



THE KEEPING ROOM

By

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BASED ON TRUE EVENTS

OVER BLACK:

The sound of a dog BARKING WILDLY. It's distant at first, but then the sound grows louder, and louder...

Until we reveal...

EXT. PLANTATION GROUNDS - DAY

A massive WHITE PLANTATION HOUSE imposes itself, intimidating the yellow grass that spreads out for acres.

And then we pinpoint the source of the barking: a BLACK DOG sits in the middle of the grass, a mere dot in the frame.

EXT. ROAD - SAME

In front of the Plantation, an empty ROAD stretches out as far as the eye can see, stately trees creeping down on either side.

A BLACK WOMAN appears, hauling bags of feed.

She spots our dog, and she stops.

EXT. PLANTATION GROUNDS - SAME

The dog BARKS at her. This gives her pause, until...

She begins to BARK right back at it.

There's some distance between these two, but here they are, barking. It's loud and strange and just this side of surreal. Until --

The dog gives in. The woman wins.

SILENCE.

She lays down her bags of feed and slowly approaches the dog, her hand outstretched.

The dogs sits, panting.

BLACK WOMAN

You a good boy or a bad one?

She reaches out...

Closer...

Closer...

SNAP!

The dog's jaws clamp down, the woman jumps back, the dog's teeth only narrowly missing the tips of her worn fingers.

And again the dog BARKS.

BLACK WOMAN (CONT'D)

Go on n' get -- don't need your kind
'round here.

And then there's a SCREAM from the house.

SUDDENLY --

A WHITE WOMAN comes running through the front door like a banshee. Her FINE CLOTHES are undone, cascading around her body.

The dog takes off after her. There's a commotion, the black woman goes to follow, the dog gives chase --

A MAN emerges from the front door, in the uniform of a UNION SOLDIER. This is HENRY. He casually takes his gun, aims at the running woman...

But the white woman doesn't see the black woman or the dog or the ground or the sky. She flies away from the house like nothing exists but whatever this man is she's running from...

The black woman stops --

The dog runs --

And then --

BANG!

The white woman falls to the ground, inches away from the black woman. She looks up, briefly, and then --

SHE IS DEAD.

The black woman stares down at the body.

A SECOND UNION SOLDIER -- MOSES -- emerges from the front door of the house. His pants are undone, and he tucks his shirt in as he joins his partner on the porch.

The black woman kneels down and holds the white woman's body in her arms.

Moses, now fully dressed, picks up a GAS LAMP that sits on the porch and with a MATCH from his pocket, he LIGHTS it. He considers it for a moment, and then...

Throws it HARD through the open door of the large house.

The front hall CATCHES FIRE.

The two men move down from the porch as the FIRE grows behind them.

The closer they get to the black woman, the tighter she holds the fallen body. And then as they move past her, as if it's an after thought, Henry puts a BULLET in the back of her head.

She falls down, DEAD.

The FIRE moves fast now, devouring the house. Soon there will be nothing but dead bodies and ash.

The dog trots over to the women, smells them.

Moses turns and looks at the dog. He lets out a long, low WHISTLE.

The dog looks up. Trails after them as they walk away, headed SOUTH.

FADE TO WHITE.

TITLE IN BLACK OVER WHITE:

THE KEEPING ROOM

EXT. FARMHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Still. Humid. Green. Brown.

Images of the landscape come in and out:

-- A rabbit sitting in mossy grass.

-- Some old TREES.

-- A PEN with a single GOAT.

-- A FARMHOUSE, small but proud and in the middle of everything, surrounded by all of its OUT BUILDINGS.

-- The KEEPING ROOM, a cabin-sized stand alone structure, connected to the house by a LONG WALKWAY.

-- The BARN.

And then, people:

LOUISE and MAD.

Louise is 16 and white. Mad is 30 and black. Both work the field. Their clothes are worn and dirty.

It's quiet, save for the noises of their hoes in the earth.

Until...

A GUNSHOT.

The two women start. Everything stands stock still.

After a moment: A SQUEAL OF JOY in the distance.

Mad rolls her eyes. Louise smiles.

EXT. KEEPING ROOM - DUSK

A young woman sits on a log, a DEAD RABBIT spread across her lap with a small RIFLE next to her.

This is AUGUSTA, early 20's and white.

Slowly, the camera creeps towards her. The only noise is the sound of her skinning the rabbit and her heavy, excited breathing.

She is deliberate; she knows how to do this.

There is an inherent violence to the act itself, pulling the skin off an animal. She wipes her hair off of her face leaving a line of blood where the hair once was.

And then --

INT. KEEPING ROOM - EVENING

CLOSE ON: a stewed RABBIT is set down on a table.

The Keeping Room is self-contained. A little house unto itself: easy to heat, easy to cool. The small room is overwhelmed by a large FARM TABLE in the middle. Cabinets filled with all sorts of goods line the walls.

At one end of the table is the fire. Pots bubble and spew inside it. The family's history hangs above the fire in the form of tintypes, poppets, dried flowers, an OLD HAT, and several more pots and pans.

It is lit up not only by the fire, but also by small gas lamps that line the windows.

The three women barely use the big house now. This room is their home. If it were big enough, they'd probably sleep here.

Louise is sitting. Mad joins her.

Augusta sits at the head of the table.

LOUISE

It's small.

AUGUSTA

It's meat. It's a lucky day.

LOUISE

Least it smells good.

MAD

Tastes good too.

AUGUSTA

Things are fun to kill taste good.

MAD

Things are cooked good taste good.

A beat.

LOUISE

Don't know why you let her talk to you that way.

MAD

Your sister?

LOUISE

No. You.

AUGUSTA

Come on now --

Louise looks down.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

You can't imagine how fun it was to kill.

MAD

If your daddy heard you --

AUGUSTA

He taught me.

MAD

For livin', not for fun.

AUGUSTA

But, Mad -- it is fun. And hard. They're so small. And you gotta be real quiet. I was trackin' that creature for near an hour 'fore I shot him. Papa said only shoot once, when you're sure. 'Cause once that gun goes off, everything livin' is gone for miles.

LOUISE

Can we start?

MAD

We all goin' to start.

And with that, the three women dig in. Legs rip off the small, dead creature.

Teeth TEAR into meat. It's messy.

LOUISE

(sauce on her face, food in her mouth)

Tastes good. Real good.

AUGUSTA

You welcome.

MAD

Welcome.

They look at each other.

EXT. KEEPING ROOM - NIGHT

From OUTSIDE, we see the three gas lamps that light the windows move away from the windows and then...

The three women emerge through the door, gas lamps in hand. Augusta, RIFLE in her other hand, leads the way as the women take the walkway to the BACK DOOR of the Farmhouse.

Augusta opens the door and they head in for the night.

INT. FARMHOUSE / FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Augusta LIGHTS a small gas lamp.

INT. FARMHOUSE / HALLWAY - NIGHT

With her lamp, Louise LIGHTS a small gas lamp in one of the windows.

INT. FARMHOUSE / STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Mad LIGHTS a small gas lamp at the foot of the stairs, and goes up.

INT. FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mad's lamp BURNS on the windowsill. Mad washes her face by the light, HUMMING SOFTLY to fill the quiet.

Louise gets into bed, blows out her lamp.

Augusta enters and puts down her lamp. She starts to undress. Mad gets into her bed, leaving her lamp burning in the window.

Augusta places her RIFLE by the side of the bed she shares with Louise. She puts out her gas lamp and crawls in next to her.

Mad looks on from her bed as the two sisters fall asleep.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

A fat, orange SUN comes up over the house and fields.

EXT. GOAT FIELDS - SAME

PETE, the lone GOAT, chews some grass.

EXT. WOODS - SAME

The empty, motionless woods.

INT. FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - MORNING

Augusta is the first to rise. She rubs the sleep from her eyes and splashes some water on her face from a nearby basin.

She dresses, grabs her RIFLE, and quietly slips from the room.

INT. FARMHOUSE / STAIRCASE - SAME

Augusta puts OUT the gas lamp at the foot of the stairs.

INT. FARMHOUSE / HALLWAY - SAME

She puts OUT another lamp.

INT. FARMHOUSE / FRONT ROOM - SAME

And OUT goes the last one.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Augusta searches for prey as the sun finishes rising.

She hears a NOISE. She stops. Looks...

Nothing.

She continues on.

EXT. GOAT FIELD - SAME

Louise feeds and plays with Pete. She runs around the field, he chases her.

She LAUGHS.

EXT. HORSE PEN - SAME

Mad feeds the old horse, FERN. She pets her nose, wipes some sweat from her own brow.

EXT. WOODS - SAME

Augusta stalks a young deer. The young deer stands alone.

Augusta moves. A twig SNAPS.

The deer looks in her direction -- for a moment Augusta and the animal are looking right at each other. Augusta moves to aim her rifle...

And the deer runs away.

The sounds of RUSHING WATER overtake us...

EXT. CREEK - LATER

Augusta kneels down by a creek. She dips her hand in and shovels out a mouth full of water. She dips her hand in again and splashes the water onto her face.

She looks up at the sky. Defeated.

EXT. ANOTHER FIELD - LATER

A make-shift cross sticks out from a mound of dirt: this is a GRAVE.

Louise kneels down and drops some wildflowers in front of the cross. She sits, cross-legged, elbow on knee, face in hand, just looking at the dirt.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DUSK

The land is STILL as the sun sets.

INT. BARN - SAME

Mad and Augusta clean up below from the day's work.

Louise plays in the hayloft.

MAD

You fixin' to hurt yourself up there,
Louise?

LOUISE

I'm fine.

AUGUSTA

Mad's right -- you watch them boards.

LOUISE

I know where the loose ones are.

AUGUSTA
If you fall, I ain't helpin' you.

MAD
Me either.

LOUISE
Why don't you just fix em?

MAD
Why bother wastin' the work, ain't no one
goes up there but you.

AUGUSTA
Come on down here and help us-- we gotta
get to the Keepin' Room, start supper.

Louise jumps from one board to another -- it SHAKES. She
teeters. Mad and Augusta look up -- a moment of fear.

Louise steadies herself and smiles.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - NIGHT

Ravaged plates lie on the table.

Just vegetables tonight. Augusta's hunt yielded nothing.

Mad holds a UKULELE and sings. Louise and Augusta sing
along. Augusta BANGS on the table to the rhythm. Louise
DANCES.

Augusta gets up and joins her sister. Arms linked, they
move about the room as one.

The song ends and Louise claps, child-like.

Augusta falls into her chair.

Mad starts to play another song, but this one is quiet
and very sad.

