup off of pastel colored plastic plates.

City has changed out of his girl costume and into something more him, though his face still shows traces of makeup.

FRANK
Thanks for the hospitality.
There's not much left out there,
you know?

City doesn't respond, he doesn't even look at Frank. Mariah emerges from the bedroom. She smiles as she enters the room. Frank stands to greet her with a nod, then sits again.

MARIAH
You boys getting along now?

Mariah looks to City who doesn't reciprocate, instead keeps eating. Frank awkwardly intervenes, trying to pick up the conversation, for the sake of politeness.

FRANK
Um... the kid's pretty quiet, but I
can tell I like him already. I was
just telling him that there's not a
lot of hospitality out there
anymore.

CITY
Someone talking to you, Frank?

MARIAH
(To City)
Hey, c'mon! Sorry I got riled
earlier. I know you were trying to
protect us, but it's no reason to
be rude to a guest.

CITY
Not my guest.

Mariah becomes very upset.

MARIAH
Little bastard.

City rolls his eyes and Mariah answers that by smacking him in the back of the head.

City looks to Mariah with a steely glare, then abruptly spits chewed peaches in her face.

Mariah stands completely still, not changing her facial expression whatsoever, as syrup and peach chunks drip from her face.

City lightens and he tightens his lips in an attempt not to laugh. Mariah's face drops, then City's expression changes to wild eyed fear. She trembles with rage.

City attempts to escape, but Mariah grabs him by the throat with both hands. She jerks him out of his chair and onto the floor. She climbs on top of his chest and continues to choke him and bang his head against the floor violently.

Frank pulls her off and restrains her.

FRANK
Jesus Christ! You kids play rough.

Mariah struggles, furiously, but can't get free of Frank.

MARIAH
Let me go, you fucker! I'm gonna
kill him!

FRANK
C'mon, be easy.

MARIAH
He spit fucking peaches... nasty
syrupy fucking peaches in my face,
Frank. I need to fuck him up!

Mariah loses steam and breath. City sits up on the floor, laughing. Soon, Frank attempts to restrain his laughter as well. Mariah looks down at City.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
(To City)
Are you fucking laughing at me, you
little monster?
(To Frank)
He's fucking laughing at me, Frank.

She cranes her head back to look at Frank who puckers his lips hard in an attempt to not crack up himself.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
You laughing at me, Frank?

Frank starts laughing uncontrollably and loses his grip on Mariah. She pulls herself away from him and collects herself, fixing her hair and clothes. She moves over to the kitchen table and sits as Frank and City continue laughing.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
You're all fucking laughing at me.

Mariah catches her breath and sits quietly for moment, then grabs handfuls of peaches off the plates and starts throwing them hard at both City and Frank. The boys continue to laugh and soon Mariah joins in.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CITY'S BEDROOM - LATER

City lays in bed alone in the dark. He stares at flickering candlelight bleeding in from under the door.

He hears the hushed voices of Frank and Mariah beyond, but their words are inaudible. Interspersed throughout their dialog is laughter and much of it.

City gets out of bed and moves to his closet. He retrieves his little metal Indian from his parka coat pocket. He places it back on his dresser, then climbs back into bed.

After a moment he jumps up, knocks the little Indian over, and climbs into bed again. He tosses a bit trying to get comfy.

His bedroom door opens slowly and Mariah enters, almost tiptoeing. City squints his eyes and pretends to be asleep. Mariah sets her candle on the dresser and starts to remove her clothing. City watches through squints.

She gets down to her underwear, then blows out the candle and climbs into bed with him. She nestles in behind him, wraps her arms around his torso, and squeezes gently, letting out a warm sigh.

They lie there in silence for a moment, simply breathing. City opens his eyes.

MARIAH
(Whispering)
I know you're awake. I know you
can hear me.

Mariah opens her eyes and the two of them stare forward.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
(Whispering)
You don't have to feel threatened
by him. He likes you, you know?
He says he has a brother your age
in a settlement in the city. He
spoke a lot about traveling and the
things he's seen. Guy's been
through some dark shit, kiddo. You
should talk to him. I think you'd
like him a lot.

City rolls over and faces Mariah. She seems caught off guard by the sudden courage. City locks eyes with her. His face holds a serious expression.

In one swift movement, City kisses Mariah passionately. Mariah's eyes grow large with shock, then gently close as she kisses him back.

City releases Mariah and rolls back onto his side, facing away from her. Mariah keeps her eyes shut for an extended moment. City closes his eyes and smiles. Mariah opens her eyes and a guilty expression consumes her.

INT. SHACK - EVENING

Country wakes with a start. He's huddled in a corner of the shack away from the windows.

He sits up quickly and looks around. He's disoriented, but quickly settles back into a metered worried pace.

He rises quietly, moves cautiously to the window, and peers out into the corn fields. He sees nothing.

Country moves toward the map. He picks it up and catches a large splinter in his hand in the process.

He cringes and quickly removes the sliver with his teeth in one swift move. He shoves his afflicted hand into his mouth as he clumsily unravels the large map with his other.

The map's covered in markings: circles, arrows, lines, all obsessively intricate and covering every inch. As he examines it, blood drips from his hand and absorbs into the paper. Country becomes disgusted by the map.

COUNTRY
(Whispering)
Fucking insane.

Country hears something, though no sound is audible. He drops the map and rushes outside.

EXT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Country bursts from the shack and looks to the ground. Tom's body is gone. In it's place is a puddle of blood and a trail of red spatters leading back to camp. Country stares down at this in shock, pacing, his hands on his head.

He gazes fearfully toward camp. In the distance is a large flickering light and billowing plume of black smoke. Country races toward it as the sky darkens.

EXT. CORN FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Country rushes through the brown corn rows, snapping stalks and breathing heavily as he goes. He nears camp and slows his pace. He hears Charlie's voice echoing confidently and the loud crackle and snap of a large flame.

What Charlie says is at first garbled by distance, but quickly the entire scene comes into view. Country slowly stalks the perimeter of the camp spying the goings on.

EXT. TENT CITY - CONTINUOUS

Charlie stands before the large fire, ranting in an impassioned manner, like an evil dictator.

All of Tom's boys and soldiers are lined up before Charlie, listening attentively. At Charlie's feet is the body of Tom and a small pile of Tom's personal items. Among the items is the tiny piano.

Near Tom's body, Teddy crouches, his face buried in his hands. He slowly rocks back and forth.

CHARLIE
(Loud and fiery)
...I want to rip open his chest to
spit on his heart.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I will castrate him. The son of bitch who did this must pay and fucking pay in full. Tom was our leader and will be avenged. This is our new goal, all of us. We will hunt and find and destroy the insect spy who lived among us as a friend, just to try and bury the knife in us. We will send him to hell and piss on the earth where he lays until it's forever infertile. His death... is our new goal in life... and there will be no rest until this goal is accomplished.

Charlie kneels before Tom's body, his face contorts with rage.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

We won't be returning here, so take what you want and what you can carry. It's our custom to burn our dead and all trace of their existence and Tom's no different. As soon as his flame goes out, the hunt begins, so prepare yourselves.

The men and boys turn and move back to their barracks.

Among them is the Pale Eyed Boy who is layered for cold weather, wearing a leather jacket, thick tattered knit sweater, fingerless gloves and a Russian winter hat. He's also holding his backpack. By his face he does not seem to be amused or impressed by any of this.

He quickly spots Country in the corn and subtly sneaks into the field to join him.

Charlie begins tossing Tom's personal effects into the fire.

Country and the Pale Eyed Boy move back a few rows into the corn and away from camp. They hunker and whisper.

THE PALE EYED BOY

(Whispering)

Did you?

COUNTRY

No.

THE PALE EYED BOY

You know who did?

COUNTRY

I have an idea... but...

Country shakes his head.

THE PALE EYED BOY

You have to get away from here. They think it was you.

Country nods and doesn't waste a moment, he turns to leave. He rushes through corn, away from camp. Charlie's booming voice chimes in again.

CHARLIE
There's been word that the murderer
is near here, in a shack in the
corn.

The world behind Country suddenly glows red. The marching song begins.

Country looks back and sees the Pale Eyed Boy hurrying to follow. Country signals for him to speed up, as the red light and song grow nearer.

EXT. CORN FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Country and the Pale Eyed Boy rush feverishly through the corn, until they notice that the red light has appeared in front of them as well. They turn back and see it all around, so they quickly lay flat and cover their faces.

Men tromp by within inches. The two lay perfectly still and wait. The singing stops, but men still pass. Soon all is still, the men seem to have passed and the area becomes dark.

Country and the Pale Eyed Boy cautiously rise and begin to move again. Country takes the boy's hand.

They cover a few feet before the Pale Eyed Boy looks back and there, mere paces behind and rushing toward them silently, is a large YOUNG MAN, in makeshift armor, carrying a baseball bat.

He wallops the Pale Eyed Boy in the stomach with such force that when the boy goes down, he pulls Country with him.

The young man is quickly above Country and swinging his bat down viciously, leaving dents in the earth wherever he hits.

Country barely avoids or blocks the blows time and again. The young man's attacks are relentless.

BOOM!

An enormous flash of white-gold light, a huge and powerful explosion not too far off. The young man is momentarily stunned and looks back.

Country grabs the fat end of the baseball bat and rolls on it, using his weight to wrench it away. The young man lunges at Country fiercely, but the Pale Eyed Boy throws dirt in the young man's face blinding him long enough for Country to put him down with a powerful swing.

The two look around quickly and desperately to see if there are any other hidden adversaries.

