

1922

Written by

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Based on, "1922" by Stephen King
From his collection, "Full Dark, No Stars"

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1 EXT. OMAHA: HOWARD STREET (1930) - DAY 1

We follow behind a lean MAN in his 50's wearing a loose fitting brown suit and hat. He slowly wanders down the pavement of the bustling street with his hands wedged deep inside his pockets.

The Man stops across the street from the ritzy Magnolia Hotel. He stares up at it, keeping his back to us.

2 INT. MAGNOLIA HOTEL: LOBBY - DAY 2

We/the Man move towards the CONCIERGE (30 years old) standing behind the front desk. The Concierge smiles cordially at Us/the Man.

CONCIERGE
Good morning, sir. Need a room?

3 INT. MAGNOLIA HOTEL: HALLWAY - DAY 3

The Man makes his way towards a room at the end of the hall.

CUT TO:

The Man inserts his key, unlocks the door and pushes it open.

4 INT. MAGNOLIA HOTEL: ROOM - DAY 4

The Man enters the room, closing the door behind him. He inspects his plush, 2nd floor surroundings with suspicion as he removes his hat, giving us our first genuine look at him.

WILFRED JAMES (53 years old, former farmer, stump where his left hand once was) tosses his hat onto the bed and moves to the window.

Wilfred stares down into the street, troubled. He reaches into his pocket and removes something; a small, tattered piece of blood stained cloth. Wilfred runs his thumb over the dried blood, reflective.

CUT TO:

Wilfred places a .32 caliber pistol on a writing desk beside the piece of bloody cloth. He then drapes his jacket over the back of a chair and sits down at the desk.

Wilfred picks up a pen and starts writing on the hotel stationary, using his stump to hold the paper in place.

He dates the page: April 11, 1930, takes a measured breath, then continues.

WILFRED (V.O.)

To Whom It May Concern. My name is
Wilfred Leland James, and this is
my confession. In June of 1922 I
murdered my wife-

5 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH - DAY

5

ARLETTE (40 years old, pretty, fire in her eyes) stands on
the front porch of a tidy farm house in her best dress,
patiently staring right at us, as if waiting for her picture
to be taken.

WILFRED (V.O.)

Arlette Christina Winters James,
and hid her body by tugging it down
an old well. My son-

CUT TO:

HENRY (14 years old, takes more after his mother) sits on the
porch steps in a pair of overalls, also staring right at us,
patiently waiting with an ethereal quality about him.

WILFRED (V.O.)

Henry Freeman James, aided me in
this crime, although at 14 he was
not responsible. I cozened him into
it, playing upon his fears and
beating down his quite normal
objections.

6 INT. MAGNOLIA HOTEL: ROOM - DAY

6

As Wilfred writes away, the melancholy clinging to his face
is evident as the unwelcome sound of the bustling city
infiltrates the room.

WILFRED (V.O.)

This is a thing I regret even more
bitterly than the crime, for
reasons this document will show.

7 EXT. FARMLAND - DAY

7

A fertile piece of flat Nebraska land stretches on as far as
the eye can see.

WILFRED (V.O.)

The issue that led to my crime and
damnation was 100 acres of good
land in Hemingford Home, Nebraska,
willed to my wife by her father.

8 EXT. JAMES FARM: CORNFIELD - DAY

8

We drift over endless rows of healthy looking cornfield sitting under the hot midday sun.

WILFRED (V.O.)

I wished to add this land to our
freehold farm, which in 1922
totaled 80 acres.

CUT TO:

The sharp corn leaves rattle in the light breeze.

Wilfred (every bit the farmer, 8 years younger than when we met him in the hotel, left hand intact) walks down the row, inspecting the corn which is almost ready to harvest.

Wilfred stops and takes a moment to listen to the leaves; a man content with life, exactly where he belongs.

HENRY (O.S.)

(calling)

Poppa...

Wilfred turns and spots Henry standing at the end of the corn row.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(calling)

Mama's made lemonade...

9 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH - DAY

9

Wilfred stands on the porch, pours himself a glass of lemonade from a fresh pitcher and takes a sip.

Arlette sits in her rocker mending a pair of pants while Henry leans against the railing and thirstily takes a gulp from his glass.

Wilfred smacks his lips together and turns to Henry.

WILFRED

Not too sour...

HENRY

Not too sweet...

WILFRED

Just right.

Wilfred and Henry smile appreciatively at Arlette. She smiles back at the pair then stares out across the farm. Her smile quickly fades, unable to fully hide her discontent. Wilfred is more than aware.

WILFRED (V.O.)
 My wife, who never took to the
 farming life, wished to sell her
 land to the Farrington Company's
 hog butchery for cash money.

10 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: DINING ROOM - DUSK 10

Wilfred, Arlette and Henry eat supper at the table.

WILFRED
 So what do you propose we do with
 money and no land?

ARLETTE
 We could move to Omaha, or even St
 Louis.

Wilfred scoffs at the idea.

WILFRED
 Cities are for fools.

HENRY
 Mama, I agree with Poppa. I don't
 want to live in Omaha or any city.

Arlette glances at Henry then narrows her eyes on Wilfred.

ARLETTE
 Let's talk about this after supper.

Arlette takes a sip of wine. Wilfred shares a concerned
 glance with Henry.

11 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: LANDING/MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT 11

Wilfred slowly makes his way upstairs onto the landing,
 frustrated.

WILFRED (V.O.)
 I thought of going to law, feeling
 sure that, as the husband in the
 matter, any court would uphold my
 right to decide the use and purpose
 of the land.

Wilfred stops by the ajar master bedroom door and peers
 inside.

WILFRED (V.O.)
 Yet something held me back.

Wilfred watches Arlette angrily slip into her nightgown.

WILFRED (V.O.)
 T'was not fear of the neighbors'
 chatter, I had no care for country
 gossip. T'was something else...

Arlette sits down on the side of the bed and furiously
 brushes her hair, unaware Wilfred is watching her.

WILFRED (V.O.)
 I had come to hate her.

Wilfred keeps his eyes locked hard on Arlette.

WILFRED (V.O.)
 I had come to wish her dead, and
 that was what held me back.

CUT TO:

Wilfred lies in bed beside Arlette. He stares at the back of
 her head as she sleeps.

WILFRED (V.O.)
 I believe that there is another man
 inside of every man, a stranger, a
 Conniving Man.

12 EXT. JAMES FARM - DAWN 12

The sun starts to rise over the farm. A rooster crows.

13 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH - DAY 13

Wilfred stands before Arlette at the end of the porch as she
 sips a cup of coffee.

WILFRED
 If we cannot agree, you should go
 to your mother's in Lincoln. Sixty
 miles is a good distance for a
 separation. It's not quite a
 divorce, yet-

ARLETTE
 And leave you my father's land, I
 suppose? That will never happen,
 Wilf.

WILFRED
 Well, then let me buy the land from
 you.

Arlette scoffs.

ARLETTE
 And how do you plan on doing that?

WILFRED

It would have to be over a period of time. Eight years. Perhaps ten. I'll pay you every cent.

ARLETTE

A little money coming in is worse than none. The Farringtons will pay at once, and their idea of top dollar is apt to be far more generous than yours.

Arlette stares out across the farm.

ARLETTE (CONT'D)

Anyway, I've had an idea of my own.

WILFRED

I'm sure you have.

ARLETTE

We sell the 100 acres and the farm to the Farrington combine. They'd buy it all just to get my father's piece sitting that close to the railway line.

Arlette turns back to Wilfred.

ARLETTE (CONT'D)

Then, we split the money, divorce and start new lives apart from each other.

Wilfred considers Arlette's proposal.

ARLETTE (CONT'D)

We both know that's what you want.

WILFRED

And with which of us does Henry go?

ARLETTE

Me, of course. A boy of 14 needs to be with his mother.

WILFRED

It's not fair on him, Arlette... To take him away from everything he knows.

ARLETTE

Fair? Life rarely is, Wilf. Especially out here.

Arlette takes a sip from her coffee. Wilfred keeps his eyes on her, trying to mask his disdain.

WILFRED
Give me some time to think it all
over.

Arlette smirks and gives him a little nod, satisfied.

WILFRED (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The Conniving Man had already
decided her fate.

14 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: BASEMENT - DAY

14

The door opens and Wilfred makes his way down a set of narrow steps. Wilfred reaches the bottom and scans the dusty, cluttered basement.

WILFRED
Henry? You down here?

Wilfred hears a can hit the ground and approaches the sound. He makes his way around some of the clutter and spots Henry awkwardly standing beside SHANNON COTTERIE (14 years old, pretty) wearing a plain baggy dress. The pair look guilty as sin.

SHANNON
Mr James...

WILFRED
Shannon... Why don't you head home.
I need a word with Henry.

SHANNON
Yes, sir.
(to Henry)
See you tomorrow.

Henry remains silent. All he can do is nod. Shannon awkwardly collects her books and disappears up the stairs as fast as she can. Wilfred watches her go then turns to Henry.

HENRY
What do you want, Poppa?

15 EXT. JAMES FARM: BARN - DAY

15

The barn sits under the late afternoon sun.

16 INT. JAMES FARM: BARN - DAY

16

Half a dozen cows stand in their stalls. Wilfred sits with Henry up in the hay-mow.

WILFRED

I wouldn't be in your life anymore,
Henry. And neither would this farm.
You'll be in a much bigger school
and you'll have to leave all your
friends behind. Shannon, too.

Henry shakes his head, distraught.

HENRY

Please, Poppa. Don't let her take
me away.

WILFRED

Well, if we could hold onto all the
acreage, we could pay off our note
at the bank three years from now
and live happily debt-free.
Breathing sweet air instead of
watching pig-guts float down our
stream from sun up to sun down as
your mother would have us do.

Henry listens intently and shakes his head.

HENRY

Why does she have to be such a...

Henry catches himself.

WILFRED

Go on, Henry. The truth is never
cussing.

HENRY

Such a... bitch.

Wilfred pats Henry's back, supportive, but stays silent on
the matter.

17 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: BACK - DAY

17

Wilfred stands at the back of the house, alone, eating slices
of apple with the aid of a small sharp knife.

He stares transfixed at an old, grim looking well sitting in
the distance, surrounded by stakes. A wooden cap rests over
the top of it.

Wilfred keeps his plotting eyes locked on the well as he
slices off another piece of apple.

18 INT/EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM/FRONT - DAY

18

Wilfred shaves with a cut throat razor in the mirror.

ARLETTE (O.S.)
 (calling)
 Henry...

Wilfred turns his attention to the window and looks down below with intrigue. He spots Henry, ready for school, trudge back towards the house. Arlette comes into Wilfred's view as she steps down off the front porch steps.

ARLETTE (CONT'D)
 Give your mama a kiss...

Henry reluctantly kisses Arlette on the cheek then turns and coldly heads off for school without saying a word.

ARLETTE (CONT'D)
 (calling)
 What has gotten into you?

Arlette shakes her head then disappears back inside the house. Wilfred resumes shaving in the mirror, clearly conflicted by the divide he has created between the two.

19 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: BACK - DAY

19

Arlette hangs laundry on a clothes line. She has her back to Wilfred as he walks towards her. Arlette suddenly turns, setting her startled eyes on him.

ARLETTE
 (shaken)
 Goddammit, Wilf... You scared the
 life out of me.

Wilfred stares at her. Silent. Resolute.

ARLETTE (CONT'D)
 What..?

WILFRED
 I've decided you won't be selling
 those 100 acres.

Arlette frowns.

ARLETTE
 Oh..? You have?

WILFRED
 Not without a fight.

Having said his piece, Wilfred simply turns and walks away. Arlette watches him go and scoffs in disbelief. Then, anger starts to take hold of her.

ARLETTE
 (calling)
 The Farrington's will bring the
 fight to you, Wilf. Right to you,
 and I'll happily-

Arlette catches herself and holds her tongue. Wilfred does not break stride and continues walking away.

20 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH/FRONT - DAY 20

Wilfred sits in his rocker, loading tobacco into a pipe. He watches a Delivery Truck pull up outside the house, LARS OLSEN (40 years old) sits behind the wheel.

Arlette climbs out of the passenger side and walks towards Wilfred. She makes her way up the porch steps with a smug grin on her face. Wilfred plays coy.

WILFRED
 Long drive?

Arlette shoots Wilfred a knowing look and disappears inside the house. Wilfred strikes a match and lights his pipe.

21 EXT. JAMES FARM: CORNFIELD - DAY 21

Wilfred and Henry walk down a row of the cornfield.

WILFRED
 She's going to win, Son.

HENRY
 But Poppa, that's not fair.

WILFRED
 Sometimes the only thing to do is
 to take the thing that you must
 have. Even if someone gets hurt.

Wilfred stops and stares hard at Henry.

WILFRED (CONT'D)
 Even if someone dies.

Henry is horrified.

HENRY
 Poppa!

Wilfred checks down the corn row, then turns back to Henry.

WILFRED
 If she was gone, everything would
 be the way it was. All the
 arguments would cease.
 (MORE)

WILFRED (CONT'D)

We could live here peacefully. I've offered her everything I can to make her go, and she won't. There's only one thing I can do. That we can do.

This is all too much for Henry to comprehend.

HENRY

But I love her!

Wilfred considers Henry and takes a measured breath.

WILFRED

I love her, too.

Wilfred places his hand on Henry's shoulder.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

It needn't be painful. And when it's over, we'll... Come with me.

Wilfred gives Henry an encouraging nod.

22 EXT. JAMES FARM: WELL - DAY

22

Wilfred and Henry stand before the old well.

HENRY

No, Poppa. Not that... No matter what.

Tears stream down Henry's cheeks and he runs off towards the house. Wilfred watches him go before setting his eyes back on the well.

23 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: DINING ROOM - NIGHT

23

Wilfred, Arlette and Henry are seated at the table eating supper. Henry has not touched his plate and keeps his head low. Wilfred does nothing about it. Arlette is furious.

ARLETTE

Eat or starve, Henry. The choice is yours.

Arlette sets her eyes on Wilfred in disgust.

ARLETTE (CONT'D)

And you... You just sit there.

HENRY

(timid)
Leave off...

Arlette snaps her head back to Henry.

ARLETTE
What did you say?

Henry looks up at Arlette, his face full of sadness.

HENRY
(pleading)
Leave off so we can be a family
again.

Arlette slaps Henry across the face. A shocked Henry holds his cheek as tears well in his eyes. Wilfred still does nothing. Arlette stands, she's had enough of this.

ARLETTE
The lawyer assures me the land is
mine to do with as I wish, and I'm
going to sell.
(to Wilfred)
You can sit here and smell roasting
hogs and cook your own meals and
make your own bed.
(to Henry)
As for you, my son. You're coming
with me to Omaha.

Wilfred remains perfectly calm as Henry stares at his mother with despair.

ARLETTE (CONT'D)
I'm going to open a dress shop.
That's my idea of fair.

Arlette storms off to the bedroom and slams the door shut.

Henry turns to Wilfred. The side of his face is red and there is a speck of blood in the corner of his mouth.

Wilfred watches as his sons despair quickly turns to rage.

24 EXT. JAMES FARM - DAY 24

Clouds slowly sail above the farm.

25 EXT. JAMES FARM: CORNFIELD - DAY 25

Wilfred stands in one of the rows, inspecting the corn. He turns and spots Henry approaching him with a troubled, anguished look on his face. Henry stops close to Wilfred.

HENRY
We can't. She's in Error. Those who
die in Error go to Hell.

Wilfred pauses for a moment, quickly thinking through the best plan of attack.

WILFRED

No, Son. Quite the opposite. We wouldn't be sending her to Hell, we'd be sending her to Heaven.

Henry frowns, confused.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

A murdered man or woman dies not in God's time but in Man's. If he... or she... is cut short before atoning for sin, all errors must be forgiven. When you think of it that way, every murder is a Gate of Heaven.

HENRY

But what about us, Poppa? Wouldn't we go to Hell?

WILFRED

How can you say so, when you see Heaven all around us? Yet she means to drive us away from it.

Henry gazes up at Wilfred.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

And think. If she goes to Omaha, she'll dig herself an even deeper pit in Sheol. If she takes you, you'll become a city boy-

HENRY

I never will!

WILFRED

You're young and you will. You'll forget all this... You'll learn city ways... and begin digging your own pit.

Darkness swells in Henry's eyes. He looks down the corn row then up at Wilfred.

HENRY

How..? When?

Wilfred considers Henry.