LOUISE
But we don't know this --

AUGUSTA
Shhhh --

LOUISE
I want her to play --

AUGUSTA
Mad's singin' what she wants to.

Louise slowly concedes, sitting and listening, arms crossed. It's a work song. It's about God and all his ghosts. Mad knows it well.

The song ends. It's followed by a long silence that somehow feels like it's part of the song.

And then --

There is a NOISE outside. They all start, but remain quiet. Finally, Augusta is the one to stand. She walks to the window and cautiously looks out.

DARKNESS.

She grabs her RIFLE, moves to the door, and opens it. It CREAKS, and she looks back at Louise and Mad. They stay still as Augusta moves through it.

Mad and Louise don't take their eyes off the door.

It's so damn quiet.

UNTIL --

SLAM!

Augusta POPS UP outside a window right next to Mad and Louise, RATTLING the glass.

Mad and Louise JUMP.

From outside, Augusta LAUGHS. Mad just shakes her head.

Then she looks at Augusta, they lock eyes for a moment, and then Mad looks away.

INT. FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - LATER

Augusta gets into bed next to Louise. Mad gets into her own bed.

Augusta wraps her arm around her sister.

Louise closes her eyes.

EXT. ROAD - DAWN

An empty road at SUNRISE.

The SOUND of a horse, moving fast.

Then, HORSE and RIDER are seen in the distance. They approach steadily as the light slowly fills in the darkness around them.

Once they are close enough we can see that the rider is a BLACK MAN in a UNION UNIFORM. He rides fast and true -- he knows where he's going.

BLACK RIDER and HORSE fill the frame and the pounding of HOOFS become overwhelming --

Until...

INT. FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Louise WAKES in a sweat. She GASPS. She wakes Augusta.

They WHISPER, so as not to wake Mad.

AUGUSTA

What is it?

LOUISE

I was havin' a fright.

AUGUSTA

It's alright. Only a dream.

LOUISE

When was the last time you went to town?

AUGUSTA

I keep losin' track of the days -- a while, I reckon.

LOUISE

You should go back.

AUGUSTA

And how you suppose I do that?

LOUISE

You think Fern can't make it no more, but she can.

AUGUSTA

We done talkin' bout this.

LOUISE

Why you get to decide everythin'?

AUGUSTA

You know well as well why. Now back to sleep.

Beat. Louise lies down.

Augusta does too.

LOUISE

Can't close my eyes.

AUGUSTA

Try.

Beat. Louise sits back up.

LOUISE

Ain't it kill you knowin' they might come back? Caleb said, men was comin back. What if he got word?

Augusta sits back up.

AUGUSTA

Our men ain't desertin' no duty.

LOUISE

But they was right there. In my dream.

AUGUSTA

Then go back there and no more talkin' on it.

Augusta lies back down. Louise just sits there.

INT. FARMHOUSE / HALLWAY - MORNING

UNKNOWN POV

Moving towards a CRACK in an OPEN DOOR, we see a WOMAN looking at herself in a mirror. She wears a fine DRESS. Her hair is so long and so blonde.

The woman turns --

It's LOUISE.

AUGUSTA

It's you --

It's Augusta who's been watching her.

LOUISE
 Didn't feel like it.

Louise goes to work.

AUGUSTA
 Even more ridiculous out here than it was
 in there.

Mad reaches into the bucket, drinks a ladle-full of water
 and then goes back to work.

LOUISE
 Why you care so much?

AUGUSTA
 You goin' to ruin it.

After a moment, Louise THROWS DOWN her hoe.

MAD
 What's wrong with you?

LOUISE
 Don't feel like hoein'.

MAD
 Too bad.

LOUISE
 She shouldn't be talkin' to me that way.

AUGUSTA
 Louise --

LOUISE
 She's the nigger, she should do it.

Mad keeps working: it's nothing new.

AUGUSTA
 Like I told you, Louise -- we all niggers
 now.

Augusta resumes her work with Mad.

Louise hesitates, and then makes a decision. She walks
 away, her back to them.

Mad looks up at Augusta. Augusta doesn't return the gaze.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - LATER

Louise sits alone, playing a game on the floor of the room, something involving a ball and some stones.

She's still wearing her mother's dress, but she's unbuttoned the back so it falls around her shoulders. She thought about taking it off, but didn't make it that far.

She's more concerned with the game now.

We sit with her here for a moment.

And then the sounds of LAUGHTER lead us to...

INT. KEEPING ROOM - NIGHT

Another night, another dinner's mess fills the table.

Mad, Louise and Augusta are laughing their heads off. They are in the middle of playing some kind of game.

Louise is seated at the table, blindfolded, she's back in her NORMAL CLOTHES now. Mad hands Louise an ONION. Louise moves it around in her hands and then holds it up to her face and smells it.

LOUISE

An onion!

She gleefully tears off the blindfold and puts it on Mad.

Louise and Augusta look around the room for something, gesturing so as not to give themselves away. They dart around rejecting each other's choices in as much silence as they can.

Augusta has an IDEA and she pulls off her BLOOMERS.

Louise stifles a giant laugh and hands the bloomers to Mad. Mad inspects them, moves them through her hands.

Realizing what they are, she drops them.

MAD

Didn't your mother teach you to keep ya drawers on?

Mad takes off the blindfold and shakes her head.

Louise and Augusta LAUGH.

Augusta puts on her bloomers.

Louise wraps the blindfold around Augusta's face.

Mad and Louise move around the room, looking. Louise pulls the MAN'S HAT down from above the fire and hands it to Augusta.

Augusta holds it in her hands. She feels it, slowly. She suddenly stops smiling and gets real QUIET.

She takes off the blindfold and puts the hat back above the fire.

LOUISE

What?

MAD

What's wrong?

AUGUSTA

I don't want to play no more.

EXT. KEEPING ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

CRACK!

CLOSE ON: An AXE and a LOG descend into frame.

The axe is held by Augusta.

The piece of wood SPLINTERS in two.

Augusta resets with a new piece of wood and her axe -- this is ritualistic, for her. She knocks the axe gently into the piece of wood, the axe catching in it. Then she raises her arms, wood and axe as one, and...

EXT. WOODS - SAME

CRACK!

We're with Louise now. She wanders through the woods.

EXT. KEEPING ROOM - SAME

Augusta takes another log. Notches the Axe. Reels back.

And...

EXT. WOODS - SAME

CRACK!

Louise sees something. Stops. Smiles.

She leans down as she approaches it.

EXT. KEEPING ROOM - SAME

Augusta wipes the sweat from her brow, axe in hand.

And then --

A SCREAM, not too far off.

Augusta drops the axe and runs around to the other side of the building, where she and Mad COLLIDE.

MAD

Louise. Mad raccoon bit her.

AUGUSTA

Then what you doin' here?

Augusta runs into the Keeping Room. She emerges with her RIFLE and runs past Mad.

We're with Mad as she backs up against the wall of the Keeping Room and watches Augusta go.

It's quiet for a moment, and then --

GUNSHOT. Mad winces.

Augusta stalks back towards her.

A beat.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

I missed.

She SLAPS Mad. Mad shows no sign of pain.

And then --

Mad SLAPS Augusta.

Augusta holds her face. A long moment.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Come on. Can't carry her by myself.

Auguta turns and goes back. Mad follows.

INT. FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - LATER

Louise writhes and sweats in the bed.

Mad and Augusta whisper in the corner.

AUGUSTA
We haven't got anythin'?

MAD
Nothin'.

AUGUSTA
You search the whole Keepin' Room?

MAD
'Course.

AUGUSTA
Fern won't survive the ride. We known
that for months.

MAD
It don't matter. Maybe they got somethin'
at the Weaver farm could help. Closer
than goin' all the way to town.

AUGUSTA
We ain't heard from them since -- since I
don't know when.

MAD
Worth a try.

Louise MOANS.

Mad goes to her. She wrings out a cloth and places it
back on the girl's forehead.

MAD (CONT'D)
(to Augusta)
Go.

The sound of HORSE HOOFS pounding earth, gradually
getting louder, takes us to --

EXT. ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON

Augusta riding as fast as Fern's old body will let her.

EXT. ROAD - DUSK

Augusta approaches THE WEAVER FARM. It's dark and quiet. No lamps or candles here.

EXT. WEAVER FARM - SAME

Augusta dismounts Fern, ties her to the fence post and approaches the FARMHOUSE.

EXT. WEAVER FARMHOUSE - SAME

Augusta moves to the door and knocks. It creaks open under the weight of her fist.

AUGUSTA

Hello?

Beat.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Mary? Clara?

Augusta goes inside.

INT. WEAVER FARMHOUSE / FRONT ROOM - SAME

Augusta moves through the first room of the house.

It doesn't look lived in. Just the opposite: this place has been abandoned. No noise. Just dark and quiet.

INT. WEAVER FARMHOUSE / STAIRCASE - SAME

CREAK.

Augusta goes upstairs.

INT. WEAVER FARMHOUSE / UPSTAIRS - SAME

Augusta moves through the hallway.

AUGUSTA

Mary? Clara?

She goes into one of the bedrooms.

INT. WEAVER FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - SAME

She rummages through the cabinets, looking for something, anything to help Louise. Problem is, she doesn't know what she's looking for.

All she finds are a tintype of a baby, some sewing tools and some unidentifiable dried HERB.

She smells the herb and sticks it in the belt of her skirt, just in case.

She looks up and she catches a glimpse of something in a mirror --

It's just her own reflection. She steadies herself.

The SOUND OF FLIES takes us to --

INT. WEAVER FARMHOUSE / ANOTHER BEDROOM - SAME

The final bedroom at the end of the hall. Augusta pushes the door open.

There is a WOMAN'S BODY lying in the bed in the corner.

FLIES are EVERYWHERE.

Augusta goes to her.

AUGUSTA

...Mary?

MARY lies motionless in the bed. Her eyes WIDE OPEN.

The WOMAN is DEAD.

The DIN is UNBEARABLE.

Augusta SHAKES her as if she's trying to wake her from a deep sleep.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Mary.

A line of blood is dried from her mouth, down her face to the bed. Augusta follows the line and her eyes keep going down to the floor where a bottle lies, broken. Some kind of POISON.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

How long you been lyin' this way?

Augusta picks up the bottle and places it on the table next to the bed.

She rolls Mary so she is flat on her back. At first, she's not sure what to do.

THEN --

She lays her arms at her sides. She closes her eyelids.

She steps back and looks at her work.

EXT. WEAVER FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Augusta walks quickly out of the house and away from it.