The corn stalks around them quickly begin to go up in flames and the two make a break for the darkness. They tear through the corn at an ungodly speed, breathing as if their lungs were about to fall out.

Behind them, the red light grows further and further away.

EXT. COVERED BRIDGE - MORNING

The Pale Eyed Boy wakes quietly, under a covered bridge. He has bundled himself in his coat like a blanket and propped himself against one of the bridge's foundations.

Country is nowhere to be seen.

The Pale Eyed Boy watches the water of a small river near his feet drift by.

The air is blue and misty, very cold. The Pale Eyed Boy wanders out from under the bridge, climbs up the river bank. He steps onto the muddy road which the bridge connects to the other side of the river and looks around.

No Country. He whistles. Country's head pops over the lip of the covered bridge's roof.

COUNTRY

Hey.

Country swings his body over the ledge and hangs for a moment, before dropping. He stumbles a bit on landing, but not enough to be embarrassing. He turns and moves to meet the Pale Eyed Boy.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)

Sleep alright?

THE PALE EYED BOY

Yeah... but, um... can't remember getting here.

COUNTRY

Well, we spread it pretty thin last night. I'm still running on fumes.

Country looks exhausted. He has dark circle under his eyes and his complexion is clammy. Country grins slightly.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)

But, the good news is, they didn't follow us here... or... either that or they haven't gotten this far yet... I can see some house or something not even a mile up the road.

THE PALE EYED BOY

Food!

COUNTRY

What I was thinking, haven't eaten in two days now. My own leg was starting to look tasty. That's a bad place.

THE PALE EYED BOY

What're we waiting for? We keep standing here, I'm gonna eat your fucking leg.

Country nods. The two begin to walk through the bridge. As they make their way through, a corpse drifts down the river. Neither notices.

THE PALE EYED BOY (CONT'D)

Let's go ninja. Hard to say what kind of weirdos live this far out.

EXT. SHANTY TOWN - MORNING

The two boys come to the small shanty town. In it, a series of small structures made from aluminum-siding, corrugated plastic, and plywood. Some are built on stilts above the mud, some are mobile homes and campers combined with pieces of other mobile homes and campers.

It begins to snow lightly. The two boys wander around, peering through doorways and gaps in construction for signs of life or supplies. They quickly gain confidence that they are alone here.

COUNTRY

What the hell is this place?

THE PALE EYED BOY

A shanty town, s'where a lot of really poor people or migrants live if they can't afford anything else. I grew up in a place like this.

The two walk along a wooden plank, trying to keep out of the mud.

THE PALE EYED BOY (CONT'D)

There might be a farm or something nearby... maybe a train depot. There's usually a reason people live in places like this.

INT. DILAPIDATED MOBILE HOME - MOMENTS LATER

The two kick open the front door aggressively, as if trying to surprise someone.

They rush in and flies disperse. Country instantly starts gagging at the horrible smell. The two quickly cover their mouths and noses.

As they glance around the room, they see a table set with half eaten, rotting food.

There's no sign of people living or dead, just stacks of old newspapers and magazines, some children's toys. The Pale Eyed Boy pulls a bandana from his inner coat pocket and ties it around his face.

The two raid the cupboards; gather all the canned goods they can carry and start throwing them out the front door.

EXT. DILAPIDATED MOBILE HOME - CONTINUOUS

The Pale Eyed Boy and Country take turns popping out of the door, tossing their findings into a small pile in the mud, and popping back inside. They do this multiple times, moving in unison, like a well oiled machine. Country continues to gag all the while.

Finally, Country pops out and stays out. He has a bit of a dry heave, then takes a seat on a rock and catches his breath. The Pale Eyed Boy pops out smiling.

THE PALE EYED BOY
What's the matter? Too much?

Country spits.

COUNTRY
Don't think I can go back in there.

THE PALE EYED BOY
Yeah, it's enough to knock a maggot off a gut wagon.

The Pale Eyed Boy pops back in, grabs more cans, and pops out again.

COUNTRY
Whatever that means.

The Pale Eyed Boy throws the cans in the pile and saunters over to Country.

THE PALE EYED BOY
Know what'd make you feel better?

Country looks up at him.

THE PALE EYED BOY (CONT'D)
Some nice runny eggs on a bed of wilted lettuce.

Country dry heaves again. The Pale Eyed Boy laughs.

COUNTRY
Oh God. Why would you do that?
You're an asshole in sheep clothing.

THE PALE EYED BOY
 Couldn't help myself. Sorry. My
 brother used to pull that when I
 was about to heave... just couldn't
 help it. Wait here, I'll get the
 last of the food and we can leave,
 alright? Maybe there's a rose
 garden around here somewhere...
 better yet, a pansy patch.

COUNTRY
 No reason to be a dick.

The Pale Eyed Boy jumps up and heads for the house.

THE PALE EYED BOY
 Sorry.

INT. DILAPIDATED MOBILE HOME - CONTINUOUS

The Pale Eyed Boy rushes back into the mobile home. He
 rifles through drawers and cabinets, looking for other useful
 items.

He finds a small hatchet, some loose bullets, twine. He
 gathers a lot of what he finds and stuffs it all in his
 pockets.

He looks around the room rushing about trying to hurry. He
 spies a duffel bag sticking out from under a door leading to
 a bedroom. He moves toward it, but hears a loud THUMP
 resonate from beyond. He stops abruptly.

EXT. DILAPIDATED MOBILE HOME - CONTINUOUS

Country sits on the rock, staring off. The Pale Eyed Boy
 calls to him, muffled by distance and walls.

THE PALE EYED BOY (O.S.)
 Hey!

COUNTRY
 Yeah?! You alright?

THE PALE EYED BOY (O.S.)
 Hey...! Um, I just heard something
 in here! I'm gonna check it out,
 which is really stupid, I know.
 But I'm gonna do it anyway. So, I
 just want you to know that's what
 I'm doing, okay?!

INT. DILAPIDATED MOBILE HOME - CONTINUOUS

The Pale Eyed Boy stands frozen and big eyed, waiting for an
 answer. One finally comes...

COUNTRY (O.S.)
 Alright! I'll be right out here
 with the shotgun, if you need me!

The Pale Eyed Boy smiles at Country's response, then starts inching over toward door. He whispers encouragingly to himself.

THE PALE EYED BOY
 (Whispering)
 It's okay, you're a bad ass.
 Nobody's gonna fuck with you.
 Nobody fucks with you.

He reaches the door, grabs the duffel bag, gives it a tug, it won't budge. He tries again.

The door falls from its hinges. He jumps back. The impact of falling door creates a huge dust billow. He coughs. The cloud slowly clears, he peers inside the bedroom.

EXT. DILAPIDATED MOBILE HOME - CONTINUOUS

Country still sits on the rock.

COUNTRY
 You alright?!

Country rises and starts toward the house nervously. The front door is open and a light plume of dust billows out.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
 You alright?

Country stands at the door, his breaths heavy, fearful. He slowly peers inside.

A figure exits abruptly, bumping into him. It's the Pale Eyed Boy, covered in dust, moving away from the mobile home with eyes wide as saucers.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
 You alright?

The Pale Eyed Boy just looks at Country with a confused expression and points to the door. Country looks toward it. The Pale Eyed Boy starts to vomit.

INT. DILAPIDATED MOBILE HOME - CONTINUOUS

Country barrels in and looks around, then he sees it...

The grey rotten bodies of three very young children hanging by their necks from the ceiling of the bedroom. Beneath them, a mostly headless overweight body is slumped on the bed with a rifle leaning on it's belly and behind it all, a huge dark brown spatter of blood and matter stains the white wall.

Flies are everywhere, their sound is deafening. Country covers his mouth. His eyes well up. He can't stop staring. He slowly backs away, then looks down.

A baby begins to cry inside the room. Country becomes light headed, he braces against the doorjamb. He shakes himself, trying to stabilize.

He braces on the wall and heading back toward the exit, weak with shock. The baby continues screaming. Country exits.

EXT. DILAPIDATED MOBILE HOME - CONTINUOUS

Country exits, but just continues to walk away at a snails pace. He passes the Pale Eyed Boy who crouches with his hands over his face. The Pale Eyed Boy notices Country, shouts after him.

THE PALE EYED BOY
What do we do?! What are we
supposed to do?!

Country stops advancing, but doesn't turn back. His face glazes over and he starts shaking his head slowly.

The Pale Eyed Boy reaches into his coat and retrieves the hatchet he pocketed earlier. He looks at it and runs his hands over it. He looks to Country who is still in shock.

Country falls to his knees, weeping. He looks back to see the Pale Eyed Boy, hatchet in hand, rush back into the mobile home. Country closes his eyes.

COUNTRY
No!

The baby continues to cry. Country races toward the house, but trips over the cans of food they've collected.

The crying stops abruptly. The Pale Eyed Boy emerges from the mobile home with the baby wrapped in his arms. Country looks up from the ground.

The Pale Eyed Boy stares at the infant, in shock. He looks down to Country with the same expression.

THE PALE EYED BOY
He stopped breathing.

EXT. WRECKAGE - DAY

City and Frank wander the wreckage, side by side, past familiar landmarks: crumbled walls, the old church, but everything now lives beneath a blanket of soft, powdery white.

The two are bundled to combat the cold, their breaths billow from their heads like smoke. The snow falls gently.

FRANK
What was it like here before?

City doesn't answer. Instead, picks up a rock and throws it into the snowy rubble.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Well... they're around here somewhere, I'm sure of that. Let me just get my bearings and we'll be back at your place before you know it.

City finds a bucket on the ground, flips it over, and sits on it. He crosses his arms and waits for Frank impatiently.