The fading sunlight lingers over the farm as an orchestra of crickets fill the air.

27

EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH - DUSK

27

Wilfred steps out onto the porch with a bottle of red wine and sets his eyes on Arlette, sitting on her rocker, watching the sunset with an empty glass in her hand.

Arlette turns and realizes Wilfred is watching her. Wilfred smiles tenderly and steps towards her. Arlette shoots him a curious look before turning her attention back to the sunset.

Wilfred tries to refill Arlette's glass but she covers it with her hand.

ARLETTE

You needn't get me drunk to get what you want... I got an itch, too, Wilf.

Arlette rubs Wilfred's crotch with her foot.

WILFRED

Have another glass anyway. We've got something to celebrate.

Arlette lowers her foot, wary.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

If the Farringtons can afford to pay us for my 80 as well as your father's 100, our argument is over. No need for a suit, nor a divorce.

Arlette is taken aback.

ARLETTE

Don't fool with me, Wilf...

WILFRED

I'm not. Henry and I have had many conversations about this.

Arlette slowly removes her hand from her glass.

ARLETTE

You've been thick as thieves. Always in the hay-mow or sitting on the woodpile or with your heads together in the back field. I thought it was about Shannon Cotterie.

Wilfred refills her glass.

WILFRED

No. We've been talking about Omaha. He wants to go, I guess. At least try it on for size. And Omaha's not that far from Hemingford...

ARLETTE

No. It isn't.

WILFRED

Will they buy the whole piece, do you think? All 180 acres?

ARLETTE

How would I know?

Arlette takes a sip from her glass.

WILFRED

You do, I have no doubt...

Arlette gives Wilfred a shrewd sidelong look then laughs harshly.

ARLETTE

P'raps I do.

WILFRED

I suppose we could hunt for a house on the outskirts of town.

ARLETTE

Where you'd sit on your ass in a porch-rocker all day, letting your wife do the work for a change?

Wilfred tops up his own glass then takes a seat beside Arlette in his matching rocker.

WILFRED

I thought I might look for work as a mechanic. Cars and trucks, but mostly farm machinery. If I can keep the old Farmall running then I guess I can keep anything running.

ARLETTE

And Henry talked you into this?

WILFRED

He convinced me it would be better to take a chance at being happy in town than to stay here on my own in what would be sure misery.

ARLETTE

The boy shows sense and the man listens. At long last. Hallelujah.

Arlette raises her glass.

Wilfred grabs another bottle of wine from the kitchen as Arlette can be heard drunkenly singing on the porch. Wilfred makes his way into the dining room and spots Henry standing by the stove, watching him, white as a ghost. The pair keep their voices down.

HENRY

Poppa, I don't think I can. It's
Mama...

Wilfred approaches Henry with the fresh bottle.

WILFRED

In any case, she's happy for the
first time in months. Getting her
own way is the only thing that ever
makes her happy.

Henry frowns and listens closely to his mother's singing.

ARLETTE (O.S.)

(slurring)

She was willin' to help him stick
it in... For it was Dirty McGee
again...

WILFRED

She wants you to join us for a
glass of wine.

HENRY

Poppa, you know I promised the Lord
I would never drink.

WILFRED

You'll have to take that up with
her. She wants to have a
celebration.

HENRY

A celebration?

WILFRED

It looks like we're selling up and
moving to Omaha.

HENRY

No.

WILFRED

Well... we'll see. It's really up
to you, Son.

Wilfred heads back outside. Henry watches him go, uneasy.

29

EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH - NIGHT

29

Arlette holds Henry tight around the waist and smothers him with motherly kisses. Her speech is slurred.

ARLETTE

Henry, Henry, Henry...

Henry pulls away from Arlette, annoyed.

ARLETTE (CONT'D)

Finally we're all together. My men see sense.

Arlette raises her glass in a toast and spills some wine onto her bosom. Arlette laughs and winks at Wilfred.

ARLETTE (CONT'D)

If you're good, Wilf, you can suck it out of the cloth later on.

Henry frowns disapprovingly at Arlette as she slumps back down in her rocker. Arlette notices the look on Henry's face.

ARLETTE (CONT'D)

No need to be so prissy. I've seen you with Shannon Cotterie. Pretty face and a nice little figger.

Arlette finishes her glass.

ARLETTE (CONT'D)

If you're not getting a touch of that, you're a fool. Only you'd better be careful. Fourteens not too young to marry out here in the middle.

Arlette holds out her glass to Wilfred who happily refills it. Henry looks up at Wilfred, disapproving.

HENRY

Poppa, she's had enough.

ARLETTE

(mocking)

Poppa, she's had enough.

Arlette raises her glass for yet another toast.

ARLETTE (CONT'D)

Here's to Shannon Cotterie and her future bubbies, and if my son don't know the color of her nipples, he's a slowpoke.

Arlette turns to Henry and grabs his arm, spilling wine on his wrist in the process.

ARLETTE (CONT'D)

Just make sure that when you're
lying down with her in the corn or
behind the barn, you're a no poke.
Explore all you like and rub it
with your Johnny Mac until he feels
good and spits up, but stay out of
the home place lest you find
yourself locked in for life, just
like your mummer an daddy.

Henry wrenches his arm free from his mother and stares at her, half plotting, half in disgust. He suddenly storms back inside the house. Wilfred watches him go.

WILFRED

He's sweet on the Cotterie girl.
You've hurt his feelings.

ARLETTE

Feelings... Last resort of
weaklings.

Wilfred sets his eyes on Arlette, her fate now all but sealed.

30 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: STAIRWELL - NIGHT 30

Wilfred carries a semi-conscious Arlette up the stairs.

ARLETTE

Lea' me 'lone... Want to go to
slee...

WILFRED

And you will... Nearly there...

Henry quietly appears at the bottom of the stairs and watches them go.

31 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT 31

Wilfred maneuvers a snoring Arlette onto the bed then takes off her shoes as a kerosene lamp flickers on the bedside table.

Wilfred keeps his eyes on Arlette for a moment, watching her sleep before exiting the room and closing the door.

32 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: SITTING ROOM - NIGHT 32

Wilfred enters the room and spots Henry anxiously standing in the corner.

HENRY

She can't say those things about Shannon.

WILFRED

But she will. It's how she is, how the lord made her. And she'll split you and Shannon up. If we let her.

HENRY

Couldn't you get your own lawyer?

WILFRED

Do you think the kind I can afford could stand up to the lawyers Farrington would throw at us? They want that 100 acres and she means for them to have it. This is the only way, but you have to help me.

Henry lowers his head and quietly weeps.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

Will you?

HENRY

I just wish there was another way.

Wilfred considers Henry.

WILFRED

Me too, son. Me too.

Wilfred places his hand on Henry's shoulder.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

This is our place. This is where we belong. Are you willing to fight for it?

Henry looks up at Wilfred and wipes his teary eyes.

33

INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: KITCHEN - NIGHT

33

Wilfred picks a butchers knife up off the counter and inspects it, trying to hold his nerve. Henry enters the kitchen holding a burlap sack in his hands and notices the knife.

HENRY

Does it have to be that? Can't you... with a pillow?

WILFRED

It would be too slow and too painful. She'd struggle.

Henry takes a troubled breath, accepting.

34 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT 34

The bedroom door creaks open. Wilfred and Henry's shadows loom ominously over the bed and spill onto the wall. They move closer to Arlette who continues snoring away.

HENRY
We'll send her to heaven.

WILFRED
It will be quick.

Wilfred turns to Henry and gives him a nod. Henry takes one last look at Arlette.

HENRY
Goodbye, Mama.

Henry pulls the sack over Arlette's head. She snorts and tries to twist away. Henry pushes down on the bag as tight as he can.

Wilfred puts one knee up on the bed, one hand on Arlette's shoulder and focuses his eyes on her throat.

He takes a sharp breath, exhales, and winds the knife back.

35 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH - NIGHT 35

Arlette's wine glass and three empty bottles sit beside her rocker on the porch.

HENRY (O.S.)
I wish it was a dream. Do you think
it might be a dream, Poppa?

WILFRED (O.S.)
We'll think it is... when it's all
behind us.

Wilfred and Henry carry Arlette's quilt wrapped body out of the house and down the porch steps. Her blood seeps through the quilt while an equally bloody pillow case covers her head.

WILFRED (V.O.)
I remember thinking, this night
will never end. In all the
important ways, it never has.

The pair carry Arlette around the corner of the house and the old well comes into view. Henry glances over at the final destination that awaits his mother, distraught.

HENRY

That's no grave for a mum- muh...

Henry lets go of Arlette's feet and faints in the weedy scrub. Wilfred comes to a screeching halt as he holds Arlette in his arms.

Wilfred notices Arlette's slashed right hand flop out of the quilt then decides to keep on going, dragging her to the side of the well, leaving Henry behind.

CUT TO:

Wilfred removes the wooden cap and stares into the darkness below, gagging at the horrible stench there to greet him. He turns to Henry, still out cold.

Wilfred then crouches beside Arlette's body and tries to compose himself. He sets his eyes on her dead hand still poking out of the quilt. He tucks it back in and pats the quilt down in a strangely comforting manner.

CUT TO:

Wilfred drops Arlette down the well with little fan fare. SKOONCH! She reaches the bottom with a squelchy thud.

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

(singing)

Mama down the well...

Wilfred gasps and turns to Henry, now kneeling in the scrub and staring at the well with shellshocked eyes.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(singing)

Mama down the well and I don't
care... Mama down the well and I
don't care, for my master's gone aw-
aay!

Wilfred storms towards Henry and slaps him across the face, leaving bloody finger marks on his cheek.

WILFRED

Shut up! Your voice will carry!
Your -

A distant dog starts to bark. Wilfred grabs Henry by the shoulders.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

There, you've raised that God damned Cotterie dog. Go in the house. The worst is over.

HENRY

Is it, Poppa. Is it?

WILFRED

Yes.

HENRY

I'm sorry... I don't know why I... I was confused. Because I'm relieved, I guess...

WILFRED

Your mother ran away... Up and left us cold. Didn't she, son?

Henry glances over at the well and nods.

HENRY

And I can still be... friends with Shannon.

WILFRED

Of course you can. But if you should ever feel the urge to confess to her-

A look of horror washes over Henry's face.

HENRY

Not ever!

WILFRED

That's what you think now. But if the urge should come on you someday, remember, she'd run from you.

Henry slowly nods, troubled by the very thought.

HENRY

No one can ever know what we did.

WILFRED

No one ever will.

Henry finds comfort in his father's words.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

Now go in the house and get both wash buckets out of the pantry. Fill them from the kitchen pump and suds 'em up with that stuff she keeps under the sink.

HENRY

Yes, sir.

Henry turns and runs back towards the house. Wilfred watches him go.

WILFRED (V.O.)

I discovered something that night
that most people never have to
learn.

CUT TO:

Wilfred stares back down into the well. Nothing but darkness.

WILFRED (V.O.)

Murder is sin. Murder is damnation.

Wilfred returns the wooden cap, covering the well.

WILFRED (V.O.)

But murder is also work.

37 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT 37

Wilfred and Henry methodically scrub the blood out of the wooden floorboards.

38 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: HALL - NIGHT 38

Wilfred and Henry give the same treatment to the floorboards in the hall.

39 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: SITTING ROOM - NIGHT 39

Soapy bristles on a brush move back and forward along the floor boards. Wilfred looks over at Henry as he scrubs, the pair are silent.

40 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH - NIGHT 40

A scrubbing brush is dipped into a soapy bucket. Wilfred and Henry scrub the porch, exhausted.

Wilfred pauses, examining the area he has finished scrubbing.

WILFRED (V.O.)

Each time we thought we were
done...

Wilfred notices another tiny blood splotch. He dips his brush into the soapy water and gets to work on it.

41 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: SITTING ROOM - DAWN 41

Wilfred is on his knees, examining the floorboards in the sitting room. Satisfied, he stands and stretches out his back.

42 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - DAWN 42

Wilfred enters the room and spots Henry combing over the floorboards for blood. The first hint of sunrise is visible through the window.

Henry looks up at Wilfred and nods, exhausted. The sudden sound of their rooster crowing startles Henry. He stares out the window, unnerved, then settles.

HENRY

I can't go to school today, Poppa.
I think people might see it on my
face. Shannon especially.

WILFRED

You can stay home until Monday,
then tell the teacher you had the
grippe and didn't want to spread it
to the rest of the class.

Henry slowly rises to his feet.

HENRY

It's not the grippe, but I am sick.

Wilfred considers Henry who picks up his heavy wash bucket with both hands and carries it out of the room. Wilfred turns his attention to the window and watches the sun rise.

43 EXT. JAMES FARM: WELL - DAWN 43

The sun has almost cleared the horizon.

Wilfred carries bloody linen, Henry the blood soaked mattress.

HENRY

I can't look in there, Poppa.

WILFRED

You don't have to.

The pair stop beside the well.

CUT TO:

Darkness.

The wooden cap removes from inside the well and Wilfred looks down below.

Arlette has landed sitting upright with her legs crushed beneath her. The pillow case is split open and now lies in her lap. The burlap sack holds her hair back, revealing the gristle of her slashed wind pipe and a clown's grin of a cut stretching all the way to her ears, showing her teeth.

Wilfred is frozen in horror at the sight.

HENRY (O.S.)

Poppa?

Wilfred snaps his troubled eyes onto Henry who has his back turned to the well.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Is she still covered up, Poppa?

Wilfred slowly nods, his mind racing.

WILFRED

Yes.

Wilfred tosses down the bundle of linen. It lands in Arlette's lap, her face still remains uncovered. Wilfred tosses the mattress down next, it lands upright and leans over her.

Wilfred takes a breath, that will do for now.

WILFRED (V.O.)

In those days, all sorts of things happened on farms out in what we called the middle.

44 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: HENRY'S BEDROOM - DAY 44

Henry is out cold in his bed.

WILFRED (V.O.)

Things that went unremarked, yet alone reported.

45 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - DAY 45

Wilfred places an old mattress onto the bed frame.

WILFRED (V.O.)

In those days, a man's wife was considered a man's business, and if she disappeared, there was an end to it.

CUT TO:

Wilfred opens the closet and studies Arlette's hanging clothes.

WILFRED (V.O.)
Taking them all would have been a mistake.

Arlette, not Wilfred, removes a handful of skirts, dresses, sweaters and blouses.

WILFRED (V.O.)
She had left on foot and taken only what she could carry.

CUT TO:

The clothes sit packed inside a suitcase on the bed. Arlette continues adding to it; a few pieces of good jewelry, a gold-framed picture of her Mother and Father, a bottle of perfume and a hair brush.

WILFRED (V.O.)
Why hadn't she taken the T?

Arlette closes the suitcase shut.

46 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH/FRONT - DAWN 46

Arlette carefully steps out of the house with the suitcase and makes her way down the porch steps. She stops and takes one last look at the house.

WILFRED (V.O.)
Because I would have heard it start and stopped her going.

Arlette, swiftly and defiantly, walks past the parked Model T and heads for the road, ready to start her new life.

47 EXT. JAMES FARM: WELL - DAY 47

Wilfred carries the packed suitcase towards the well.

CUT TO:

Wilfred removes the wooden cap and suddenly freezes with dread clinging to his face. The mattress has somehow been shunted aside and further sending chills down his spine, Arlette appears to be breathing.

Her dress rises and falls, rises and falls as Wilfred watches on. Then, her jaw begins to move.

Wilfred is frozen stiff, clinging to the edge of the well for support. This cannot be happening.

A tail starts to slither out of Arlette's wide, disfigured mouth and a large rat soon backs out of it completely, digging its back feet into her chin for purchase.

The slightest hint of relief hits Wilfred, but he cannot shake the sad, gruesome image of what his wife has become.

The rat plops down onto Arlette's lap. Her dress starts to dance. A flood of rats pour out from under it.

Wilfred throws Arlette's suitcase down into the well in disgust. The rats scurry away into the round black mouth of a water pipe.

Wilfred stares long and hard at Arlette's almost unrecognizable face with utter despair. Her dead eyes seem to stare directly up at him.

WILFRED
(breathless)
Arlette.. I'm... I'm so sorry.

Wilfred returns the wooden cap, blocking out the horrific sight. He tries to make his way to the house but drops into the scrub.

He keeps his head lowered, distraught, as tears stream down his cheeks. He slowly tilts his head up and stares at the house with undeniable regret looming ever so largely over him.

48 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: FRONT - DAY

48

Wilfred repairs a piece of fence as the hot afternoon sun beats down upon him.