Once outside, She stops and stands for a moment, trying to catch her breath.

Is the whole world this way now?

EXT. ROAD - LATER

Augusta rides.

EXT. ROAD - LATER

The first lights of town.

Fern is tired. Augusta, too.

EXT. TOWN - LATER

It's virtually a GHOST TOWN. Augusta had no idea.

The only establishment open is the SALOON, which is also, of course, a whorehouse.

As she approaches, a dog, THE DOG, is tied to the post out front. He BARKS wildly just as before.

Augusta dismounts and ties Fern to the post. Once she is off the horse, the dog quiets.

Augusta stands still and regards the dog. It's a comfort after what she's just seen.

Augusta moves to pet the dog and...

SNAP!

CALEB
You been ridin' all night?

AUGUSTA
Yessir.

CALEB
On Fern?

AUGUSTA
Yessir.

CALEB
She dead yet?

AUGUSTA
Just about.

Caleb grabs an ALMOST EMPTY bottle of WHISKEY and pours her a SMALL SHOT.

CALEB
Drink this.

He slams it down in front of Augusta. She inspects the glass.

AUGUSTA
You sure?

CALEB
Positive.

Augusta swallows it whole. Sputters.

CALEB (CONT'D)
Good girl.

AUGUSTA
You hear from anyone out at the Weaver place? Seen Clara?

CALEB
Mary was the last one I saw. Few months back. She was lookin' for Clara. She run off. Probably went West, I said.

AUGUSTA
I just been there.

CALEB
And?

AUGUSTA
Mary's dead.

CALEB
No...

AUGUSTA
Drank herself some poison. Just lyin' up there.

CALEB
God forgive her.

AUGUSTA
Flies everywhere.

CALEB
First time you see a dead body?

AUGUSTA
I seen my mother when she go.

CALEB
You alright then?

AUGUSTA
I'm alright.

Beat.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
Went there hopin' for some medcin'. Found this.

Augusta pulls the dried HERB from her belt.

CALEB
Ain't nothin' dried sage'll do to help Louise.

AUGUSTA
Anyone come back since last time?

CALEB
A few injureds. A few deserters. Can't tell you who -- too dangerous with them so close.

AUGUSTA
But no --

CALEB
No.

Caleb gently shakes his head.

Augusta tries to hide how foolish she feels for thinking maybe there would be good news.

CALEB (CONT'D)
You should go.

LOUISE
But I can't go back with nothin'. All that ridin' and nothin' for Louise?

MOLL, a whore, sits a few stools down. She has overheard their entire conversation.

It's hard to tell if she's young or old, but if there wasn't a war on, you can be sure she'd be beautiful.

MOLL
Hi.

Augusta just looks at her.

CALEB
(re: Moll)
You can say hi.

AUGUSTA
...Hi.

MOLL
Caleb?

Moll doesn't take her eyes off Augusta.

CALEB
Moll?

MOLL
Can I speak to ya?

Caleb gives Augusta a look and then motions for Moll to follow him into the back.

CALEB
(re: the soldiers)
Don't you look at 'em.

Augusta watches them as they walk back behind the bar. She fiddles with her empty glass, draws circles with her finger on the bar.

Behind her, the SOLDIERS look right at her.

But Augusta doesn't look back.

Moll and Caleb return. Moll has a FULL BOTTLE in her hand.

MOLL
There ain't no medcin'.

AUGUSTA
Already knew that.

Moll goes to open the new bottle.

CALEB
(re: the bottle)
You sure 'bout that?

MOLL
I am.

Caleb shakes his head. He looks over at the soldiers, hoping they don't see the fresh liquor.

Moll pours two shots. She hands one to Augusta. She clinks her glass to Augusta's and they shoot them down.

MOLL (CONT'D)
You put her in the tub. You boil that water beyond boilin'. Don't worry bout burnin' her. Got that?

AUGUSTA
Yes ma'am.

MOLL
You close her in that hot room and no matter how much she screams, you don't let her out. It's once she stops screamin' you open that door, cause she's liable to of passed out.

AUGUSTA
Alright.

MOLL
You got vinegar?

AUGUSTA
Yes ma'am.

MOLL
After you let her out, you put that vinegar on that wound as much as she'll let you.

AUGUSTA
That'll work?

MOLL
There's a chance.

AUGUSTA
Alright.

MOLL
You ready for her to die?

Augusta shakes her head.

Moll pours them two more shots.

CALEB
Hey now -- how much uh that you gonna
give her?

MOLL
What we savin' it for 'cept someone who
needs it?

Augusta looks at Caleb and then back at Moll. Moll raises
her glass, Augusta follows and they down them.

MOLL (CONT'D)
She's young, so it might work. But you
get ready.

AUGUSTA
Yes ma'am.

Moll leans in. Whispers.

MOLL
Where you ridin' to?

AUGUSTA
Due east. Not far, but far enough.

MOLL
What you ridin'?

AUGUSTA
Dead horse.

Moll gets up and motions for Caleb to follow once more.
Augusta watches them go.

This time, Augusta can't help herself. She turns to see
if the SOLDIERS are still there.

And they are staring STRAIGHT AT HER. Henry SMILES.

Augusta quickly turns away. She overhears Caleb and Moll arguing.

And then, Moll returns.

She leans in and WHISPERS again --

MOLL

You're gettin' Martin. He's a good ride.

AUGUSTA

Why you bein' so nice to me?

MOLL

I knew your Daddy. He was a good man.

AUGUSTA

He was alright.

MOLL

You look just like 'em.

Moll pours them one last shot. Caleb knows not to bother stopping her.

AUGUSTA

Everyone says I look like my mother.

MOLL

I never met *her*.

AUGUSTA

Hardly knew 'er myself.

They shoot the drinks.

HENRY (O.S.)

I see you found more liquor.

He's right behind them.

CALEB

Sure thing. Found this last bottle in the back.

Beat.

HENRY

(not taking his eyes off
Caleb)

Hey Moses, this place is luckier than we thought.

He smiles at Moll and lingers on Augusta. Augusta uses every ounce of her power not to look at him. And he walks back to his table.

Moll waits a beat and then --

MOLL
You best get goin'.

AUGUSTA
Thank you.

Moll leans in one last time, her voice as quiet as it can be.

MOLL
You're gonna go upstairs. And out the window on the back wall. Caleb'll meet you out there.

Augusta and Moll share a look that says more than they can with words.

Augusta stands and walks towards the back stairs. The soldiers follow her with their EYES, like dogs following meat.

She walks as slowly and calmly as she can.

And then --

Moll turns it on, puts on a SHOW, all smiles and arms as she heads towards the soldiers' table.

MOLL (CONT'D)
You better share some uh that with me, boys!

And as she sits on Henry's lap...

INT. SALOON / STAIRS - SAME

Augusta reaches the top of the stairs.

LAUGHTER trails behind her.

She walks down the hall towards the door on the other side. She OPENS it.

INT. SALOON / UPSTAIRS ROOM - SAME

A LAMP sits on a table next to a bed where a MAN and a WOMAN are FUCKING.

Augusta, horrified, steps back, she goes to close the door --

And then, a voice from downstairs:

HENRY (O.S.)
Isn't that girl gonna join us?

Augusta steels herself and creeps past the animal act before her, OPENS the WINDOW and CLIMBS OUT.

The couple doesn't pay her any mind.

INT. SALOON - MOMENTS LATER

Henry and Moses sit and drink and laugh with Moll and then --

A dog BARKS WILDLY outside.

The Soldiers exchange a glance. Moses gets up.

MOLL
Oh! Don't go --

EXT. SALOON - SAME

Moses comes outside.

MOSES
What you barking at, boy?

EXT. SALOON / BACK ENTRANCE - SAME

Augusta, standing on the window ledge, tries to figure out how to climb down. And then, she sees Caleb and MARTIN, the HORSE.

She takes a deep breath and JUMPS down.

She tumbles, and Caleb starts talking fast --

CALEB
You better go.

MOSES

I like dogs more than I like people.

AUGUSTA

It don't make no difference to me,
really.

MOSES

Dogs or people?

AUGUSTA

That's right.

MOSES

That's a mighty fine horse for such a
young girl.

CALEB

(shooting him a look)

You go on now, Augusta.

He helps Augsuta up. She sits on Martin's back now.

MOSES

She got somewhere to be?

AUGUSTA

I do.

MOSES

All on your own?

AUGUSTA

No, I got people. Lots of 'em.

August shoots a look to Caleb --

And Caleb SMACKS Martin up the backside, sending the
horse FLYING.

Moses has to leap out of the way not to get run over.

Battle BARKS like crazy.

Moses steadies himself and turns to look at Caleb.

It's a STAND-OFF. Until...

HENRY (O.S.)

Get back here!

Moll comes RUNNING around the side of the Saloon.

She stops, looking at Caleb looking at Moses.

Her face his covered in BLOOD, she wipes it away with her hand. They stare each other down, BREATHLESS.

Moll looks back towards the door --

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Augusta rides Martin.

In the background, a GUNSHOT.

And then ANOTHER.

Augusta stops the horse. Listens intently.

ANOTHER.

Augusta considers, and then she kicks Martin.

He begins to RUN.

Just the NIGHT, the GIRL, and the HORSE.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

The LAMPS of the Farmhouse glow near. Augusta slows as she approaches.

Mad is waiting outside for her, lamp in hand.

MAD

Where you get that horse?

AUGUSTA

Whore gave it to me.

She dismounts...

MAD

I knew your Daddy wasn't just playin' cards.

...and VOMITS at Mad's feet.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Mad takes a GIANT POT OF WATER off the fire. She and Augusta struggle as they carry it out of the Keeping Room and head to --

EXT. KEEPING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The water SLOSHES between them and they head into the --

INT. FARMHOUSE / STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

They head up the stairs to the --

INT. FARMHOUSE / HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mad kicks the bedroom door open. STEAM pours out.

The women enter and we can't see them for the steam. It's quiet for a minute and then the SOUND of RUSHING WATER --

Louise WAILS and SCREAMS.

Mad and Augusta emerge from the steam and Augusta slams the door. The two women stand on either side of it.

STEAM and Louise's SCREAMS escape through the cracks.

INT. FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - LATER

Louise lies in bed, red-faced and breathing deeply.

Augusta sits in a chair next to the bed, looking out the window.

Augusta goes to Louise and lifts the skirt of her nightgown. The WOUND shines purple and black. She takes a cloth, dabs it with VINEGAR and applies it to the wound.

Louise MOANS, but doesn't wake.

Mad enters, lamp in hand. She looks at Louise and then at Augusta. They share an uncertain look.