Frank wanders around clearing patches of snow from the ground and remaining chunks of wall, trying to find familiarity in his surroundings. City kicks his feet and looks down.

CITY
Is there really a settlement in the city?

Frank looks back at him with a smile.

FRANK
Yep, a bunch of folks, lots of kids like you. They all pooled their resources and made a decent life.

City's face remains serious, unimpressed.

CITY
Why aren't you there, then? Why'd you come all the way out here?

Frank turns his attention back to the search.

FRANK
Complicated. But hey, I've got the wanderlust in me. Always have. Can't help it. Mostly, I wanted to see what was left out here. Planning on heading back, but after I've had a look around. A GOOD look around. There's still a lot of world out there for me.

CITY
You're not worried about the dangerous stuff?

Frank finds something on the ground and starts to dig.

FRANK
Think this's it.

CITY
What the fuck are you looking for anyway?

Frank smiles and keeps digging.

FRANK
You've got a mouth, kid.

City shrugs.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Look, it's a surprise... When I saw
you were a kid and girl, I stashed
this stuff. Didn't wanna freak you
guys out.

Frank yanks a heavy, dark-green duffle bag out of the earth.
He drops it, sounds like it's filled with metal.

FRANK (CONT'D)
I know it's not good to store 'em
like this, but I haven't had much
other choice out here. Maybe you
can help me clean 'em up later.

Frank opens the bag slowly.

FRANK (CONT'D)
My young friend... meet... the
arsenal.

Frank spills the bag's contents... it's guns. Lots of guns:
a shotgun, some rifles, an AK-47, some small caliber
revolvers and a German Luger. City perks up at this sight.
He looks up to Frank with big eyes and a smile.

EXT. WRECKAGE - LATER

City stands near a a wood plank fence. He holds an empty can
of food, looking at it closely. There's a hole straight
through it. He smiles.

CITY
That's amazing!

At City's feet is a pile of old empty cans. City throws the
can he's holding as hard as he can, straight up into the sky.
He watches the ascent intently.

BAM!

A deafening gunshot and the can is knocked drastically off
course.

Frank lowers his rifle and chuckles to himself. He's
standing about a hundred yards away from City. City shouts
across the distance in excitement.

CITY (CONT'D)
Oh my God! How'd you do that?

Frank points toward him.

FRANK
Hey! Set up some more cans! Set
'em in a row there!

City sets up five quickly, along the fence. He turns back to Frank.

CITY
Now wha--

City words are cut off by four quick shots zipping just by him and hitting each can, knocking them all from the fence. Frank reloads and shouts over to City.

FRANK
Your sister like shooting?!

CITY
What?! She's not my sister!

Frank finishes reloading and stares down the scope.

FRANK
(Quietly to himself)
Oh.

He shouts back to City.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Set up some more!

Frank aims the gun. He places the back of City's head directly in the cross-hairs.

He moves his aim back to the cans and fires.

CITY
You're so good at that!

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mariah sits in the big chair gazing into nothing. She holds her hand over her mouth and looks down.

Another gun blast. She flinches, then goes back as she was before. She takes a deep breath, snuffles a bit and looks to the corner of the room.

Sitting there is a brand new pink backpack, tags still attached. She grabs the backpack, heads to her room, and slams the door behind.

EXT. WRECKAGE - MOMENTS LATER

A stop sign stands stark above a cracked bit of asphalt road.

FRANK (O.S.)
(Quietly)
Okay... go.

BOOOM!!! The loudest blast known to man.

The stop sign is pelted with tiny scattered holes with such force it's nearly knocked from its post. It wobbles wildly, over City's panicked, windless attempts to cry out in pain.

CITY
(Sans breath)
Aw, fuck! Aw!

City lays on the ground, shotgun tossed aside, clutching his chest and right arm. He rolls about and writhing in serious pain.

Frank saunters over almost lackadaisically, a slight smirk on his face. Quickly his face fills with serious concern as he wanders close enough to see that City is really hurt.

FRANK
Shit, kid... you alright?

INT. CITY'S BEDROOM - LATER

Mariah stands behind City who sits on the edge of his bed. She ties a sling for City's bad arm. He cringes as she fumbles to tighten it. Frank stands in the doorway, pacing.

FRANK
Sorry again, kid.

City looks at him and shrugs. This makes him cringe.

MARIAH
Stay still or you're gonna fuck
yourself up even more.

Frank shoots Mariah a serious glance, sets bottle of a green "nighttime" on the dresser, and exits.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
I don't even know if this is the
right thing to do for a fucked up
shoulder... I mean...

Mariah sighs loudly.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
I don't know what I'm doing.

Mariah starts to cry, but gets pissed at herself for it.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Goddamn it.

City turns toward her.

CITY
Hey, it's alright.

Mariah looks into City's eyes as her's well. She shakes her head and moves her mouth like she wants to say something, but nothing comes.

She rises to her feet and turns from City. She composes herself and grabs a green bottle from City's dresser. She turns back to City and hands it to him.

MARIAH
I know this is expired, but drink it.

City looks at the bottle confused.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
Just drink it. It'll make you sleep hard. And when you wake up you'll feel better. Alright?

City stares at her and takes the bottle with his good arm. He chugs down half of it and stops to take a breath. Mariah looks at him with sad eyes. He knocks back the rest.

MARIAH (CONT'D)
(Whispering)
Thank you.

City lays back. Mariah blows out the candle and opens the door to leave the room.

CITY
When are you coming to bed?

MARIAH
You know... we can't stay here forever, boy. None of us.

City's eyes grow heavy. He looks up at the little metal Indian on his dresser.

CITY
You should take my little Indian with you tonight. He's good luck. You could use some of that, crazy.

Mariah grabs the Indian and looks at it closely, then pockets it.

MARIAH
Promise me you'll leave this place soon. You won't keep exploring and dicking around. You should find one of those settlements...

City furrows his brow, drunkenly. It obviously that the nighttime medicine is getting to him at the same pace as the conversation.

CITY
Why are we talking about this?

City tries to sit up, but can't, he's far too drugged.

CITY (CONT'D)
(Slurred)
I'm all noodles and clouds, Mariah.

MARIAH
I've seen things here... horrible
things you should get away from.
Look, I... I love you, boy. But...
we just... I can't do that.

City reaches out to her weakly, the drugs pulling him under.

CITY
(Weakly)
Mariah...

Mariah exits and clicks the door shut after.

EXT. TRAIN DEPOT - NIGHT

Country kneels before a metal trash-can fire, alone. He is surrounded by old box cars, some knocked on their sides, and a huge, empty, open-air warehouse. Above him, an old creaking water tower looms.

COUNTRY
Peaches... fucking millions of
peaches.

He pulls cans from the black duffel bag from earlier and wipes mud from them. As he does, he reads each label and comments on the contents, loudly. He seems to be alone.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
And peas. We've got peas.

He wipes another can clean.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
Corn... that's a good one, right?

He continues.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
Beef Tamales... Beef Tamales in
sauce... hmm. I wonder what kind
of sauce...

There's a metal CREAKING from above. Country glances toward the sound. It emanates from the railing surrounding the water tower tank.

It's the Pale Eyed Boy shifting from his bird's-eye vantage. He sits slumped against the huge rusted metal cylinder.

He stares at his hands. Country continues his proclamations below.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
Organic Veggie Chili... not bad,
not bad... I didn't see that one
coming...

The Pale Eyed Boy continues staring at his hands with an almost confused look. His expression switches quickly to concern and he rises. He catches a glimpse of something on the horizon. Red Light.

He looks down to Country. Country pauses and looks to a plank of wood sticking out of a small mound of a dirt, a recent grave for a child. Country sighs and goes back to reading.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
Pineapple spears in... their own
juices--

THE PALE EYED BOY
(Cutting Country off)
Kill the fire.

Country grabs a bucket of sand sitting next to him and in a smooth movement, dumps it on the flame. All goes dark.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - MORNING

Country and the Pale Eyed Boy wander down the tracks.

Country walks on the tracks themselves and seems almost playfully delirious, practically jogging, but at a snail's pace.

The Pale Eyed Boy follows a good distance back, walking to the side of the tracks. He just looks down with a sullen expression, rubbing at his hands.

The two are in their own worlds and exhausted beyond all reason. They approach the base of a mountain, through the center is a dark train tunnel.

Country stops a moment and perks up like a meerkat, looking half crazed. The Pale Eyed Boy mumbles under his breath, repeating the same phrase, as he catches up.

THE PALE EYED BOY
I don't want to go in there. I
don't want to go in there. I don't
want to go in there.

The Pale Eyed Boy repeats this, as they stand at the tunnel opening. Country chimes in as if he's not heard the Pale Eyed Boy at all.

COUNTRY
You hear that...? Do you?

Country turns to the Pale Eyed Boy with wild eyes.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
You can hear that, yes?

The Pale Eyed Boy looks up to Country with a fearful expression.

THE PALE EYED BOY
Don't think I can go in there.

COUNTRY
This is it, I think.

Country lays on his belly and puts his ear to the rail.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
(Whispering)
They're here, I know it. I know it
for sure.

Country stands and looks to the Pale Eyed Boy again.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
This is it.

Country turns toward the tunnel and runs inside full bore, disappearing quickly into the darkness. The Pale Eyed Boy clinches his fists and shakes his head looking completely crazed.

THE PALE EYED BOY
(Whispering)
I can't go. I don't want to go. I
can't--

The Pale Eyed Boy races into the tunnel after Country.