WILFRED (V.O.)
Two days later we had our first
visit from the world that Arlette
had so badly wanted to be a part
of.

Wilfred looks up and spots a large dust cloud over the top of the corn, heading towards the farm.

CUT TO:

ANDREW LESTER (40 years old, sharp suit) climbs out of the passenger side of a parked delivery truck, the same one Arlette took to meet the Farrington's, and lifts a pair of goggles, revealing white circles around his eyes.

MR LESTER
Wilfred James?

Wilfred approaches him.

MR LESTER (CONT'D)
Andrew Lester. Attorney at law.

Mr Lester extends his hand. Wilfred considers it.

WILFRED
Before I shake that, you'd better
tell me whose lawyer you are Mr
Lester.

MR LESTER
I'm currently being retained by the
Farrington Livestock Company of
Chicago, Omaha and Des Moines.

WILFRED
In that case, why don't you just go
on and put that hand away? No
offense.

Mr Lester lowers his hand, accepting, and gives Wilfred a
pleasant, professional smile.

Wilfred moves past him and approaches the driver, Lars Olsen,
fiddling around with the engine of his delivery truck.

WILFRED (CONT'D)
How are you, Lars?

Wilfred and Lars shake hands.

LARS
Tolerable fair. But dry. I could
use a drink.

Wilfred nods towards the east side of the house.

WILFRED
You know where it is.

Lars nods, appreciative.

LARS
Sweet and cold as ever, I guess?

Lars heads for the shady side of the house where an outside
pump stands in a little shelter.

MR LESTER
I could use a drink myself, Mr
James.

WILFRED
Me too. Nailing fence is hot work.
Not as hot as riding twenty miles
in Lars's truck though, I'll bet.

Mr Lester rubs his butt and starts to scan the farm.

MR LESTER

My sit-upon may never be the same.

Lars thirstily gulps water from a dipper then offers some to an unimpressed Mr Lester.

MR LESTER (CONT'D)

Perhaps we could drink it inside, Mr James. It would be a little cooler.

WILFRED

It would. But I'd no more invite you inside than I'd shake your hand.

Lars hands Mr Lester the dipper and heads back over to his truck. Mr Lester takes a small, measured sip of water.

Henry suddenly steps out of the house and glances at Mr Lester before heading over to Lars.

HENRY

Hello, Mr Olsen.

LARS

Henry.

Henry watches Lars tinker with his engine while Wilfred sits down on a wood pile and looks up at Mr Lester.

WILFRED

I imagine you're out here on business. My wife's.

MR LESTER

I am.

WILFRED

Why did she send you? If it was some legal paperwork, I reckon a sheriff's deputy would have come out and served it on me.

MR LESTER

Your wife didn't send me, Mr James. In point of fact, I came here to look for her.

Wilfred does his best to look confused.

WILFRED

That proves it then.

MR LESTER

Proves what?

WILFRED
She really has gone.

Mr Lester frowns.

MR LESTER
Are you telling me your wife has...
Absconded?

WILFRED
Decamped. Did a midnight flit.
Whatever you want to call it.

Wilfred shakes his head, contemplative.

WILFRED (CONT'D)
I thought she would have gone to
her hog-fancying friends at the
Farrington Company, and the next I
heard from her would have been a
notice that she was selling her
father's acreage.

MR LESTER
As she means to do.

WILFRED
Has she signed it over yet? Because
I guess I'd have to go to law, if
she has.

MR LESTER
As a matter of fact she hasn't. But
when she does, I would advise you
against the expense of a legal
action you would surely lose.

Wilfred stands.

WILFRED
Well, since she's not here, it's
what the legal profession calls "a
moot question", wouldn't you say?

Mr Lester considers Wilfred.

WILFRED (CONT'D)
I'd look in Omaha if I were you. Or
Saint Louis. She was always talking
about Sain'-Loo. It sounds to me as
if she got as tired of you fellows
as she did of me and the son she
gave birth to.

MR LESTER
You'll pardon me for saying, but
this all seems very strange to me,
Mr James.

Mr Lester removes a silk handkerchief from a pocket inside his suit and wipes his sweaty face.

MR LESTER (CONT'D)

Very strange indeed, considering the amount of money my client is willing to pay for that piece of property, which is contiguous with Hemingford Stream and close to the Great Western rail line.

WILFRED

Let's just say that trying to nail her down to something is like trying to nail jelly to the floor.

Mr Lester turns his attention to the house.

MR LESTER

Could I look in the house?

Wilfred can't help but scoff at the request.

WILFRED

Could you drop your pants so I could look at your goolie-bits?

Mr Lester frowns.

MR LESTER

Excuse me?

Mr Lester keeps his suspicious eyes fixed on Wilfred.

WILFRED

(calling)

Henry. Come over here a minute.

Henry keeps his head down and drags his feet as he approaches the pair.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

Tell this man where's your Mama.

Henry stops before them and shrugs.

HENRY

I don't know. When you called me to breakfast Friday morning, she was gone. Packed and gone.

MR LESTER

Son, is that the truth?

HENRY

Yes, sir.

MR LESTER

The whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Henry turns to Wilfred.

HENRY

Poppa, can I go back in the house?
I've got schoolwork to make up from being sick.

WILFRED

Go on, then. But don't be slow.
Remember it's your turn to milk.

HENRY

Yes, sir.

Mr Lester watches Henry trudge up the porch steps and disappear back inside the house.

MR LESTER

There's more here than meets the eye. This isn't finished.

Wilfred snatches the dipper back from Mr Lester.

WILFRED

It is.

Mr Lester heads towards the delivery truck in a huff before stopping and turning back to Wilfred.

MR LESTER

If you think those 100 acres are yours just because you've scared your wife away... Sent her packing to her aunt in Des Moines or a sister in Minnesota-

WILFRED

Check Omaha. Or Sain-Loo. She had no use for her relations, but she was crazy about the idea of living in Sain'-Loo. God knows why.

MR LESTER

If you think you'll plant and harvest out there, you'd better think again. That land's not yours. If you so much as drop a seed there, you will be seeing me in court.

WILFRED

I'm sure you'll hear from her as soon as she gets a bad case of broke-itis.

Mr Lester gives his flustered, sweaty face another wipe while Wilfred waits for him to leave.

WILFRED (CONT'D)
Have yourself a fine day, Mr
Lester. Mind the sun going back.

Mr Lester turns and continues on towards the truck.

WILFRED (CONT'D)
It gets pretty fierce in the late
afternoon and it'll be right in
your face.

Mr Lester climbs back inside the truck. Lars cranks the engine then waves goodbye to Wilfred. Henry steps back out onto the porch.

HENRY
Did I do it right, Poppa?

Wilfred turns and approaches Henry as the delivery truck takes off.

WILFRED
Perfect.

HENRY
Are we going to get caught? Are we
going to jail? When are we going to
fill in the well..?

WILFRED
Not yet.

HENRY
Poppa, why?

WILFRED
Just a matter of time before he
sends Sheriff Jones here. He's old
but not stupid. A filled in well
might make him suspicious about why
it got filled in, so recent and
all. But one that's still being
filled in. And for good reason...

HENRY
What reason? Tell me!

WILFRED
Soon, Henry. Soon.

Wilfred turns his attention back to the delivery truck as it pulls out onto the road, kicking up dust as it goes.

49 INT/EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: SITTING ROOM/PORCH - DAY 49

Wilfred sits in a chair, reading a copy of "Main Street" by Sinclair Lewis. He looks up from his book, something catches his eye in the far corner of the room; a mannequin bust draped in one of Arlette's unfinished dress designs.

Wilfred keeps his eyes locked on the mannequin, unnerved by it when suddenly there is a knock at the front door. Wilfred jumps, startled. He composes himself then gets up and opens the door. Shannon greets him with a polite smile.

SHANNON

Hello, Mr James.

WILFRED

Hello, Shannon.

SHANNON

Can I speak with Henry? I was wondering if he'd like to join us for dinner?

Wilfred turns and spots Henry already standing in the corner entrance to the room.

WILFRED

You have company.

Shannon peers into the house and smiles at Henry.

50 EXT. JAMES FARM: CORNFIELD - NIGHT 50

A half moon sits above the cornfield.

51 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: BASEMENT - NIGHT 51

The door to the basement opens and Wilfred carries Arlette's mannequin down the stairs. He places it amongst some clutter then turns for the stairs.

He suddenly stops though and turns back to the mannequin 'staring' back at him. He picks up a dirty sheet and covers it.

52 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH/FRONT - NIGHT 52

Wilfred sits in his rocker, smoking a pipe with half a glass of beer next to him. Henry trudges back towards the house and sits down beside his father in Arlette's rocker.

WILFRED

You told it the way we decided?

Henry nods.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

And she promised not to tell her folks?

HENRY

Yes.

WILFRED

But will she?

Henry shrugs.

HENRY

She loves them and they love her. They'll see something in her face, I reckon, and get it out of her. And even if they don't, she'll probably tell the Sheriff. If he bothers to talk to the Cotteries at all, that is.

WILFRED

Lester will see that he does.

Henry sets his eyes on Wilfred's beer.

HENRY

Can I have some beer?

Wilfred frowns, unsure, before passing his glass to Henry.

WILFRED

You can finish that off. None of this tomorrow or the day after, mind.

Henry sips at the beer, grimaces it down, then sips again.

HENRY

I hated lying to Shan, Poppa. Everything about this is dirty.

WILFRED

Dirt washes off.

HENRY

Not this kind.

Henry takes another sip, this time with more ease.

The barn doors open. Wilfred and Henry enter, examining the cows standing in their stalls.

WILFRED (V.O.)
I had named all our cows after
minor Greek goddesses.

CUT TO:

The pair approach the oldest of the cows, Elphis.

WILFRED (V.O.)
In the summer of 1922 there was no
more hope for our Elphis, the
goddess of hope.

Henry gently strokes Elphis' face, mournful.

WILFRED
She's gettin' on, Henry. Can't
remember the last time she gave us
any milk...

Henry keeps stroking Elphis' and begrudgingly nods.

54

EXT. JAMES FARM: WELL - DAY

54

Wilfred and Henry lead a stubborn Elphis to the well with the
aid of halter strings.

CUT TO:

Wilfred and Henry manage to guide Elphis up onto the well cap
but the wood holds. The pair stare at Elphis, dumfounded.

HENRY
What now?

Wilfred is out of ideas when - SNAP!

The cap breaks in half and Elphis plummets down into the
well. Her nose rig rips free and flies up into the air.

CRUNCH! Elphis hits the bottom and releases a long, echoing
groan. Henry is terrified by the sound and quickly grows
hysterical.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Poppa! Make her stop!

THOOMP! THOOMP! THOOMP! Elphis' hoofs beat against the stone.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Make her stop!

Wilfred grabs Henry by the arm and runs him towards the
house.

55 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: SITTING ROOM - DAY

55

Wilfred pushes Henry down on the sofa.

WILFRED

Stay here until I come back. This
is almost over.

HENRY

It'll never be over.

Henry turns face down into the sofa and covers his ears.

56 EXT. JAMES FARM: WELL - DAY

56

Wilfred returns to the well with his .22 in hand. He stops and looks down at the horror, trying to catch his breath, haunted by what he sees. Elphis, Arlette and rats. Lots of rats. Everywhere. Feasting on the fresh delivery of meat.

Elphis wildly kicks out in agony and one of her hoofs connects with what remains of Arlette's face. CRUNCH! Arlette's jaw breaks off.

Wilfred gags at the sickening sight. He has seen enough and aims his riffle at Elphis' head. He steadies as best he can and pulls the trigger.

BOOM! One shot is enough to put Elphis out of her misery.

Wilfred turns away from the well and slumps down in the scrub, overcome, trying his best to pull himself together.

57 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: SITTING ROOM - DAY

57

Henry sits with his head lowered, holding himself as he rocks back and forward on the sofa.

Wilfred enters, shaken, and leans his .22 in the doorway. Henry looks up at Wilfred who gives him a gentle nod.

WILFRED

I want you to get the truck and
drive it out to the dirt pile at
west fence.

Henry frowns and stops rocking.

HENRY

By myself?

WILFRED

You know all the forward gears, and
you can reverse, can't you?

HENRY

Yes, sir.

WILFRED

Then you'll be fine. When you come back, the worst will be over.

Henry nods, wanting desperately to believe his father.

58 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: WELL - DAY

58

Wilfred shovels dirt into the well. He looks up and spots Henry approach in the truck with a load of rocks and soil in the back tray.

Henry parks right beside the well and kills the engine. He climbs out of the truck, shirtless, filthy, then suddenly spies something in the distance.

HENRY

Look yonder...

Wilfred turns and notices an approaching car kicking up dust on the road before looking down into the well. The edge of the bloodstained mattress pokes out of the dirt.

WILFRED

Help me. Quick. We just have to cover the mattress...

The pair madly shovel dirt and rocks out of the back of the truck as fast as they can.

59 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH/FRONT - DAY

59

Wilfred and Henry sit on the porch steps. Shirtless. Sweaty. Filthy. Drinking lemonade as the County Sheriff's car approaches the house. Henry turns to Wilfred, preoccupied.

HENRY

Poppa, if he finds out, we can't do anything else. I can lie, but there can't be any more killing.

Wilfred nods, a tad unsettled by his son's statement.

The car pulls up outside the house. SHERIFF JONES (50 years old) steps out of the vehicle, hitching his belt and straightening his hat.

JONES

Good day, gents. Hard chorin' this afternoon is it?

Wilfred spits on the ground.

WILFRED
My own damn fault.

HENRY
One of our cows fell in the old
livestock well.

JONES
Is that so?

WILFRED
It is. Glass of lemonade, Sheriff?
It's Arlette's.

JONES
She decide to come back did she?

WILFRED
No. She took her favorite clothes
but left the lemonade. Henry, go in
and get the Sheriff a glass.

HENRY
Yes, sir.

Henry gets up and disappears inside the house.

WILFRED
Come on up and get some shade.

Jones makes his way up the porch steps as Wilfred sits down
in his rocker.

JONES
Shade sounds good, but I believe
I'll stand. Need to stretch out my
spine.

Henry returns with a glass and hands it to Jones, filling it
straight from the pitcher.

JONES (CONT'D)
Thanks, son.

Jones drinks half the glass in one gulp.

WILFRED
Good, isn't it? Not too sour, not
too sweet...

HENRY
Just right.

Wilfred glances at Henry, as does Jones.

JONES
Hit the spot alright.

Jones sets his glass down on the railing. He takes off his hat and brushes his hair back before setting his eyes on Wilfred.

JONES (CONT'D)

Guess you know I'm not out here on my own hook.

WILFRED

I'm surprised Mr Lester's not out here with you.

JONES

Oh he wanted to come, but I put the kye-bosh on that. He also wanted me to get a search warrant, but I told him I didn't need one. I said you'd either let me look around or you wouldn't.

HENRY

What does that Lester think? That we've got her tied up in the cellar?

Jones laughs heartily. Wilfred shoots Henry a subtle sideways glance.

JONES

I don't know what he's thinking, do I? I don't care much, either. Lawyers are fleas on the hide of human nature. But... I wouldn't mind a look, just because you wouldn't let him look. He's pretty hot under the collar about that.

WILFRED

I didn't let him in the house because I took against him. I would have taken against John Apostle if he came out here batting for Cole Farrington's team.

Jones guffaws as Wilfred stands.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

You can look to your heart's content.

Wilfred stares confidently at Jones.

Wilfred leads Jones up the stairs, Henry follows behind them. Wilfred pushes open the door and nods at Jones, letting him enter first.

61 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT 61

Arlette SCREAMS and wildly thrashes around as blood wells through the burlap sack covering her head. Henry stumbles back as she tries to pull it off and knocks the bedside kerosene lamp onto the floor. Light and dark roll back and forth inside the room.

Wilfred catches Arlette's right hand with the blade as she tries to protect herself, cutting three fingers to the bone and causing her to SCREAM even louder. Her murder is anything but quick and painless as Wilfred had promised.

62 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - DAY 62

Wilfred stares hard at the perfectly made bed, maintaining his composure whilst trying to shake the grisly images from his mind.

JONES

Lovely room. Get's the early light,
doesn't it?

WILFRED

Stays cool most afternoons, even in
summer. Sun's on the other side.

Wilfred moves to the closet and opens it up. Jones joins him and inspects the hanging clothes Arlette left behind.

JONES

Lot o' duds.