EXT. FIELDS - THE NEXT MORNING

CLOSE ON: Two dead CHICKENS lie on the ground.

Augusta and Mad look down like GIANTS at the chickens.

MAD

Must be the raccoon.

AUGUSTA

Means we can't eat em, right?

MAD
Probably best not to.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - LATER

Mad takes inventory on the shelves, organizing what's left when suddenly --

Augusta bursts in. She slams her GUN down on the table and kicks a chair.

MAD
Nothin'?

AUGUSTA
You sure we can't eat them chickens?

MAD
You can do whatever you want.

Augusta looks up at Mad, angry. And then, looks away.

MAD (CONT'D)
We should talk 'bout that goat again.

AUGUSTA	MAD
His name's Pete.	(on 'name's')
	I know his name.

AUGUSTA
Then don't call him 'that goat.'

MAD
Just 'cause you give it a name don't mean we can't eat it.

AUGUSTA
We need the milk.

MAD
We need the meat.

AUGUSTA
We got turnips and carrots.

MAD
How strong you think that's goin' to keep us?

They stand in silence for a moment.

AUGUSTA
We got anything to drink?

MAD
Yeah. Goat's milk.

AUGUSTA
That's not what I meant.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON: A JAR OF MOONSHINE as Mad sets it down on the table.

She and Augusta both stare at it for a moment.

MAD
Jesus ain't goin' be happy bout this.

AUGUSTA
I think there's lots uh things Jesus
ain't happy 'bout right now.

MAD
Lord forgive me.

AUGUSTA
You never had this before?

MAD
No ma'am.

AUGUSTA
I'll show you.

Augusta gets two glasses. Mad pours. Augusta raises her glass. Mad raises hers.

Augusta downs hers. Slams down the glass.

Mad downs hers. Slams down the glass.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
That's the worst thing I ever tasted.

MAD
But you --

Augusta grins.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - LATER

Mad and Augusta are now DRUNK.

AUGUSTA
Gets easier more you drink.

MAD
Gets real easier.

AUGUSTA
I like the way I feel.

MAD
Bill was the only one your Papa let drink
it. He would come back at night just
stinkin' and so proud the white man gave
him his drink.

AUGUSTA
You was with him? Bill?

A beat.

MAD
I was.

AUGUSTA
You wanted to have his babies.

MAD
Oh, lord.

AUGUSTA
You miss him?

MAD
I do.

AUGUSTA
Was he --

Augusta stops herself.

MAD
Go on -- with this moonshine in me I'm
fixed to answer any question you got.

AUGUSTA
You real sad?

MAD
We all real sad.

Augusta gets a dreamy girl look on her face like she's
fixing to ask something blue.

AUGUSTA
What's it like?

MAD
Oh no.

AUGUSTA
You said you'd --

Mad motions for Augusta to pour her another shot.

Augusta pours. Mad drinks.

MAD
What you wanna know?

AUGUSTA
What's it like? What's it feel like?

MAD
You'll know.

AUGUSTA
But what if I won't?

MAD
You'll know when your husband takes you --

AUGUSTA
What if all the men kill all the other
men? What if it's the end of the world
and we the only ones left?

MAD
It ain't the end of the world --

AUGUSTA
I think about all the women sittin' in
houses right now were supposed to be
taken, but ain't. Learned how to shoot a
gun fore they learned how to bed. Learned
how to be men 'stead uh wives.

Mad hears her. She thinks about it.

MAD
It's scary. It feels good, but it's
scary. It hurts! But *good* hurts. Like
ridin' a horse. Or shootin' a gun.

AUGUSTA
You didn't ever shoot no gun --

MAD

Well, what does it feel like?

Augusta thinks.

AUGUSTA

Feels powerful --

MAD

Yeah --

AUGUSTA

And it hurts --

MAD

That's right --

AUGUSTA

But you like it --

MAD

That's what I'm talkin' bout --

AUGUSTA

It's like shootin' a gun --

MAD

Yes ma'am --

AUGUSTA

Alright.

A beat. She SMILES.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Least I done that!

They LAUGH and CLINK glasses and shoot some more moonshine. A silence overtakes the room, but it's comfortable and soft. Until --

A NOISE, directly behind them. They turn to see...

LOUISE.

She's just standing there. Like a GHOST.

Augusta and Mad stare at her. No one knows what to do or say until --

LOUISE

I'm... hungry.

MAD
Did she say --

AUGUSTA
-- hungry?

Mad and Augusta break into NOISES OF RAPTURE. Shouting and hollering and dancing around the room. Louise, standing stock still at the center of it all, even manages a smile a small smile.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
She's hungry!

MAD
What did you say?!

LOUISE
I'm hungry.

MAD
Say it again!

LOUISE
I'm hungry!

INT. KEEPING ROOM - LATER

Mad is at the stove, cooking FURIOUSLY.

MAD
I'm gonna cook you somethin' so good,
Louise. Come back from the dead stew,
that's what. Come-back-from-the-dead
stew!

Augusta is sitting next to Louise. She stares at her. Louise just looks ahead.

Mad starts to sing a song while she cooks. It's about -- of course -- come-back-from-the-dead stew.

Augusta touches Louise's hair like something you're not supposed to touch. Louise looks at Augusta and smiles.

LOUISE
You thought I was gone?

Augusta can't say the word -- YES -- she can only nod.

Augusta puts her head on the table, Louise puts her head on Augusta's head. They both watch as Mad cooks and sings.

Augusta smiles a contented, drunken smile.

EXT. ROAD - DUSK

CLOSE ON: The red TONGUE of a tired of a dog, PANTING.

It's Battle.

We widen out to reveal Henry and Moses as they come walking up behind him. Moses walks ahead of Henry, who lags behind holding a bottle of WHISKEY and a BLOODY LIP.

MOSES

Didn't realize you needed your mouth to walk proper.

HENRY

Whore damn near bit my lip off. Made me all dizzy.

MOSES

Just keep drinking that whiskey. It'll stop hurting soon.

HENRY

Ain't enough whiskey in this bottle fix what I got.

MOSES

No one suffers but you.

HENRY

If you were the one bit we'd still be sitting back at the whorehouse stead of moving.

MOSES

Henry. I don't know that I'd call what you're doing moving.

HENRY

You sure we're going the right way?

MOSES

Road only goes one way.

HENRY

How do you know it's the right road in the first place?

MOSES

Battle knows.

HENRY

Maybe we should stop and look at the map.

MOSES

Maybe you should quit acting like she bit off your foot.

Battle suddenly stops and sits.

Henry and Moses stop their bickering and take notice of his stillness.

MOSES (CONT'D)

What is it, boy?

Battle whimpers.

MOSES (CONT'D)

You got something there?

Battle YELPS.

Moses looks at Henry, who is now just sitting down in the center of the road.

Moses shakes his head and goes over to where Battle sits, who's calling to his master to come look.

As Moses approaches Battle, he looks up and sees what the dog sees:

A SWATCH OF FLOWERED FABRIC

Caught in the branches of a tree. It's from Augusta's dress.

Moses grabs the fabric off of the tree, holds it to his nose and, breathing deep, takes in the smell.

HENRY

What's he got, Mose?

MOSES

Let's just say we don't need no map.

INT. FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - JUST BEFORE DAWN

Mad and Louise sleep. Augusta groggily wakes, and holds her head: her first HANGOVER.

She gets out of bed and splashes water on her face from the basin. And then something MOVES behind her...

It's just Louise having a restless sleep.

Outside is the pre-morning sky, the silhouettes of trees in still dark light.

And then --

An uneasiness overtakes her, something all women know and only women can understand.

Something's coming.

Augusta grabs her RIFLE from the bedside.

She sits in a rocking chair, rifle in hand, looking out the window.

EXT. CREEK - MORNING

A series of images:

-- Trees rustle and sway.

-- The creek moves, hitting rocks and dragging sticks.

-- Augusta runs down the hill to the creek with a BUCKET.

-- Mad helps Louise slowly down the hill and helps her sit down. Augusta hikes her skirts and stands in the water.

-- Mad sits with Louise as Augusta fills the bucket and hauls it to where the others sit. Augusta fills the ladle with the cool drink and Louise sips it down.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

Augusta carries the full buckets of water on her shoulders. Mad supports Louise.

Augusta stops. Mad and Louise walk past her. She looks off in the distance --

And there's that feeling again.

EXT. FIELDS - LATER

Augusta walks quickly.

MAD (O.S.)

Augusta! Augusta!

Augusta gets to the GOAT FIELD. Mad is standing in the middle of the emptiness.

AUGUSTA
What is it?

MAD
Pete's gone.

Augusta looks around. Claps her hands. Walks in circles.

MAD (CONT'D)
Already did that.

Augusta stops, looks at Mad.

AUGUSTA
What'd you do to him?

MAD You don't mean what you're sayin' --	AUGUSTA Did you eat him all yourself?
--	---

MAD
You know that's not a thing I'd do.

AUGUSTA
(realizing she's wrong)
I'm upset.

MAD
We gotta find that raccoon.

AUGUSTA
Wasn't no raccoon.

MAD
What'd you mean?

Augusta pauses. Thinks.

AUGUSTA
Nothin'.

MAD
If you ask me, it's this farm's curse.

AUGUSTA
What do you mean?

MAD
White girls get things kept from 'em.

AUGUSTA

I don't like what you're implyin' --

MAD

I seen the ghosts of this house with my own two eyes.

AUGUSTA

Ain't got no ghosts.

MAD

There are monsters in this world you don't know 'bout.

Augusta considers this. She knows.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - NIGHT

A PLATE of COOKED VEGETABLES comes down on the table.

Louise looks at it and then looks up at Mad, who has just put it down.

Louise is still weak, but she's getting better.

Augusta sits by her side.

LOUISE

I can't eat no more turnips.

Mad joins them at the table.

MAD

Then you ain't goin' to eat.

Louise concedes and pokes the vegetables with her fork.

LOUISE

Shoulda' eaten Pete when we had the chance.

Mad goes to say *I told you so*, but Augusta stops her with a look. Mad gives in and eats her turnips.

Over the three women eating turnips by the fire, the sound of a horse BREATHING FAST takes us to --

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

It's empty, as before.

The Black Rider and his horse come down the road through town. They reach the Saloon.

EXT. SALOON - SAME

The body of CALEB, the bartender, lying in the street, DEAD. The Black Rider goes to him, rolls him over, knows even before he sees him that he's dead. He shakes his head.

Then he goes to the body of a WOMAN. It's Moll. Eyes wide, lips still smeared with blood. He closes her eyelids.