INT. TRAIN TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

All is dark as the two race through. All that's audible at first is the sound of their FEET AGAINST GRAVEL and their PANTING BREATHS in the echoey vastness. Soon the Pale Eyed Boy begins to call after Country, desperately.

THE PALE EYED BOY
Where are you?! Help! Where've
you gone? Help me!

Suddenly, the deafening SQUEAL OF BRAKES, then the sound of a powerful locomotive engine chugging along slowly. The light of the other end of the tunnel comes into view, blinding at first.

COUNTRY
(Whispering)
This is it. This is it.
(Yelling)
This is it!

The light gets brighter and brighter illuminating each of them, as they desperately race on. They reach the opening. It takes their eyes a moment to adjust. As they exit the tunnel completely, there it is...

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - CONTINUOUS

The Train!

In the not far off distance, maybe fifty yards away: the train, covered with young men with rifles and bandanas. It chugs away. Black smoke billows as it slowly cranks down the tracks. Country lightens.

COUNTRY
That's it! This is what I've been
wishing for.

Country races toward it and the Pale Eyed Boy quickly follows. Country waves his arms and shouts.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
Hey! Hello!

The Pale Eyed Boy smiles and runs up along side Country.

THE PALE EYED BOY
I'll race you!

They take off with everything they have, rocketing forward. The Pale Eyed Boy overtakes Country, passing him.

They laugh as they pant along with an eighth wind conviction only young men could muster. The gap between the Pale Eyed Boy and Country widens.

COUNTRY
(Yelling, out of breath)
How are you doing that?

In the distance: a gunshot barely audible over the sounds of Country running.

BIRDS BURST FROM THE TREES.

Country's smile subsides and his heavy breaths become heavier. He watches the Pale Eyed Boy power on, not looking back.

Country slows, watches the Pale Eyed Boy grab onto the back of the train and get footing. The Pale Eyed Boy looks back and his face drops.

Country slows to a walking pace and his face grows slack. Panting heavily, he looks down at his torso. It's covered in blood. He reaches toward the train and the Pale Eyed Boy in the distance.

The Pale Eyed Boy is seized by a number of boys on the train and overtaken. He calls out to Country, but his voice doesn't make the distance.

Country collapses, his limp weight slumping forward. His head hits the railing of the tracks and he rolls onto his back. His head begins to bleed as he stares up into the sky. A black billow of smoke evaporates into the sky and he loses consciousness.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - EVENING

City wanders the house collecting items and placing them in a duffel bag. He has two fully packed backpacks slouched next to the big chair. Frank and Mariah are nowhere.

He collects the liquor, picking up many half empty bottles and combining them into one. He has stacked the canned goods he likes on the kitchen table. He wanders over to the backpacks. One is unzipped, it's full of knives.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CITY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

City layers his clothes: multiple T-shirts stacked, then thin coats, then a parka. He takes another parka under his arm, as he leaves his room.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - CITY'S PARENT'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

City grabs the German Luger from the vanity. Frank has apparently left it for him. Under the gun is a note; he pockets it.

The rest of the vanity is covered in wadded tissues with lipstick blots, candy wrappers, and a large box of strike anywhere matches. Among the debris is the ring of keys Mariah found.

City looks at himself in the mirror, then over to the picture of him and his mother. He snatches up the photo and looks at it deeply. He tosses the photo onto Mariah's unmade bed, strikes a match and tosses it on top.

He watches the bed. It takes only a few moments to ignite. City watches the flames as they grow, Luger slack in his hand. He slips the gun into his pocket, moves to leave the room, but pauses. He looks to the vanity and grabs the box of matches and ring of keys.

INT. CITY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

City walks through the kitchen dropping matches as he goes.

In the living room he collects the duffle bag and his backpacks.

EXT. CITY'S HOUSE - LATER

City stands before his wildly burning home, watching it go up expressionless. He stands very close, too close for comfort, closes his eyes, and feels the warmth on his face.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out the letter from the vanity. He opens it. It reads:

"I had to.

I'm sorry.

-Mariah"

He wads the letter and tosses it into the burning house, then turns away from it all.

FADE OUT:

SUPER: SOME DAYS LATER...

FADE IN:

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Country wakes in a dark wooden room.

He sits up quickly in a modest and simply dressed bed. He cringes and grabs his ribs. He looks down, his bullet wound has been dressed. He looks around slowly while the pain subsides.

The room is very plain: No decorations, the wood walls are unfinished, unpainted. The only furniture in the room is a large simple armoire and the bed, made of the same unfinished dark wood.

Country pulls back the covers. He is nude. He rises slowly, cringing as he goes. Beneath the door he makes out flickering light. He wanders toward it, starts to hear voices beyond. He presses his ear to the door.

It's the sound of two men: one old, one young, perhaps Country's age. They're arguing, but civilly.

YOUNGER MAN (O.S.)

Yes, but--

OLDER MAN (O.S.)

You've heard me, haven't you? Are my words meaningless?

YOUNGER MAN (O.S.)
Of course not... of course. Your words are the seeds of my knowledge. Your example is what makes me a good man.

OLDER MAN (O.S.)
Don't patronize me, child. Please, don't dare. You've brought this... this person, this outsider into our home.

YOUNGER MAN (O.S.)
Yes, I know, but...

OLDER MAN (O.S.)
(Cutting him off again)
No, don't make excuses, child. Not in this house, not to me.

Country kneels and peers through the keyhole under an old fashioned doorknob.

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Country's POV:

The two men stand in a very modest living-room: simple, with unfinished wood walls, lit by oil lamp. The men are Amish: dressed simply in white shirts, black vests and pants.

The older man, DANIEL, has a white beard and no moustache. The younger man, MOSE, holds a black, large-rimmed hat to his chest as he stands humbled by his elder, even though he towers over him.

DANIEL
This is all beside the real issue. What in the world were you doing so far out?

MOSE
I... I was hunting and--

DANIEL
We're not hunters. We're farmers, child.

Daniel sighs and continues.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
We have strict perimeters. We live simply here and how we retain this life is by not mingling with outsiders. Not anymore.

MOSE
He was dying, Father...

Daniel exclaims something in German, then sighs again.

DANIEL

I suppose what's done is done. I just want you to learn from this. Of course it is our duty not to let another die needlessly, but it is also our way not to meddle... Tomorrow I'll consider a proper punishment, but tonight we rest.

MOSE

Are we rising earlier for the harvest?

DANIEL

Well, we are rising earlier, but with the odd weather there will be no harvest. In the morning we will meet with Sarah Gerig and the others before Ezekiel's funeral and decide how to proceed with this.

Daniel looks toward Country, seems to look directly at him. Daniel moves quickly toward Country's door.

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Country, startled, rushes back into bed. He covers himself and rolls onto his side, away from the door, just as it opens.

Daniel looks around the room, then to Country. Country breathes mock-heavily, trying to fake sleep.

DANIEL

He's awake, been listening. That's good.

Daniel walks to the bed and leans over it.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(To Country)

You can stay here in our home and convalesce. I realize it may take you some time. But once well, I'll expect you to do the proper thing and leave us be.

Daniel turns back toward Mose and looks at him sternly, then exits the room. Mose lingers, nervous, clutching his hat.

MOSE

(Meekly)

My name is Mose...

Just as he speaks the oil lamp fades to darkness and his Father shouts from the next room.

DANIEL (O.S.)

To bed, child!

Mose shuts the door. A moment later, Country rolls over, stares at the door, and sighs.

INT. BUNKER - UNKNOWN

Country awakes with a gasp. He's lying in his make-shift hay bale bed. His mother is lying behind him holding him. She seems to be fast asleep.

He sighs deeply, thankfully. He looks toward his curtain door. A woman sings just beyond: his mother. He turns around in bed, he's alone again.

He rises and slowly exits his tiny room. He looks around the main room of the bunker. It's empty. He hears snoring.

He wanders to his parents' makeshift room. They lie in bed together, Father snoring, both fast asleep.

Thunder claps loudly behind him. He turns to see. The ceiling hatch is open and rain pours through it. He looks back toward his parents' bed, they are gone. He climbs out of the hatch.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The rain pours down mercilessly. Country is soaked. He looks off toward the horizon. In the distance are his parents, together, facing away, holding hands. He tries to call out to them. He mouths the word "Mother" as if he's yelling it at the top of his lungs, but no sound comes.

He starts toward them, but is stopped by a large hole in the ground. He looks to his Father who turns back and waves to him with a large smile.

Country looks down into the hole before him. Inside is his mother's body, wrapped in tarps. Suddenly, the sound of his scream comes to life disembodied.

COUNTRY'S VOICE
(Disembodied)
MOTHER!

Country clutches his ears, startled. He turns back toward the hatch just in time to see it close. He struggles to get it open, but it won't budge.

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE BEDROOM - TWILIGHT

Country wakes with an abrupt gasp startling Mose, who's standing near him holding clothing.

The light illuminating the room is a rich morning violet. Country looks around, groggy. He looks to Mose who stares at him, smiling sweetly.

COUNTRY
Hey.

MOSE
Hello.

Daniel walks past the doorway. Country and Mose look to him.

DANIEL
If you would like breakfast, I
recommend you hurry before it
becomes ice... that goes for both
of you.

Mose turns his attention back to Country and sets the
clothing at the foot of the bed.

MOSE
These should fit you I think...
um...

Mose quickly turns and leaves the room, shutting the door.
Country sits up, holding his ribs. He slaps his own face.

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN/PATIO - MORNING

Country, now dressed in Amish clothes, enters the plain and
simple kitchen, moving through it and into an enclosed patio
with a large picture window that gives a panoramic view of
the vast farmland: rows upon rows of once fertile earth
rendered useless by cold snow and gray skies.