WILFRED

Arlette liked clothes and mail-
order catalogues. But since she
only took the one suitcase, we have
two, and the other one's still
there, see it in the back corner?

Jones spots the suitcase in question and nods. Wilfred takes the opportunity to glance ever so carefully at Henry standing by the foot of the bed.

63 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT 63

Wilfred slashes into the sack, slicing Arlette's throat. Arlette pushes him away and tries again to tear the sack from her face. Wilfred pulls it down tight and tries slashing her throat again, catching her mouth area instead.

Arlette releases a guttural, choked roar as blood spurts from the slashed sack. Henry covers his ears.

HENRY
 (screaming)
 Poppa, make her stop. Make her
 stop. Please God, make her stop!

64

INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

64

Wilfred takes his eyes off Henry watching on and turns his attention back to the closet.

WILFRED
 I'd have to say she only took the ones she liked the best. And the ones that were practical, I suppose. She had two pairs of slacks and a pair of blue denims, and those are gone, even though she didn't care for pants.

JONES
 Pants're good for travelling in, though, aren't they? Man or woman, pants are good for traveling. And a woman might choose them. If she was in a hurry, that is.

WILFRED
 I suppose.

HENRY
 She took her good jewelry and her picture of Nana and Pop-Pop.

JONES
 Did she now? Well, I suppose she would.

Jones closes the closet door and takes another look around the room.

JONES (CONT'D)
 Nice room. Nice house. Woman would have to be crazy to leave a nice room and a nice house like this.

HENRY
 Mama talked about the city a lot. She had the idea of opening a dress shop.

Jones turns to Henry.

JONES
 Did she?

Wilfred watches the pair.

65 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

65

Henry holds Arlette's blood soaked body down on the bed. She stops fighting before going completely limp. Wilfred turns to Henry watching on in the darkest corner of the room with terror clinging to his face. The kerosene lamp stops rolling.

WILFRED
(breathless)
Henry... The deed is done... Now
help me.

66 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

66

Wilfred continues watching the pair.

JONES
But a thing like that takes money
doesn't it?

WILFRED
She got those acres from her
father.

JONES
Yes, yes.

Jones spots a pair of shoes under the bed and drops to one knee.

JONES (CONT'D)
Appears to be a pair of woman's
shoes under there. Broke in, too.
The kind that would be good for
walking. Don't suppose she ran away
barefooty, do you?

WILFRED
She wore her canvas shoes. Those
are the ones that are gone.

JONES
Ah! Another mystery solved.

Jones pulls a silver-plate watch from his vest pocket and checks the time.

JONES (CONT'D)
Well, I'd better get on the roll.
Tempus is fugiting right along.

67 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: FRONT - DAY

67

Wilfred and Henry follow Jones out of the house and back towards his waiting car.

JONES

I stopped at the Cotteries.

(to Henry)

Pretty daughter. Just about your age, isn't she?

HENRY

Yes, sir.

JONES

Kinda sweet on her, I guess? And her on you, from what her mama says.

HENRY

Did she say that?

JONES

Yes. Mrs Cotterie said you were troubled about your own mama, and that Shannon had told her something you said on the subject. So I asked Shannon what it was.

HENRY

I told her to keep it to herself.

JONES

She said your ma and your pop here had a big fight about selling those hundred acres, and when you came down on your poppa's side, Missus James slapped you up pretty good.

HENRY

She had too much to drink.

The trio stop by Jones' car.

JONES

Was she drunk or just tiddly?

WILFRED

Somewhere in between. If she'd been all the way drunk, she would have slept all night instead of getting up, packing her suitcase.

JONES

Thought she'd come back once she sobered up, did you?

WILFRED

I thought for sure she'd come back. Someone must have come along and given her a ride before her head cleared. That'd be my guess.

JONES

Yep, yep, mine too. You'll hear from her when she contacts Mr Lester, I'm sure. If she means to stay out on her own, if she's got that in her head, she'll need money to do it.

Jones' eyes sharpen on Wilfred.

JONES (CONT'D)

Did she have any money at all, Mr James?

WILFRED

I kept a box in my dresser. There was 200 dollars put by in it, to help pay the pickers when they start next month.

HENRY

And Mr Cotterie has a corn harvester. A Harris Giant. Almost new. It's a pip.

JONES

Yep, yep, saw it in his dooryard. Big bastid, isn't it? Pardon my Polish. Money all gone out'n that box, was it?

WILFRED

She left twenty. That's all Harlan Cotterie will ever take for the use of his harvester, so that's all right. And when it comes to the pickers, I guess Stoppenhauser at the bank'll advance me a shortie loan. Either way, I've got my best farmhand right here.

Wilfred ruffles Henry's hair, he pulls away.

JONES

Well, if Lester's as smart as he thinks he is, I guess he'll know enough to expect her in his office, sooner rather than later. People have a way of turning up when they're short on folding green, don't they?

WILFRED

That's been my experience... If we're done here, Sheriff, my boy and I better get back to work.

(MORE)

WILFRED (CONT'D)

That useless well should have been filled in three years ago. An old cow of mine-

HENRY

Elphis. Her name was Elphis.

WILFRED

She got out of the barn and decided to take a stroll on the cap. Didn't have the good grace to die on her own either. I had to shoot her. Come around the back of the barn I'll show you. We're going to bury her right where she lies.

Jones considers Wilfred then checks his watch again.

JONES

Another time.

Jones hoists himself up into his car.

JONES (CONT'D)

Thanks for the lemonade, and for bein' so gracious. You could have been a lot less so, considering who sent me out here.

WILFRED

It's alright. We all have our jobs.

Jones sets his eyes on Henry.

JONES

And our crosses to bear... A company lawyer don't need to know that a boy's mother put her hand to him while she was in drink.

Jones reaches under his seat and removes the crank, holding it out to Henry.

JONES (CONT'D)

Would you save an old man's back and shoulder, son?

HENRY

Yes, sir. Happy to.

Henry takes the crank and moves to the front of the car.

JONES

Mind your wrist. She kicks like a bull.

Jones turns to Wilfred.

JONES (CONT'D)
Mr James I need to ask you
something. Man to man.

Wilfred braces himself, then nods.

JONES (CONT'D)
I can put her name and description
out on the telegraph wire, if you
want. She won't have gone no
farther than Omaha, will she? Not
on just a hundred and eighty
smackers. And a woman who's spent
most of her life keepin' house has
no idea how to hide out. She'll
like as not be in a rooming house
over on the east side, where they
run cheap. I could have her brought
back.

WILFRED
That's a generous offer, but-

JONES
Think it over before you say yea or
nay.

WILFRED
I will.

Wilfred nods. Henry cranks the engine to life.

CUT TO:

Wilfred and Henry watch Jones drive off, kicking up dust as
he goes. Henry shakes his head in amazement.

HENRY
He never even wanted to look.

The car disappears beyond the corn.

68

EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: WELL - DAY

68

Wilfred and Henry stand over the well, holding their shovels.
Elphis's hoof sticks up out of the half filled-in well.

Henry motions to start filling in the rest when the dirt
starts to pulse. Henry's eyes widen with terror.

HENRY
Poppa! It's her. She's trying to
get out.

Wilfred watches the dirt with curious eyes. Dirt and pebbles
spray to either side as a rat surfaces.

SHOONK! Henry smashes the rat's head in with the end of his shovel, sending brain and blood flying every which way.

HENRY (CONT'D)

She sent it. The rats are hers now.

Henry continues smashing away at the mutilated rat.

WILFRED

Henry!

Henry hits it again.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

HENRY!!

Henry suddenly stops and sets his wild eyes on Wilfred.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

Stop...

HENRY

People say someone who's murdered
will come back to haunt whoever-

WILFRED

People say lots of things.

Wilfred keeps his eyes locked on the destroyed rat, unnerved.

HENRY

I used to really think that if I
stood on a crack I'd break my
mother's back.

WILFRED

There. You see.

Henry musters a grin.

HENRY

I got that fucker, didn't I?

Wilfred slaps Henry on the back of the head. Henry continues grinning.

HENRY (CONT'D)

If the Sheriff had come back here
to look and seen that rat come
tunneling... He might have had a
few more questions, don't you
think?

Henry starts laughing hysterically at the very thought. Wilfred watches Henry, slightly unsettled, then continues filling in the well.

Henry settles, then resumes helping his father.

CUT TO:

The filled in well sits bathed under the late afternoon sun. Wilfred and Henry are gone. The job is done.

"Stumbling" by Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra, starts to play.

69 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: SITTING ROOM - NIGHT 69

The song crackles away on a phonograph and echoes through the house.

70 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: KITCHEN - NIGHT 70

Wilfred and Henry chow down on a solid meal of sausage and beans. Wilfred notices Henry stop and stare at what would have been Arlette's place at the table.

HENRY

Sure do miss Mama's cornbread.

Wilfred keeps his eyes locked on Henry for a moment then looks down at his plate. The pair continue eating without saying a word.

71 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: SITTING ROOM - NIGHT 71

Wilfred sits in his chair, trying to focus on a copy of "Silas Marner" by George Eliot. Henry enters dressed in only his summer underdrawers. Wilfred looks up at him.

HENRY

Mama always insisted on me saying my prayers, did you know that?

WILFRED

Still? No I didn't.

HENRY

Even after she wouldn't look at me unless I had my pants on, because she said I was too old and it wouldn't be right. But I can't pray now, or ever again. If I got down on my knees, I think God would strike me dead.

Wilfred takes a troubled breath.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I hope there isn't a God. I imagine all murderers hope there isn't.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)
 Because if there's no Heaven,
 there's no Hell.

WILFRED
 Son, I was the one who killed her.

HENRY
 No. We did it together. I know you
 think I'll slip. To Shannon. Or to
 that Sheriff. But you don't have to
 worry about me, Poppa.

Wilfred nods, appreciative.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 Did you see the way he looked at
 everything? Did you see his eyes?

WILFRED
 I did.

HENRY
 He'd try to put us both in the
 'lectric chair. He'd be there,
 lookin' at us with those hard eyes
 of his when they strapped us in and-

WILFRED
 Stop it. That's enough. Go to bed,
 Henry.

HENRY
 Hank.

Henry stares at Wilfred, defiant.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 She hated it when you'd call me
 that...

Wilfred considers his son.

WILFRED
 Hank. Go to bed. I love you.

HENRY
 I know, but I don't much deserve
 it.

Henry shuffles off to bed before Wilfred can reply.

Corn is violently ripped away from the stalks by a harvester.

WILFRED (V.O.)

If God rewards us on earth for good deeds, then maybe Satan rewards us for evil ones.

A harvester slowly moves along a row. A small CREW (male, Native American Indians) walk along behind, picking up the corn and tossing it into the gather truck that follows them.

WILFRED (V.O.)

That was a good summer, with plenty of heat and sun for the corn and just enough rain.

Wilfred rides beside HARLAN COTTERIE (40 years old, chubby) who operates the harvester.

73 EXT. LARS'S DELIVERY TRUCK - DAY

73

The truck turns off the road and rattles towards Wilfred's now fully harvested farm.

WILFRED (V.O.)

Mr Lester came out twice. He tried to badger us, but he had nothing.

Mr Lester sits in the passenger seat with his goggles on, looking irritated as they close in on the house.

WILFRED (V.O.)

The second time he showed up, he came right out with it.

74 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: FRONT - DAY

74

Mr Lester stands flustered before Wilfred by the chopping block.

MR LESTER

Mr James, did you murder your wife?

WILFRED

(measured)

No. I did not. And that's your last question. Get in your truck, drive away, and don't come back here. If you do, I'll take an axe handle to you.

MR LESTER

You'd go to jail for assault.

WILFRED

No such thing. I have warned you off my property, as is my right, and I intend to send a registered letter to your firm stating that very thing. Come back again, that's trespassing... and I will beat you. Take warning, sir.

Mr Lester glares at Wilfred before turning in a huff and climbing back inside Lars's delivery truck. He points his finger at Wilfred in a dramatic fashion.

MR LESTER

You killed her! And sooner or later, murder will out!

Henry emerges from the barn holding a pitchfork across his chest in a threatening manner. Mr Lester notices him.

HENRY

(calling)

You better get out of here before you start bleeding.

WILFRED

Come back any time, Lars. But don't bring him, no matter how much he offers you to cart his useless ass.

Lars nods and drives off.

Wilfred turns to Henry and watches him raise his pitchfork and aim it at the car like a rifle. He makes a firing sound effect and jerks the pitch fork back.

Wilfred's eyes fill with a sense of unease.

75

INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: DINING ROOM - DAY

75

Shannon stands over the stove, happily cooking bacon, pearl onions and asparagus in a pan. Henry watches over her shoulder, salivating.

Wilfred sets the table for supper and watches the pair looking every bit the married couple.

WILFRED

Smells good, Shan.

SHANNON

I know what men cook. I insist you let me do this at least twice a week, Mr James.

HENRY

What does a pearl onion even taste like?

Henry reaches his hand into the pan but Shannon smacks it away. She smiles playfully at him.

Henry musters a grin right back at her then stares out the window as something crosses his mind.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I'll be right back.

Henry heads into the hall. Shannon turns to him as he goes.

SHANNON

It's nearly ready, Henry...

Wilfred and Shannon listen to the back door as it opens and closes. Shannon takes the pan off the heat and turns to Wilfred with a concerned look in her eyes.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Mr James, is Henry sick?

Wilfred frowns.

WILFRED

Sick? He's healthy as a horse. Eats like one too. You've seen that for yourself.

SHANNON

He's... different. I always used to know what he was thinking, but now I don't. He broods. You haven't seen it?

WILFRED

He seems like his old self to me. But he cares for you an awful lot, Shan. Maybe what looks like brooding to you feels like lovesick to him.

SHANNON

I've thought of that, but... Mr James, if he was sweet on someone else, one of those girls from school, you'd tell me, wouldn't you?

WILFRED

Shan, summer's always a hardworking time and with Arlette gone, Hank and I have been busier than one-armed paper-hangers.

(MORE)

WILFRED (CONT'D)

He hardly has time to spark you,
let alone another girl.

SHANNON

I just thought... he's so quiet
now... So moody... Sometimes I have
to say his name twice or three
times before he hears me and
answers.

WILFRED

The only thing you need to worry
about is putting him back in his
place if he gets out of it.

Shannon considers Wilfred then shifts uncomfortably.

SHANNON

Mr James, I'm... I'm real sorry
about, Mrs James.

Wilfred nods, appreciative. Henry reappears in the kitchen
holding a bunch of bright yellow daisies in his hand, freshly
plucked from the ground. He approaches Shannon with them.

HENRY

Been meaning to pluck these for a
while now...

Shannon beams as a heavy weight seems to leave her.

SHANNON

Henry, they're beautiful...

Shannon takes the flowers. The pair refrain from kissing in
front of Wilfred. Instead, Shannon tenderly rubs Henry's
shoulder.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Let's find a vase.

Wilfred smiles warmly as he watches the pair. For a brief
moment, Wilfred is freed of his own heavy weight and he
continues setting the table.

76

INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

76

Wilfred shaves in the mirror. He dips his cutthroat razor
into a soapy bowl of water, cleaning it off before returning
his attention back to the mirror.

He suddenly stops and feels his jaw, mildly discomfited by
it. He gives it a wriggle, thinks nothing of it then
continues shaving.

Wilfred looks back down into the bowl and cleans his razor once again when - SPLASH! Wilfred's entire lower jaw breaks off and lands in the soapy bowl.

Wilfred looks up in the mirror, horrified. The lower half of his face is gone. Blood oozes out of his exposed throat and down his freshly shaven neck.

He fumbles his jaw out of the soapy water with trembling hands and tries to reattach it to his face while making an anguished, moaning sound.

CUT TO:

Wilfred wakes with a start to the sound of a cow lowing. He reaches for his jaw in a panic. Still intact. He breathes a sigh of anxious relief.

Wilfred then checks his pocket watch before looking out the window into the moonless dark, confused.

77 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: FRONT - NIGHT 77

Wilfred rushes out of the house, clutching his .22 in his hands and makes a beeline for the barn.

78 INT. BARN - NIGHT 78

Wilfred shoulders the right door open and steps inside. He reaches for a carbon arc-lamp hanging on a hook and pushes the spark button, shedding much needed light on the situation.

Wilfred approaches a cow named Acheolis, moaning and thudding her hoofs on the ground as she tosses her head from side to side. The other cows start working themselves into a panic.