There is a horse lying DEAD not too far off from where Caleb lies. The Black Rider moves to the horse. He comes around the front and sees it's proud, dead face.

The Black Rider bends down.

BLACK RIDER

...Fern?

He looks up, eyes searching.

INT. FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Augusta SITS UP in the darkness.

She shakes Mad AWAKE.

MAD

What --

AUGUSTA

Shhhhhh.

MAD

Why you wake me up just to be quiet?

AUGUSTA

Just *listen*.

They listen together. NOTHING.

MAD

I'm goin' back to --

AUGUSTA

Just wait. Please.

They listen once more.

MAD

Probably just some a them ghosts you
white people got in here.

They wait. Nothing.

MAD (CONT'D)

I'm goin' back to sleep.

AUGUSTA

Come have a look with me?

MAD

If I come downstairs with you and we look
around, then we go back to sleep?

Augusta nods.

MAD (CONT'D)

Alright.

INT. FARMHOUSE / STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER

Augusta, gun in hand. Mad right behind her. They quietly
make their way down the stairs.

They hear a NOISE. It's coming from outside.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Augusta and Mad move in the darkness.

The sounds of a struggle --

RIP!

A SNARL as flesh and bone TEAR.

Augusta rounds the corner of the house and sees a
CREATURE tearing ANOTHER CREATURE apart. It's dark, but
she's sure as sure that it's the RACCOON.

Augusta AIMS, SHOOTS and HITS. The menace WHIMPERS and
COLLAPSES. Augusta runs towards it.

The raccoon is dead, but not because she killed it. It's
dead because the dog she just shot had devoured it.

THE DEAD DOG IS BATTLE.

Augusta backs away in fear.

She runs into someone, CRIES OUT --

It's MAD.

AUGUSTA
We gotta get back inside.

MAD
Was it the raccoon?

AUGUSTA
Yes -- but somethin' else too.

MAD
What?

AUGUSTA
We gotta get inside, now --

HENRY (O.S.)
Who's firing? Show yourself!

MOSES (O.S.)
Battle! PHFT! PHFT! Battle!

Augusta runs inside the house. Mad follows --

INT. FARMHOUSE / STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER

Augusta and Mad run upstairs.

MAD
Who is that?

INT. FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

They wake Louise.

AUGUSTA
Get up.

LOUISE
No.

MAD
(to Augusta)
You tell me what's goin'
on.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
(to Mad)
There's men comin'. Soldiers.

MAD
And how is that bad?

AUGUSTA

Yankees.

MAD

What make you think that?

AUGUSTA

I just shot their dog!

MAD

How you know what dog belong to what
Yankees?

AUGUSTA

I tell you once we're safe, alright?

MAD

Safe from what?

AUGUSTA

(almost to herself)
I knew it when I saw that
goat, and I didn't --

MOSES (O.S.)

You shot my dog!

Augusta motions to Mad and Louise to sit still and quiet.

MOSES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(louder)

You shot my dog!

HENRY (O.S.)

(singing)

He was just a dog.
Same as you and me.

Pause.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(singing)

And you went and shot him.
Couldn't let him be.

MOSES (O.S.)

He's singing now and he only sings when
he's real drunk or real mad and right
now, he's both!

A beat. He is waiting for some kind of response.

MOSES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Young lady we got guns ain't been used in
days. And they are *itching* to fire. Who
else you got in there? Any men-cowards?
Or negros?

And then it's quiet. The women whisper, and FAST:

AUGUSTA
Where are the other guns?

MAD
What?

AUGUSTA
The guns --

MAD
I think they in the shed.
(remembering)
Oh! And that small one in the box
downstairs --

AUGUSTA
We need to get all of 'em and bring 'em
back.

MAD
Bring 'em back where?

AUGUSTA
Here.

MAD
Why you wanna stay here?

AUGUSTA
Where else we goin' to go?

MAD
Keepin' Room. Only safe place on this
land.

AUGUSTA
We ain't leavin' this house.

<p>MAD Too many doors and windows and rooms --</p>	<p>AUGUSTA (on 'windows') We ain't leavin' --</p>
--	---

MAD
And why not? If they is soldiers like you
say -- what can we do?

AUGUSTA
We goin' to fight.

MAD
We goin' to fight the Union army?

AUGUSTA

S'only two men.

MAD

How you know that?

AUGUSTA

Suppose I don't --

Mad reaches her hand for Louise.

MAD

Louise, come with me --

AUGUSTA

(angry now)

You ain't takin her nowhere.

LOUISE

I don't wanna fight nobody, Augusta --

AUGUSTA

And what happens once they find you down there? What happens when you're in the Keepin' Room and they come through and you just sittin' there waitin' --

MAD

They don't know nobody's here. That's why we gotta hide. And the Keepin' Room, it's safe and small.

AUGUSTA

They know we're here.

(a beat, and then she tells them)

They followed me.

MAD

What --

Suddenly, a SOUND from downstairs --

A GUNSHOT rips through a wall downstairs.

Louise goes to SCREAM. Mad covers her mouth.

Once she calms down, Augusta moves to the door.

AUGUSTA

You lock this behind me. And don't you dare go to no Keepin' Room.

She goes out. Louise tries to stop her.

Another window BREAKS. She moves to the nearest HALLWAY and hides in the darkness.

In the WINDOW:

A HAND creeps through the broken glass and goes to open the window from the inside.

Augusta takes aims at the hand. She steadies herself as best she can and when she's ready, she takes a long deep breath...

And SHOOTS.

The hand RECOILS as the bullet passes through the tender area between thumb and forefinger.

HENRY (O.S.)

Jesus!

INT. FARMHOUSE / HALLWAY - SAME

Augusta holds the gun. Listening. Waiting.

A SHOT is fired back -- it hits the wall near her. She GASPS. Henry yells something to Moses about his hand, and then their voices recede from the side of the house.

Augusta is FROZEN in place. She waits until she can't hear the Soldiers anymore. And then she waits just a bit more.

Cautiously, she moves to the window, opens what's left of it and hangs outside, holding the gun tight. She looks to her right...

NOTHING.

To her left...

NOTHING.

They're gone...

CRASH!

Henry runs at the side of the house and grabs at Augusta with his now very bloody hand. She quickly pulls herself inside and slams the window down on his hand --

He lets out a SCREAM --

INT. FARMHOUSE / FRONT HALL - SAME

Augusta is running fast. She grabs a gas lamp.

She digs around underneath a table and pulls out a small box. It's nothing special, filled with mostly trinkets and odds and ends, things that may have belonged to her mother, a long time ago...

And then she finds it: a small REVOLVER. And the BALLS and BLACK POWDER.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Henry holds his arm to his chest. He is moving quickly, but comes to rest on an exterior wall of the house.

HENRY
(under his breath)
Shit shit shit!

He breathes deeply, his gun at the ready.

Suddenly Moses comes around the side of the house.

Henry STARTS and AIMS...

MOSES
Drop your gun, it's me.

Beat. He does.

HENRY
Shit, Moses.

MOSES
How bad?

HENRY
Women takin' all kinds of parts of me
today.

He shows his hand. It's bad. Moses winces at the site of it.

Decisive, he crouches down next to Henry and puts down his gun. He takes the tail of his shirt from his pants and rips part of it off at the bottom. He wraps the scrap around Henry's hand.

AUGUSTA (O.S.)
(from inside the house)
I will use this gun again!

Moses looks to Henry as if to say:

You got it in you to keep going?

Henry nods. Moses gets up and helps him up.

They grab their guns.

MOSES

(loud)

No more games. We're coming in.

He motions for Henry to be quiet and points towards the other side of the house.

INT. FARMHOUSE / FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Augusta hears the men, but isn't sure exactly where they are coming from.

She runs to the stairs, realizes something, and heads back down. She puts out the remaining gas lamps and runs back upstairs.

INT. FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - SAME

A SHARP KNOCK on the door.

Mad and Louise crouch in the corner.

AUGUSTA (O.S.)

It's me!

They open the door, and this conversation happens VERY QUICKLY:

LOUISE

What's happening? Where are your --

AUGUSTA

(to Mad)

Do you know how to use a gun?

MAD

What --

AUGUSTA

Do you know how to use a gun --

LOUISE

Why are you naked?

AUGUSTA

There was a fire. I had to put it out.

LOUISE

What?

Augusta opens a wardrobe and pulls on a pair of bloomers and a camisole as she talks.

AUGUSTA

Watch. You take the powder and put it in, then you take the ball and put it in. You can do that six times. Then, you pull this part back and you wait. When you're ready, you push this as hard as you can.

Mad takes the PISTOL. She LOADS IT as the conversation continues.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Wait. But don't wait too long.

MAD

Alright.

ONE BALL is loaded.

A GUNSHOT rings out from one side of the house. And then one from the OTHER SIDE.

AUGUSTA

And remember, don't shoot unless you're sure or else --

TWO BALLS.

MAD

I know what else.

AUGUSTA

Now -- I'm gonna need to you to run.

BANG BANG BANG!

Someone POUNDS on the SIDE OF THE HOUSE.

LOUISE

Where we goin'?

THREE BALLS.

MAD

Keepin' Room.

AUGUSTA

That's right.

Mad nods.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Mad was right. Ain't safe here.

LOUISE

But you said --

BANG BANG BANG!

Now it's on the other side --

AUGUSTA

Mad, you take that gun and you take my sister and you run as fast as you can and you get to the Keepin' Room. And once you there, you stay with that gun, ready to shoot.

FOUR.

LOUISE

What about you?

AUGUSTA

Gonna' make sure they don't see where you went.

Louise goes to take the lamp to lead their way.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

No light. They'll find us.

LOUISE

But --

AUGUSTA

(no more talking)

Follow me.

Louise nods. Augusta opens the door.

INT. FARMHOUSE / STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Augusta leads the way as Mad and Louise quietly slip out and make their way down the stairs behind her.

Augusta reaches the bottom of the stairs, gun at the ready. The men are nowhere to be seen...

BANG BANG BANG!

The house is SHAKING.

She motions for Mad and Louise to head out the BACK.

They open the BACK DOOR -- a small CREAK -- and ease into the night, leaving the door open behind them.

Mad and Louise disappear from sight.

BANG BANG BANG!

The noise is making Augusta crazy -- she points her gun ONE WAY, then the OTHER --

...And then it's SILENT. The banging has STOPPED.

After a very long moment...

A HORRIBLE SCREAM. The sound of STRUGGLE.

And here, just when Augusta should make a run for it, she is quite suddenly overwhelmed...

She can't take it...