Daniel and Mose eat their hearty breakfasts. Daniel looks to
Country, then back down at his food without a change to his
grumpy expression.

DANIEL
Chose to join us, I see.

MOSE
Please, have a seat.

Country smiles and nods to Mose in thanks and takes his place
at the breakfast table. The table is covered in serving
plates of eggs, meat, and a gravy boat. Country piles it on,
obviously starving.

COUNTRY
Thanks for this. Not sure of the
last time I ate real food.

Country looks out the window at the sad state of the land.
In the distance stands an unfinished barn.

As he stares out, a horse-drawn carriage approaches, manned
by two more Amish men, both with beards, no mustaches.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
You have company.

Daniel and Mose both turn and look out the window at the approaching carriage. Daniel sets down his fork and knife, picks up his cloth napkin, wipes his face.

DANIEL
(To Mose)
Go collect your things.

Mose quickly wipes his face and hands and rushes into the house. Daniel rises as well and turns to greet the men as they approach. He speaks to Country through his back.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
We'll return later. I'll discuss
the subject of you with the others.
Just rest and wait. We'll be back
in the evening.

Country furrows his brow. Daniel turns his face to Country and gives a concerned look, then returns his gaze to the approaching men, who have dismounted the carriage.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(To the two men)
Amos... Eli, welcome.

AMOS, the larger of the two, is in his early thirties. He chimes in quickly.

AMOS
It's good to see you, Daniel. Now,
can we please discuss your moving
in with Miriam and I. We have
plenty of room... the children
would love it.

Daniel turns to Country and whispers.

DANIEL
You see what I suffer for my
independence?

Daniel smiles to Country for the first time.

AMOS
Come now, Daniel. It's not right,
the two of you living out here
alone like this. Ester would not
have wanted this for you.

Daniel's face drops a bit. The man standing next to AMOS, ELI, is about the same age, but much shorter than his traveling companion, giving the duo a "Mutt & Jeff" quality.

ELI
Forgive my brother, Daniel. He
just cares for you and Mose and, it
seems, has no concept of proper
breakfast talk.

Mose comes rushing out of the house wearing his coat and hat. Daniel looks to him.

DANIEL
I suppose we're ready.

Daniel and Mose walks toward the carriage, Daniel turns to Country.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(To Country)
Don't worry, boy. We're proper Christians.

AMOS
(To Daniel)
But, please, Daniel. We must discuss this some time.

Daniel groans in German. The four of them climb into the carriage. As the carriage passes the house, Mose waves to Country and Country reciprocates, then watches as they ride into the cold haze and out of sight. Country starts back into eating.

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - DAY

Country stands in the kitchen before a large old fashioned basin sink, washing and drying the breakfast dishes.

Country walks around the house as if in an museum. He walks past Daniel's room. The door is cracked, he peeks in, but is unable to see more than a bed topped with a plain quilt.

He moves on to the next room, Mose's. It has a small modest bed, but in one corner is a wooden desk topped with the Bible and many handmade wooden toys. Country enters and picks up a small wooden train, examining closely with a smile.

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

Country is back in his room sitting on the bed. He's going through his old clothes. In the pocket of his pants he removes the tiny wooden cowboy that Teddy gave him. He looks at it for a moment, then closes his fist around it tightly and begins to weep.

EXT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - DAY

Country stands just outside the patio watching it snow. He sips a mug of warm water, which steams in his hands. He sniffles a bit, eyes red and puffy from crying. After another sip, he takes a slow stroll around the outside of the house.

He spots a scythe propped against the side of the house and lingers his gaze upon it before turning his attention to a small group of stables not too far off. He sets his mug down in the dead, icy grass.

EXT. STABLE - CONTINUOUS

Country approaches the small stable, which is half stonework, half wood: painted the color of rust. Horse's NEIGH within. Country continues his slow approach. He reaches the window and peers inside. It's dark.

He sees the haloed silhouettes of two horses in the corner, steam rising from their nostrils. They move slowly and sigh deeply. Country cautiously opens the large double door and enters quickly. He shuts the door behind him.

INT. STABLE - CONTINUOUS

Country stands with his arms extended and inches slowly toward the horses. They watch him from the shadows, at first keeping a wide berth. One moves out in front. The horse seems as nervous as Country and stands at a distance just watching him. Country inches closer and closer.

The horse nearest him sighs again as Country finally reaches him. Country touches the horses muzzle, petting it gently. Country closes his eyes.

EXT. OLD CHURCH - DAY

Snow pours down and whips wildly through the desolate wreckage with the wind. The large heavy doors of the old church rattle. The scene stands, a macabre winter wonderland.

CLACK!

A gunshot rings out, originating inside the church, muffled by the wind.

INT. OLD CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The huge crucifix hangs boldly above the altar as snow drifts in from a hole in the ceiling giving the altar a peaceful, ethereal quality, like a visual interpretation of choral music.

CLACK!

Another gunshot, this one deafening. The bullet strikes the crucifix, shattering an area of wood on the giant cross holding a ceramic Jesus. Splinters rain down.

A dog starts to bark from somewhere unseen within the room. City stands behind the rear pews. His hair is filthy and stringy, his thick fur-lined winter clothes are stained.

He's holding the German Luger in his hand and examining it closely. He smacks it a couple of times. The dog keeps barking. City raises the gun again and takes aim at the painted 3-D rendering of the Christian savior. After a moment he rolls his eyes, sighs, and lowers the gun.

CLACK!

He takes a shot at the unseen barking dog. A chunk of wood from front pews explodes to bits and the three legged dog comes running up the aisle.

CITY
I'm sorry, that was a dirty trick.

City reaches back and retrieves his bottle of booze. He takes a big sip.

CITY (CONT'D)
(Yelling)
I promise, I won't do it again...!
Okay?!

He set down the bottle and climbs up on top of the pews and starts walking quickly, precariously rushing across them.

CITY (CONT'D)
And I, unlike some people, keep my
promises!

He stumbles a few times, but keeps it going until he reaches the dog. He hops down and sits on the bench and starts petting the pooch.

CITY (CONT'D)
You can rely on me. I'll be
around.

City stops petting the dog and lays down across the bench of the pew. The dog licks his face a few times as he pulls a pack of cigarettes and a lighter from his pants pocket.

He lights up. The dog wanders off, City smokes and stares at the ceiling.

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Country lies in bed. He hears the carriage approach and stop, and muffled chatting of men, then the carriage start off again. He sits up in bed and listens to the foot steps slowly approaching his room. His bedroom door opens and Mose enters, holding a lantern.

MOSE
Would you like to join us for a
moment?

COUNTRY
Of course.

INT./EXT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Country follows Mose through the kitchen and into the patio. Mose hangs the lantern from hook attached to the ceiling.

COUNTRY
Where's your Pop?

Mose smirks at Country's vocabulary.

MOSE
Pop.

Mose grins a little harder after trying it out.

MOSE (CONT'D)
He's outside there. He'd like you
to join him, if you will.

COUNTRY
Okay.

Country opens the patio door and exits the house. Behind him, still inside, Mose wanders back into the main house and out of sight. A few feet from Country, his back turned, is Daniel. Country places his hands in his pockets and shyly approaches.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
Hey.

Daniel turns to Country. He is lighting a simple wooden pipe. He doesn't look to Country at first, but instead watches his cherry, making sure it takes, then glances to him.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
Didn't take you for a smoker.

DANIEL
Yes well... it's a bit
controversial in our community, but
God made it, we grew it, we've no
longer anyone to sell it to, so...
I smoke it.

COUNTRY
Makes sense.

Daniel smiles slightly and nods. Behind Country, Mose returns to the enclosed, illuminated patio with a piece of wood. He sits at the table and starts to carve. Daniel watches Mose intently for a while, not speaking. Country turns and looks to Mose as well.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
He really makes all those toys
himself?

Daniel nods.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
Amazing.

DANIEL
They would like to meet you, the
rest would... in the morning.

Country nods.

COUNTRY
Okay.

DANIEL
Good.

Daniel goes back to watching Mose. Country looks up to the stars.

COUNTRY
Oh.

DANIEL
What's that?

COUNTRY
All this time... all this time has
passed and tonight's the first
night I've thought to look up.

Daniel looks up.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
The stars are amazing here.

DANIEL
I suppose that they are.

Daniel's gaze moves from the stars to the farmland and his face slowly drops.

EXT. OLD CHURCH - BELL TOWER - NIGHT

City sits, huddled in a corner wrapped in blankets and extra clothing. All around him a panoramic, vista of nothing, aftermath. On one side the distant skeletal city, on the other distant forest. City shivers and mumbles to himself.

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - DAWN

Country wakes silently in his bed, bathed in blue morning light.

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Country, dressed in his Amish clothing, enters the kitchen where he finds Daniel in an apron cooking breakfast. Country smiles, nods to him and is greeted with the same. Country continues through to the patio where Mose sits carving what is now obviously a horse. He looks up from his busy work and smiles at Country.

MOSE
I'm going to be baptized this
evening.

Country sits, a little unsure of how to respond.

COUNTRY
Good. Excellent.

Mose smiles and Daniel places a couple of plates on the table.

DANIEL
It's a big day.

Mose notices his Father serving and stops carving. He quickly jumps up to help set the table. Country smiles at this show of respect.

Daniel takes his seat and a moment later Mose places the rest of the food on the table and sits as well. Country looks at them both, enamored.