WILFRED

Acheolis? What's the matter girl?

Wilfred throws open the stall door and lets Acheolis out into the aisle. He inspects her and notices her rear legs are smeared in blood. Then he spots the cause of Acheolis pain, a huge rat (2 feet long, six pounds) clinging to one of her teats.

The rat drops down to the ground, taking the teat with it and runs up the middle aisle as blood pools from Acheolis's wound.

Wilfred aims his .22 at the rat but it scurries into the mouth of a pipe. Wilfred approaches the pipe and holds his lamp over it, catching a glimpse of the rat's hairless tail as it slithers into the darkness.

Wilfred covers his mouth and nose from the awful stench emanating from the pipe when something horrible dawns on him.

WILFRED (V.O.)

The pipe lead to one place and one place only. The need to scream was strangled by the need to-

Wilfred drops to all fours and vomits. He looks up at Acheolis as she retreats to her stall. Wilfred tries to gather himself and turns his attention back to the pipe.

CUT TO:

Wilfred frantically stuffs canvas into the pipe and uses a broom handle to poke it deeper in.

79 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: HALL - NIGHT

79

Wilfred opens the front door and makes his way down the hall with the .22, stopping dead in his tracks at the sight of a faint silhouette standing in the darkness before him.

Arlette's.

Wilfred is frozen by the sight.

HENRY (O.S.)

What happened?

He quickly realizes its Henry and not his dead wife standing before him.

WILFRED

I thought I heard a fox trying to get in the barn.

HENRY

A fox? I haven't seen a fox for-

WILFRED

Back to bed, Hank.

Henry stands his ground, curious.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

I said back to bed.

Henry slowly moves back into his bedroom and closes the door. Wilfred continues on down the hall.

80 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: FRONT - DAY

80

Henry sits behind the wheel of the running truck with wide eyes.

WILFRED

You can still find reverse?

HENRY

Yes, sir!

WILFRED

You're ready. Maybe not for Omaha just yet, or even Lincoln, but if you take her slow, you ought to be just fine in Hemingford Home. Here.

Wilfred removes a leather wallet from his pocket and hands it to Henry.

HENRY

What is it?

WILFRED

That was your grandfather's. You might as well keep it. I was going to give it to you for your birthday this fall, anyway.

Henry opens it up, there is money inside. His eyes light up.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

You can keep what's left over, if there is any.

Henry simply nods as he conducts a quick count of the cash.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

Stop by Lars Olsen's smithy on your way back and fuel up. Mind me, now, or you'll be on foot instead of behind the wheel when you get home.

HENRY

I won't forget.

Henry looks up at Wilfred.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Could I stop at the Cotteries and ask Shan to come?

WILFRED

No. You ask Sallie or Harlan if Shan can come. And you make sure you tell them that you've never driven in town before. I'm putting you on your honor, Son.

HENRY

Yes, sir!

Henry takes off.

WILFRED (V.O.)
I had a stupid but very strong
premonition that I would never see
him again.

Wilfred watches Henry go with a troubled look on his face.

CUT TO:

Wilfred mixes up a batch of cement in an old pail.

81 INT. BARN - DAY 81

Achelois stands in her stall with salve smeared over her wound staring at Wilfred as he packs the cement into the mouth of the pipe.

WILFRED (V.O.)
Down in the dark they would die. If
not of suffocation, then of-

82 INT. MAGNOLIA HOTEL: ROOM - DAY 82

Wilfred looks up from his confession and sets his eyes on the wall behind him. A rat can be heard crawling around inside it.

Wilfred slowly gets up out of his chair and moves over to the wall, pressing his ear to it.

He listens to the rat scurry along. Wilfred's eyes fill with dread as he follows the sound. He suddenly stops his pursuit, wary, and lets the rat be.

He moves back to his desk, picks up his pen and tries to recompose his thoughts.

WILFRED (O.S.)
Henry did return. And when he did,
he brought with him some news.

83 EXT. COTTERIE FARM: FRONT - DAY 83

Harlan, his wife SALLIE (40 years old, plain faced) and Shannon stand on the porch of their farmhouse, staring right at us, proudly waiting for their picture to be taken.

WILFRED (V.O.)
Harlan Cotterie prospered more than
most farmers in the years 1916 to
1922. And his farm showed it.

84 INT. COTTERIE RESIDENCE: HALL/BATHROOM - DAY

84

We slowly move down the hallway to the sound of running shower water in the bathroom.

WILFRED (V.O.)

He added indoor plumbing which meant three times a week, he and his womenfolk could enjoy what was an unbelievable luxury that far out in the country, hot baths and showers supplied by pipes.

Sallie, carrying a basket of fresh laundry, walks past the ajar bathroom door and glances inside, stopping short.

WILFRED (V.O.)

It was the shower bath that revealed the secret Shannon Cotterie had been keeping.

Sallie carefully pushes the door open wider and sets her disbelieving eyes on Shannon's pregnant bulge through the translucent shower-curtain.

WILFRED (V.O.)

The girl was five months along, or near to it.

85 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH/FRONT - DAY

85

Henry sits on the porch steps with tears in his eyes. Wilfred stands before him, arms folded, downcast.

HENRY

We want to get married but I'm afraid they won't let us.

WILFRED

Never mind them. I won't let you.

Henry locks his eyes on Wilfred.

HENRY

Why not?

WILFRED

She's 15 years old and you won't even be that for another 2 weeks.

HENRY

But we love each other.

WILFRED

I know you do, Henry.

HENRY

Hank! And others get married that young.

WILFRED

I have no money to give you a start. Maybe by '25, if crops and prices stay good, but right now there's nothing. And with a baby on the way-

HENRY

There would be enough! If you hadn't been such a bugger about that 100 acres, there'd be plenty! She would've given me some of it. And she wouldn't have talked to me this way!

Wilfred stares at Henry in shock.

WILFRED

No. She would have talked to you much worse. And laughed. If you search your heart, Son, you'll know it.

Henry glares at Wilfred.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

Your mother told you to keep your willy in your pants. It was her last advice, and although it was as crude and hurtful as most of what she had to say, you should have followed it.

HENRY

It was only after that... after that night... That we... Shan didn't want to, but I talked her into it. And once we started, she liked it as much as I did. Once we started, she asked for it.

Henry shakes his head, wearily.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Now that 100 acres just sits there sprouting weeds and I'm... if Momma was here, she'd help me fix it. Money fixes everything.

The pair spot Harlan's brand-new green Nash rattle towards the house in a ball of furious dust.

WILFRED

Make yourself, scarce.

Henry stands.

WILFRED (CONT'D)
I'm going to do my best for you,
Son.

Henry storms off into the house. Harlan pulls up and kills the engine. Wilfred makes his way up onto the porch and prepares himself.

WILFRED (V.O.)
Harlan had always been good to me.
I'd always considered us not just
neighbors, but good friends.

Harlan steps out of his car and removes a duster, folding it neatly and placing it on the seat.

WILFRED (V.O.)
Yet in that moment I hated him.

Harlan is dressed for the occasion, white shirt, string tie, good Sunday pants held up by a belt with a silver dolphin shaped buckle, which he hitches just below his tidy paunch.

WILFRED (V.O.)
Not because he'd come to tax me
about my son. No, it was-

86 EXT. COTTERIE RESIDENCE: FRONT - DAY 86

Harlan waxes his new car with pride.

WILFRED (V.O.)
The brand-new shiny green Nash.

87 INT. COTTERIE RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - DAY 87

Harlan removes the belt we have seen him wearing from his dresser and admires the buckle.

WILFRED (V.O.)
It was the silver belt buckle made
in the shape of a dolphin.

88 EXT. COTTERIE FARM: BARN - DAY 88

Harlan stands back, marveling at his new barn.

WILFRED (V.O.)
It was the new barn painted bright
red.

89

INT. COTTERIE RESIDENCE: KITCHEN - DAY

89

Harlan turns on the kitchen tap and conveniently fills a glass of water, thirstily gulping it down.

WILFRED (V.O.)

It was the indoor plumbing.
But most of all it was the-

Sallie stands over the stove cooking a steak.

WILFRED (V.O.)

Plain-faced, biddable wife he'd left back at his farm, no doubt making supper in spite of her worry. The wife whose sweetly given reply in the face of any problem would be-

Sallie looks up from the steak and stares blankly out the window.

SALLIE

Whatever you think is best, dear.

90

EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH/FRONT - DAY

90

Harlan strides towards the porch steps. Wilfred extends his hand.

WILFRED

Harlan...

Harlan gives Wilfred's hand a brief squeeze before letting it go.

HARLAN

We've got a considerable problem here, Wilf.

WILFRED

I know. Will you sit down?

Harlan reluctantly sits down in Arlette's rocker. Wilfred takes a seat beside him.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

Would it help to say I'm sorry?

HARLAN

No. I'm madder than a hornet and what makes it worse is I've got no one to be mad at. I can't be mad at the kids because they're just kids.

(MORE)

HARLAN (CONT'D)

I'd like to blame Sallie for not seeing the girl's condition sooner, but first-timers usually carry high, and Shan's been wearing those granny-go-to-meetin' dresses since she was 12 and started getting her...

Wilf nods.

HARLAN (CONT'D)

And I'd like to blame you, because it seems like you skipped that talk fathers usually have with sons. The one about keeping the safety on his pistol.

Harlan takes a deep, frustrated breath.

HARLAN (CONT'D)

What the hell are we going do about this mess, Wilf? My little girl is too young to be a mother.

WILFRED

Henry wants to marry her and give the baby a name.

Harlan shakes his head.

HARLAN

These have been fat years, and you're still only one step ahead of the bank. Where are you going to be when the years get lean again? If you had the cash from that back 100 then it might be different. Cash cushions hard times but with Arlette gone, there they sit, like a constipated old maid on a chamberpot.

WILFRED

Well what do you want to do? I doubt you made this trip with nothing in mind.

HARLAN

She's bright. She's good in English, and she's even better in the maths, which is apparently rare in girls. She can do triggeronomy, Wilf. Did you know that?

Wilfred gives Harlan a wry smile and does not attempt to correct his pronunciation of the word.

WILFRED

No, I didn't.

HARLAN

Sallie wanted to send her to the normal school in Omaha. They've taken girls as well as boys since 1918, although no girls have graduated so far. The females always want to get married, you see. And have babies. Join Eastern Star and sweep the God damned floor.

Harlan sighs.

HARLAN (CONT'D)

Shan could be the first. She has the skills and she has the brains. We planned to send her to school as soon as she turned 17. Shan was willing and the money was put aside. It was all arranged, it's still all arranged. But first, almost right away, she's going to the St Eusebia Catholic Home for Girls in Omaha. She doesn't know it yet, but it's going to happen.

WILFRED

Sounds like some kind of... Orphanage.

Harlan bristles.

HARLAN

It's not an orphanage. It's a clean, wholesome, and busy place. So I've been told. All the reports I get are good ones. She'll have chores, she'll have her schooling, and in another 4 months she'll have her baby. When that's done, the kid will be given up for adoption. Then she can come home, and in another year and a half she can go to teachers' college, just like Sallie wants. And me, of course. Sallie and me.

WILFRED

What's my part in this? I assume I must have one.

Harlan narrows his eyes on Wilfred.

HARLAN

Are you smarting on me, Wilf? I know you've had a tough year, but I still won't bear you smarting on me.

WILFRED

I'm not smarting on you, but you need to know you're not the only one who's mad and ashamed. Just tell me what you want.

Harlan settles.

HARLAN

I know you're not rich, but you still need to step up and take share of your responsibility. Her time at the home is going to cost me 300 dollars. Sister Camilla called it a donation but I know a fee when I hear one.

WILFRED

If you're going to ask me to split it with you-

HARLAN

I know you can't lay your hands on 150 dollars, but you better be able to lay them on 75, because that's what the tutor's going to cost. The one who's going to help her keep up with her lessons.

WILFRED

I can't do that. Arlette cleaned me out when she left.

Wilfred looks away, contemplative.

91 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: KITCHEN - DAY 91

Arlette's hands open a flour cannister and bury a roll of twenty dollar bills inside.

92 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH/FRONT - DAY 92

Wilfred quickly snaps out of his daydream and turns his attention back to Harlan.

HARLAN

Take another shortie from the bank. You paid the last one back, I hear.

WILFRED

I had crop money to pay it back with. Now I don't. I've got my land and my house and that's pretty much it.

HARLAN

You find a way. Mortgage the house, if that's what it takes. 75 dollars is yours to share, and compared to having your boy changing didies at the age of 15, I think you're getting off cheap.

Harlan stands. Wilfred follows suit.

WILFRED

And if I can't find a way? What then, Harl? You send the Sheriff?

HARLAN

I'd never go to law on a thing like this. But if you don't take your share of the responsibility, you and me's done.

Harlan squints into the fading sunlight.

HARLAN (CONT'D)

I'm going. I won't need the 75 for a couple of weeks, so you got that long. And I won't come dunning you for it. If you don't, you don't. Just don't say you can't, because I know better.

Harlan shakes his head.

HARLAN (CONT'D)

You should have let her sell that acreage to Farrington, Wilf. If you'd done that, she'd still be here and you'd have some money in hand. And my daughter might not be in the fam'ly way.

Wilfred glares hard at Harlan as he trudges down the steps. Suddenly, he kicks Harlan square in the back.

Harlan falls awkwardly down the steps. CRUNCH! His neck breaks on the ground below.

Wilfred stares down at Harlan's lifeless, twisted body lying in the dirt with satisfaction.

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

She was clean and your boy filthied her up.

Wilfred snaps out of his fantasy as Harlan make his way down the steps, safe and sound, in one piece.

WILFRED

Do you want to talk to Henry? He feels as bad about this as I do.

HARLAN

No. If you hauled him out here, I'm sure I'd knock him down.

Wilfred remains on the porch, seething as Harlan continues back towards his green Nash.

93

INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: HENRY'S BEDROOM - DAY

93

Wilfred paces while Henry lies on his bed, keeping his back to his father.

HENRY

They can't send her away like that.

WILFRED

Can and will. And if you try something stupid and headstrong, you'll only make a bad situation worse.

Henry turns to Wilfred and sits up on the side of the bed.

HENRY

We could run away. We wouldn't get caught. If we could get away with... with what we did... then me and Shan could get away with eloping off to Colorado.

WILFRED

You couldn't. You have no money. Money fixes everything, remember? Isn't that what you said?

Henry falls silent.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

I say money spoils everything. I know it, Shannon will too. She's got her baby to watch out for now-

HENRY

Not if they make her give it away.

WILFRED

You will not ask a five months pregnant girl to run off with you.

Henry stands with fire in his eyes.

HENRY

You can't tell me what to do. You
couldn't even cut mama's throat
without making a mess of it.

Henry starts to walk off but Wilfred grabs him by the arm.
The pair eyeball each other.

WILFRED

I did it for us, Hank... What good
are 180 acres if I have no-one to
pass them on to?

HENRY

There was another way... You know
there was.

Henry yanks his arm free and keeps his eyes narrowed on
Wilfred.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You cursed it all... You cursed me.

Henry storms off. Wilfred is left speechless. He looks around
his son's room, those last cutting words of his still ringing
in his ears.

94 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: SITTING ROOM - DAY 94

Wilfred stands at the window and watches Henry drive off in
the Model T.

WILFRED (V.O.)

He went off to school the next day
without any argument. Probably
because I let him take the Model T.

Wilfred moves away from the window.

WILFRED (V.O.)

Once he was gone, I started
searching.

95 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: DINING ROOM - DAY 95

Wilfred carefully pours the flour cannister into a bowl.
Nothing. He moves onto the sugar.

96 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - DAY 96

Wilfred opens the closet and starts searching through
Arlette's clothes.

CUT TO:

Wilfred examines Arlette's shoes. He gives up and stretches out his neck, frustrated. His eyes come to rest on a hat box resting on the top shelf of the closet. Wilfred reaches up and gets a fingertip to the box.

CUT TO:

Wilfred opens the box. Inside sits a red hat. He carefully inspects it. Tucked into the satin inner band of the hat are two folded twenty dollar bills.

Wilfred unfolds them. His small win quickly turns to frustration. This won't cover it.

97 EXT. HEMINGFORD HOME: BANK - DAY 97

Wilfred pulls his truck over outside the Bank as TOWNSFOLK go about their day.

98 INT. BANK: MR STOPPENHAUSER'S OFFICE - DAY 98

Wilfred, defeated, sits across from MR STOPPENHAUSER (60 years old, clean cut, sharp suit) at his desk.