She presses herself up against a wall, gun in hand...

And starts to CRY.

The quiet, terrified cry of a VERY YOUNG GIRL.

And then she stops. She stands in silence, ALONE.

She turns and makes a break for it.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Augusta moves quickly across the long walkway to the closed door of the KEEPING ROOM.

She opens the door, gun at the ready...

And...

It's EMPTY.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Augusta makes her way around to the front of the house.

She finds Mad, face bloodied, on the ground.

Augusta leans down to her.

MAD

Louise. Louise!

Augusta leaves her and follows the house around to the front, just in time to see Louise's KICKING LEGS disappear inside the front door.

INT. FARMHOUSE / FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

Cautiously, Augusta enters, gun poised.

HENRY (O.S.)

You better quit that.

Augusta follows their voices. She knows she has to be strategic. Quiet.

She hears the muffled noises of Louise trying to CRY OUT.

She moves towards the stairs.

INT. FARMHOUSE / STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Augusta goes up the stairs.

A CREAK. A PAUSE.

And then --

SHE IS RIPPED OUT OF FRAME FROM BEHIND.

But the camera continues to move up the stairs, creeping upwards as if we are following Augusta on what is now the journey of a ghost. It comes to rest in front of the bedroom door, where the muffled sounds of a struggle can be heard from within.

INT. FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Henry is on one side of the room, Louise is on the other. He moves towards her, she moves away. She is very weak.

The small gas lamp sits next to the table.

HENRY

If you don't stop moving, I might just shoot you.

Louise stops moving.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I don't want to shoot you.

Louise moves away again.

HENRY (CONT'D)

If you don't want me to shoot you, why don't you come and sit right here, on the bed.

Louise gives up and moves to the bed.

He holds the gun in one hand -- the hand that hasn't been shot up -- and RIPS her nightgown off with the bandaged one. It doesn't rip all the way, so he TEARS at it again. Some of the blood from his hand gets on her skin.

Louise is SHAKING.

He pushes her back on the bed. He pulls down his pants and begins to RAPE her.

She CRIES out. He pulls the upper part of her nightgown up and stuffs it in her mouth. She GAGS.

He continues to hold the gun as he rapes her.

She tries to rise up, but she is so weak, and he is a man. He pushes her back down. He holds her down with the hand with the gun in it.

Finally, she submits.

This is not something to look at, not ever.

But there is one small moment, just one, where it doesn't feel wrong to Louise, when she goes to a place in her mind where she realizes that this -- *this* -- is what it feels like to have a man inside you. And it feels good.

A GUNSHOT rings out from outside just as he finishes.

It's over.

He moves off of her. After a moment we hear her slow, wheezing breaths.

Continuing to hold the gun, he stands, pulls up his pants and flattens his shirt inside them. He walks over to the window. Looks out. Sees nothing.

Louise doesn't move.

He slowly walks over to the mirror. Smooths his hair.

He takes some water from the basin and splashes it on his face. He looks at Louise, behind him in the mirror.

He looks at her lying there. He looks at the blood around her. She sees it too.

He walks by the bed, looking at her, and keeps walking towards the door. Their eyes meet for a moment. Usually, they don't look at him after. It unnerves him, looking in her eyes.

He shakes it off. He's proud. Like a hunter after the kill. He opens the door, steps out, and --

BANG!

He is shot right in the HEAD.

Mad stands there, shaking, bloodied, PISTOL aimed straight out.

After a moment, Louise stands and moves toward the open door. HALF alive, nightgown HALF off, BLOOD EVERYWHERE.

She takes Mad's gun and shoots him AGAIN and AGAIN and AGAIN and then CLICK --

It's out.

She takes the butt of the gun and bashes his face in with it.

ONCE.

TWICE.

THREE TIMES.

Mad wrestles with Louise.

MAD

Enough. Enough. Enough.

Louise resists. Mad wrestles on.

MAD (CONT'D)

(almost a whisper)

Enough.

Finally, Louise submits.

Augusta comes running up the stairs. She stops when she sees the soldier dead on the ground and the women beside him.

AUGUSTA

You sure learned to use that fast.

MAD

Where's the other one?

AUGUSTA

He got Daddy's gun. And part of me too.

Augusta motions to her leg. She's been SHOT. The back of the leg. There's blood everywhere. She swoons a little.

MAD

Thought I heard another shot. Glad you ain't dead.

AUGUSTA

I barely got away -- kicked him in the face when we was both down. Don't think we have much time fore he finds us.

MAD

Let's get to the Keepin' Room.

(pause)

This time, we go together.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - AN HOUR OR TWO BEFORE DAWN

Mad, Augusta and Louise come through the door. Mad and Louise hoist Augusta up between them.

They put her down on a chair. Louise collapses into the one next to her.

Mad runs to one of the cabinets and pulls out some MUSLIN. She also pulls out the big jug of MOONSHINE.

She puts them both down on the table.

Augusta stretches her leg out, pulls up the bloomers.

Mad pours the moonshine on the wound.

AUGUSTA

AAAGGGHHH.

MAD

(to Louise)

Get me a knife.

Louise quickly grabs a knife from a drawer.

Mad pours the moonshine on the knife and then hands the jug to Augusta who takes a LARGE GULP of it.

We stay on her face as Mad extracts the bullet from her calf.

AUGUSTA

AAARRGGGGH.

Mad drops the knife, rips the muslin with her teeth and winds it around Augusta's wound.

Louise is still wearing the bloody, torn nightgown, but she's wrapped it around herself in such a way that it hides what needs to be hidden.

MAD

(To Augusta)

You alright?

AUGUSTA

Get the glasses.

Mad goes and returns with three.

Augusta leans forward and pours three shots of moonshine. She slides one down to Louise.

LOUISE

You want me to drink this?

AUGUSTA

Yes.

MAD

You mind your sister and drink up.

The three women take the shot and SLAM down the glasses.

Louise sputters. Coughs.

LOUISE

More.

Augusta pours Louise another shot.

Louise drinks it down. Sputters less.

It's quiet for a moment.

MAD

At my second farm, there was this one shed we wasn't allowed at. All the other sheds had their jobs. One for feed.

(MORE)

MAD (CONT'D)

One for tools. But there was this one shed that we was told never to go in. Not to play near it. Not to get curious. We made up all sorts of stories bout it. Gold. Monsters. God. Then, one day when I was 'bout 10 the man told me to go to the shed. 'Til then, I had never known what happiness was. I was goin' to the shed. I would get to know. I walked to the shed, my heart comin' out my dress, I was gonna get to know, I was gonna get to know. I was gonna be the one to tell all the others.

Beat.

MAD (CONT'D)

I open the door. Only thing in there was a low cot and no windows. I stood in there a minute so unsure. So sad that that was all. Wonderin' why we wasn't supposed to know for so long. And then the man come in. And he had me. He was so big and I was so small. So small that I didn't even know what was happenin'. That was the first time. And there were many more. Some times they cut the baby out. Other times, they kept 'em. I don't know where they are now.

LOUISE

You don't think --

MAD

You might.

Louise looks down.

MAD (CONT'D)

There are many kinds of monsters. You never know which one goin' be yours. Wish I could say I killed mine. You put a bullet in yours today.

Louise looks at Mad in a way she never has. Mad pours them each another shot.

Mad raises her glass to Louise and drinks. Augusta is in a trance.

MAD (CONT'D)

Your daddy never did -- don't you worry. He hit us, sure, but never that.

Augusta nods.

And then they hear a NOISE outside. A man's feet pounding on the earth.

MAD (CONT'D)

We best be sure that door is locked.

And then --

BANG!

A GUNSHOT. And ANOTHER. Right outside the door, but not at it.

Augusta hobbles over to the door. She stays real close to it. The women don't dare to breathe.

AUGUSTA

(a whisper)

Is that gun ready?

Mad checks the gun -- it's not.

She moves quickly to load it.

And then --

The door knob RATTLES.

And all of this happens VERY FAST:

Mad stands behind Augusta, ONE BALL is loaded --

Augusta motions for Mad to hand her the pistol, she places it right at the center of the door --

Louise backs into the corner --

Augusta looks back at her sister and at Mad, both shaking with fear --

Someone is BANGING on the door.

Augusta closes her eyes. She SHOTS...

The bullet tears through the door --

THUD.

SILENCE.

Augusta looks back at Mad and Louise again. She puts her ear to the door. There is no sound.

She presses her eye to the hole made by the gun.

We see the BOOTS of a Union Army soldier pointing toes-up towards the sky.

And then...

Augusta's face cracks into a SMILE. She begins to laugh a crazy, hysterical laugh. Louise smiles too, and begins to echo Augusta's laugh. It's almost as if she is controlled by her.

MAD

You don't even know if he all dead yet.

Augusta stops. So does Louise.

Cautiously, Augusta steps outside the doorway. The BODY lies before her.

Mad and Louise wait behind in the Keeping Room.

EXT. KEEPING ROOM - SAME

Augusta peers down through the darkness and sees a BLACK FACE staring back up at her. Eyes WIDE.

It is the face of the BLACK RIDER.

THIS IS BILL. Mad's LOVER.

Augusta drops the empty pistol and backs up into...

INT. KEEPING ROOM - SAME

MAD

What is it?

Augusta just keeps moving backwards. Mad stands and goes to the body.

AUGUSTA

Don't!

LOUISE

What? What's wrong?

EXT. KEEPING ROOM - SAME

Mad stands staring down at Bill.

She doesn't move for a LONG moment. She stands there, staring, weighing, realizing...

Until finally...

She kneels down, and kisses him real hard on the mouth. She looks down and takes the pistol out of his belt, stands up, goes back inside, and closes the door.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - SAME

Mad walks back past Augusta and sits at the table.

Augusta is shaking now. She just looks at Mad.

A LONG PAUSE.

AUGUSTA

Say somethin'. Please. Just say somethin' Mad.

Mad remains silent.

LOUISE

What's goin' on?

AUGUSTA

I'm just gonna keep havin' to say words cause I can't bear this quiet.

MAD

(to herself, real quiet)
He come back.

AUGUSTA

That's not what I'm... please, Mad --

MAD

It ain't bout you.

AUGUSTA

But I --

MAD

I ain't angry with you, Augusta.

AUGUSTA

Wha --

MAD

I'm angry cause I came right close to killin' him myself.

Augusta moves right next to Mad. Mad grabs her hand real hard.

LOUISE
We wanted him dead, right?

AUGUSTA
Hit me or hurt me or somethin'.

MAD
(biting back feeling)
Glad you done it 'stead of me. He would never forgive me if I's the one who done it.