Daniel folds his hands in prayer and Mose follow in suit. Country, caught off guard, quickly lowers in head. After a moment of silence, Daniel inhales deeply, sighs and the two start to dig in. Country quickly follows.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - LATER

Peering in from outside the picture window: The table is empty of food and Country, Mose, and Daniel sit around laughing and chatting.

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Country and Daniel have obviously grown comfortable, even fond, in one another's company. Mose seems happy as well.

COUNTRY
It's just amazing to me. I mean, I
love it here, the country is
beautiful, I can't even imagine it
in full blown spring.

Behind them, through the morning haze, the carriage approaches. Daniel looks over and notices.

MOSE
Oh, it's glorious in bloom. Me and
few others, when we were younger of
course, would wander down to a
creek just past--

DANIEL
(Cutting Mose off)
Come now, we can continue this
later. Now run along and collect
your things. Let's not leave our
neighbors standing in the cold
waiting on us.

MOSE
Of course.

Mose jumps up and rushes off. Daniel looks to Country.

DANIEL
That goes for you as well. Grab
your coat.

Country rushes out of the kitchen.

EXT. FARM ROAD - LATER

The carriage moseys down the road which splits two large
fields. The morning is filled with fog and cold haze. The
horseshoes and wheels of the carriage, smash and cut through
fresh powdery snow turning it to slush.

Riding up front, is Amos on the reigns and Daniel next to
him. They are conversing, intensely, inaudibly.

In the back of the carriage are Country and Mose and sitting
across from them, Eli. Everyone's breath billows like smoke
from their lips and noses.

ELI
(To Country)
Amos has to be driving poor Daniel
crazy. He'd really like young Mose
and his Father to move in with him.

COUNTRY
I heard some of that, yesterday.

Eli nods.

ELI
Ever since poor Ester passed
everyone is trying to get these two
to move closer to the community.

Country looks to Mose, who is looking down. Country nudges
him, making him look up. Country pulls the tiny cowboy from
his pocket and hands it to Mose.

Mose smiles and pulls the horse from his pocket. The
carriage continues down the road. Soon the houses grow more
numerous and more and more Amish are milling about the side
of the road. They wave as the carriage passes.

EXT. EZEKIEL GERIG'S FARM - CONTINUOUS

The carriage heads up a muddy path between a large white farm-house and barn. The carriage stops. People are milling around the back patio of the farm house.

A group of small children, six boys and girls between four and six years of age, all wearing modest clothing, see the carriage stop and race over.

Amos steps down from the carriage compartment and helps Daniel down. A couple of small children, a boy and a girl, run in circles around Amos' legs. One little boy, JED, stands beneath the back of the carriage, he quieter than the others, sadder. He looks to Mose.

JED
Would you like to come play with
me, Mose?

Mose climbs out of the carriage and smiles.

MOSE
Of course, let's play.

Jed's little face brightens and he and Mose race toward the farm-house. Eli climbs out of the carriage next. He looks back to Country who's hanging back just staring at all the happiness.

ELI
There's food inside.

Country smiles. Eli wanders toward the house. Daniel leans on the carriage near Country. They look out at the beauty of family.

DANIEL
(To Country)
I've been out there. I've seen
where you come from and it is not a
place to live.

COUNTRY
It's not like this. This is...
this is ideal.

Daniel smiles.

DANIEL
Come out of there. You should meet
Sarah Gerig.

Country jumps down out of the carriage and joins Daniel. They walk together, up toward the house. The children race around them.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EZEKIEL GERIG'S FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Country follows Daniel up a narrow staircase toward an upstairs bedroom. The staircase becomes darker as they ascend. Daniel reaches the top and knocks. From inside, a woman's voice. The voice of Sarah Gerig.

SARAH GERIG (O.S.)
Well, come in!

Daniel opens the door and illuminates the staircase. Daniel enters followed by Country.

INT. EZEKIEL GERIG'S FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah Gerig is very old and a bit gruff. She sits up in her bed with a knitted blanket wrapped around her legs. Daniel wanders in apprehensively.

SARAH GERIG
Well, come on. I know you're more
spry than all that, Daniel Miller.

A young woman in a bonnet, Hannah (16), sits in the corner of the room on a wooden rocking chair. She watches the men with no assessable emotion. Daniel smiles and moves to the side of the bed.

DANIEL
Hello to you too, Sarah.

Daniel puts his arm back in presentation.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
This is him. The boy Mose found...
out there.

Sarah looks past Daniel to Country and starts to squint and furrow.

SARAH GERIG
Well, come on. I can't see you
that far off.

Daniel ushers Country into his place. Sarah looks at him and smiles a bit.

SARAH GERIG (CONT'D)
Well aren't you a handsome one?
Show me your hands.

Country puts his hands out. Sarah grabs them and runs her palm across his.

SARAH GERIG (CONT'D)
Evidence of hard work is a good
sign of character. You have worked
hard haven't you?

Sarah releases his hands.

SARAH GERIG (CONT'D)
Well, it's a pleasure to meet you.

Sarah starts to scoot across the bed to the edge.

SARAH GERIG (CONT'D)
Now, you two strapping men help me
downstairs. I'm starving.

Country and Daniel both move to help her up.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EZEKIEL GERIG'S FARMHOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

Sarah Gerig takes her seat at the head of the long dining room table with most of the family. The children sit a separate, smaller table, Country and Mose among them. The adult's table is covered with food.

Sarah gets comfortable in her seat and leads everyone in silent prayer. All bow their heads and look down.

Country peeks around subtly. He sees Mose also peeking, looking toward the adult table with a smile. Country looks over to what's has Mose's attention.

It's Hannah. Mose stares at her and she stares back, they both giggle. Country puts his head back down and smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EZEKIEL GERIG'S FARM - LATER

Country chases Mose and the smaller children around the yard. They play tag, Country's "it". He tags little Jed, who quickly jukes and tears back after Country. The little guy's fast and catches Country quickly, tagging him. Country, out of breath, takes a seat on the ground.

COUNTRY
You kids have so much energy.

Country stands up and starts to walk away. Mose looks to him and starts to the follow. The little kids continue their game without the bigger ones.

Country takes a seat on a log and catches his breath. Mose stands by, but doesn't speak. Country takes the initiative.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
Are you excited about today, about
getting baptized?

MOSE
I am.

COUNTRY
I'm excited to see it. I've never
seen anyone baptized.

MOSE
Really? I thought you folks were
all baptized as babies.

COUNTRY
Not all of us.

MOSE
Do you think you'd want to do it?

COUNTRY
What? Get baptized? I don't know.
I've never thought of it. My
parents weren't religious, you
know, in a serious way. I've never
even thought about it.

Mose smiles.

MOSE
Well, I think you should. I wish
you could get baptized with me.
I'm a little nervous about doing it
alone.

Country smiles and looks down for a moment. The pause
becomes pregnant, then Country chimes in.

COUNTRY
So, do you like her a lot?

Mose furrows his brow.

MOSE
Who?

COUNTRY
You know who. Sarah Gerig's
granddaughter, Hanna.

Mose turns red.

MOSE
How did you know?

Country twiddles his fingers.

COUNTRY
Magic... You think you'll marry
her?

Mose gives an embarrassed smile.

MOSE
(Meekly)
I hope so.

Country's face brightens with surprise at Mose's response.

COUNTRY
Wow. Well, I hope so too.

Country looks to the side of the farmhouse. There, Sarah Gerig and Daniel walk together. Daniel is lighting his pipe, once he gets it lit, he hands it to Sarah. She takes a drag and sees Country watching. She beckons him over.

Mose is still smiling. Country stands.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)
Excuse me, Mose.

Country heads over to Sarah and Daniel.

SARAH GERIG
What do you think of all this?

COUNTRY
I like it very much, thank you.

SARAH GERIG
I've been speaking to Daniel here
and he seems to think a lot of you.

Daniel chimes in.

DANIEL
That's not what I said.

SARAH GERIG
Close enough. I'm very old and
with the changes that have come to
pass outside here, I feel that we
need to change our ways.

Country cuts in.

COUNTRY
I'd like to be with Mose when he's
baptized. I'd like to stand by
him.

Daniel's face becomes serious. Sarah smiles.

SARAH GERIG
That's fine.

EXT. OLD CHURCH - BELL TOWER - DAY

City stands staring off into the vastness shivering. From within the church, the dog barks. The snow cover has thickened into powdery white. He squints intently, watching the distant horizon.

There's a point where the wasteland ends and the forest begins.

A duo of small black specs appear there, people breaking from the forest. They move slowly through the snow. City's eyes grow large. He climbs down a ladder.

INT. OLD CHURCH - OFFICES & STORAGE - CONTINUOUS

City races through an old store room, still filled with boxes, most torn open and rummaged through. He reaches the edge of the room and stands at the upstairs lip of the crumbled stairwell. He descends the rope too quickly, burning his hands.

He shakes them as he races down the shiny wood paneled hallway and into the nave of the church. The dog races up along side City as he makes for the exit.

EXT. WRECKAGE - MOMENTS LATER

City tromps slowly through the thick snow. The downfall is continuous, as is the wind. He makes out the black figures through the white veil. He does his best to race over.

The figures disappear. City reaches the point where he last saw them. He looks around in all directions, confused and desperate.

EXT. AMISH CHURCH - EVENING

Amish folk, quietly file into the small, simple church.

INT. AMISH CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Country sits with Mose in the front row. Mose stares downward, nervously. Country looks back at the people filing in. He pats Mose on the back.

All of the churchgoers find their seats and become even quieter. The minister takes the altar.

MINISTER

It is obviously a strange autumn that finds us this year. It seems that our traditional cycles have been set askew, but that is no reason to alter or bend in our beliefs. I ask you, brothers and sisters, if you will accept young Mose as one of us.