MR STOPPENHAUSER
Will Home Bank and Trust loan you
35 dollars? You bet. But!

Mr Stoppenhauser raises his finger.

MR STOPPENHAUSER (CONT'D)
You don't need 35 dollars.

WILFRED
Sad to say, I do.

MR STOPPENHAUSER
No, you don't. You need 750, that's what you need, and you could have it today. You paid off the mortgage on your place 3 years ago. It's free and clear. So there's absolutely no reason why you shouldn't turn around and take out another mortgage. It's done all the time, my boy, and by the best people. All the best people. Yessir.

WILFRED
I thank you very kindly, Mr Stoppenhauser, but I don't think so. That mortgage was like a gray cloud over my head the whole time it was in force, and-

MR STOPPENHAUSER

Wilf, that's the point! That is exactly the rootin'-tootin', cowboy shootin' point! It's the fellows who take out a mortgage and then feel like they're always walking around in sunshine who end up defaulting and losing their valuable property! Fellows like you, who carry that bank-paper like a barrowload of rocks on a gloomy day, are the fellows who always pay back! And do you want to tell me that there aren't improvements you could make? A roof to fix? A little more livestock? Maybe even indoor plumbing, like your neighbor down the road? You could end up with improvements that far outweigh the cost of a mortgage. Value for money, Wilf! Value for money!

WILFRED

I'm very tempted, sir. I won't lie about that-

MR STOPPENHAUSER

No need to. A bank's office, the priest's confessional - very little difference. The best men have sat in that chair, Wilf. The very best.

WILFRED

I only came in for a shortie loan - which you have kindly granted. This new proposal needs a little thinking about. I ought to talk it over with my boy, Henry. Hank, as he likes to be called now. He's getting to an age where he needs to be consulted. What I've got will be his someday.

MR STOPPENHAUSER

Understood, completely understood. But it's the right thing to do, believe me. You came in here to buy a fish, Wilf. I'm offering to sell you a pole. Much better deal.

Mr Stoppenhauser shoots Wilfred a smarmy grin. Wilfred tries to hide his growing impatience.

99 EXT. HEMINGFORD HOME: BANK - DAY

99

Wilfred exits the bank and heads back to his truck. He stops short, riddled with confusion; the truck he drove in has been replaced by the model T.

Wilfred looks up and down the street then moves to the drivers side of the vehicle. He spots a folded piece of paper sitting under a rock on the seat. His heart sinks.

HENRY (V.O.)

Poppa. I have taken the truck.

100 INT. MODEL T - DAY

100

Wilfred drives back to the farm in a complete daze.

HENRY (V.O.)

I guess you know where I am going. Leave me alone. I know you can send Sheriff Jones after me to bring me back, but if you do I will tell everything. You might think I'd change my mind because I am just a kid, but I won't.

Wilfred approaches Sallie, minding the families roadside vegetable stand on the edge of the Cotterie farm. She stares at Wilf with resentment as he passes by.

HENRY (V.O.)

Without Shan I don't care about nothing. I love you Poppa even if I don't know why, since everything we did has brought me misery. Your loving Son, Henry Hank James.

101 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: FRONT - DAY

101

Wilfred sits parked out the front of the house and keeps the Model T running. He re-reads Henry's letter, still completely shell-shocked.

Wilfred slowly folds the letter and stares out across the farm. He then sets his eyes on the house. Resentment starts to build inside him the longer he stares at it.

102 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: SITTING ROOM - DAY

102

Wilfred quietly enters the room and comes to a standstill, lost deep in his thoughts.

WILFRED (V.O.)

I had murdered my wife to keep my home, and I wasn't going to leave it now because my foolish and immature accomplice had gotten it into his head to take off on a romantic quest.

Wilfred moves to the mantle and stares at a year old framed photograph of himself with Arlette and Henry posing on the porch.

Arlette's face in the photograph suddenly switches to the one of unimaginable horror Wilfred last saw down in the well. He snaps his eyes closed and takes a deep breath.

Wilfred slowly opens his eyes. Arlette's face is back to normal.

103 EXT. JAMES FARM: VEGETABLE GARDEN - DAY 103

Wilfred busies himself by picking carrots out of the ground. He glances over his shoulder at the filled in well sitting in the distance.

104 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: FRONT - DAY 104

Wilfred feeds the chickens, distracted.

105 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - DAWN 105

Wilfred lies wide awake and reaches his hand out to Arlette's empty side of the bed.

WILFRED (V.O.)

Part of me believed that all of this was a long and terribly complex dream that I would awake with Arlette snoring beside me...

CUT TO:

Wilfred stands by the window and stares out at the chopping block sitting in the distance.

WILFRED (V.O.)

And the sound of Henry chopping wood for the morning fire.

106 EXT. JAMES FARM - DAY 106

An overcast sky hovers above the farm.

107 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: PORCH/FRONT - DAY

107

Wilfred watches from the porch as Sheriff Jones climbs out of his car.

WILFRED

(calling)

Is he alright? Did you find him?

Jones mounts the porch steps.

JONES

Can't say we did. Line-rider over east of Lyme Biska found the truck, but no sign of the kid. We might know better about the state of his health if you'd reported this when it happened. Wouldn't we?

Jones stands before Wilfred and hitches his belt.

WILFRED

I was hoping he'd come back on his own. I don't know how much I need to tell you, Sheriff-

JONES

I already know enough, don't I? That your kid got Harl Cotterie's daughter in the family way and has probably gone haring off to Omaha. He run the truck off the road into a field of high grass when he knew the tank was 'bout dry. That was smart. He get that kind of smart from you or Arlette?

Wilfred does not reply, busy processing this new information.

JONES (CONT'D)

Wilf, if Henry was my son and Harl Cotterie was my neighbor - my good neighbor - I might've just taken a run down there and said, Harl? You know what? I think my son might be going to try to see your daughter. You want to tell someone to be on the prep for him? But you didn't do that either, did you?

WILFRED

He hasn't shown up wherever she is, has he?

JONES

No, not yet. He may still be looking for it.

WILFRED

I don't think he ran away to see Shannon.

JONES

Why then? Do they have a better brand of icecream there in Omaha? Because that's where he was headed, sure as your life.

WILFRED

I think he went looking for his mother. I think she may have gotten in touch with him.

Jones considers Wilfred.

JONES

How would she do that?

WILFRED

A letter would be my guess.

Jones takes out a notebook and jots something down in it.

JONES

Is that all it is, Wilf? A guess?

WILFRED

He talked a lot about his mother after she left, but then he stopped. And I know he hasn't shown up at that home where Harlan and his wife stuck Shannon. Put the two things together and what do you get?

JONES

I don't know. I truly don't. I thought I had this figured out. Good God, kids make my life hard. If you hear from your son, tell him to get his skinny ass home and stay away from Shannon Cotterie.

Jones removes his hat and scratches his head.

JONES (CONT'D)

There's something else, Wilf.

Wilfred prepares himself.

WILFRED

What?

JONES

Three days ago, in Lyme Biska - not so far from the rider found your truck - someone held up that grocery store on the edge of town. Took 23 dollars. I got the report sitting on my desk. It was a young fella dressed in old cowboy clothes, with a bandana pulled up over his mouth and a plainsman hat slouched down over his eyes.

Wilfred shakes his head, rattled, not wanting to believe what he's hearing.

WILFRED

Henry left from school, Sheriff, and so far as I can remember he was wearing a flannel shirt and corduroy trousers that day. He didn't take any of his clothes, and in any case he doesn't have any cowboy clothes, if you mean boots and all. Nor does he have a plainsman's hat.

JONES

He could have stolen those things, too, couldn't he?

WILFRED

My son's not a robber. That's not how he acts and not the way he was raised.

Jones nods, accepting.

JONES

Probably just a drifter looking for a quick payday. But I felt like I had to bring it up. And we don't know what people might say, do we? Talk gets around. Talk's cheap. The subject's closed as far as I'm concerned - let the Lyme County Sheriff worry about what goes on in Lyme Biska, that's my motto - but you should know that the Omaha police are keeping an eye on the place where Shannon Cotterie's at.

Jones puts his hat back on and straightens it.

JONES (CONT'D)

Maybe he'll come back on his own, no harm done, and we can write this whole thing off as, I don't know, a bad debt.

Wilfred keeps his guard up.

108 EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY 108

The grocery store in question sits in total isolation.

WILFRED (V.O.)

It was him. It was Henry.

Henry (old cowboy clothes, plainsman hat, bandana covering his mouth) bursts out of the front door, clutching a crowbar and runs for his life, nearly bowling over a shocked ELDERLY WOMAN (70) as he goes.

109 EXT. FIELD - DAY 109

From a birds eye view, Henry sits crouched in tall grass, trying to catch his breath as he counts his money.

WILFRED (V.O.)

And if he tried it once, he would try it again, once those 23 dollars were gone. Probably in Omaha. Where they would almost certainly catch him...

Henry finishes counting his haul and settles back into the grass.

110 EXT. SKY - DAY 110

A crack of lightning. The heavens open and it buckets down.

111 EXT. JAMES FARM: WELL - DAY 111

Hard rain pummels the filled in well.

112 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: SITTING ROOM - NIGHT 112

Wilfred sits reading "The House of the Seven Gables" by Nathaniel Hawthorne, distracted. Slowly, Arlette's decayed, mangled hand reaches around from behind Wilfred. She gently runs her index finger down the side of his face.

Wilfred leaps to his feet and turns around, petrified. There is no-one there. Water taps Wilfred on top of his cheek. He shudders and looks up. The ceiling over head is discolored and dripping. He tries in vain to calm himself.

Wilfred moves to a table in the corner of the room. He pours himself a good-sized hooker of brown whiskey and downs it in two swallows with a trembling hand.

WILFRED (V.O.)
 Fixing a leak would take only a day
 or two. I needed work that would
 keep me through the winter.

Wilfred looks back up at the leaking roof, reflective.

WILFRED (V.O.)
 Sometimes work is the only thing to
 help drive out bad thoughts.

113 INT. BANK: MR STOPPENHAUSER'S OFFICE - DAY 113

Wilfred sits across from Mr Stoppenhauser in his office and begrudgingly signs for a loan.

WILFRED (V.O.)
 The next day I took out a mortgage
 for 750 dollars.

Wilfred puts down the pen. Mr Stoppenhauser nods and takes the form from him.

WILFRED (V.O.)
 In the end we all get caught.

114 EXT. OMAHA: DODGE STREET - DAY 114

Henry, wearing tattered clothes and a plainsman's hat stands across the road from a pawnshop, waiting to cross the busy street.

WILFRED (V.O.)
 In Omaha that same week, a young
 man wearing a plainsman's hat
 walked into a pawnshop on Dodge
 Street...

A gap in the traffic opens and Henry rushes across the street.

115 INT. PAWNSHOP - DAY 115

The CLERK (40 years old) slides Henry a nickel-plated .32 Caliber pistol over the counter.

WILFRED (V.O.)
 ...and bought a nickel-plated .32
 Caliber pistol.

Henry hands the Clerk a crumpled 5 dollar note.

116 INT. FIRST AGRICULTURAL BANK OF OMAHA - DAY

116

Henry, wearing a flat cap on his head and a red bandanna over the lower half of his face, enters the bank. At first the handful of CUSTOMERS inside the bank do not notice him.

WILFRED (V.O.)

The next day, the same young man walked into the Omaha branch of the First Agricultural Bank...

Henry approaches the FEMALE TELLER (21 years old, pretty) and pulls his .32 on her. Some of the Customers start to notice Henry and stand frozen in shock.

HENRY

Please, I won't hurt you, just empty the drawer...

The Female Teller nods with wide frightened eyes and hands over the cash. Henry stuffs it into his pockets.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Henry quickly turns for the exit where he is confronted by an UNARMED GUARD (60 years old, portly).

UNARMED GUARD

Son, you don't want to do this.

BLAM! Henry fires his .32 in the air then points it at the Unarmed Guard. Customers scream. The Unarmed Guard raises his hands in the air.

HENRY

Fall back, sir. I've got a friend outside watching the door.

The Unarmed Guard backs up. Henry runs for the door and makes a hasty exit.

117 EXT. FIRST AGRICULTURAL BANK OF OMAHA - DAY

117

The Unarmed Guard carefully exits the bank and searches up and down the street.

WILFRED (V.O.)

There was no friend of course.

Henry is long gone.

118 EXT. ALLEY WAY - DAY

118

Henry hides behind a line of trash cans in the filthy alley and counts the crumpled wad of bills.

WILFRED (V.O.)

Hank James had no friends in Omaha
except for the one with his baby
growing in her belly.

119 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

119

Wilfred, soaking wet and rattled, paces in the room, counting
a wad of 20 dollar bills.

WILFRED (V.O.)

Unlike my desperate son, I wish I
hadn't taken so much in cash...

Wilfred shakes his head then turns his attention to the
closet.

CUT TO:

Wilfred reaches up for Arlette's hat box with his left hand.
He hooks his finger through the elastic running around the
outside of it.

The large rat Wilfred last saw disappearing into the pipe
suddenly appears from behind the box. The rat sinks its teeth
into Wilfred's finger.

Wilfred screams in agony and stumbles back. He fumbles the
box and the rat down onto the floor while his money spills
everywhere. Wilfred holds his bleeding hand and instinctively
brings his foot down on the rat.

CRUNCH! The mutilated rat tries to sink its teeth into
Wilfred's blood splattered ankle but cannot reach, completely
pinned to the floor.

Wilfred pushes harder. The rat twists and flops, its tail
wraps around Wilfred's calf before it finally stops fighting
and dies.

Wilfred keeps his wide eyes locked on the rat with curiosity.

WILFRED (V.O.)

You might say to me, Wilf, one rat
looks like another, and ordinarily
you'd be right.

120 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: DINING ROOM - DAY

120

Wilfred dips his left hand into a bowl of cold water and
assesses the damage.

WILFRED (V.O.)

But I knew this one...

The rat has bitten all the way through the webbing between his now askew hanging left thumb and forefinger.

121 INT. BARN - DAY 121

Wilfred, still soaking, grimaces into the barn with a bandaged left hand and moves towards the pipe. It's perfectly intact. He shakes his head in disbelief.

122 INT. MAGNOLIA HOTEL: ROOM - DAY 122

Wilfred writes feverishly at the desk.

A clawing sound can suddenly be heard coming from the wall behind him. Wilfred stops writing and turns to the sound. He notices a slight hole has appeared towards the bottom of the wall.

Wilfred watches as a rat starts to scratch its way through the hole. The rat makes it all the way out and lands inside the room. It looks up at Wilfred and snarls at him before disappearing under the bed.

Wilfred sets his eyes back on the wall and listens as more rats scurry inside it. He then realizes that the rats are scurrying inside all four walls of the room.

123 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: MASTER BEDROOM - DUSK 123

Blood soaked money sits on the dresser as the sound of the rats scurrying inside the walls intensifies. The wind outside gusts hard, shaking the house. Through the window, sleet starts to fall.

CUT TO:

Wilfred is on his knees with a soapy bucket of water and a brush, scrubbing the rats blood out of the floorboards with his uninjured hand, trying to ignore the sound of the rats.

124 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: SITTING ROOM - NIGHT 124

A bottle of pills rests in Wilfred's good hand. They read: Arlette James: Take 1 or 2 at Bed-Time for Monthly Pain.

CUT TO:

Wilfred, sitting on the sofa, pops three of the pills in his mouth and downs them with a large swig of whiskey straight from the bottle.

CUT TO:

Wilfred lies on the sofa, staring up at the leaking roof with heavy, drugged eyes. They soon close.

125 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: FRONT - NIGHT 125

The sleet has turned to driving snow and covers the house in a white blanket.

126 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: DINING ROOM - DAY 126

It continues snowing hard outside the window. Wilfred sits before the roaring stove, pale, sweating profusely and unwrapping his bandage in agony.

Wilfred finishes unwrapping the bandage and inspects his hand. It is twice its normal size, the bite itself is an ashy gray and the first three fingers are a dull pink.

127 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: FRONT - DAY 127

Wilfred, hand tightly wrapped again, trudges through the heavy snow towards the almost fully covered Model T in a daze.

CUT TO:

Wilfred tries to crank the engine with his right hand, but can hardly see in front of his face. He gives in to the futility of the situation and drops the crank, trying to catch his breath.