AUGUSTA
But it didn't even have to be --

MAD
What? You want me to sit here cryin'? Talk 'bout how much I love Bill? How I can't believe he made it all the way here just to die? What's the purpose in it? How that goin' to get us through this night?

LOUISE
(realizing what happened)
Wha --

AUGUSTA
Mad --

MAD
There's another man come through that door any second. Ain't no time to think on such things.

Beat.

LOUISE
Bill? He came back -- he was goin' to --

MAD
When you goin' to learn what don't happen don't *matter*?

Augusta motions to Louise to be quiet.

MAD (CONT'D)
You just go on.

Mad takes out Bill's gun. Holds it. Regards it. Puts it in the waist of her skirt.

AUGUSTA

We best block up that door, 'case that
other one come back.

MAD

We ain't goin' to wait for him.

LOUISE

What we goin' to do?

MAD

We goin' out there to hunt him. And we
ain't come back here 'til he ours.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - JUST BEFORE DAWN

The sky is SOFT and BLUE-BLACK.

We're WIDE on the farm and the surrounding buildings.
Maybe we see two tiny figures, creeping. But it could
just be a trick of the eye.

And save for the symphony of southern bugs...

It's DEAD QUIET.

And then on the side of the frame, we see...

Moses moving through a field.

SLAM!

The door to the Farmhouse shuts.

He turns. Goes to it. Enters, cautiously.

INT. FARMHOUSE / FRONT HALL - SAME

Moses moves quietly through the house, gun at the ready.
Shafts of LIGHT are starting to creep across the floor.

He hears FOOTSTEPS going up the stairs.

INT. FARMHOUSE / STAIRCASE - SAME

He moves up the stairs.

INT. FARMHOUSE / HALLWAY - SAME

He looks into one room. It's EMPTY.

Another room.

EMPTY.

He HEARS SOMETHING at the other end of the house.

INT. FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - SAME

In the back of a darkened room he sees a man sitting in a chair with his back to the door. A gas lamp BLAZES next to him.

Moses immediately holds up his gun, ready to shoot if the man is an enemy.

MOSES

That you, Henry?

No response. Can't be Henry then. He raises his gun.

MOSES (CONT'D)

Who are you?

Still nothing.

MOSES (CONT'D)

I said: who are you?

And still nothing.

MOSES (CONT'D)

You the man was shooting at me before?

Silence.

MOSES (CONT'D)

I got a gun ready to fire right through the back of your head if you don't answer me.

He's scared now, but --

MOSES (CONT'D)

Answer me!

In a moment of bravery, he kicks the chair around with his boot, gun pointed but shaking in his hands.

His breathing STOPS.

It is Henry -- HENRY -- propped up in the chair, head blown straight through and bashed up, and what's left of his eyes are WIDE and WILD.

Moses muffles his own scream by shoving his fist in his mouth.

There's a note pinned to his chest that simply reads:

YOU NEXT.

Over this he hears:

The VOICES of girls singing outside the house. Maybe it's one of the songs they sang earlier.

Moses is shaking. He is bewildered.

FEAR is in his eyes.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAWN

Moses comes stalking out.

The flash of a FIGURE runs in-between two buildings. He tries to see where it went, but it's too fast.

Then ANOTHER FIGURE off to the side.

He doesn't know which way to go.

And ANOTHER. He starts towards it, but then it's gone.

A WAIL -- coyote like, something not quite animal but not quite human -- emanates from the trees.

MOSES

Who are you? You tryin' to scare me? Show yourself, coward!

The SINGING starts again, and somehow... it's coming from the TREES.

He moves towards the trees where he thinks the singing is coming from. He gets real close to it -- it's loud now -- and then suddenly it STOPS.

He hears something coming --

WHUMP! WHUMP! WHUMP!

And suddenly there's a horse -- MARTIN -- GALLOPING straight for him.

At first he's too bewildered to move, but he gets his wits about him just in time to jump out of the way, and he falls to the ground as Martin gallops past him and disappears into the distance.

He shakes his head and looks around. And then --

Like an apparition, there's Louise. She's a good distance away, but it's most certainly her. They hold each other's gaze for a moment...

And then she's GONE.

MOSES (CONT'D)

I see you, girl!

Louise runs as fast as she can into --

INT. BARN - SAME

Moses slips inside. It's dark in here -- the shutters have all been CLOSED.

He moves slowly, carefully, gun at the ready.

A VOICE from above --

LOUISE (O.S.)

Please don't shoot. I don't have a gun.

He turns in the direction of the voice.

MOSES

Where --

And then the voice is suddenly SOMEWHERE ELSE.

MOSES (CONT'D)

How you movin' round like that?

LOUISE (O.S.)

I'm scared. There's another man lose on the farm. He's trying to kill us.

MOSES

I know. He shot at me too. Think he killed Henry.

LOUISE (O.S.)

I'm scared.

MOSES

You seen the man's face?

LOUISE
He's everywhere.

And now the sound of CLIMBING.

MOSES
You goin' up to the hayloft?

LOUISE (O.S.)
Your friend had me.

Moses gropes around in the dark until his hands land on A LADDER. He looks up to the hayloft and slowly begins to climb.

MOSES
Did he now?

LOUISE (O.S.)
If I let you, do you promise not to shoot me? Will you protect me from the other one?

MOSES
I have to find you first.

A CREAK.

Louise's feet carefully move across the boards of the hayloft.

LOUISE (OS)
Ain't goin' to let you find me less you promise.

MOSES
Alright. I promise.

Louise LIGHTS a MATCH and holds it right up near her FACE.

She is facing him. She waves it out.

Moses catches a glimpse of her EYES. He moves towards her, she moves back.

Another MATCH:

Her LIPS.

She waves it out. Moving backwards, now.

He advances.

Louise's feet, walking backwards, so lightly.

Another MATCH:

Her HAIR.

She waves it out. Still moving backwards.

His feet, approaching.

One last MATCH:

She is SMILING, beckoning.

He steps toward her and...

THERE'S NOTHING THERE.

There's no floor. The board is gone. He FALLS, emits a GUTTURAL sound, some CLATTERING, and then --

THUD. He hits the ground.

His gun on the ground beside him.

And suddenly the SHUTTERS ARE OPEN and MORNING LIGHT comes POURING IN.

A foot kicks the gun away. A hand reaches down and grabs it.

AUGUSTA

This belongs to my daddy.

Augusta and Mad, BACKLIT, face the Soldier, who looks up at them, directly into the BARREL of the GUN.

Louise joins them.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - MORNING

Mad, Augusta and Louise sit looking at something across the room, guns trained.

Moses sits in a chair, feet bound and a rope wrapped around his chest. He's broken now, close to done.

He holds a glass of moonshine, the only thing to ease the pain.

MOSES

This is fine moonshine.

AUGUSTA
Our daddy made it.

MOSES
Your Papa made fine moonshine.

Silence.

MOSES (CONT'D)
Mighty fine of you to give me some before
I go.

The women stare at him.

AUGUSTA
What's your name?

MOSES
Moses.

AUGUSTA
Like the baby.

MOSES
Just like.

Beat.

MOSES (CONT'D)
Who was that other man shooting at me?

MAD
That was Bill.

MOSES
He was wearin' one of ours.

MAD
He was.

MOSES
Funny that.

MAD
I reckon.

MOSES
He was trying to save you from me.

MAD
I suppose he was.

MOSES
Where is he now?

AUGUSTA

I killed him.

Moses cracks a smile and then bursts into a full on LAUGH. It is just him laughing for a good long moment.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

Thought he was you.

Then, he settles and stops.

Again: SILENCE.

MOSES

He kill Henry?

MAD

No. That was me.

LOUISE

And me.

MAD

He was already dead.

LOUISE

I made him *real* dead.

MAD

That you did.

MOSES

How long you girls been on your own?

AUGUSTA

Long enough.

MOSES

You do alright.

AUGUSTA

We do alright.

MOSES

I shot you.

AUGUSTA

And I kicked you in the face.

He takes another sip.

As she speaks, Augusta gets up, limps over to the fire, pulls down the HAT from the game of Blind Man.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

This is my favorite room. Always been my favorite place on this whole land. This room. And I guess since I never been anywhere else, that means this room is my favorite place in the whole world.

She puts on the hat.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

My daddy built this room. Bill and Nathaniel too. And I intend to stay here. Ain't no one gonna' make it otherwise.

MOSES

I don't think you're gonna have a say.

AUGUSTA

What now?

MOSES

Me an' him, we were scouts. Sent on ahead to cover the outlying land, see if there's food, send messages back to the coming regiments. Sherman's coming and he's not taking prisoners. None of us are.

(beat)

They're coming here. Soon. And there ain't nothing you can do to change it.

AUGUSTA

You kill that bartender? And that whore?

MOSES

Sure did. But I'm not going to kill you.

AUGUSTA

You got that right.

MOSES

But someone just like me will. Someone who looks like me, hates your people like me, he'll shoot you right in the head.

AUGUSTA

Too bad you ain't goin' live to see if you're right.

MOSES

You know how many battles I fought in?

AUGUSTA

Don't seem like many.

MOSES

No. It don't. But it was. And yet, here I sit --

AUGUSTA

-- here you sit --

MOSES

-- shit.

AUGUSTA

That's what you get for bein' bad.

MOSES

North ain't bad.

AUGUSTA

Didn't say it was. Said you was.

MOSES

And you, are you good?

AUGUSTA

Don't know anymore.

MOSES

Used to though, right?

AUGUSTA

I did.

MOSES

When was that?

AUGUSTA

Back when all the men was where they belonged. Made the world seem correct. And then all things got moved and once all things got moved didn't seem to be a right and a wrong no more. Didn't seem to matter. Doesn't matter, does it?

MOSES

I killed that bartender and that whore. You killed Henry. You killed Bill. You're going to kill me. Someone's going to kill you too.

AUGUSTA

It don't matter.

MOSES

No it don't.

MOSES (CONT'D)

But I will say this. I'm glad I'm not gonna be the one to kill you.

AUGUSTA

What now?

MOSES

Might even say I was starting to like you.

AUGUSTA

You tryin' to get let go -- I know.

MOSES

I know *she* won't let me outta here alive.

He looks at Mad.

MOSES (CONT'D)

I'm just telling you I like you. Say something true before I die.

AUGUSTA

(a beat)

I am sorry 'bout your dog.

MOSES

Thank you.

AUGUSTA

That's a true thing.

MOSES

He was a good dog.

AUGUSTA

He was just a dog.

Beat.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)

You bout finished your drink?