The entire congregation responds in unison.

CONGREGATION

We do.

An older Amish man, JACOB, standing near the altar, beckons Mose and Country over. They stand and walk toward him.

He ushers them into another room of the church and shuts the door. The two boys look down, humbled.

JACOB
I remind you, that this is a
promise for life. If you have
doubts in this decision, now is the
time to speak. Especially given
your forgoing of Rumspringa.

Mose looks up undaunted.

MOSE
I have no wild oats to sow. I am
ready.

Jacob nods to Mose. The boys leave the room with their heads bowed. They take their places in their pew. After a time, Mose is beckoned to the altar by the Minister. Mose walks to the altar and kneels.

MINISTER
Remember that this is a promise to
God. It is witnessed by all in our
community.

Jacob enters from the other room carrying a wooden bucket full of water. The Minister raises Mose's head and anoints him with water three times. Jacob beckons Country over and he helps Mose to his feet.

The Minister says something in German, some phrase to welcome the boy, and gives him the Holy Kiss. Country and Mose start down the aisle. Country whispers to Mose.

COUNTRY
(Whispering)
You did great.

Mose smirks.

EXT. AMISH CHURCH - LATER

Country stands off from the congregation, which is milling and socializing. He stands with his hands in his pockets at the edge of a useless field. He looks back to Mose, who is chasing the smaller children around.

EXT. FARM ROAD - EVENING

The carriage cuts through the snow, heading back to Daniel's farm. Daniel and Amos are up front, at it again. Country and Mose sit in back. Country smiles at Mose and nods. Mose smiles back.

EXT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Country stands at the stables peering in at the horses. Behind him Daniel and Amos argue at the carriage. Mose makes his way into the house.

Amos climbs into the carriage and pulls away. Daniel watches Amos go and waves, then looks to Country. Country is drawn completely in by the horse, he clicks his tongue and mimics their sounds.

Daniel stares at him for a long moment with a strangely serious expression, then heads into the house.

INT. OLD CHURCH - BELL TOWER - EVENING

City has found a telescope and set it up on the edge of the bell tower. He peers through, searching for signs. Through the telescope: a plume of black smoke. He steps back from the telescope and furrows his brow, then looks again. It's smoke alright. He scans the rest of the horizon and spots a faint and distant red glow.

INT. BUNKER - UNKNOWN

Country opens his eyes with a gasp. He lies in his makeshift hay bale bed and his Mother lies behind him. He's sweaty and out of breath. His Mother wakes up.

MOTHER
(Whispering)
What? What is it, baby?

Country catches his breath.

COUNTRY
(Whispering)
I had a bad dream.

MOTHER
It's okay, baby. It wasn't real.

COUNTRY
It seemed so real. It was awful.

MOTHER
It's okay now. Dreams can't hurt you, even if they're bad. You know what my mother used to tell me?

Country shakes his head.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
She said children have bad dreams, so that they remember to wake up.

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - TWILIGHT

Country wakes up abruptly. He sits straight up in bed. He's sweaty and out of breath. He looks around the room.

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Country, now dressed, walks through the main house and steps into the kitchen. He pours a glass of water from the kitchen faucet and gulps it down. He steps out onto the dining patio and looks out into the fields.

The morning birds are CHIRPING. Country takes a deep breath. Two horses, Daniel's horses, race by the side of the house, wildly, tearing up the earth as they race out into the fields.

Country, confused by the sight, peers out the side window. His face turns to shock and he drops his glass of water. Three of Tom's young soldiers wander the perimeter of the farm house. Country races back toward the bedrooms. He bursts into Daniel's room. Daniel sits up abruptly.

COUNTRY
There are bad men here.

DANIEL
What?

Mose enters the room quickly.

MOSE
What's happening?

Country looks to him with wide eyes. Daniel jumps out of bed.

DANIEL
Quickly.

Daniel races into the main room and kicks the carpet away. He pulls up a trap door and points down into it.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Get in. Quickly.

Mose jumps down in and Country follows, but stops to look up to Daniel. Daniel begins to shut the trap door, shutting the boys in. Country protests.

COUNTRY
Come on.

Daniel slams the door and rolls back the carpet.

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - CRAWL SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The space beneath the house is dark and dirty. The air is ice cold and the boys can see their breath. Spider webs and dust are everywhere. The only light pours in through the gaps between the wood slats in the floor.

Country and Mose follow Daniel's footsteps with their eyes. He's headed toward the back of the house. Country begins to crawl. Mose tries to stop him.

MOSE

You have to wait here.

Country wrenches away and looks back to Mose with wild and desperate eyes.

COUNTRY

They'll kill him, Mose.

Country begins crawling, Mose becomes completely distraught, but follows. Country crawls through the underground space, his clothes and flesh getting caught on loose nails and splintering wood. He reaches the side of the house.

There is a small vent panel through the cement foundation. He peers through, Daniel is walking toward one of the men.

DANIEL

Please leave here. There's nothing for you.

A young soldier, holding a baseball bat and looking starved and sleep deprived, rushes Daniel. He hits him hard with the bat, making a loud, flat sound that even Country can hear from his distant vantage. Daniel goes down.

Country shifts his body and begins kicking the vent with all his might. It slowly gives. One of the other soldiers joins in the merciless beating of Daniel. Country finally kicks out the vent and begins to pull himself through the tiny hole. Jagged bits of metal and concrete surrounding the hole cut into his torso, tearing into his shirt and drawing blood.

EXT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Country is out. The third soldier spots him and rushes at him. Country moves out of the way quickly and the third soldier trips landing head first on a rock. He doesn't move again. Country looks down at him and notices Mose trying to pull himself through the vent hole.

COUNTRY

(To Mose)

Stay there!

The other two soldiers look over to Country, then to each other. The first soldier smiles and starts toward Country.

Country looks to the side of the house and spots the scythe. He rushes over and grabs it. He wields it at a high velocity, just as the rushing soldier approaches. The first soldier is decapitated, his body and head hit the ground at the same moment.

Country looks to the remaining soldier breathing heavily holding the bloody scythe. The soldier is terrified. Country looks to Daniel who is lying in a slump, perfectly still.

Country's face turns to rage, his eyes well up. He takes a step toward the soldier and the soldier races away, toward the woods, with all his might. Country drops the scythe, he looks faint, filled with emotion. He walks over to Daniel and collapses to his knees before him. Daniel isn't breathing.

Mose exits the back of the house running, but stops as soon as he sees Country and Daniel. Mose grabs his head with both hands, his face goes blank. Country weeps, but his face quickly changes, his eyes grow large.

He looks toward the rest of the farms and starts running through the field. Mose follows.

EXT. FARM ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Country races, distraught. He tromps through the mud and snow toward the other farms. He trips a couple of times, pulls himself up, not relenting. Mose is trailing behind him.

The horses reappear, they race along the edge of the woods, then disappear into them. Country rounds the last stretch of road, then slows at what he sees.

Ezekiel's farmhouse is burning to the ground, the flames raging. Some Amish bodies are strewn about in the road ahead. In the distance the marching song is drifting away.

COUNTRY
(Whispering to himself)
No.

EXT. CITY'S HOUSE - DAY

City stands before the charred remnants of his former life. All that exists where his house once stood are black planks, antiqued by flame, jutting from the earth. He stares into bleak spaces with no sign of happiness in his face.

He scans the debris and spots something beyond the rubble. Dark figures emerge from the distant forest. He squints to make them out. He walks out toward the wasteland. Finally he makes out the shapes: two horses racing through the snowy oblivion.

EXT. EZEKIEL GERIG'S FARMHOUSE - EVENING

Country digs a series large holes in the earth, graves. He's obviously been at it a while. He's already dug five in a row. He's exhausted, but pushes on. Just beyond him Mose sits on a log with his face in his hands.

Country keeps digging, shovelful after shovelful. Mose stands, face stained with tears, though he's no longer crying. He doesn't look at Country, but speaks to him.

MOSE

I'm going to tend to the animals in the barn. We'll need to eat soon.

He starts to walk away. Country pulls himself up out of the grave. Mose doesn't turn or slow. Country follows him toward Ezekiel Gerig's barn.

INT. EZEKIEL GERIG'S BARN - MOMENTS LATER

The large barn door slides open. Mose enters first. He makes his way to a darkened corner and disappears for a moment, then a sudden illumination. Mose walks back from the corner with an oil lamp. Country sighs and looks around.

COUNTRY

Where should we begin?

Mose suddenly furrows his brow and cocks his head to the side.

COUNTRY (CONT'D)

What is it?

Mose shushes Country and begins to walk toward the center of the barn. He crouches down and listens, then quickly sets down the oil lamp. He begins pushing aside the hay on the floor of the barn. He looks over to Country.

MOSE

Help me.

Country rushes over and helps and soon they uncover a trap door. Mose pulls at it with all his might, Country helps and soon they get it open. Mose snatches up the oil lamp and casts it light down into the hole.

Inside: women and children. Hanna sits with Jed asleep on her lap. Jed blinks awake. He looks up to Mose and smiles.

JED

Mose?

Mose falls back in surprise and relief.

EXT. OLD CHURCH - NIGHT

City has built a small fire on a metal merry-go-round in the small dilapidated playground. He's used some of the church pews to fuel it. He stands before it a long moment, then gives the merry-go-round a gentle shove, starting it slowly rotating.

He sits on a swing, the rusty chain supporting it epitomizing tetanus. He sways slightly, slowly and staring off. The dog runs up beside him, then lies at his feet. City slowly looks down at the pooch.