128 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: DINING ROOM - DAY 128

Wilfred sits back in front of the stove, covered in snow and looking even more worse for wear. He turns his attention to the pills sitting on the table.

CUT TO:

The fire inside the stove has all but burnt itself out. The snow outside the window has not let up an inch.

Wilfred wakes with a start to the sound of distant scuttering. He tries to get his bearings.

The scuttering intensifies and is coming from behind Wilfred. He turns to the back door in a daze to investigate.

The door latch begins to rattle slightly. Wilfred narrows his eyes on the lock.

WILFRED
(coarse)
Hank..?

The door latch stops rattling and begins to slide free.

CLACK! The door, now completely unlocked, begins to creak open.

Wilfred takes a terrified breath.

The door fully opens. Standing there on the porch is Arlette; filthy dress, burlap snood flecked with snow, face slack with decay. She has managed to reattach her jaw which now slews crookedly to one side.

Rats surround the ground where Arlette stands. They follow her as she contorts her crushed, mangled legs and manages to step inside the kitchen. Her bones make horrid cracking sounds with every jagged move she attempts.

Wilfred staggers to his feet and slowly backs away from Arlette, terrified. She sets her cloudy eyes on him, her head bobbing and rolling on her cut throat.

WILFRED (CONT'D)

You aren't even here... You're in the well...

Arlette cracks and contorts her way towards him. Wilfred shakes his head and backs through into the sitting room.

129 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: SITTING ROOM - DAY 129

Wilfred listens intently to the rats scurrying around on the floorboards in the dining room.

WILFRED

You're in the well...

Wilfred moves out into the hallway.

130 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: HALLWAY - DAY 130

Wilfred starts towards the back door but suddenly stops at the sight of Arlette and her rats moving out of the kitchen and into the hallway, cutting him off.

Wilfred turns and sets his eyes on the basement door. He opens it and steps inside.

131 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: BASEMENT - DAY 131

Wilfred slams the door behind him and makes his way down the narrow steps. He suddenly trips and takes a tumble, ending up at the bottom of them in a heap.

Too weak to do anything but perch himself up against the wall, he looks up at the basement door with dread, waiting.

CH-CH-CH-CH! The handle suddenly starts to jerk up and down.

WHOOMP! The door flings open and Wilfred comes face to face with Arlette once again in all her mangled glory. Her loyal court guide her down the steps towards Wilfred who shakes his head.

WILFRED

No... Please... No...

The rats sniff at Wilfred. Arlette makes it to the bottom of the stairs. She makes a thick gurgling sound as she bends right over Wilfred, her face dangling with loose flesh. Wilfred braces for impact, expecting her to bite him.

Instead, Arlette's broken jaw grinds back and forth. She pushes her cold lips to Wilfred's ear and begins to whisper.

WILFRED (V.O.)

You may have wondered how I know about the gun Henry bought in the Dodge Street pawnshop and the bank robbery in Omaha.

Wilfred listens intently to Arlette's every word.

132 INT. SHACK - DAY

132

Henry sits in a dank, single room shack with no windows loading bullets into his .32 pistol.

WILFRED (V.O.)

If you did well you probably said to yourself, it's a lot of time between 1922 and 1930. Enough to fill in plenty of details.

Henry finishes loading the final bullet.

WILFRED (V.O.)

But that only confirmed what I already knew. Right as it was unfolding.

Henry snaps the chamber shut.

133 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: BASEMENT - DUSK

133

Arlette continues whispering into Wilfred's ear.

WILFRED (V.O.)

She whispered secrets only a dead woman could know.

134 INT. MAGNOLIA HOTEL: ROOM - DAY 134

Wilfred frantically writes away at his desk with a haunted look on his face, trying to ignore the dozen rats that now occupy the room.

WILFRED (V.O.)

All I can do is reiterate that this is my confession, my last words on earth, and I've put nothing in it I don't know to be true.

135 EXT. ST EUSEBIA CATHOLIC HOME - DAY 135

Henry stands with a bicycle behind a delivery truck and scopes out the bleak looking home from across the street.

WILFRED

A week after robbing the First Agricultural Bank, he began making trips into Omaha.

A group of GIRLS (14-16 years old, dowdy dresses, some noticeably pregnant) make their way through the front gates and walk down the street.

Henry watches on. Shannon is not amongst them.

136 EXT. SODA FOUNTAIN - DAY 136

Henry rides past the window and glances inside. He sets his eyes on the same group of Girls sitting at a booth, drinking icecream sodas as they chat away.

Henry brakes at the mouth of an alley way next door to the soda fountain and looks around.

137 EXT. ALLEY WAY - DAY 137

Henry sits on a crate just inside the alley way smoking a cigarette. He watches as the group of Girls walk past.

VICTORIA (15 years old, six months pregnant) walks just behind the group and notices Henry. She stops and stares at him, curious. Henry smiles back and offers a cigarette.

138 EXT. ST EUSEBIA CATHOLIC HOME: FRONT STEPS - DAY 138

Victoria heads after Shannon as she scales the front steps under the watchful gaze of a prying NUN (60 years old).

HENRY (V.O.)
 Dear Shan. I'll wait from midnight
 to dawn behind your place every
 night for 2 weeks.

VICTORIA
 (calling)
 Shan...

Shannon turns and spots Victoria approaching her.

HENRY (V.O.)
 If you don't show up, I'll know
 it's over between us and never
 bother you again even though I will
 go on loving you forever.

VICTORIA
 I've been looking all over...

Victoria walks side by side with Shannon as they enter the home. The prying Nun lets her guard down and Victoria slips the note into Shannon's hand.

139 INT. ST EUSEBIA CATHOLIC HOME: DORM ROOM - NIGHT 139

Shannon sits on the edge of her bed, alone, reading the note with tears in her eyes.

HENRY (V.O.)
 We are young but we could lie about
 our ages and start a good life in
 another place. I have some money
 and know how to get more. Love,
 Henry.

Shannon folds the note and takes a breath, trying to compose herself.

140 EXT. ALLEY WAY - DAY 140

Henry paces back and forth in the alley way, anxious. Victoria suddenly appears before him.

CUT TO:

Henry unfolds a note. Shannon's response is four words long: Tomorrow Morning. 2 o'clock.

Henry holds his head with elation then throws his arms around Victoria and plants a kiss on her cheek. She blushes. Henry rereads the note and laughs with euphoria.

141 EXT. FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF OMAHA - DAY 141

The bank sits under the late afternoon sun.

WILFRED (V.O.)

Only hours after Henry handed his
reply to the girl in the alley way,
a young man robbed the First
National Bank of Omaha.

Henry, wearing a flat cap and bandanna, approaches the bank
and enters.

142 INT. FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF OMAHA - DAY 142

Henry holds his .32 on the terrified CASHIER (40 years old,
female) as she hands over the cash.

HENRY

C'mon, c'mon... Faster, faster.

Henry shoves the cash into his pocket and makes a beeline for
the exit.

A YOUNG GUARD (30 years old) approaches Henry and motions for
his gun. Henry is faster. BLAM! The Young Guard drops to the
floor, holding his wounded left thigh amidst screaming
CUSTOMERS.

Henry continues on towards the exit and looks back at the
Young Guard writhing on the floor in agony.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(calling)

You made me do it! You made me!

Henry catches himself and takes off.

143 EXT. ST EUSEBIA CATHOLIC HOME: REAR - NIGHT 143

A nondescript Ford coupe sits behind the home in near
darkness.

144 INT. FORD COUPE - NIGHT 144

Henry anxiously watches the back of the home like a hawk.
Suddenly, a window carefully slides open and a travel bag is
thrown out of it.

Henry watches on as Shannon awkwardly wriggles her way
through it and lowers herself onto the ground. Henry can't
contain his excitement and jumps out of the coupe.

145 EXT. ST EUSEBIAS CATHOLIC HOME: REAR - NIGHT 145

Henry embraces Shannon with a hug and the pair passionately kiss before gazing into each other's eyes.

SHANNON
(whispering)
You're here... You're really
here...

Henry beams.

HENRY
(whispering)
Where else would I be?

Henry looks down at Shannon's belly in amazement. She takes his hand and places it on their unborn child. They both giggle with excitement when suddenly a light turns on from inside the home.

Henry picks up Shannon's bag and takes her by the hand. The pair quickly run towards the waiting coupe.

146 EXT. OMAHA-LINCOLN HIGHWAY - DAWN 146

The coupe motors along the quiet highway.

WILFRED (V.O.)
By dawn, they were on the Omaha-
Lincoln Highway. Their life as
fugitives had begun.

147 INT. SHERIFF JONES OFFICE - DAY 147

Sheriff Jones sits at his desk reading a front page story on "The Sweetheart Bandits" and their crime spree in the World-Herald. The story is accompanied by individual photographs of the Henry and Shannon.

Jones can only shake his head in disbelief.

148 INT. COTTERIE RESIDENCE: KITCHEN - DAY 148

The same copy of the World-Herald sits on the kitchen table. Harlan consoles a distraught Sallie.

Harlan stares down at the picture of Shannon then turns his attention to the kitchen window, seething with rage.

149 EXT. ISOLATED ROAD - DAY 149

Smoke starts to billow from the engine of the coupe. Henry pulls over on the stretch of road.

- 150 EXT. FARM - DAY 150
Henry and Shannon walk hand in hand towards a farm house sitting in the distance.
- 151 EXT. FARMER'S HOUSE: FRONT - DAY 151
A FARMER (60 years old) opens his screen door and sets his eyes on the pair. He greets them with a warm smile.
- FARMER
Car trouble?
- Henry pulls his .32 on the Farmer. Shannon looks away with tears of remorse in her eyes. The Farmer's smile vanishes.
- HENRY
We need your car. And your cash.
- Shannon dares not turn around as Henry enters the house.
- 152 EXT. MCCOOK TRAIN DEPOT - DAY 152
The Farmer's truck sits abandoned on the side of the street near the train depot.
- SHANNON (V.O.)
Here is your car back, we will send the money we stole when we can.
- 153 INT. FARMERS TRUCK - DAY 153
A note sits on the drivers seat underneath a rock.
- SHANNON (V.O.)
We only took from you because we were in a scrape. Very truly yours,
The Sweetheart Bandits.
- 154 EXT. STREET - DAY 154
Henry tries to jimmy open the drivers side door of a Hupmobile with a crowbar while Shannon keeps lookout.
- WILFRED (V.O.)
They played it smart and stayed lucky.
- Henry springs the door open and smiles proudly at Shannon.
- 155 EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY 155
The Hupmobile rattles along the isolated road.

WILFRED (V.O.)

They turned south, picking their way through dirt roads and cattle trucks.

156 INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - DAY

156

Henry, wearing a flatcap, and Shannon, scarf around her head, sit in the far corner of the carriage, hands interlocked, keeping a low profile.

WILFRED (V.O.)

A week later, a young couple calling themselves Harry and Susan Freeman boarded the train for San Francisco in Colorado Springs.

Henry scans the other COMMUTERS, hypervigilant. Shannon stares solemnly out the window at a passing field.

Henry notices a TIDY MAN (35 years old, brown suit, glasses) staring at them over the top of his newspaper.

WILFRED (V.O.)

They robbed a bank there, and then a gas station in Ogden, Utah.

Henry keeps his eyes on the man, uneasy.

157 INT. FORD - DAY

157

Shannon anxiously sits in the passenger side of the idling Ford, staring at a gas station out her window.

158 INT/EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

158

Henry, bandana covering his face and his .32 fixed on the scared CUSTOMERS and EMPLOYEES, backs away towards the door.

Henry turns and runs towards the Ford but is tackled out of nowhere by a WIRY MAN (35 years old). The .32 slips out of Henry's hand. Shannon watches on in horror.

SHANNON

(calling)

Henry!

Shannon climbs out of the Ford and approaches the pair as they pick themselves up and wrestle. Shannon lunges at the Wiry Man and pushes him. He hits his head badly on a bench sitting out the front of the gas station and is out for the count.

HENRY

C'mon...

Henry picks up the .32, takes Shannon's hand and they jump inside the Ford. It takes off kicking up dust as it goes.

WILFRED (V.O.)

The man in Ogden suffered a bad concussion.

159 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: BASEMENT - DUSK 159

Arlette's jaw grinds in an unnerving manner as she continues whispering her news into Wilfred's ear. Wilfred soaks it all up, equal parts transfixed and terrified.

WILFRED (V.O.)

The Sweetheart Bandits had almost graduated to murder. Again they had stayed lucky.

160 EXT. DINER - DAY 160

The quiet diner sits under a blanket of thick snow. The Ford rattles its way towards the diner and pulls up out the front.

WILFRED (V.O.)

That luck had all but run out by the time they reached Deeth, Nevada.

161 INT. DINER - DAY 161

Henry and Shannon sit in a booth eating eggs and sipping coffee. They look exhausted.

SHANNON

Go on...

Henry smiles, sheepish, and shakes his head.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Come on, out with it...

HENRY

What about... Hank?

SHANNON

Hank Henry James...

Shannon smiles.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

And what if it's a girl? I was thinking Sallie, after my mama...

Henry considers Shannon, reflective.

HENRY
Your mama?

SHANNON
I owe it to her.

Henry gently nods. Regret lingers in his eyes.

HENRY
Sallie... Sallie it is.

Henry reaches across the table and takes Shannon's hand.

HENRY (CONT'D)
What about her middle name?

Shannon runs her thumbs over Henry's skin, contemplative.

CUT TO:

The COUNTERMAN (40 years old) sneaks a peak at the pair from inside the kitchen then looks at the copy of the World-Herald clenched in his hands.

The Counterman turns to a WAITRESS (21 years old) and a COOK (30 years old), giving them a nod.

CUT TO:

The Counterman reaches underneath the front counter and removes a rusty old cowboy pistol.

CUT TO:

The Counterman walks up to the pair and nervously points the pistol at them with trembling hands.

COUNTERMAN
Throw up your hands...

Shannon freezes. Henry sizes up the Counterman.

COUNTERMAN (CONT'D)
I said throw up your hands...

Shannon raises her hands.

HENRY
Don't do that my friend... We mean you no harm.

The Counterman keeps the pistol fixed on them.

SHANNON
Please, sir... We'll just leave you be.

HENRY

What business do you have pointing
that thing at a defenseless
pregnant lady?

The Counterman stands his ground. Henry slides out of the booth and slowly approaches him. Cool. Calm. Collected. Shannon slowly lowers her hands, uneasy.

HENRY (CONT'D)

We'll just pay up and g-

The Counterman pulls the trigger but the old pistol misfires. The Waitress and Cook watching on from the kitchen, gasp.

Henry suddenly snatches the pistol off the Counterman and opens the cylinder.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(laughing)

These bullets have been in there so
long they're green.

Henry looks back at the Counterman and shakes his head.

CUT TO:

Henry places two dollars down on the counter, then the pistol, while Shannon quickly puts her coat on by the door. Henry glances over at the powerless Counterman.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Like she said. We'll just leave you
be... Thanks for breakfast.

Henry turns to Shannon and takes her by the hand. The pair start to exit the diner.

The Counterman suddenly picks up the pistol and aims it at them again. CRACK! This time it fires.

Shannon is hit in the back and screams, stumbling forward out the door into the blowing snow.

162

EXT. DINER - DAY

162

Henry catches Shannon before she hits the ground.

HENRY

Shan..?

Shannon looks up at Henry in shock as the falling snow slowly covers them.

163 INT. FORD - DAY

163

Henry drives as fast as he can through the thickening snow as Shannon takes rapid, anguished breaths on the back seat.

HENRY

(crying)

Just hold on, Shan... Hold on...
We'll get to Elko... We'll find a
Doctor... Just hold on, please hold
on...

Shannon screams in agony and she holds her belly and starts going into labor.

164 EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

164

The Ford starts to skid on the slippery road and skids into a ditch, stalling. The strengthening winds blows snow all around the vehicle.

165 EXT. SNOW COVERED FIELD - DAY

165

Henry carries Shannon towards the ghostly outline of an abandoned house sitting in the distance, trudging through the snow with great difficulty. Shannon groans in his arms.

SHANNON

I can't go any farther, honey...
Put me on the ground...

HENRY

What about the baby?

SHANNON

It's dead, Henry...

Henry stops, overcome.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

I can't stand the pain... I love
you, honey, but put me on the
ground.

Henry considers Shannon then sets his eyes on the abandoned house. He continues trudging towards it with Shannon in his arms.

166 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY

166

Henry sets Shannon down on a dank looking mattress.

HENRY

I'll go get wood, okay? I'll make
it warm...

Shannon is semi-conscious and covered in snow and blood.

167 EXT. SNOW COVERED FIELD - DAY 167

Henry searches through the snow for pieces of scrap lumber.

168 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY 168

Henry lights a small stove.

HENRY
(muttering)
I'll make it warm... I'll make it
warm...

Shannon is now completely unconscious. Henry moves onto the mattress and rests her head on his lap. He gently strokes her hair and shivers uncontrollably.

CUT TO:

The fire in the stove has burned to embers. Shannon is dead. Henry stares into the stove, overwrought, and continues stroking her hair.

WILFRED (V.O.)
All these things Arlette told me
while those two doomed children
were still alive and there was
nothing I could do about it.

169 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: BASEMENT - NIGHT 169

Arlette's jaw stops grinding and she pulls away from Wilfred who remains slumped against the wall.

WILFRED (V.O.)
All these things she told me while
her rats crawled around me.

Wilfred shakes his head, distraught.

WILFRED
Please... Save them... You have
to... Please, Arlette...

Arlette simply stares down at Wilfred.

WILFRED (CONT'D)
Kill me then... Do it... Open my
throat like I opened yours...

Arlette shakes her head then turns and slowly heads back up the stairs, taking her rats with her.

WILFRED (V.O.)
 She wouldn't... That was her
 revenge...

And just like that, Arlette and her rats are gone.

The door closes.

Wilfred collapses.

CUT TO BLACK.

170 INT. JONES' PATROL CAR - DAY

170

Wilfred, lying on the back seat, sets his semi-conscious eyes on the clear blue sky passing by through the window.

WILFRED
 (mumbling)
 Henry... Shannon... Shack out of
 Elko... Call someone...

JONES (O.S.)
 He's run off with her alright.

Wilfred glances at Jones driving along.

WILFRED
 (mumbling)
 Sheriff, you have to-

JONES
 You need to save your strength,
 Wilf. And you need to be grateful
 to Arlette. I never would have come
 out here if not for her.

WILFRED
 (mumbling)
 Arlette... Dead...

Wilfred passes out.

FADE TO BLACK.

171 INT. ANGELS OF MERCY HOSPITAL: RECOVERY ROOM - DAY

171

Wilfred, heavily medicated, lies in a hospital bed, twenty-five pounds lighter and minus his left hand. He stares long and hard at his bandaged stump with glassy eyes.

Sheriff Jones enters the room and sits before Wilfred with a grave face.

Wilfred braces himself for all the unwanted news waiting to leave Sheriff Jones' mouth.

Sheriff Jones removes his hat and glances at Wilfred's stump, shaking his head in utter disbelief. He then locks eyes with Wilfred.

JONES

I'm sorry for your loss, Wilf.

Wilfred remains perfectly still.

JONES (CONT'D)

Two days ago, a farmer headed to Lyme Biska noticed something lying in a ditch.

172 EXT. SIDE OF ROAD - DAY 172

A CURIOUS FARMER (40 years old) climbs out of his truck. He stares down into a ditch at a pink pair of step-ins. He then notices a trio of wild dogs fighting over something in a field.

173 EXT. FIELD - DAY 173

BOOM! The Curious Farmer fires his rifle into the air as he walks towards the dogs, scaring them off.

He stops, chilled to the bone, before a woman's skeleton. A few pieces of flesh and the rags of a dress cling to it.

JONES (V.O.)

Two of the back teeth were gone.

174 INT. ANGELS OF MERCY HOSPITAL: RECOVERY ROOM - DAY 174

Wilfred keeps his eyes locked on Jones.

JONES

Was Arlette missing a couple of back teeth?

Wilfred musters a slow, methodical nod.

JONES (CONT'D)

When I came out that day just after she ran off, your boy said she took her good jewelry. And you mentioned something about 200 dollars. Isn't that right?

WILFRED

That's right.

JONES

Well, there you go. She was robbed on the road.

(MORE)

JONES (CONT'D)
Some bad egg picked her up, killed
her, robbed her of her money and
her jewelry.

WILFRED
And Henry..?

Jones falls silent as his face fills with regret.

WILFRED (V.O.)
He didn't need to tell me.

175 EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY 175

The house sits like a ghost in the blanket of white snow.

WILFRED (V.O.)
Arlette already had.

Suddenly, a muzzle flash can be seen through one of the
windows.

176 EXT. HEMINGFORD TRAIN DEPOT - DAY 176

Wilfred, stoney faced, stands at the depot and watches a
train approach. A pack of REPORTERS take photographs of
Wilfred and bombard him with questions he does not even
attempt to answer.

WILFRED (V.O.)
Henry arrived in Hemingford by
train on the eighteenth of
December.

177 INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY 177

Wilfred stands over Henry's closed pine box. The FUNERAL
OPERATOR (40 years old, sharp suit) opens it up. Wilfred does
all he can to prepare himself.

A large chunk of Henry's left skull is missing. His eyes,
nose and lower lip are gone.

FUNERAL OPERATOR
I'm sorry, Mr James... The rats got
to him... Got to both of them
before they were found.

Wilfred's horror is matched only by his inconsolable grief at
the sight of his dead son. The tears flow with ease and he
soon begins to howl.

Wilfred turns to the Funeral Operator.

WILFRED

Fix him up.

FUNERAL OPERATOR

Mr James... sir... the damage is-

WILFRED

I see what the damage is. Fix him up. And put him in your finest coffin. I have money.

The Funeral Operator nods.

FUNERAL OPERATOR

Certainly, Mr James.

Wilfred turns back to Henry's body, leans down and kisses his cheek.

WILFRED (V.O.)

No father should have to kiss his son for the last time, but if any father deserved such a fate, it was I.

178 INT. HEMINGFORD GLORY OF GOD METHODIST CHURCH - DAY 178

The church is packed full of MOURNERS.

Wilfred enters the church and stands at the back, unnoticed. He spots Harlan and Sallie crying on the front pew. REVEREND THURSBY (60 years old) delivers the eulogy.

DISSOLVE TO:

Wilfred sits on the front pew, alone, listening to another of Reverend Thursby's eulogies.

WILFRED (V.O.)

The attendance was much smaller for Henry...

Wilfred slowly turns and sets his eyes on Arlette sitting a couple of rows behind him, surrounded by her rats.

Wilfred, unnerved but accepting of the now familiar sight, turns back to Reverend Thursby and continues listening.

179 EXT. JAMES FARM: BARN - NIGHT 179

A severe storm rages. Half of the barn roof has caved in.

180 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

180

Acheolis stands in the darkened room looking very much out of place.

Wilfred sits near her on the sofa, still in his funeral clothes. He drunkenly gulps whiskey from the bottle, numb.

Most of the damaged, leaking roof suddenly caves in and crashes to the floor, narrowly missing Wilfred and Acheolis.

He simply stares up into the raging storm above and takes another gulp of whiskey.

181 EXT. COTTERIE RESIDENCE: FRONT - DAY

181

The storm has stopped and the sun is out. Wilfred knocks on Harlan's front door and waits.

A sad and sorry looking Harlan opens the door, unimpressed to see Wilfred standing before him. He slowly steps out onto the porch.

HARLAN

What do you want?

WILFRED

I want to sell you my 100 acres.

Harlan smiles and shakes his head in disbelief.

HARLAN

Hard times, hey Wilf? Half your house and half your barn caved in. Heard you've got a cow living in there with you.

WILFRED

I'll give you the whole lot for 500 dollars.

Harlan frowns.

HARLAN

Arlette would roll in her grave.

Wilfred considers Harlan's choice of words and waits for a response.

HARLAN (CONT'D)

You think you know what you've done to me, but you don't know all of it. Sallie's left me. She's staying with her folks down McCook. She says she may be back, say's she'll think things over. But I don't think she will.

Harlan takes a breath, reflective.

HARLAN (CONT'D)

You and me in the same old broke wagon. We're two men who started the year with wives and are ending it without them. We're two men who started the year with living children and are ending it with dead ones. I've still got both my hands, there's that I suppose.

WILFRED

Why would Sallie leave?

HARLAN

She blames me as much as you for Shannon's death. She said if I hadn't gotten on my high horse and sent Shan away, she'd be alive and living...

(chokes up)

She'd have a grandchild... Called me a self righteous fool and she's right.

Harlan shakes his head.

HARLAN (CONT'D)

One thing I know for sure, if I took you up on that offer, tasty as it is, I'd regret it. That land is cursed. Sell it to the bank.

WILFRED

They'd just sell it to Farrington. All I ask is they don't get their hands on it... Not them...

Harlan shrugs, unmoved.

HARLAN

Don't ever come back here, Wilf.

Harlan heads back inside and slams the door in Wilfred's face. Wilfred stands there, lost, accepting.

182

EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: BACK PORCH - DAY

182

Wilfred approaches the house and notices Achelois lying in a heap with two broken front legs at the bottom of the stairs. The back door lies in smashed ruins around her.

WILFRED

Achelois..? What the hell spooked you girl-

Something dawns on Wilfred. He knows exactly what.

183 INT. JAMES RESIDENCE: DINING ROOM - DAY 183

Wilfred solemnly grabs his .22 from the dining room. On his way back outside he spots a trio of rats staring at him from the hallway.

Wilfred aims his rifle at them and fires. BOOM! The floor tears up and the rats scatter. Wilfred turns with a crazed glint in his eye and heads back outside.

184 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: BACK PORCH - DAY 184

Wilfred kneels beside Achelois and strokes the top her head as she moans in pain.

WILFRED
Ssshhh, girl. Ssshhh... The worst
is nearly over. Ssshhh...

Wilfred slowly stands and aims the barrel of the .22 at the back of Achelois head.

WILFRED (CONT'D)
It's nearly over...

Wilfred pulls the trigger. BOOM!

WILFRED (CONT'D)
That was the end of 1922.

185 INT. MAGNOLIA HOTEL: ROOM - NIGHT 185

Wilfred looks up from his confession and sets his eyes on the hundred odd rats crowded into the now dimly lit room, watching him, waiting, growing impatient.

WILFRED
Not yet... Not yet, Goddammit.

Wilfred looks back down at his confession and continues writing.

WILFRED (V.O.)
I lost the farm, of course. When
the hog-butchers finally swooped
in, I was forced to sell at an
insanely low price.

186 EXT. JAMES RESIDENCE: FRONT - DAY 186

A bunch of dead daisies sit underneath the now withered elm tree.

CUT TO:

SMASH! Wilfred's house is knocked to the ground by a DEMOLITION TEAM.

WILFRED (V.O.)

I would have lost my little toehold in Hemingford County even if I'd had financial resources to fall back on. There is a perverse sort of comfort in that.

187 EXT. JAMES FARM: CORNFIELD - DAY 187

The field is dry as a bone. The stalks are dead.

WILFRED (V.O.)

They say this depression we are in started on Black Friday of last year. But people like me and Harlan know it started in 1923...

188 EXT. COTTERIE FARM: WHEAT FIELD - DAY 188

The dead field sits under a harsh, early afternoon sun. Harlan's faded red silo is visible in the background.

WILFRED (V.O.)

...when the crops that survived the terrible storms that spring were killed in the drought that followed, a drought that lasted 2 years.

189 EXT. COTTERIE RESIDENCE: FRONT - DAY 189

The house sits run down and abandoned.

WILFRED (V.O.)

Harlan Cotterie hung on until 1925 or so, and then the bank took his farm.

190 EXT. OMAHA: INNER CITY - DAY 190

PEOPLE go about their day in the bustling city.

WILFRED (V.O.)

I went to Omaha. A city of fools
and I was their model citizen.

191 INT. DINGY BAR - DAY 191

Wilfred sits at the quiet bar, drowning his sorrows in whiskey.

WILFRED (V.O.)

Took me two solid years to drink up
Arlette's 100 acres.

He holds his glass aloft to the BARTENDER (50 years old).

192 INT. PAWNSHOP - DAY 192

Wilfred enters the pawn shop and looks around.

WILFRED (V.O.)

When I wasn't drinking, I visited
the places Henry had been during
the last month of his life.

Wilfred glances at the Clerk.

193 INT. FIRST AGRICULTURAL BANK OF OMAHA - DAY 193

Wilfred approaches the Female Teller, the same one who was held up by Henry. She smiles at him.

FEMALE TELLER

Can I help you, sir?

194 EXT. ALLEY WAY - DAY 194

Wilfred stands at the mouth of the alley way next to the soda fountain.

Wilfred notices a crate and sits down on it. He leans against the wall and quietly watches PEOPLE walk back forth, lost in his thoughts.

195 INT. MILL - DAY 195

Wilfred, wearing blue overalls, hauls a pallet along the factory floor.

WILFRED (V.O.)

I hauled pallets for 14 months and
often limped back to the
boardinghouse where I was staying
with my stump on fire.

Wilfred stops to take a quick breather.

WILFRED (V.O.)
The reason I stopped..?

Wilfred spots a group of rats watching him from atop a rafter in the shadows.

WILFRED (V.O.)
You guessed it...

196 INT. OMAHA PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

196

Wilfred wheels a cart of books down an aisle and stops to load the shelf.

WILFRED (V.O.)
Wherever I went... Whenever I tried
to busy myself with work, to keep
out the thoughts, they'd find me.

Wilfred creates a gap on the shelf then picks up a book from his trolley, "The House of the Seven Gables" by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Wilfred stares at the cover, reflective, then turns to slide it onto the shelf when he is confronted by a large rat wedged inside the gap, snarling at him.

Wilfred gasps and falls back against the adjacent bookshelf. He watches the rat climb to the top of the shelf and scurry off. Wilfred, shaken, tries hard to compose himself.

He then notices something the rat let behind in the book gap and picks it up. A piece of the bloodstained burlap sack used to kill Arlette.

A fellow LIBRARIAN (40 years old, male) watches Wilfred from the end of the aisle.

LIBRARIAN
Wilf? You alright?

Wilfred turns to the Librarian and quickly shoves the piece of burlap into his pocket. He does not respond and briskly walks down the other end of the aisle.

197 EXT. OMAHA: INNER CITY - DAY

197

Wilfred walks down the street in a daze.

WILFRED (V.O.)
Henry was right... There was
another way... There always is...

198 INT. MAGNOLIA HOTEL: ROOM - NIGHT

198

Wilfred continues writing.

WILFRED (V.O.)

But in 1922, the Conniving Man
inside farmer Wilfred James, had
begged to differ-

One of the rats bites Wilfred on the ankle. He screams and stands, kicking it away before being bitten by another, then another.

An angry rat scurries along the desk. Wilfred stares at it then reaches for his .32 sitting beside the bloodstained piece of burlap sack. The rat bites him. Wilfred winces and retracts his bloody, bitten hand.

WILFRED

(to the rat)

It's done... Let me end this...
Isn't that what you want?

The rat holds its ground and guards the .32 with menace. Wilfred scans the room, the hundred rats close in around him.

Wilfred then hones in on the sound of footsteps leading up to his room. They come to an abrupt stop, just outside the door.

The handle starts to jimmy up and down. Wilfred watches the door as he nurses his bleeding hand and backs into the corner of the room.

The door slowly creeks open and Wilfred ducks behind the back of a lounge chair, unable to face who's there. He listens as three sets of footsteps enter the room and come to a stop.

Silence follows.

Wilfred closes his eyes tight and shakes his head.

199 EXT. JAMES FARM: CORNFIELD - DAY

199

Wilfred calmly walks along a row of rustling leaves bathed in the late afternoon sun; a man exactly where he once belonged.

Wilfred reaches out and touches the leaves as he goes. He suddenly stops and looks down at his hand. It is slashed to pieces and dripping with blood.

HENRY (O.S.)

Poppa..?

200 INT. MAGNOLIA HOTEL: ROOM - NIGHT

200

Wilfred eyes snap open, wide with fear.

HENRY (O.S)
Come out from there, Poppa. It's
time.

Wilfred carefully glances over the edge of the chair. His eyes fill with horror. He pauses before slowly standing and staring at his new guests with anguished curiosity.

Arlette stands with Henry and Shannon to either side of her. The gruesome looking trio stare hard at Wilfred as the rats surround them.

Shannon holds the filthy, bloodstained burlap sack in her hands. Henry reaches for something tucked into the back of his waistband; the bloody butcher knife used to murder Arlette.

HENRY (CONT'D)
It will be quick.

Wilfred nods, accepting.

WILFRED (V.O.)
In the end we all get caught.

CUT TO BLACK.