MOSES

Just abou --

Augusta shoots him in the head. Louise screams.

Beat.

LOUISE

Why did you --

AUGUSTA
I was startin' to like him too.

Mad and Louise are speechless.

AUGUSTA (CONT'D)
Now, what we gonna do with these bodies?

A jarring THUMP takes us to --

INT. FARMHOUSE / STAIRCASE - LATER

Mad and Augusta lug Henry down the stairs by his feet.

THUMP.

THUMP.

EXT. GOAT FIELD - LATER

Augusta digs a big, messy HOLE. Louise sits to the side, watching. The body of Henry lies by her side.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - LATER

Mad drags Moses by his boots. A trail of blood behind him.

EXT. GOAT FIELD - LATER

Mad drags the body around the side of the house.

MAD
(shouting)
Come help!

Augusta hauls herself out of a SECOND HOLE she's been digging and runs to help Mad carry the body the rest of the way. They dump him next to Henry.

They stop in front of the hole. They look down.

MAD (CONT'D)
Them's good holes.

Augusta nods.

With their feet, Mad and Augusta push the body of Henry into the ground.

EXT. GOAT FIELD - LATER

Mad and Louise work on filling in the first hole.

Augusta sits by the body of Moses, getting ready to push him in. She looks at his face. She touches his nose. She looks at his jacket and pats his pockets. She pulls out a small purse with some coins and a TINTYPE of a young woman.

She looks at the woman's face. She holds the picture close to hers. She puts it back. She finds a few bullets, too. Takes them.

She looks at him one last time and then, with all her might, she rolls him in.

EXT. GOAT FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Mad and Augusta shovel the dirt on top of the second hole. Louise sits by.

INT. SHED - LATER

Mad is standing inside over Bill's body. They dragged him in there to hide him from Moses.

Augusta walks in. Mad doesn't turn, she just feels Augusta behind her.

MAD

Don't know what I want to do with it.

Beat.

MAD (CONT'D)

Don't want to bury it.

AUGUSTA

You can think on it if you want.

MAD

As long as I just leave 'em there, it's alright.

AUGSUTA

Then leave 'em.

MAD

How strange he show up here dressed up like a Yankee.

AUGUSTA
Disguise maybe?

MAD
No, I reckon he joined up.

AUGUSTA
With them --

MAD
Maybe he was free.

Augusta understands.

AUGUSTA
And he came back.

MAD
Let's dig him a hole.

AUGUSTA
But you --

MAD
If you don't make me put him in the
ground, I might never stop standin' right
here.

EXT. GOAT FIELD - LATER

The women stand over the now filled up, make-shift
graves, looking at their work.

The THREE GRAVES: mounds of dirt swelling up out of the
earth, side by side.

LOUISE
What do we do now?

MAD
We should say a prayer.

Mad bows her head and closes her eyes. Augusta and Louise
do the same.

After a moment, Augusta opens her eyes and looks up
again. The sun now BLAZES overhead.

AUGUSTA
We best get inside.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - LATER

Louise sleeps in the corner. Mad and Augusta talk by the fire.

AUGUSTA

You think if Bill made it back... maybe?

MAD

Don't get your hopes high.

AUGUSTA

I know, but --

MAD

Ain't goin' to tell you again.

This next bit in hushed WHISPERS:

AUGUSTA

What are we gonna do if she's got a baby?

MAD

Take care of her. Like always.

AUGUSTA

You know how to cut 'em out?

MAD

That's a Godless thing to say.

AUGUSTA

Sorry.

Beat.

MAD

We stayin' here?

AUGUSTA

We are.

MAD

Then we goin' to need to go out to the garden, get all the food we can. Ain't no animals left.

Augusta starts to get up.

MAD (CONT'D)

No, I'll go. You stay with Louise.

Augusta nods.

Mad takes the rifle and heads outside.

Augusta looks over at Louise. Watches her sleep.

Augusta looks at her gun. Runs her fingers across it.

AND THEN --

MAD (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Augusta!

Augusta starts.

MAD (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Augusta come out here!

Augusta wakes Louise.

LOUISE

(waking)

What?

AUGUSTA

Come on.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Mad stands on a hill overlooking the land. As Augusta and Louise approach, they know exactly why she called out.

The three women stand, looking out. And then we see:

THE WORLD IS ON FIRE.

AUGUSTA

Looks like the sky's on fire.

LOUISE

Looks like the whole world's on fire.

AUGUSTA

He wasn't lyin'.

MAD

What?

AUGUSTA

They comin'.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - LATER

A pile of carrots, turnips and beets rests on the table.

The faint SOUNDS OF WAR approaching in the distance.

AUGUSTA

This is all the food we got. Can't go outside no more.

LOUISE

You sure we shouldn't run?

AUGUSTA

Where to? Ain't nothin' safer than these walls.

MAD

Ain't nothin' safe.

AUGUSTA

This room is the best hope we got. This is our home and we gonna' defend it.

LOUISE

This our home.

Louise takes Mad's hand. She holds tight. Mad holds tight back. She knows what Louise is trying to say even if Louise doesn't know quite how to say it.

MAD

So we just sit?

AUGUSTA

No.

A resounding RIP takes us to --

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Augusta takes wooden SHUTTERS off the side of the farm house.

INT. FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - SAME

Louise PULLS NAILS out of whatever she can.

INT. SHED - SAME

Mad GATHERS tools.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - LATER

The women furiously BOARD UP the windows.

Louise holds boards as Mad nails them.

Augusta looks wildly around the room and then moves towards the TABLE.

Augusta shoves everything off of it, sending the mess flying around the room.

She tries to upend the table, but she can't do it.

LOUISE

How many you think they is?

MAD

More than we can count.

BOOM!

A cannon erupts in the distance.

Louise and Mad get back to work. Augusta goes back to the table, takes a deep breath --

LOUISE

(frustrated)

What if we didn't stay here? What if we went?

AUGUSTA

Went?

LOUISE

Out there --

MAD

They're comin' -- and fast.

LOUISE

So?

MAD

The entire union army walkin' right for us and you just wanna walk right back?

LOUISE

They walkin' here either way. Don't see what a few bullets and boards is goin' to do to keep 'em out.

AUGUSTA

We can hold 'em.

LOUISE

Keepin' Room's just walls, Augusta, ain't nothin' more than that.

Augusta goes back to trying to lift the table.

MAD

Three dresses comin' 'gainst the Union army don't mean nothin'.

Augusta resumes the struggle. She puts her whole body into the lifting, as if blocking the door with the table will save their lives. She grunts. The table lifts a little and then falls back to the ground.

Augusta stands there. Mad and Louise watch her.

She rests her hands on the table, leaning forward.

AUGUSTA

(realizing)

What if it was men 'stead of dresses?

Augusta looks up, meeting Louise's gaze.

And then the SOUND of DIGGING --

EXT. GOAT FIELDS - LATER

EARTH flies everywhere.

Augusta stands in one of the graves. They've dug it up. Mad stands above, helping her lift the body out.

Louise stands by. She's SWEATING. SHAKING a little, even.

The two bodies of the white soldiers now lay on the ground in front of the dug up holes and piles of dirt.

Augusta looks at Mad.

AUGUSTA

You ready for Bill?

Mad looks at Augusta.

EXT. GOAT FIELDS - MOMENTS LATER

Augusta and Mad pull Bill's body out of the unearthed grave. They take a few heavy breaths.

Mad takes him in one last time.

MAD

It's funny how people look the same whether they dead or alive.

AUGUSTA

What do you mean?

MAD

He gone. But he don't look so bad...

AUGUSTA

He look dead.

MAD

But he look goooooood.

Augusta smiles a deranged, exhausted smile.

Mad runs her hand down his face.

AUGUSTA

(smiling)
Alright.

INT. FARMHOUSE / BEDROOM - DUSK

Mad, Louise and Augusta in the bedroom.

Augusta stands in front of the mirror in full UNION UNIFORM. Mad stands behind her, the same.

Louise is still getting into the borrowed clothes. She struggles. Her SYMPTOMS now really starting to show.

She slowly moves to join Mad and Augusta in front of the mirror. They look at themselves, all dressed up as men. As soldiers. The uniforms are too big, of course, but the women wear them well.

As they speak, they keep looking in the mirror.

LOUISE

Had a dream the other night Papa and Nathaniel were comin' back. It's funny it was Bill instead. Don't you think?

MAD

Don't know that funny's the right word.

LOUISE

What is the right word?

MAD

Don't think there is one.

LOUISE

We goin' to kill em or join em?

MAD

Guess we'll have to see what fits.

LOUISE

So we just go?

MAD

It was your idea.

LOUISE

I think we just go.

MAD

Alright.

LOUISE

Strange, isn't it? We don't know them and they don't know us but we want to kill each other.

The sounds of GUNS and CANNONS grow closer.

AUGUSTA

'Fore they left, I asked daddy why the war was happenin'. He said it was the season. Just like there's summer, spring, and winter and fall... there's war.

Louise wipes her brow. Augsuta and Mad exchange a look.

The three women look at themselves in the mirror. They aren't women anymore.

AUGSUTA

There's one more thing we got to do.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

The land grumbles in the distance, but here, for the moment, all is still.

TWO FIGURES emerge from the house and walk away towards the road: Mad and Louise.

Then, a THIRD FIGURE, moving quicker than the others away from the house.

Augusta.

As she walks, a SMALL FIRE starts and catches in one of the downstairs windows.

She catches up to the other women.

Louise looks at Augusta, their eyes locked for a moment. Augusta then looks at Mad.

And then all three look ahead, toward the ROAD.

Behind them, the FIRE GROWS, consuming the ground floor of the house.

Louise turns her head to look back. Augusta stops her.

AUGUSTA

Don't look back.

Louise repositions her eyes on the road ahead.

The sounds of WAR grow louder, nearly consuming them.

Nearly consuming us all.

They are feeling the exact same feeling in the exact same way: they are at once afraid and unafraid.

A few men appear, UNION SOLDIERS. Running across the road. The women walk on, unrecognized for what they are.

The FIRE continues to GROW behind them. Turning their world to ASH and RUBBLE.

And slowly, slowly, EVER SO SLOWLY, the camera RISES UP into the sky...

UP, UP, UP...

Into the air, above the women, above the road and the Keeping Room and the Farm and the Barn and all of the Out Buildings...

And settles into the sky.

Their FIRE becomes one of many FIRES.

And there is CRACKLING.

HOLLERING.

BARKING.

GUNSHOTS.

MEN ARE EVERYWHERE.

They creep up over the land like zombies.

THE END.