City's face has become devoid of anything resembling humanity. He looks to the dog with a face lobotomized by loss and emotional excess. City pulls the German Luger from his inner parka pocket and aims it at the dog's head. He makes a "BANG BANG" with his mouth, then lets his arm go slack and stares back out into the emptiness.

He raises the gun again, this time to his temple. He takes a deep breath and pulls the trigger. The gun clicks, but doesn't fire. He looks at the gun and places it in his lap.

One of the chains supporting the swing snaps. City falls hard to the ground. He cringes and rolls on his side clutching his lower back.

He reaches into his back pocket and removes the set of keys that used to live in his mother's dresser. He tosses them away and looks to the dog. He begins to laugh. Soon he's cracking up, rolling around on the ground.

As his laughter subsides he stands and walks over to where he threw the keys. He picks them up and stares at them in his hand. From his face it's apparent, an idea has struck him.

INT. PLAIN FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Country stands in the middle of the main room cringing as Mose dresses the wounds he's accumulated on his torso. Jed acts as nurse's aid, handing Mose what he needs.

The house is filled with women and children, cooking, sewing, or milling about. Country looks around with an expression of loss, then stares down at Mose. Mose doesn't look to Country at all, he finishes with the wounds and walks into a corner and stands there, not facing anyone.

Hanna approaches Country carrying his pack and a canteen. Country gears up. He's ready to leave. He looks to Mose, moving his lips as if about to say something. Nothing comes. He turns and walks out through the back of the house. Mose turns to Country just then, too late.

EXT. FARM ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Country wanders down the road at a brisk walking pace. His face, the expression of a man driven.

INT. OLD CHURCH - NIGHT

City wanders down the long shiny hallway. He approaches the end and the four doors. He looks to the locked one, places his ear to it. Silence. He starts to try the keys. None give for quite a while, then suddenly, a fit.

City's eyes go wide, filled with curiosity and fear. He turns the key, then opens the door. He peers inside, it's pitch black. He walks away a moment, stepping into the stairwell and comes back with a flashlight.

He steps back up to the newly unlocked door. He clicks the flashlight, but it doesn't come on. He smacks it a couple of times, then finally. He shines it into the room.

His face goes white, jaw goes slack at what he sees. He braces himself on the door frame and closes his eyes a moment, then enters the room, shutting the door behind.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Country is pushing on through the snow and thick foliage. He looks up to the sky at the full moon which reflects off the snow, making the earth glow.

In the distance he spots an orange flicker, a fire. He pushes toward it, struggling through the snow. As he gets closer it's obvious that the fire is large, more a burning building than a campfire.

He climbs down through a shallow ravine, across a trickling creek, and back up the other side. He pulls himself up by a tree root and spots a long narrow clearing ahead.

Railroad tracks. He follows them, picks up the pace, almost running. The tracks lead directly toward the fire. He ducks into the cover of forest and stealthily wanders through the last bit before the fire.

He stops when he's as close as he can get without being exposed. He peers out.

The fire is the large train engine he saw before, it's engulfed in flames, but still slowly moving along the tracks.

The burning train illuminates the clearing around the tracks, which is populated by bodies. Dozens scattered about. Both Tom's soldiers and the young men in bandanas from the train.

Realizing everyone is dead, Country steps out from the forest. He wanders along side the burning train, walking at the same pace, staring down at the dead. There was a battle, every body shows the tell tale signs of murder.

Country scans the faces of the dead, his expression filled with despair. Suddenly, he stops and stares down. He sighs deeply. At his feet is the body of the Pale Eyed Boy. Country closes his eyes.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Country tromps through the snow, moving away, quickly away from the flames. He pushes through a thick cluster of trees, the branches snap back and hit him in the face. He doesn't stop, he pushes harder.

The landscape begins to incline and he climbs. He reaches the apex of the hill and stops to catch his breath, steadying himself on a tree trunk. He looks off toward the horizon.

His minor vista reveals what looks like endless forest, then beyond, at the horizon, the city. He stares for a time, but shifts his attention, startled to see a small red glow in the not too distant patch of forest. He sets down his pack and sets up camp.

INT. OLD CHURCH - BELL TOWER - TWILIGHT

The morning birds sing in the distance. The interior of the bell tower sits empty.

INT. OLD CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The nave of the church sits empty as well. A crow flies in from the hole in the ceiling and perches on the giant crucifix.

INT. OLD CHURCH - OFFICES & STORAGE - CONTINUOUS

The long shiny hallway sits empty and the door that City went through is still shut.

EXT. OLD CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The face of the church is stark against the morning blue, as the sun crests the horizon. The dilapidated playground sits empty, the remaining swings swaying with a squeak in the breeze. The two horses wander slowly through. The dog sits at the church entrance watching them.

Suddenly, the dog barks and scares off the skittish beasts. They gallop back toward the wastelands.

EXT. FOREST - DAWN

Country packs his bags. He looks to where the red light was the night before. He makes out a small plume of smoke, a campfire left to smolder. He starts off toward it.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Country stands at the edge of the bushes that line the perimeter of an empty campsite. The campfire is nothing but smoldering coals.

A makeshift tent like structure made of old flags and large branches sits to one side. It's impossible to see if anyone is inside. Country stalks around, keeping within the cover of foliage.

As he changes his view a man's body can be seen hanging by a noose from a large tree. The man is Frank. To one side of the tent entrance, a rifle rests. Country looks around. Nothing and no one stirs.

He starts out slowly, silently into the clearing and toward the gun. He nears the tent and snatches the gun. He raises it and holds it at the ready. He pulls back the tent flap and his eyes grow wide. He lowers the barrel.

Inside the tent is Mariah. She's lying nude on a pile of dirty sleeping bags. She looks up at Country and starts breathing heavily, unable to speak. Her body is covered in cuts and bruises. She slowly tries to back away, but slides on the sleeping bag. She starts to moan incoherently with fear. Country tries to shush her.

COUNTRY

It's okay. It's okay, I'm not going to hurt you.

Country puts the gun back against the tent and moves inside. He removes his coat and wraps her in it. She starts to writhe and kick. Behind Country a twig snaps.

Country spins around and there at the edge of camp is Charlie. Charlie is very nonchalant, oddly so.

CHARLIE

Another rooster in the hen house.
That's poor form.

He starts to mosey toward Country, taking his time, with a half smile. Country jumps up and grabs the rifle. He aims at Charlie and starts to breathe heavily with rage. Air and saliva escape through Country's tightly clenched teeth.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Whoa there, kiddo.

Charlie stumbles a bit, he seems drunk.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Hold on a second.

Charlie turns around and starts peeing.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Can't shoot me in the back.

A rustle emanates from the bushes at Country's side; he quickly shifts his aim and fires. One of Tom's SOLDIERS stumbles out and collapses. Country cocks the rifle. ANOTHER SOLDIER appears behind the first. Country fires, hitting him in the head and knocking him back with a red mist.

Country trains the gun back on Charlie who finishes peeing and zips up.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Well then...

Charlie starts to laugh.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I guess this means we can't be friends.

Country pulls the trigger, but the gun just clicks. He looks down at it. Charlie continues laughing. Country rushes over to Charlie, his face overflowing with burning anger. He swings the gun hard at Charlie, cracking him in the head and taking him down.

Country jumps on top of Charlie and starts pounding on his face with his fist. His hands quickly become bloody. Country stops a moment and looks around. Charlie spits blood, but continues laughing. Country spots a rock within reaching distance, grabs it, and starts flattening Charlie's head with.

After a few good hits, Country's rage subsides and he drops the rock. He stands and looks down at what he's done, then back to the tent. Mariah is standing outside of it staring at Country silently. Country reaches out his bloody hand to her.

EXT. OLD CHURCH - DAY

In the distance, two tiny black figures move slowly through the snow.

EXT. WRECKAGE - CONTINUOUS

Country pushes through the thick snow pulling Mariah along. She is now dressed in a collection of dead men's clothing. She walks stiff legged still in shock. Neither speaks. Neither has anything left. Country spots the church.

EXT. OLD CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

Country stumbles into the playground and releases Mariah's hand. She stands still and Country walks over to a swing and sits in it. Country looks around this place.

Mariah starts to look around as well. She looks over to City's house, sees the rubble, and furrows her brow.

Country begins to weep uncontrollably, violently. Mariah walks over to him stiffly and pushes something into his hand. He looks at her and collapses to his knees. Mariah rushes into the church.

INT. OLD CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Mariah wanders down the aisle, through the nave, and back behind the altar.

INT. OLD CHURCH - OFFICES & STORAGE - CONTINUOUS

She moves down the shiny hallway to the end. She moves to the formerly locked door. She puts her hand on the knob and turns.

EXT. OLD CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Country sits on the ground under the swing. He collects himself as much as he can. He grabs his knees and begins to rock back and forth slowly, staring off. He looks to his hand and opens it. In his palm is the little metal Indian.

INT. OLD CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Mariah pushes the door open. Inside, City is laying in the arms of a woman's gray corpse. A dead woman wearing bright red high heels. City stares directly at Mariah, wide eyed, but empty of all recognition. A blank stare. Mariah slowly steps back and covers her mouth.

EXT. OLD CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Country still sits rocking back and forth. He drops the Indian and grabs his canteen. He kneels and pours the water over his forehead. He mumbles inaudibly, as he baptizes himself.

Behind him a large group of Tom's soldiers slowly approach. As they near, they begin to sing. Country turns and looks back.

INT. BUNKER - UNKNOWN

Country lays in bed staring off with his mother lying behind him. He closes his eyes.

CUT TO BLACK: