

To the Green Valley

by

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EXT. SANDY ROAD -- NIGHT

JOHN OXENDINE, a grizzled Lumbee Indian, rides his busted up wagon down the pitiful sandy road. It's hot as hell.

Sweat rolls down his face. The god-awful mosquitoes buzz incessantly.

Wagon ruts run deep in the soil from years of use. The road looks like a pale scar cut into the ugly scrub oak and pine forest.

John's wagon is piled high with tobacco leaves.

It's 1917 in the swamp lands of Eastern North Carolina and John is trying to make a buck, trying not to starve.

John's doing something wrong though, and he knows it. That's clear from the way he looks around nervously as the wagon struggles through the sand. Then, BUMP.

The wagon hits something in the road and stops. John smacks the mule's back with the reins.

JOHN

(whispering)

Get up der mule! Get on now!

The mule won't move. John doesn't have time for this. He jumps down. The wagon wheels are stuck on a fallen tree. He grabs the mule by its harness. He tugs and pulls.

The mule starts to struggle forward, then pulls its head away nervously. Two men on horseback emerge from the tree-line up ahead. They ride slowly onto the road.

One of the riders lights a torch. It's SHERIFF TOM VANCE. The other man is his younger brother LUCIUS VANCE.

Sheriff Vance is huge, almost six feet eight inches tall. He's broad in the chest. The deep wrinkles around his eyes look like furrows.

Lucius, on the other hand, is thin and handsome. He's in his early twenties and by some miracle he hasn't been beaten down yet by the meanness of Bladen County.

The two men ride up close to John Oxendine.

SHERIFF VANCE

(sarcastically)

John Oxendine, now what would you be doing hauling a load of tobacco down Devil-Head Road just before the ass-crack of dawn?

John can't think of anything to say, instead he tugs stupidly at the mule's harness.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

This road leads to the city, don't it
Lucius? That's where this road goes.

LUCIUS

Yep.

SHERIFF VANCE

Now John,
(he sighs as if it's
exhausting to explain
this)

Bladen County has a law. All crops exported
must be taken by steamer from one of the
designated river landings. You know that.

LUCIUS

It's true John. I've seen the law. It's
written down. I've looked at it on paper.

JOHN

(pleading)
I can't afford it.

SHERIFF VANCE

It's for your own good John. It's dangerous
out here.

A deer bolts across the road behind Sheriff Vance and Lucius.

The two men turn to look. John seizes the opportunity and runs, leaving the wagon behind, but John is old. The deep sand slows him. The whole attempt seems desperate and absurd.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

Jesus, John, come back.
(to Lucius)
I'm on a horse. He can't get away. What's
he doing?
(to John)
Don't make me chase you John!

Sheriff Vance tosses the burning torch into the wagon bed. The tobacco goes up in flames.

He pulls a twist of tobacco out of his pocket. He bites some off and then hands it to Lucius. They watch as John runs.

Lucius puts some of the tobacco in his mouth and then hands it back to Sheriff Vance.

Suddenly Lucius spurs his horse and rides John Oxendine down.

He hits him on the head with the butt end of his Colt Navy revolver as he rides past. John falls into the sand.

Lucius pulls on his reins and the horse stops.

He aims his pistol at John's head and clicks the hammer back with his thumb. John grimaces, preparing for a bullet through the brain.

BANG...BANG, BANG, BANG. Fire shoots from the end of the big Colt Navy. Lucius empties the revolver. The bullets impact in the sand next to John's head.

The orange light from the burning wagon casts strange shadows on the ground. The roar from the fire is deafening. The mule, panicked, kicks and brays. John Oxendine begins to whimper.

Sheriff Vance and Lucius ride off into the darkness.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

CLOSE ON

Preacher BOOBY ALDRIDGE standing at the pulpit wiping his pink sweaty face with a sopping wet handkerchief.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE

From murder and vengeance and sudden death,
good Lord, deliver us!

The congregation lets out an AMEN and the walls of the meager little church rattle.

LIBERTY SCOPES, a determined looking young man in his twenties, sits among them with his mother DAHLIA SCOPES and his best friend GUS OXENDINE.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE (CONT'D)

From our sins Lord, and the sins and
trespasses of our fathers, deliver us!

And the congregation screams out again, AMEN!

Liberty is screaming with them and he's doing it with all his heart, but as he does it, he's looking at something else out of the corner of his eye.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE (CONT'D)

Let us sing.

On the other side of the church, with their bitch-of-a-headmistress MISS ARCHER, sit the children from the Orphans' School for Girls.

Among them is VIRGINIA, a beautiful and thin faced Lumbee Indian woman of seventeen.

Presumably Lumbee anyway. That's the best guess in Bladen County, but there's something different looking about her. There's something exotic and exciting that everyone is aware of.

Beside Virginia sits her younger roommate TAMMY. Tammy's legs dangle from the pew and she swings them back and forth energetically.

The congregation stands and begins to sing.

CONGREGATION

Oh the devil wears those hypocrite shoes!
That suits me! Oh the devil wears those
hypocrite shoes! That suits me!

The song is belted out heartfelt in the crumbling little church.

CONGREGATION (CONT'D)

Tobacco and snuff you better quit! That
suits me! Tobacco and snuff you better
quit! That suits me! Tobacco and snuff you
better quit, when you get to heaven ain't
no place to spit, and that suits me!

Sweat trembles on people's lips. Flies buzz around the rafters and the air is hot and suffocating.

Liberty continues to look at Virginia and she can feel him doing it, like he always does, and she looks back for a second. They've played this game before.

EXT. JOHN OXENDINE'S HOUSE -- DAY

CLOSE ON

A horse's hooves slogging through the muck.

Gus, still in his church clothes, is riding his horse toward his uncle's house.

The house sits in the middle of a sprawling tobacco field. Gus rides down the long dirt driveway to it.

GUS
(as he gets close to the
house)
Uncle John! You home?

Gus dismounts, ties his horse to the porch rail, and walks suspiciously up to the door. The main door is open but the screen door is closed.

Gus starts to pull the screen door open when John's face appears behind it. It startles Gus.

GUS (CONT'D)
Jesus, John! Goddamn it. You scared me.

Gus notices the long bloody wound creeping out of John's hairline from the pistol whipping he received.

GUS (CONT'D)
What the hell happened to you?

JOHN
Got kicked by the mule.

GUS
I worry about you out here all alone, never
see you in town.

Gus turns around and looks at the yard, presumably to where the mule normally is.

GUS (CONT'D)
Where is he?

JOHN
I turned the bastard loose.

John's starting to realize his uncle's lying to him.

GUS
And the wagon? You turned it loose too?

Gus pushes the door open and walks inside.

INT. JOHN OXENDINE'S HOUSE -- DAY

John retreats a little. There are whisky bottles littering the room. John is clearly a drunk.

GUS
What happened? You fall down drunk?

John knows he'll be found out either way. His nephew cares too much to let it drop.

JOHN

I got caught trying to take a load of tobacco into town by the road.

GUS

By Vance?

JOHN

Yep. Must have missed me at the landing.

Gus reaches out and touches the wound. John recoils a little. It hurts. The look in Gus's eyes changes. He's pissed.

GUS

They can't keep doing this. It ain't right.

JOHN

It is what it is.

EXT. JOHN OXENDINE'S HOUSE -- DAY

The house looks far away in the middle of the field. Gus, small in the distance, rides hell-bent toward the main road. His horse kicks up dust as he goes.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -- DAY

Virginia stands in her room on the third story of the Orphans' School for Girls. She stares out the window taking in the commanding view.

The school sits on a high bluff above the river. Down below at the landing she can see wagons lined up full of crops. Liberty Scopes sits on one of the wagons waiting his turn.

A paddle wheel steamer floats at the landing taking the crops on board. Smoke belches from the steamer's stacks and the black water of the river laps around the dirty hull.

Down near the water's edge sugar cane grows in great abundance. Away to the east corn is planted and some of the girls from the orphanage tend to it.

The door to Virginia's room busts open and Tammy runs in crying. Tammy flings herself on her little bed and sobs. Virginia walks over to comfort her. She sits down on the bed.

VIRGINIA

Miss Archer got you again, huh?

Tammy says nothing but continues to wail, her face buried in the pillow and her arms tucked under her torso.

Virginia pulls one of Tammy's hands out. Tammy has it balled into a tight fist.

Virginia pries it opened and looks at it. It's red as fire and looks like it hurts.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

(gently)

Aw now, it don't look that bad. How many licks you get?

TAMMY

(trying to regain her composure)

Five.

VIRGINIA

Well, you've had worse from the old bitch. You got to be smarter.

Tammy looks into Virginia's eyes. She's starting to feel a little better. She's adorable and it's hard for Virginia to see her so upset.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Can't get caught eating out of Miss Archer's chocolate stash. How's she going to stay so fat if you eat it all?

Tammy laughs a little.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

(pensively)

What are you going to do when I'm not here to take care of you? Huh?

Virginia pushes some of Tammy's hair back behind her ear.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Worries the hell out of me Tammy. Got to look out for yourself.

Tammy looks toward the window.

TAMMY

He out there?

VIRGINIA

Yep.

TAMMY
(regretfully)
You love to look at him, don't you?

VIRGINIA
Maybe.

TAMMY
You going to kiss him?

Virginia ignores her.

TAMMY (CONT'D)
You gonna do a lot more than that ain't
you?

VIRGINIA
(embarrassed)
You got a filthy mouth Tammy.

Tammy laughs and pushes her face down into her pillow. Virginia stands up and walks back over to the window.

EXT. STEAMER LANDING -- CONTINUOUS

Sheriff Vance stands next to the steamer. A long line of wagons filled with crops wait to unload their goods.

Several ruffians, the Vance's hired hands, stand around keeping an eye on things.

The Orphan School for Girls looms high up on the bluff. Rain clouds are gathering in the distance and the wind is picking up.

Liberty pulls his wagon onto a big scale built into the planks of the landing. A TOLL MAN sits looking at a raggedy book of price charts.

Sheriff Vance walks down the line of wagons slapping the sides of them with a wooden truncheon as he goes.

SHERIFF VANCE
They're selling it hot and selling it high
today in the city boys! Move it along.
Step it up! Get your crops to market!

The Toll Man looks at the scale's reading and then back at his charts. He spits a black gob of chewing tobacco onto the wooden planks of the landing. Flies buzz around it.

TOLL MAN
It'll be three dollars today.

Liberty groans and digs deep into his pocket to find the money.

SHERIFF VANCE
 Stop your goddamn groaning Liberty.
 (pointing to Liberty's
 tobacco with the
 truncheon)
 You're lucky we even let you take that leaf
 to town.

Liberty doesn't respond.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)
 What you selling that as anyhow? Shit-
 paper?

Liberty looks at Sheriff Vance.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)
 I asked you a question. Is it or ain't it a
 crop of shit-paper?

The air gets tense for a minute.

Liberty looks at the ground, then at the big gold ring on Sheriff
 Vance's finger. Liberty breaks the tension.

LIBERTY
 (smiling)
 That's what it is Sheriff, shit-paper.

Liberty pays the three dollars and moves the wagon forward toward the
 steamer. The next wagon pulls onto the scales.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Liberty sits on the porch of his little farmhouse holding a jar of
 money.

The rain is coming down hard and Liberty is staring out at his muddy
 plot of land. The crops have been harvested and the little nubs of
 tobacco that are left are getting beat down in the cruel rain.

Liberty twists the top off the jar and drops a measly amount of
 crumpled up dollars into it. He looks out at the field. He lights a
 pipe and listens to the rain.

The front door opens and Dahlia Scopes, Liberty's mother, steps out
 onto the porch. She walks over and puts her hand on Liberty's shoulder.
 She knows what's going through his mind.

DAHLIA

It's never enough, is it?

LIBERTY

Nope.

DAHLIA

Hard for a man to get ahead when he starts with nothing. God will provide.

Liberty cuts his eyes at Dahlia. He draws hard on his pipe. He's heard this before and it annoys him.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)

She'll come to you.

Dahlia spits over the railing of the porch.

Liberty stands up and walks out into the rain. He looks at the mud, the rain drops beating into it.

He looks back at the tiny farmhouse, his mother standing on the porch, the grey clouds swirling above.

INT. TOWN HALL -JUDGE VANCE'S OFFICE -- DAY

CLOSE ON

A newspaper being held up by JUDGE VANCE who's sitting at his big mahogany desk.

A ragged stuffed bear with big bald patches strikes a freighting pose in the corner.

The date on the paper reads March 1st, 1917.

Judge Vance is puffing on a cigarette and smoke is billowing around the paper and making it look like the paper might be on fire. It might as well be, given the news it contains.

BANG, BANG, BANG, there's a knock at the door and Judge Vance drops his paper a little. He's a stern looking man with calculating eyes. He's no fool and he's used to being in charge.

JUDGE VANCE

Enter.

Liberty Scopes walks in the door with his hat in his hand. He's dressed up in his Sunday finest.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

Come in Liberty. Sit down.

Liberty walks over cautiously.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

Goddamn Germans and Mexicans are plotting against us.

Liberty stands in front of the desk clutching his hat tightly, his knuckles turning white. He desperately wants to get down to business.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

Jesus, don't hover over me like a buzzard.

Liberty sits down in the small chair in front of Judge Vance's desk.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

The Mexicans! Never would have figured that.

LIBERTY

What?

JUDGE VANCE

The Mexicans Liberty, and the Germans. They have just conspired against America.

LIBERTY

How's that sir?

JUDGE VANCE

They've found a telegram. The sons-of-bitches are forming an alliance against us, or so it would appear.

(to himself)

Goddamn industrialists. Won't stop until they've destroyed the world.

Judge Vance puts the paper down and lights another cigarette.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

You come from a long line of gallant soldiers don't you Liberty?

LIBERTY

I guess.

JUDGE VANCE

Your father received a chest full of medals in the Spanish American, emboldened him. Came back all puffed up.

LIBERTY

I didn't really know him. He died when I was small.

JUDGE VANCE

Too bad.

(theatrically)

And your grandfather, a vainglorious cavalryman. Wouldn't swear allegiance to the Union at the end of the war. Instead, renounced it to the Confederacy.

Judge Vance thinks about the implications of this.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

Now that takes balls. I admire that. That's a man with conviction.

Judge Vance takes a long draw on his cigarette.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

What is it your mother is always saying?

LIBERTY

(trying to end the conversation)

War is against God's plan.

Judge Vance smiles.

JUDGE VANCE

It is, isn't it, against God's plan.

Judge Vance leans across his desk a little, like he's going to tell Liberty a secret.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

I mean Liberty, if we don't have God anything's permissible, and that won't do will it?

(pause)

I think Dostoevsky said that, or some shit like it.

Liberty chews on this for a minute.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

(getting back to business)

So, you've come for a loan.

LIBERTY

Yes sir.

JUDGE VANCE

I never thought I'd see a Scopes man in here.

Liberty ignores the comment.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

And what will you do with it, the loan?

LIBERTY

Buy a herd of pigs--
(pause)
--and a ring.

JUDGE VANCE

(amused)
Pigs and a ring.

LIBERTY

My field don't put out much in the way of crops. I figure with the way pork's going I stand to gain.

JUDGE VANCE

Not many men raising hogs here. Bladen County's tobacco crazy.

Judge Vance looks at his cigarette and thinks.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

I know your property. It'll do as collateral, just.

Liberty is relieved.

LIBERTY

Thank you sir.

Suddenly the SOUNDS OF A MAN'S RANTING VOICE can be heard from outside.

JUDGE VANCE

(looking out the window
inquisitively)
Sign the papers at the bank and they'll get you the money.

Liberty stands up.

LIBERTY

Thank you sir.

EXT. TOWN HALL -- DAY

CLOSE ON

Gus Oxendine's glaring eyes. Sweat rolls down his face.

Gus stands on a flatbed wagon that sits across the street from Town Hall. A painted sheet hangs on it that says "Gus Oxendine for Sheriff".

People are walking past him, trying to ignore what's happening.

Liberty walks out of Town Hall and his smile quickly fades as he takes in what's going on.

GUS

(gesticulating like a
worked up preacher)

That's right, walk on by, but I'm here to
tell it, I'm here to call it out. I'm here
to call it by its name.

(pause)

There's a wickedness in Bladen County. A
monster. A double-headed, double-talking,
forked-tongued monster.

A few brave souls have stopped to listen. BIG JOHN CUMMINGS is standing with his hands in his pockets and BUCKY ATTERHALL has pulled out a knife and is carving up a stick.

GUS (CONT'D)

Now ONE of them heads, it goes by the name
of Sheriff Vance, and the OTHER, the other
head, it goes by the name of Judge Vance.

(pause)

And I'm gonna cut 'em off. I'm gonna bring
'em down.

Now the crowd is bigger and the energy and power of a group is brewing.

Liberty remains on the periphery watching his friend.

GUS (CONT'D)

I'm here to slay the cowardly bastards and
you're going to help me. You're gonna cast
them votes like David slung stones. Your
gonna cast them votes like you was blowin'
on the trumpets and bringing the walls
down!

Sheriff Vance and Lucius have ridden up behind the crowd and they're wondering what to do, just how to handle it.

GUS (CONT'D)

How you think they got all that land, all that power? Oh, you know. You know how they done it! You know but you don't want to talk about it.

Gus wipes the sweat that's dripping off his face with a handkerchief.

People are starting to grumble, to get worked up.

GUS (CONT'D)

And now you ain't nothing but slaves, nothing but tenant farmers on your own land, paying to get your own crops to market!

Lucius and Sheriff Vance ride their horses into the crowd letting their horses' heavy bodies brush against people. The people get the idea and slowly begin to disperse, Liberty among them, but Gus keeps on talking.

GUS (CONT'D)

(pointing his finger at
Sheriff Vance and
Lucius)

We ain't taking it no more! We ain't taking it no more! I'm here to tell you! Take the message to the king up there in his tower!

(Indicating Judge Vance's
office)

Take it to him! We gonna stand up.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DUSK

Giant orange flames leap into the air. Black smoke billows into the heavens. Liberty stands in front of his farmhouse watching the nubs of his tobacco crop burn.

Gus rides up the drive and reins his horse to a stop next to Liberty.

GUS

Burning it off, huh?

LIBERTY

Yep. Pigs are coming soon.

GUS

Finally got yourself mixed up with Vance did you?

LIBERTY

(hurt)

I ain't working for him. I borrowed some money is all.

GUS

You going to come to the meeting then?

Liberty thinks about it.

GUS (CONT'D)

(accusingly)

You're not, cause you're in a bit of a situation.

LIBERTY

No good can come out of this.

GUS

Alright Liberty, you stay home and wait on your pigs.

Liberty stands there looking at Gus.

Gus pulls hard on his reins and starts to ride off, leaving Liberty standing in front of the burning field.

GUS (CONT'D)

(turning back for a moment)

But I'd like to know one thing. Who in the hell watered down the Scopes' blood with yellow piss?

Gus turns and rides off.

INT. VANCE HOUSE -- DAY

Lucius sits at a small table near the window reading *The Letters of Cicero*.

Sheriff Vance walks into the room.

SHERIFF VANCE

Daddy got you reading them books all day?

Lucius looks up for a minute and then goes back to reading.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

Guess he figures I don't need to read none.

Sheriff Vance walks over and takes the book away from Lucius.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

Maybe that's how come he named me Tom and you Lucius. Had it all planned out from the start.

LUCIUS

Stop your goddamn complaining. You're free to read whatever the hell you like. The books are on the shelves.

Sheriff Vance hands the book back to Lucius and walks out of the room.

SHERIFF VANCE

(as he leaves)

Let me know if you ever want to do some real work. Somebody has to keep this shit hole in order.

EXT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -- DAY

CLOSE ON

Liberty's fist pounding on the door.

The door slowly opens. Miss Archer peeks her head out.

MISS ARCHER

What do you want.

LIBERTY

I want to see Virginia.

MISS ARCHER

She's busy in the kitchen. Come back tomorrow.

LIBERTY

I'll see her now.

Miss Archer closes the door.

Liberty pounds on it again.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

Open the door Miss Archer. I'm not one of your children. Open the door.

No response.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

I ain't leaving. I been waiting a long time for this.

Liberty kicks the door repeatedly. He's starting to seem a little dangerous.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

(yelling)

Virginia turned 18 yesterday Miss Archer. I know the law! She ain't yours no more. That's the law.

The door creaks open again. Miss Archer's infuriated face peeks out.

MISS ARCHER

Wait here.

A few moments later Virginia steps outside in an apron covered with flour.

VIRGINIA

You wanted to see me?

She knows what it's about but she's trying to play it cool.

LIBERTY

There's no use dancing around it Virginia. You're 18 now.

Liberty pulls a tiny engagement ring out of his pocket.

Virginia watches wide-eyed.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

Virginia, you're the prettiest girl around. Will you marry me?

VIRGINIA

(smiling)

I will.

Liberty pushes the ring awkwardly onto Virginia's finger.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Liberty watches as the last of a massive herd of pigs is led down his drive and into a newly made fence that surrounds his old tobacco field.

Liberty hands the man who's brought the pigs a large wad of cash. The two shake hands.

Dahlia watches from the porch.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Liberty sits on a chair in the living room. Dahlia Scopes stands over him. She's angry.

DAHLIA

That's a lot more pigs than you had money son.

LIBERTY

I got a good deal.

DAHLIA

You got a mouth full of lies, that's what you got.

Liberty is nervous now.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)

(referring to Judge Vance)

That man and his family are not to be trifled with. You ain't like that. We're not like that.

Liberty looks out the window. He's embarrassed that he's disappointed his mother.

DAHLIA (CONT'D)

We've never been beholden to anyone but God Liberty, but God.

LIBERTY

(defiantly)

It's done now.

Dahlia brings out the big guns.

DAHLIA

Your father would weep to see this, you taking a loan from Judge Vance.

That stings Liberty. He turns his head and looks out the window.

EXT. GUS OXENDINE'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Liberty rides his horse up to Gus Oxendine's farmhouse. Two little children, DAISY and THOMAS, throw pine cones into a mud puddle out front.

THOMAS

(noticing Liberty)

Mama! Liberty Scopes is here! Mama!

Thomas runs to the house to get his mother. Liberty reins his horse to a stop and swings down off her. The horse starts eating what weeds it can find.

Daisy runs into Liberty's arms and Liberty picks her up.

DAISY
(gleefully)
Liberty Scopes! You're a no-good bastard!

Daisy plants a big kiss on Liberty's cheek.

MRS. OXENDINE'S face peers out from the screen door, then disappears. Shortly after, Gus steps out.

GUS
Come inside Daisy.

Liberty puts Daisy down. She starts to run inside.

DAISY
(turning back for a
moment)
I got a birthday coming up Mr. Scopes, and
I want one of them pigs.

The screen door slams as Daisy disappears. Gus walks down into the yard. The two men instinctively start to walk together, out across the sandy fields.

LIBERTY
I'm getting married Gus.

GUS
That so.

Gus is trying to seem cold.

LIBERTY
It is.

GUS
You been after her a long time. She's a
good looking Indian gal. I've always said
that.

There's an awkward moment of silence as Liberty works up the courage to ask his question.

LIBERTY
Gus, I want you to be my best man.

Gus is silent.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

I just want a family like you, a way to live and have a family. Sick of being poor.

Gus turns and looks at Liberty.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

I'll vote for you in the election.

DISTANT VIEW OF

Liberty and Gus look small as they walk together in the big open field. The orange sun sinks behind the pine trees.

EXT. BLUFF -- DAY

VIEW OF

Bees BUZZ around a honeycomb. A gloved hand grabs the comb and lifts it up. Honey oozes off the comb.

Virginia and Tammy stand in the midst of several bee houses. The Orphans' School for Girls is silhouetted in the distance. Down the bluff sunlight glints off the black river.

Other girls from the Orphans' School are busy scraping the honey off combs and into glass mason jars. The girls are wearing protective beekeeping clothes.

Through the mesh of Tammy's mask we can see that she's crying again.

VIRGINIA

I'll come for you as soon as I can.

TAMMY

No you won't.

VIRGINIA

(earnestly)

I will Tammy. I promise you.

TAMMY

You're going to get all knocked up. You'll forget me sure as shit.

LIBERTY

No I won't.

TAMMY

Yes you will.

Tammy is feeling more destitute and sorry for herself every second.

VIRGINIA

Remember the plan Tammy. I'll make him adopt you. That's the plan. We're doing it.

Tammy has become suspicious of the plan.

TAMMY

Did you ever ask him?

VIRGINIA

Not yet.

TAMMY

He'll say no.

VIRGINIA

He won't say no.

TAMMY

But what if he does?

VIRGINIA

Then I'll leave him and come snatch you away.

Tammy smirks, imagining it. Bees buzz around their heads. The bell at the Orphans' School starts to ring.

The girls collect their honey and start toward home in the gathering darkness.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS - DINING HALL -- NIGHT

Miss Archer sits in the empty dining hall. The room is dimly lit. Pools of light illuminate the rows of empty tables.

Virginia walks across the room and sits down in front of Miss Archer.

MISS ARCHER

So you're finally leaving us, huh Virginia?

VIRGINIA

Yes ma'am I am. Hard to believe. I don't know what to say.

MISS ARCHER

Say you're happy.

VIRGINIA

I'm happy.

Miss Archer slides a small box across the table to Virginia.

MISS ARCHER

Here are your things, what your father gave us when he left you here.

(pause)

Not much to 'em.

Virginia cautiously pulls the box toward herself.

VIRGINIA

I've been meaning to ask, I know you don't show the girls their records but--

MISS ARCHER

(interrupting)

It's not good for them. What good could it do?

VIRGINIA

I just thought maybe now that I'm leaving you could let me see them.

MISS ARCHER

(sighing)

Oh lord Virginia, what's there to see? It's the same old story.

Virginia waits, hoping desperately to hear something, anything.

MISS ARCHER (CONT'D)

Your father was a Lumbee farmer I figure. He came in, gave you up. Something happened to your mama. I don't know.

VIRGINIA

What happened to her? Don't you have to ask or something?

MISS ARCHER

I don't ask much. There's children being put out everyday. Your father was a mess, a drunk. I took you. His name ain't even in your records. Anonymity, that's what they call it. Guaranteed anonymity.

Virginia realizes that's all she's going to get. She stands up and starts to walk off.

VIRGINIA

Thank you.

MISS ARCHER

Virginia.

Virginia stops and turns around.

MISS ARCHER (CONT'D)

I was given up too, you know. All them things I did to you was to make you stronger. May have seemed cruel sometimes.

(thinking about it)

I been here all my life. Not pretty enough to get a man I guess. Past don't matter. It's the now that matters, and you got to be strong.

Virginia walks from the room. Miss Archer continues to sit alone in the darkness.

EXT. SPEAKEASY -- NIGHT

Back in the swamps a shack built on low stilts sits on an elevated piece of land. Black water spreads out around it. Cypress trees rise up out of the water and press in on the shack, threatening to overwhelm it. Spanish moss hangs from their branches.

Fires are lit outside the shack and gruff looking men stand around them drinking from mason jars, their rifles slung on their shoulders.

Men finish offloading barrels of whisky from a wagon. Two men ride atop the wagon, one holding a sinister looking double barreled shotgun.

Light comes from one of the shack's windows and the shrill notes of a fiddle vibrate the warped glass.

INT. SPEAKEASY-- NIGHT

Around a cracked oak table a group of six men are engaged in a high-stakes poker game. Lucius Vance sits among them. In the corner a blind LUMBEE WOMAN with a scarred up face scrapes away at her fiddle.

The pile of money on the table is bigger than usual, even for the games played here. Lucius slides more cash into the pot.

Big John Cummings, the Lumbee man who runs the joint, puts his cards down on the table. He's folding.

BIG JOHN

Too rich for my blood.

JESTER FINCH folds as well.

JESTER

Should have known not to play when I heard
you was coming Lucius.

The last three men stay in the game, BEEDY, TUX and THUD LOCKLEAR.
They're Lumbee brothers, skinny as rails with crazy eyes.

TUX

What's so goddamn special about Lucius
here?

JESTER

Wins all the time.

BEEDY

Does he?

LUCIUS

I'm the best card player around this shit-
hole.

TUX

That so?

LUCIUS

(matter-of-factly)
It's so.

THUD

Looks like that's about to change Mister.

Everyone's drunk and it's late. Tux is feeling confrontational.

TUX

(putting his money in)
I'll see your bet, and I'll raise you ten.

LUCIUS

Sorry, I'm all in boys.

BEEDY

(greedily)
What else you got?

Lucius pulls his Colt Navy revolver out of its holster and lays it on
the table.

LUCIUS

I got this, and it's damn sure worth more
than ten dollars.

Beedy turns and looks at Big John.

BEEDY

What the hell's he doing with a pistol in here? Thought there was no pistols.

BIG JOHN

He's the law.

TUX

(offended by the idea)
Ain't no law out here.

Beedy pulls out a big knife and starts to clean his fingernails with it.

BEEDY

(thinking about it)
Maybe he wins all the time 'cause he's cheating.
(pointing to the pistol
with his knife)
Maybe that's why he's got his rig in here with him.

Big John is getting uncomfortable. So is Jester.

BIG JOHN

(trying to diffuse things)
Beedy, Lucius Vance has been playing out here for years. He's no cheater.

All the men sit in silence looking at each other until...

LUCIUS

(pointing at the pistol)
Big John, do you mind taking the bullets out of my pistol?
(looking at Beedy)
Unless you object?

Big John reaches over slowly. He picks up the pistol and cracks it open. He dumps the rounds onto the table.

The men look at each other. They're not sure where this is going, but everyone is intrigued.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

Now put one back in.

Big John puts the round back in. Now he knows where this is going. He reaches into the middle of the table and slowly pushes the money aside. He places the pistol between Beedy and Lucius.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

Now Beedy, I may or I may not be a cheater. You'll never know. But I ain't cheating now, unless I'm a magician.

Everyone is starting to get the idea.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

I propose we stop this fucking around and play for what's in that pot. You spin the cylinder, I'll spin the pistol.

BEEDY

(as if it's a trick)
I'll spin the pistol.

LUCIUS

Suit yourself. Better yet, spin 'em both.

Beedy smiles. He picks up the pistol and spins the cylinder. CLICK, CLICK, CLICK.

He puts the pistol down and spins it as hard as he can. It whirs around and around on the oak table and comes to a stop, the barrel pointing towards him.

Beedy looks worried. Lucius smiles. Beedy picks the pistol up and puts it to his head. Tux scoots his chair away.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

I'm lucky Beedy. I'm a lucky bastard.

Beedy clicks the hammer to the pistol back with his thumb. He grimaces, trying hard to pull the trigger, but he can't.

Defeated, he exhales sharply and drops the pistol to the table.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

Anybody else want to play.

The Locklear Boys are silent. Lucius reaches out and slides the money toward himself.

EXT. TOWN HALL -- DAY

Sheriff Vance rides through the sandy streets. As he rides, he passes several handmade posters sloppily pasted to the sides of the brick buildings. The signs read "Gus Oxendine for Sheriff".

EXT. GUS OXENDINE'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

CLOSE ON

Gus Oxendine's hands pulling a rusted trench mortar fragment from his field. It's hard to get out, but he's used to it. He pulls this junk out of the dirt all the time.

After he yanks the fragment out, he notices something under it, a small object that barely catches the sun's light. He pulls the object out and wipes the dirt off it with his thumb. It's part of a dental bridge, about three silver teeth stuck together.

CUT TO:

At the edge of the field Gus drops the trench mortar fragment into a rusty pile of similar objects.

CUT TO:

Gus drops the teeth into a little hole he's scraped out of the earth, then covers it up.

The SOUND OF HOOVES and Gus looks up. Sheriff Vance is approaching. Gus wipes his hands on his pants and stands up. He watches Sheriff Vance ride up. Sheriff Vance stops his horse and looks down at Gus.

SHERIFF VANCE

(indicating the mortar
fragments)

Ought to take that iron to the foundry.
They'll give you cash on the pound for it.
There's money in that stuff.

GUS

I'd just as soon let 'em bake in the sun.

SHERIFF VANCE

Big battle fought here.

GUS

I find this shit all the time, find bones
too.

Sheriff Vance looks down at the ground for a moment.

SHERIFF VANCE

Listen Gus, you're a good man, got a family
and work hard.

(MORE)

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

(pause)

Why you want to go and start all this trouble?

GUS

You're the one that started the trouble when you bashed my uncle in the head.

SHERIFF VANCE

We got laws in this county. If you was to be elected sheriff, you'd have to enforce them too. Then YOU might have to bash your uncle in the head.

GUS

That all you've come to say?

SHERIFF VANCE

Judge Vance told me to give you a chance 'cause you seem like a good fella', only you're a little misguided.

(pause)

Why don't you just stop this shit?

Gus glances back at the house, he's thinking about it. The idea is appealing. Sheriff Vance can see he's on the verge of a breakthrough.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

We'll waive the fee for you and your uncle to take your crops to town.

Gus clenches his jaw, it sounds good.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

And I'll make you a deputy.

Sheriff Vance leans over and puts his hand out.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

What do you say?

Gus hesitates, then shakes it.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

You're a good man Gus. I'll be glad to have you working with us.

Sheriff Vance pulls on his reins and rides off.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)
(calling back over his
shoulder)
Tell the missus I said hello.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

CLOSE ON

Gus Oxendine staring and sweat running down his face.

Liberty and Virginia stand in front of the preacher. The congregation is assembled.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE
Kiss the bride son.

Liberty leans over and kisses Virginia. The congregation bursts into song.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

CLOSE ON

THE FIDDLER'S fingers blaze away at Bonaparte's Retreat. Fifty or so pigs are grunting and rolling around in the mud out front.

A wedding reception is going on Bladen County style. Tables have been set up outside with white lace tablecloths on them. Plates of fried catfish, venison, bear meat and pork are laid out. Pots of grits and black eyed peas steam.

People butter cornbread and drop it into swampy bowls of collard greens. Children run past screaming and playing.

Liberty and Virginia dance a spirited dance in front of a crowd of people. Preacher Aldridge, obviously a little drunk, stares at Virginia a little too long.

Suddenly the sound of a TRUCK ENGINE is heard, then PISTOL SHOTS ring out.

People turn and look.

BILL MOONEY is standing in the back of a flatbed truck being driven by ERNIE THOMPSON. Bill is trying not to fall out and trying to fire his pistol into the air at the same time.

The truck recklessly pulls into the crowd and skids to a stop, kicking up dirt and dust.

CLOSE ON

Bill Mooney's red face.

BILL MOONEY
War! War! War's been declared!

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- NIGHT

Liberty, Dahlia Scopes, and Virginia sit around the dinner table. Their plates are filled with ham and black-eyed peas. Liberty puts his hands together. Everyone bows their heads.

LIBERTY
Dear Lord, thank you for your bounty.
Thank You for the health of this family.
Help us to do thy bidding in keeping with
your heavenly plan. Amen.

Dahlia starts to pass the food around.

VIRGINIA
It all looks delicious, Mrs. Scopes.

DAHLIA
You can call me Dahlia.

Virginia smiles then looks down at her plate.

VIRGINIA
(muttering to herself)
Dahlia...Dahlia, Dahlia.

Virginia looks back at Dahlia.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
It's a beautiful name. I wish I had such a
pretty name.

Liberty cuts into the ham and takes a bite.

LIBERTY
It's good ham.

VIRGINIA
It's lovely ham.
(pause)
I was thinking, we ought to keep bees. Have
our own honey. Fresh honey.

DAHLIA
You know how to keep bees?

VIRGINIA

Yes ma'am. I did it at the Orphans' School.
Ain't much to it. I liked it.

The three chew in silence for a while.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

I want to ask something.

LIBERTY

What?

VIRGINIA

I don't know if it's the right time.

DAHLIA

Spit it out child, we don't have secrets in
this house. Speak your heart. I'll read it
soon enough.

VIRGINIA

Tammy, my roommate from the Orphans'
School, she's like my sister.

Everyone listens, knowing what's coming.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

I always told her if I ever got out of
there I'd adopt her.

Dahlia Scopes puts her head down and chews. She looks up a little at
Liberty passing this one off to him.

LIBERTY

Don't it cost?

VIRGINIA

Something, I guess.

LIBERTY

Soon as we sell off the pigs we'll get her.
As long as it don't cost too much.

Virginia's face lights up. She's overjoyed. She looks at Liberty
adoringly.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON

Virginia's face on Liberty's bare chest.

They lie in bed together. Moonlight comes though the window and dimly lights the modest room.

They're both crammed into Liberty's single bed. They touch each other gently.

VIRGINIA

(whispering)

Soon as we get things settled, start making a little, we can have a baby of our own.

Liberty smiles.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Me, you, Tammy, Dahlia and Olive.

LIBERTY

(a little surprised)

Olive?

VIRGINIA

Yes, Olive. Little Olive. But we'll call her Pickle.

Liberty chuckles.

LIBERTY

What if it's a boy?

VIRGINIA

(playfully)

Still Olive.

Liberty sighs and kisses Virginia on the forehead. A light rain patters on the tin roof.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

What if the war comes here?

LIBERTY

It won't come here.

VIRGINIA

How do you know?

LIBERTY

There's a big ocean between us and them.

VIRGINIA

You ever seen the ocean?

LIBERTY

Nope. You?

VIRGINIA

No. Ain't that something? Only eighteen miles down the river and we never seen it.

LIBERTY

(comforted by the thought
of the ocean)

They ain't coming here and I ain't going there.

EXT. RIVER -- DAY

Virginia sits by the river. The black water flows by. In the distance, a steamer drifts along. Virginia holds the little box given to her by Miss Archer. She pulls the lid off.

Inside the box is a child's rattle made out of a box turtle shell. She picks up the rattle and shakes it. CLACK, CLACK, CLACK, the rattle makes a sound. Virginia passes her fingers over the smooth surface of the turtle shell.

She puts the rattle back in the box and pulls out another object. It appears to be a handmade amulet of some sort, about the size of a silver dollar. The amulet is attached to a hemp necklace.

Virginia turns the amulet over. On the back is very small writing in a foreign language. Virginia slides the necklace over her head and lets it drop under her dress.

EXT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -- DAY

Virginia and Tammy walk along through the cornfield together.

TAMMY

I didn't think you'd come back.

VIRGINIA

I told you I would.

TAMMY

Old Archer is getting worse everyday.

VIRGINIA

She's just lonely.

Tammy stops and stares at Virginia. She can't believe Virginia just stuck up for Archer.

TAMMY

I'll be damned. Never thought I'd hear you make excuses for her. That what love does to you? Make you all frizzle-headed?

Virginia takes the rattle out and puts the rattle in Tammy's hand.

VIRGINIA

Listen, you keep this 'til I come back. Like a promise.

Tammy looks at the rattle. She's touched. She knows Virginia cherishes it.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

I asked him.

TAMMY

You did? You did! What did he say?

VIRGINIA

He said yes.

Tammy is elated. She begins to sniffle, unable to hold back her tears.

DISTANT VIEW OF

Tammy and Virginia walk together next to the wind swept corn.

INT. TOWN HALL RECEPTION AREA -- DAY

Gus Oxendine, in his deputy's uniform, walks through Town Hall with MASTIFF TAYLOR, the District Attorney he's called in from the city.

The two men walk up to SANDY GRIMES, the receptionist, and the only person in Town Hall at this time of the day.

GUS

Morning, Sandy.

Gus is nervous and talking fast.

GUS (CONT'D)

This is Mastiff Taylor, lawyer from the city. I got to show him some records in the vault.

SANDY

(trying to understand)
Some records?

GUS

I just need the key Sandy, to the records vault.

SANDY

What records does he need to see?

Sandy is noseey and bored.

GUS

Land records, about a legal dispute.

Gus puts his hand out.

MASTIFF

(a little irritated)

Any member of the public has the right to access the records, Mrs--?

SANDY

Miss. Miss Grimes.

MASTIFF

Miss Grimes. They're public records.

Sandy reaches over and grabs the key. She slowly places it in Gus' hand, unsure if she's doing the right thing.

GUS

Thank you, we won't be long.

INT. TOWN HALL RECORDS ROOM -- DAY

Mastiff Taylor flips through records in an open file cabinet. Gus stands near him eagerly awaiting his verdict.

MASTIFF

I don't see the deeds your talking about, but there are hundreds here. It would take days to go through them all, and I don't have days.

Mastiff Taylor pulls out his watch.

MASTIFF (CONT'D)

I've got forty-five minutes.

GUS

How about the roads, them saying what you can and can't haul? Ain't that obstruction of commerce? Ain't that what that is? Obstruction of commerce?

MASTIFF

A county can pass laws about what's hauled on county roads.

(pause)

State's full of crooked bastards. It's the beauty of our system. May the biggest bastard win. You've got bigger problems in this county deputy. You find out where all that illegal booze is coming from, then you'll be on to something.

GUS

They're making it out in the swamps. Hard country back there. Hard folks. You're welcome to go out there and look anytime you want.

Mastiff smiles a little.

MASTIFF

You hear anything, you let me know. I'll come back when I've got more time. We'll go through these.

EXT. TOWN HALL -JUDGE VANCE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Judge Vance sits at his desk looking at papers. There's a knock at the door.

JUDGE VANCE

Enter.

The door opens and Sandy Grimes creeps in with a tray of food.

SANDY

Lunch.

JUDGE VANCE

Thank you.

Sandy walks the tray of food over and begins setting the food out on the desk.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

Beautiful day.

SANDY

Strange day. Strange morning, anyhow.

JUDGE VANCE

How's that?

Sandy finishes placing the food.

SANDY

Oh, I don't know, just strange.

(pause)

Deputy Oxendine came in.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

A ways off from the the farm house Virginia is tending to her new bees. She's wearing a white hood with a mesh face guard.

She notices a man riding toward her on horseback. It's Lucius Vance.

When he gets close he stops his horse.

LUCIUS

Morning.

VIRGINIA

Morning.

LUCIUS

Liberty Scopes around?

VIRGINIA

No sir. He's in town getting feed.

LUCIUS

My father sent me by to check on the investment.

Virginia is silent. She doesn't like the sound of this.

She takes off her hood and her long black hair falls down around her shoulders.

VIRGINIA

Everything's fine.

LUCIUS

Looks like it.

Lucius stares at Virginia. The silence is awkward.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

You a Lumbee?

Virginia finds the question ridiculous.

VIRGINIA

Yep.

LUCIUS

You don't look exactly like one. You're prettier.

Virginia's not sure if she should be flattered or insulted.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

They say Lumbees aren't really much Indian at all, just darkies and crackers all mixed together with a little Indian sprinkled on top.

Now she knows she's insulted.

VIRGINIA

Can I help you with anything else Mr. Vance?

LUCIUS

(flirtatiously)
Maybe.

Lucius spurs his horse a little closer.

Virginia puts her hood back on and knocks the bee house with her arm. Bees swarm out.

Surprised, Lucius turns his horse and rides off.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

(calling out as he rides
away)
Tell your husband I stopped by.

EXT. GUS OXENDINE'S FARMHOUSE -- MORNING

Sheriff Vance and Lucius Vance stand at the door. The door opens and Mrs. Oxendine looks out. She's not happy to see them.

SHERIFF VANCE

Morning Ma'am. Is Deputy Oxendine home?

EXT. SWAMPS -- DAY

Lucius, Gus and Sheriff Vance ride down a twisted trail through the swamps in single file. The cicadas buzz.

SHERIFF VANCE

(explaining the situation)
The Locklear Boys been acting up.

Gus tries to listen intently. He's nervous. He's never gone on an arrest before.

LUCIUS

They been drinking liquor every night at Big John Cummings' and they ain't stopped for days.

SHERIFF VANCE

It's one hell of a drunk they're throwing, and apparently last night they all got in a fight--with each other. Nobody else left to fight I guess.

LUCIUS

And Thud cut off Tux's nose.

GUS

Goddamn.

LUCIUS

Yep, and then Beedy cut off Thud's nose.

EXT. THE LOCKLEAR BOYS' HOUSE -- DAY

The house is nothing but a pitiful little shack in the middle of nowhere. It's not clear whether anyone is home. Lucius, Sheriff Vance, and Gus ride up to the front of the house.

Alligator skins are drying in the sun. They hang from the porch by ropes. The ropes creak as the skins twist in the gentle breeze.

SHERIFF VANCE

Beedy, Tux, boys? Come on out.

Gus starts to draw his pistol but Sheriff Vance, shaking his head, motions for him to leave it holstered.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

Come on out now boys.

The front door slowly creaks open. One by one the three Locklear boys step out into the light.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

(as if he's surprised)

Well goddamn. You still got your noses.

(to Lucius and Gus)

They still got their noses.

Gus smiles, relieved. Sheriff Vance looks at Gus.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

(as if he's perplexed)

Looks like we were misinformed. I hate liars and sneaks. Only thing I hate worse is nosey bastards sticking their noses where they don't belong.

Sheriff Vance quickly pulls his pistol out. BAM! A pink mist wafts though the moist air as a bullet passes through Gus' head. THUD. Gus's body hits the ground.

LUCIUS

(surprised)

Jesus! Jesus Christ, Tom.

The Locklear Boys snicker. An alligator slithers into the water nearby. Lucius looks away ashamed.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

I thought we was just going to kick his ass a little.

EXT. SWAMPS -- DAY

Virginia hears Sheriff Vance's pistol shot in the distance and looks up. The cicadas go quiet. She listens for a minute and then continues to walk down a narrow path through the swamps. She walks along the path until it widens and she comes to a ratty marketplace in the middle of the swamp.

EXT. SWAMP MARKET -- DAY

Small wooden structures, shabbily constructed, serve as makeshift open-air shops. A few people, all Lumbee, mill around the little stands. Men and women peddle cured meat, leather goods, and home-spun clothing.

Virginia moves up to one of the stands. An OLD WOMAN arranges jars of pigs feet and preserves.

VIRGINIA

Ma'am.

The old woman looks up at her. She sucks slightly on her teeth as if she's pondering something.

Virginia pulls out the amulet and shows it to the woman.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Can you read this?

The old woman studies the amulet and then shakes her head no.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Virginia moves down the line of little stands holding out the amulet to the vendors but no luck.

INT. GUS OXENDINE'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

It's raining. Mrs. Oxendine peers out her window at the two approaching riders. It's Sheriff Vance and Lucius and they're leading Gus Oxendine's horse.

Mrs. Oxendine can see that Gus's body is lying draped across the saddle. Horrified, Mrs. Oxendine runs out of the house toward the men.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

CLOSE ON

Mrs. Oxendine's red, swollen eyes.

CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK. The sound of shells being loaded into an ancient Spencer Repeating Rifle. Mrs. Oxendine sits in a chair staring blankly. Liberty, furious and panicked, paces around the room loading the rifle.

Dahlia Scopes stands in the corner with her hands on her hips. She can see that things are about to get out of control.

DAHLIA

How do you know it didn't happen like they say?

MRS. OXENDINE

Because I know. I know!

(pause)

He said they got bushwhacked by the Locklear boys, that Gus might of hit one but his pistol ain't even been fired.

(pause)

Stupid bastards. They just put an empty cartridge in his pistol. Probably the one they killed him with.

Mrs. Oxendine pulls the pistol off her lap and smells the cylinder.

MRS. OXENDINE (CONT'D)

(holding it out to

Dahlia)

Smell it. Smell it!

Liberty is finished loading. He grabs his hat and starts to walk out the door. Dahlia Scopes walks over and grabs his arm.

DAHLIA

(whispering grimly)

You listen to me Liberty Scopes, wars and feuding ruined my daddy and they killed yours. Big feuds or little, makes no difference, they only end in death.

Liberty pulls away and opens the door. The rain beats down. He walks out and slams the door.

EXT. MUDDY ROAD -- DAY

CLOSE ON

Liberty's face, his slouch hat pulled down low, rain pelting him. He rides along through the muck, the Spencer Rifle dangling in one hand.

His horse comes to a stop on its own in the middle of the muddy road. The reins are slack around the horse's neck. Liberty sits on the horse staring aimlessly. After a while he picks up the reins and pulls on them, starting back toward home.

INT. SPEAKEASY-- EVENING

Lucius sits in the corner in Big John Cummings' place. He sits in front of an open bottle and takes another shot. He's drunk and bleary eyed.

EXT. CHURCH -- DAY

The Scopes family and the remnants of the Oxendine family stand around the open grave of Gus Oxendine.

Preacher Aldridge delivers the end of his prayer.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

Mrs. Oxendine looks dazed with grief. She throws a flower onto the casket and then walks away. Dahlia and Virginia quickly move to comfort her.

Liberty grabs the children by their hands and follows the women. John Oxendine continues to stand by the grave, intently watching Virginia as she leaves.

INT. VANCE HOUSE -- NIGHT

Judge Vance stands with Lucius in his study. He opens a roll top secretary and unlocks a drawer. He removes a map of the county. Judge Vance rolls the map out.

JUDGE VANCE

(indicating areas of land
with his finger)

All this, all this acreage, we got after
the War Between the States.

(pause)

Daddy bought it from the widows of the war
dead.

(pause)

Which rubbed some folks the wrong way.

Lucius looks at the map.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

And he bought it for nothing.

Judge Vance opens another drawer. It's filled with land deeds.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

I keep the deeds here with the map, see?

He pulls one out. He holds the deed up to the light.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

(reading the deed)

This one's from Fanny Barklay. Thirty acres
on Henery's Run. She signed it right over.

(pause)

What the hell was she going to do with it?
Old Fanny just wanted to eat for another
week.

Judge Vance turns toward Lucius.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

It was bad times.

Judge Vance puts the deed away.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

Course, the steamer landings, they're the
most important. Kind of the key to the
whole operation.

Lucius wonders where this is going. He glances back at the map. Lucius looks at his watch. Judge Vance notices and looks irritated.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

Where the hell do you have to be? Another card game?

(collecting himself)

Listen, you're smart. Some day you're going to run all this. Your brother, he's a good boy, but he's made for different things.

Lucius listens.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

Times are about to get tough. The first round of conscription is coming.

The gravity of the moment dawns on Lucius.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

I'm afraid we can't afford to sit this war out. You're going to have to go or people will talk.

LUCIUS

What about Tom?

JUDGE VANCE

He's got a job to do here. County's got to have a sheriff.

Lucius thinks about the implications of this.

LUCIUS

You want me to just sign up?

JUDGE VANCE

I've talked to Senator Atkinson. You'll be getting a commission in the 321st Regiment.

Lucius looks dizzy, confused. Judge Vance sticks his hand out.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

Congratulations.

EXT. VANCE HOUSE -- DAY

John Oxendine stands at the door of the Vance house knocking.

A few moments later Sheriff Vance steps out of the house. He looks at John sternly.

JOHN

I come to appeal to you as a Christian to confess what you and Lucius done.

SHERIFF VANCE

Look, I don't know how Mrs. Oxendine has got this pollution into your head, but it ain't healthy. We ain't responsible.

JOHN

I saw the pistol. His pistol wasn't fired. You said he fired it, but it weren't fired.

Sheriff Vance reaches out quickly and grabs John by the neck. He slams him up against the wall of the house and squeezes hard, choking him.

SHERIFF VANCE

You listen to me you old drunk, go back to your farm.

John is gurgling. Sheriff Vance lets go of John's neck and he falls to his knees, gagging and coughing. John stares up at Sheriff Vance.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

Do you need to be told again?

John shakes his head no. He gets up and staggers off.

EXT. GUS OXENDINE'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Mrs. Oxendine has all her belongings precariously packed onto a rickety wagon.

She loads the last child on board and climbs up herself. She grabs the reins and pulls away, headed out of town.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- NIGHT

Liberty, Virginia and Dahlia sit around the table silently. A draft notice lies on the table in front of Dahlia. She stares at it dejectedly.

LIBERTY

I'm drafted. I've got to go. It's the law.

DAHLIA

Not God's law.

LIBERTY

They'll put me in jail.

DAHLIA

This will ruin you.

It's too much for Dahlia. She breaks down crying.

Virginia stands up and walks over to her. She puts her arms around Dahlia and Dahlia sobs harder.

Liberty pushes his food around on his plate. He doesn't know what to do. He's stuck. He doesn't like it, but there it is, no way out.

EXT. RIVER -- DAY

Liberty and Virginia swim in the cool water. They move toward each other. Virginia puts her arms around Liberty's neck. She kisses him. She takes the amulet from around her neck and puts it around his.

VIRGINIA

For luck.

She kisses him again. They slip under the water together.

VIEW OF

Slipping beneath the water. The sunlight coming down through the water in rays.

CUT TO:

EXT. NO MAN'S LAND -- DAY

VIEW OF

The muddy water inside a shell crater. No Man's Land in France in the middle of a failing infantry assault.

Liberty bursts up from beneath the dirty water, breathing in deeply, trying to get air.

EXPLOSIONS, GUNFIRE, SCREAMING. He's narrowly escaped drowning but there are worse things going on around him than drowning.

An unimaginable amount of German machine-gun fire is flying through the air.

The slimy pock-marked field is filled with long dead bodies, nightmarish monsters, half-mud and half-human.

Artillery shells are bursting and throwing huge geysers of mud, barbed wire, and body parts into the air.

The men of the 321st Regiment are scattered, terrified, demoralized.

An officer tries to move forward and rally his men. It's CAPTAIN RICHARDS the commander of B Company, 321st Regiment, 81st Division.

CAPTAIN RICHARDS
North Carolina! Rally on me! Rally on me!

Richards has fantasized about this moment since he was a child.

CAPTAIN RICHARDS (CONT'D)
Home boys! Home is on the other side of
that--

But this isn't Bunker Hill or Cowpens. Here you'll die like a dog before you can get a word in.

Suddenly Captain Richards seems to vaporize, vanish, the effects of hundreds of 30 cal. machine gun rounds hitting his body all at once.

The assault is grinding to a halt all across the front. A shell bursts near Liberty. He's dazed, disoriented, hurt. He imagines he's dying.

Flares pop in the air signaling retreat, disaster. The survivors of the failed advance limp back into the smoke, back toward their own lines.

As Liberty slips out of consciousness, someone grabs him by the collar and drags him back toward friendly trenches. He recognizes the face. It's Lucius Vance.

INT. COMMAND BUNKER -- DAY

The command bunker is stifling. The ceilings are low, almost touching the men's heads who stand inside.

The Bunker is lit with tallow candles giving off an eerie light. The air is stale, hot.

Lucius Vance stands with the other officers of B Company. In front of them stands their new commander, CAPTAIN ERASMUS C. SHERIDEN.

Captain Sheriden is immaculate. His uniform is perfectly pressed. He wears the tall leather boots of a cavalry officer.

Captain Sheriden glances at a map lying on a table. He knocks his West Point ring on the table as if thinking, then looks up at the officers.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN
I'm sorry about the loss of Captain
Richards.

Captain Sheriden looks down for a moment. He notices something on his sleeve, a spec of mud, he compulsively begins to pick it off.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN (CONT'D)
 But that's what happens in war, people get
 killed.

Everyone is silent. Captain Sheriden looks at each man, one at a time.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN (CONT'D)
 (fidgeting with his
 sleeve)
 I'm an old cavalryman and I don't like this
 idea of sitting on our asses in a trench. I
 don't like this shit-eating infantry game.
 I want to move fast but all the love's gone
 out of war, and here we are, sitting on our
 asses.

Lucius is looking at the floor dazed and exhausted from the recent
 attempt to cross No Man's Land.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN (CONT'D)
 Lt. Vance?

Lucius looks up.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN (CONT'D)
 Stick with me for a little longer son.

LUCIUS
 I'm sorry sir.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN
 There's no room for apologies in this
 command.

LUCIUS
 Yes sir.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN
 The 321st is already on the Army's watch
 list. We have more Indians in our outfit
 than any unit. Cherokee and--and--

Captain Sheriden is at a loss.

LUCIUS
 Lumbee sir.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN
 And Lumbee. Thank you.
 (MORE)

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN (CONT'D)

(pause)

Now I'm from goddamn Washington DC, and I don't know much about Indians, but I do know they have two legs like any other soldier. Under my leadership the next time we go over the top, my fucking company of Indians is going to advance farther into No Man's Land than any other.

The officers stand silently.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN (CONT'D)

Is that clear?

OFFICERS

(unenthusiastic)

Yes sir.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

Jesus Christ, you're not dead yet.

OFFICERS

(summoning a little more energy)

Yes sir!

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

Dismissed.

EXT. TRENCH -- DUSK

Liberty stands on a firestep at the parapet of the trench pointing his rifle into No Man's Land. He's guarding against a potential dusk attack.

Out in No Man's Land, amongst the slaughter and debris of the recent attack, Liberty can hear a voice. He's been hearing it all day and it's starting to wear him down.

It comes from an AMERICAN SOLDIER tangled in the barbed wire. He's badly wounded and he's been there since the previous assault.

WOUNDED SOLDIER

Help me boys! I'm dying! I'm dying, boys!

Liberty tries to ignore it. He can see the silhouette of the man's body in the gathering darkness. His arms are spread out wide, hung in the spiked wire like a crucified puppet.

WOUNDED SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Oh Jesus! I'm hurt bad!

A BRITISH SERGEANT on his way to deliver a message walks down the trench behind Liberty.

LIBERTY
Sergeant, sergeant.

The sergeant stops.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)
(indicating the wounded
soldier)
Someone has to get him.

SERGEANT
(sarcastically)
Go get him then boy. I'll hold your rifle.

Liberty thinks about it for a moment. He's not going back out there. The sergeant expected as much.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
Maybe when I come back by then, huh?

The sergeant moves along.

EXT. TRENCH -- NIGHT

The blackness of night has completely descended. Liberty stands on the firestep. He has his pocket bible pulled out and squints to read from it in the darkness. The wounded man is moaning in the distance, shrill terrifying moans.

LIBERTY
(yelling out into the
blackness)
The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

Liberty is having a hard time reading. He pulls a match from his pocket and lights it. THWAP. A bullet smacks into the sandbags near his head. Liberty drops down into the trench.

INT. DUGOUT -- DAWN

Liberty lies on his cot. The men around him cough and turn restlessly in their sleep. A rat scurries across Liberty's body. He is awake.

Liberty gets up quietly. He's fully dressed and his boots are on. He grabs his rifle and sneaks out of the dugout.

EXT. DUGOUT -- DAWN

Liberty walks down the trench. His boots squish in the putrid mud. He climbs up onto the firestep and peaks out into No Man's Land.

In the breaking light he can see the man tangled in the barbed wire. He can see the man's breath in the cold morning air.

Liberty raises his rifle and takes aim at the man's head. POW. He pulls the trigger. The man's head recoils with the impact.

Liberty hurries back down the trench.

EXT. MOBILE FIELD KITCHEN -- DAY

Liberty stands in line with his platoon mates waiting for food. He looks dazed, removed. Lucius stands nearby talking with another officer.

THUD, THUD, THUD. German howitzers fire in the distance. Seconds later the sounds of incoming rounds are heard. The men scatter in all directions as rounds impact in the mud.

Lucius and Liberty duck into the same dugout. They crouch in the corner. The earth shakes. Sand falls through the beams above. The barrage is tremendous. It seems as if the entire world is caving in.

Liberty and Lucius huddle together as if they're trying to press their bodies into the same tiny corner. Gas masks hang from the rafters and shake violently in the dim light.

Finally, silence. The barrage seems to have stopped. Lucius and Liberty sit huddled together breathing heavily. The gas curtain at the dugout door is pulled back.

Light and dust pour in. A man's silhouette is visible. It's Captain Sheriden.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

Jesus H. Christ. Lt. Vance, is that you?

LUCIUS

(trying to regain his
composure)

Sir!

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

What are you doing huddled in there like a goddamn coward? Get to your platoon! Get to your post! We're under attack!

EXT. TRENCH -- DAY

Lucius and Liberty run through the support trenches to the main trench. Smoke fills the air. Wounded and dead men lie against the walls. The unit is in confusion. Lucius grabs a rifle that lies haphazardly on the ground.

LUCIUS
 (stopping a random
 corporal)
 Where's first platoon?!

THE CORPORAL looks scared. He doesn't know. He shakes his head. He's got troubles of his own. The corporal pulls away and runs off.

EXT. TRENCH -- LATER

Lucius and Liberty enter the main trench. Men line the firestep.

SOLDIER
 Here they come!

Lucius and Liberty man the firestep. Through the smoke the black outlines of the enemy can be seen advancing. It's the first time the men have really seen them, the first time they've been confirmed as real.

There's a strange pause as the men take in the sight, then, POP, POP, POP, a wall of fire erupts from the trench line. Machine guns blaze. German bodies begin to tumble to the ground.

Sporadic artillery falls on the trench adding to the confusion.

INT. OBSERVATION POST -- DAY

Captain Sheriden stands at the observation post. Artillery impacts all around. Beams fall in. Dust swirls in the air.

Captain Sheriden is frantic. He picks up the land phone and cranks its generator handle. He puts the phone to his mouth.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN
 I'm being overrun! I'm being overrun! I
 must have reinforcements.

INT. OBSERVATION POST -- MOMENTS LATER

Another beam falls from the ceiling. Captain Sheriden is knocked flat. He still clings to the phone but the receiver, unknown to him, has been severed from the line.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

I must have ammunition! I must have
ammunition!

EXT. TRENCH -- DAY

A few Germans have made it to the parapet. Liberty and Lucius fire away. Men to the left and right engage in hand to hand combat.

INT. OBSERVATION POST -- MOMENTS LATER

Captain Sheriden is frantic, stumbling through the rubble of the observation post, the receiver still pressed to his ear.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

(gleefully)

We are winning. We are winning! We are
driving them back!

INT. OBSERVATION POST -- MOMENTS LATER

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

(in control of nothing)

My command is lost! Permission to retreat!
I must retreat!

INT. OBSERVATION POST -- DAY

Captain Sheriden sits in the dirt, the disconnected receiver in his hand.

The crisis is over. Dust swirls in the air. Charred timbers are piled around him. His face is black with soot. He stares aimlessly.

EXT. TRENCH -- DAY

Lucius and Liberty watch exhausted as the German survivors retreat back into the smoke.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Virginia and Dahlia fill the pigs' trough with slop. Mud rises above the women's ankles. Virginia looks at one of the pigs.

VIRGINIA

I got another sick one here.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Dahlia and Virginia struggle to drag the squealing pig off to the side of the house. Dahlia holds the Spencer Repeating Rifle in her hand.

Virginia holds the pig as best she can.

Dahlia puts the muzzle of the rifle to the pigs head. The pig struggles and squeals. Dahlia pulls the trigger. BANG.

The pig grunts and undulates. It wriggles away and runs. It's not dead. Virginia takes aim and shoots at it several more times. A few shots hit.

Finally the pig drops to the ground and spasms violently for several agonizing seconds.

INT. FEED STORE -- DAY

Virginia stands at the counter of the feed store. MISS ASHLEY brings her a bottle of medicine for the pigs.

MISS ASHLEY
 (handing her the medicine)
 Here it is, came in this morning.
 Expensive, ain't it?

VIRGINIA
 Yeah. Cleaned us out.

Virginia opens the jar of money and pulls the last dollars from it. She hands the money to Miss Ashley.

MISS ASHLEY
 Sure is a shame. How many sick?

VIRGINIA
 We've killed fourteen.

Miss Ashley shakes her head.

MISS ASHLEY
 Times are tough. Don't look like this war's
 ending anytime soon. That's what the
 papers say.

VIRGINIA
 Any letters come for us?

Miss Ashley checks behind the counter.

MISS ASHLEY
 Of course.

She looks at the letter.

MISS ASHLEY (CONT'D)

He must write you everyday.

Virginia smiles.

VIRGINIA

Seems like it.

Virginia hands Miss Ashley two outgoing letters.

MISS ASHLEY

And you write two for every one he sends.

VIRGINIA

Dahlia writes them for me. I can't write. I mean, she writes what I say.

MISS ASHLEY

I know what you mean.

VIRGINIA

I sure miss him.

Virginia picks up the medicine and walk out of the feed store.

MISS ASHLEY

We'll pray for you Virginia.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DUSK

Dahlia sits in a chair and looks out the window at the pigs. The wind blows the leaves on the distant trees.

EXT. GRAVE -- DAY

Dahlia stands in front of her husband's grave stone. She stands there for a while just looking.

EXT. RIVER -- DAY

Virginia sits with Tammy by the river bank. A railroad bridge crosses the water to the left. The sugar cane grows high along the banks. Tammy strips the hide off a piece and chews on the sweet insides of the cane.

VIRGINIA

Listen, I want you to find my records for me.

TAMMY

You want I should go through her things?

VIRGINIA

You said you saw them once when you was looking for the chocolate.

TAMMY

Yeah, I saw them. She keeps them in one of her drawers next to her big-ass panties.

Virginia cracks a smile.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

You could make a sail out of them panties, sail away from here.

VIRGINIA

Would you be serious.

TAMMY

I am. Serious as shit. If I get caught, it's my ass.

VIRGINIA

Don't get caught.

TAMMY

I always get caught.

VIRGINIA

Well don't. Jesus Tammy. Will you do it or not?

TAMMY

I'll do it.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Dahlia slops the pigs. Her dress is filthy. She looks rough, exhausted.

She notices a car coming down the drive. It's a novelty in these parts. The car pulls up next to the pen. It's Preacher Aldridge. He gets out of the car and glances back at it, proud of his new possession.

Dahlia bends over and looks at herself in the pig trough. She sees her reflection amongst the pigs' faces. She tries to fix her hair a little.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE

(indicating the car)

How do you like her?

Dahlia walks out of the pen.

DAHLIA

Fine.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE

Faster than a horse once she gets going.

DAHLIA

Really?

PREACHER ALDRIDGE

Yep.

Dahlia does her best to admire the machine, but she's tired and she doesn't care.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE (CONT'D)

I've missed you at church.

DAHLIA

I'm sorry. We have our hands full.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE

I can see that.

Preacher Aldridge wipes his face with his handkerchief.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE (CONT'D)

I figure if you can't come to church, I'll bring it to you.

Dahlia smiles.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE (CONT'D)

I'm here to help you Dahlia, help you take care of these pigs and this place 'til Liberty gets back.

Dahlia begins to tear up. Preacher Aldridge walks over and puts his arms around her.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -TAMMY'S BEDROOM -- EVENING

Tammy looks out of the window. Below she can see Miss Archer standing on the drive. Sheriff Vance rides up and stops. The two begin to have a conversation.

Tammy walks away from the window.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS - HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Tammy creeps down the hallway to Miss Archer's room. She pulls a bobby pin out of her pocket and jimmyes the lock open.

She walks into the room and closes the door behind her.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS- MISS ARCHER'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Tammy opens the bottom drawer of Miss Archer's dresser. She moves Miss Archer's clothes to the side and reveals a false bottom to the drawer. She opens it.

EXT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -- CONTINUOUS

Miss Archer concludes her conversation with Sheriff Vance and heads back inside.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS - MISS ARCHER'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Inside the drawer is a file box. Tammy opens the box to reveal a stack of papers. Tammy begins to go through them, looking for Virginia's records.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Miss Archer walks down the hallway toward her room.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS- MISS ARCHER'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Tammy stops for a moment and stands up. She opens Miss Archer's top drawer and finds her chocolate box. She begins eating some of the chocolate.

Suddenly she hears a key at the door. Alarmed she grabs a handful of files. She closes the drawers and looks around the room for somewhere to hide.

CLOSE ON

The door opening.

VIEW OF

Tammy's feet can just be seen at the base of the curtains.

Miss Archer walks over to the curtains and makes sure they're pulled completely shut.

Miss Archer walks over to her bed and lays down on it. She closes her eyes and hikes up her big flannel skirt. She begins to masturbate.

INT. CATHEDRAL -- DAY

A crucifix towers above Liberty. He stands inside the empty cathedral looking up at it. He looks at the crown of thorns, how it cuts into Christ's head. He looks at the bleeding wound in Christ's side.

Liberty studies the gilded walls, the gold adorning things, the shimmering richness of the church.

He watches the light pouring in through the brilliant stained glass windows. He sees the look of agony on Christ's face.

EXT. PARISIAN STREET -- DAY

A cloud moves by the sun casting a quick moving shadow over the street.

Liberty walks along the cobbled street. Faded French flags adorn the monuments.

EXT. WHOREHOUSE -- DAY

Liberty walks inside the whorehouse. Several soldiers stand outside smoking cigarettes. THE SOUND OF A TINNY PIANO is coming from inside.

INT. WHOREHOUSE -- DAY

Inside the scene is lively. A SOLDIER plays the piano. Men sit on lush couches drinking. Women sit next to them or on their laps. Smoke fills the air.

At one of the tables, Lucius sits with three other men playing cards. One of the men, BEN CROWFOOT, is a Cherokee Indian from the 321st regiment. Ben holds his cards up close to his face and looks at them.

Liberty walks over to the men. Lucius notices him.

LUCIUS

Liberty Scopes.

LIBERTY

What are you doing in here? I thought officers had their own cat houses.

LUCIUS

Oh they do. Funny thing is, the girls are the same at both places. The card games are just worse at the officers'.

(pause)

Why don't you get in on the game.

Liberty hesitates for a moment and then walks over and sits down. The other men at the table, CORPORAL JACK RUBINS and PRIVATE TOM ILBERT, size Liberty up.

BEN

You play cards much?

LIBERTY

Not much.

BEN

Where you from?

LIBERTY

Bladen County, same as Lt. Vance here.

BEN

Down there with all them Swamp Injuns, eh?

LIBERTY

Yep.

BEN

I'm Cherokee. My uncle's a chief. You ever met a chief?

LIBERTY

No. I don't think Lumbees got chiefs.

BEN

They ain't missing much. Ours are more like mayors or something. Course, there's not much to be mayor of up there. Some trees...rocks... some trout.

Ben laughs, he's cracked himself up.

JACK

We going to play cards or you two going to talk about Indians? No offense Ben.

BEN

None taken.

A PROSTITUTE comes around with a tray of drinks. The men all take one.

LUCIUS

(indicating Liberty)

Put his on my tab.

PROSTITUTE

Okay.

The men guzzle down there drinks. Liberty picks his up and drinks it. He winces. Clearly he's not used to drinking whisky.

BEN

Lay 'em down boys.

The men lay the cards down. Lucius has the winning hand. He scoops the money up.

INT. WHOREHOUSE -- LATER

Glasses litter the table. The men are clearly drunk. Lucius wins the last hand.

The prostitute approaches the table. She runs her hand over Liberty's shoulder invitingly.

Liberty drunkenly pulls out his billfold and turns it upside down. It's empty. He's broke. He's lost all his money.

LUCIUS
(to the prostitute)
I'll pay for him.

Lucius grabs a handful of money from his pile and hands it to the prostitute.

INT. WHOREHOUSE BEDROOM -- NIGHT

In the distance the THUD, THUD, THUD, of artillery can be heard at the front.

Liberty is on top of the prostitute. He's moving back and forth on her. He's been at it for a long time. He's too drunk. He stares at her face.

The sex is strange, it's mechanical, but there's a hint of violence beneath the surface. The prostitute is used to this. She's used to men who are ruined by war.

Exhausted, Liberty gives up and rolls off. She brushes his forehead with her hand, trying to comfort him, salvage what she can of him. They listen to the sounds of the distant guns.

INT. COMMAND BUNKER -- DAY

Lucius sits on a crate. Captain Sheriden sits in front of him puffing on a pipe. A cat sits on Captain Sheriden's lap.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN
This cat belonged to a British ship
captain.

Lucius looks at the cat.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN (CONT'D)
It's been all over the world. I won it in a
shooting match.
(MORE)

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN (CONT'D)

(pause)

Can you imagine it, this cat rolling on the high seas, looking out over the deck as New Guinea appears out of the mist?

Captain Sheriden chuckles to himself thinking about the cat on the ship.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN (CONT'D)

His name is Lord Carlesworth.

LUCIUS

(mulling it over)

Lord Carlesworth.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

Do you know why I've called you here Lt. Vance? Do you?

LUCIUS

I've been spotted playing cards at the enlisted men's whorehouse.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

That's right, the enlisted men's whorehouse. I don't approve of whorehouses in general, but sometimes a man's got to fuck. That's good for morale. Of course you increase drastically your chances of catching something at the enlisted men's whorehouse. I can't afford to--

LUCIUS

(interrupting)

I don't sleep with the women sir.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

Oh, of course not. What do you do? Give blowjobs?

LUCIUS

I play cards.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

Which leads me to the real problem Lieutenant, you becoming familiar with the men.

Lucius is silent.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN (CONT'D)
 You're not their buddy, you're their leader, and the way I found you during the German attack cowering.

LUCIUS
 Sir, it was an artillery barrage.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN
 Listen to me, we may be going over the top again. God, I hope we are. And if we are, I can't afford any liabilities. I'll be watching you. At the first sign of cowardice, I'll relieve you of your rank. Do you understand?

Lucius thinks about this. He's on the verge of spouting off at the mouth but thinks better of it.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN (CONT'D)
 Do you understand me?

LUCIUS
 Yes sir.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS - TAMMY'S BEDROOM-- NIGHT

Tammy sits in her room looking out the window. The door creaks open and Miss Archer walks in. She's holding a ruler in her hand.

MISS ARCHER
 You know Tammy, I've tried to accommodate you. Since Virginia left I've let you have your own little room. I haven't worked you too hard.

Tammy stands up. She's worried that Miss Archer knows about the records she's taken and she's thinking about making a break for it.

MISS ARCHER (CONT'D)
 And how is it that you repay me? By going through my things, eating my chocolate. Isn't that right Tammy?

Tammy's relieved.

TAMMY
 (defiantly)
 Yes ma'am it is. I did eat your chocolates.

Miss Archer walks close to Tammy and stares down at her.

MISS ARCHER

Put your hand out. How many times do I have to do this?

Tammy summons all her courage and puts her hand out.

THWACK. Miss Archer smacks her on the hand. Tammy winces. THWACK, THWACK, THWACK.

Tammy tries hard not to cry but it's too much. The tears come down her cheeks.

THWACK, THWACK.

MISS ARCHER (CONT'D)

You going to cry a little? It hurt? Hasn't stopped you before.

POW, Miss Archer belts Tammy across her face with the ruler. The metal trim on the ruler opens Tammy's cheek up. Blood pours out. Tammy falls to her knees holding her face.

MISS ARCHER (CONT'D)

Maybe that will make you think twice?

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Dahlia stands in the kitchen kneading dough. Preacher Aldridge walks in. He's filthy from slopping the hogs. He's holding a bucket in his hands.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE

Fever's over. We haven't had a pig show signs in a week.

Dahlia turns around.

DAHLIA

Thank the Lord.

Preacher Aldridge looks at Dahlia for a while. She's sweating and her hair is falling onto her face. Dahlia blows the hair out of her face. Preacher Aldridge sets the bucket down.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE

I best be getting back to the house. Mrs. Aldridge will be expecting me.

DAHLIA

Thank you preacher.

Preacher Aldridge turns and walks out of the room.

EXT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -- DAY

Virginia knocks on the door. Miss Archer opens it.

VIRGINIA

I was out at the bee houses. Tammy ain't there. Where is she?

MISS ARCHER

She's sick.

VIRGINIA

What's wrong with her?

MISS ARCHER

She fell down the steps on the bluff. She was throwing rocks in the river like she does.

Virginia is suspicious.

VIRGINIA

I need to see her.

MISS ARCHER

You should come back next week.

VIRGINIA

I have to see her now.

Virginia pushes past Miss Archer and heads for Tammy's room. Miss Archer follows.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS- HALLWAY -- DAY

Virginia walks briskly down the hall. Miss Archer hurries behind her.

MISS ARCHER

She needs to rest! She needs to rest!

Virginia pushes the door to Tammy's room open.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -TAMMY'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Tammy lies on the bed holding the turtle shell rattle. There's a long cut down her cheek.

Virginia instantly knows something is amiss. She's been around the orphanage long enough to know how Miss Archer operates.

TAMMY
 (pitifully)
 Hey.

VIRGINIA
 Hey.
 (to Miss Archer)
 Can I talk to you outside for a minute.

The two women step outside of the room.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS - HALLWAY -- DAY

VIRGINIA
 I want to adopt her. Now.
 Miss Archer is a little surprised.

MISS ARCHER
 These things take time. There are forms.

Virginia struggles to pull her engagement ring off her finger. She hands it to Miss Archer. Miss Archer looks at it.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS - DINING HALL -- NIGHT

Miss Archer sits alone among the empty tables of the dining hall. Moonlight comes in the window.

She takes Virginia's ring out of her pocket and slowly pushes it onto her finger. She looks at it in the moonlight, turning it so the light catches the facets.

INT. DUGOUT -- NIGHT

Liberty sits around a makeshift table with some of his platoon mates. They're playing poker. Liberty puts some money in the pot.

LIBERTY
 I'll see it. Lay 'em down boys.

The other soldiers put their cards down. At that moment, the candle goes out.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)
 Shit... shit.

Liberty frantically lights a match.

CORPORAL BAKER
 It's the last candle.

A voice from somewhere in the darkness.

PRIVATE CLARK

I wish you assholes would stop wasting our
candles on your games.

Liberty throws some paper into a tin can and lights it. The flames flare up. He throws some more paper in. It's the pages of his pocket bible.

LIBERTY

(noticing the cards)

Ha! Pot goes to me. Who's in for the next
hand?

PRIVATE TAYLOR

Not me. I'm going to bed.

CORPORAL BAKER

Me too.

LIBERTY

(a little manic)

Come on. One more hand. One more.

The other soldiers walk through the clutter of the dugout to their bunks. Liberty continues to drop pages from the bible into the blazing tin can. He busies himself shuffling cards.

He lays the cards down for a game of solitaire. He flips a card over, the Jack of Diamonds, and lays it on another card.

INT. TRENCH -- DAWN

Liberty stands on the firestep, his rifle pointing into No Man's Land.

In the distance he can see the dead American he shot earlier tangled in the barbed wire. The man is badly decomposing and even at this distance he is horrible to look at.

LIBERTY

(to the soldier down the
line from him)

How much you want to bet I can get that
body out of the wire?

SOLDIER

Are you crazy? You wouldn't even make it
out to him.

LIBERTY

How much? How much you want to bet?

SOLDIER

Ten dollars.

LIBERTY

(eagerly)

Okay, ten. Ten dollars.

Liberty lays his rifle on the sandbagged parapet. He starts to climb over.

SOLDIER

(in disbelief)

Wait. Leave the money here. I'm not going out there to get it off you once you're dead.

Liberty pulls out the ten dollars and tucks it under a sandbag. He pulls himself over the parapet and dashes out toward the wire.

One by one other soldiers notice him. There's an air of excitement. It's a welcome and unexpected break from the usual monotony. A few of the soldiers begin to cheer him on.

Suddenly white muzzle flashes can be seen from the enemy lines. Bullets whiz by.

Liberty tries to go forward but he can't do it. The volume of fire is increasing. He hits the ground and crawls back to his own lines. Exhausted, he tumbles back into the trench.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

(gleefully)

You're a crazy bastard. Give me my money.

INT. OFFICER'S WHOREHOUSE -- DAY

Lucius sits around a table playing cards. The place is clean, quiet, boring.

The other officers smoke cigars and sip brandy out of tiny glasses.

CAPTAIN LASSITER

I raise, gentlemen.

CAPTAIN LASSITER throws in a measly amount of money.

LUCIUS

I fold. I'll see you later.

Lucius stands up and leaves the room.

CAPTAIN LASSITER
(to the other players)
Timid fellow, isn't he?

EXT. PARISIAN STREET -- DAY

Lucius walks down the street drinking from a bottle of wine.

He enters a square where several monuments are erected to the dead of past wars.

Lucius stands in the midst of the monuments looking up at them. The streets are strangely empty. Lucius becomes unnerved. It's as if the monuments are pushing in on him.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF PARIS -- DAY

Lucius walks next to a river on the outskirts of Paris. The dark sooty buildings of the city can be seen in the distance.

Lucius finishes his bottle of wine. He walks down to the river and wades in. He splashes the cold water on his face.

INT. WHOREHOUSE -- NIGHT

Liberty sits in the midst of a rowdy party at the whorehouse. He's playing cards and having a grand time. One of the prostitutes approaches him.

PROSTITUTE
When will you be going back to the line?

LIBERTY
Tomorrow.

PROSTITUTE
Two times in Paris in one month. My, my.

LIBERTY
We're lucky. The lucky 321st.

Liberty chuckles to himself.

PROSTITUTE
You don't know nothing. It's not luck, it's pity. They always let units come in before an assault.

LIBERTY
That's bullshit. Just a rumor. Who gives a fuck anyway?

Liberty slaps the prostitute on the ass and guzzles down more whisky.

EXT. FEED STORE -- DAY

Virginia stands at the counter of the feed store. Tammy stands next to her. Miss Ashley comes out from the back room. She looks at Tammy, surprised to see her. She looks at the cut on her face.

MISS ASHLEY

Well Tammy, on a field trip from the orphanage?

VIRGINIA

She lives with me now. I've adopted her.

Miss Ashley looks shocked for a moment and then regains her composure.

MISS ASHLEY

Another mouth to feed?

VIRGINIA

Any mail for me?

MISS ASHLEY

No, strange. He just stopped writing, huh?

VIRGINIA

I'm sure it's something with the mail.
Their letters are bound to get delayed.
Bound to.

Miss Ashley isn't convinced. While she intends to feel bad for Virginia, she can't help but be excited by the potential for drama that the lack of letters is creating.

MISS ASHLEY

Well, I would just die if something had happened to him. My friend in the city, she lost her brother just the other day. Said they can't even send the body back on account of it being so blown to pieces.

Virginian tries to ignore the comment. She pulls out a letter and hands it to Miss Ashley.

VIRGINIA

Will you mail this for me?

MISS ASHLEY

Of course I will honey.

Miss Ashley takes the letter from Virginia.

INT. BARN -- DAY

Preacher Aldridge stands inside the dark barn. Shafts of light spill in through a few holes in the tin roof.

Preacher Aldridge is grooming the horse. It's been of little use since the Scopes' stopped growing tobacco.

Dahlia walks in with a pitcher and a cup.

DAHLIA

I brought you something to drink.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE

Oh, thank you.

Virginia pours the water into the cup and hands it to Preacher Aldridge. He takes it and sits down on a crate. Dahlia sits down beside him.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE (CONT'D)

You ought to sell that old horse. He's not much good to you now. When you ship those pigs out, you can get yourself a car.

DAHLIA

I wouldn't know what to do with a car.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE

Drive it. Drive it all over.

Dahlia smirks.

DAHLIA

I don't have anywhere to be.

The horse suddenly whinnies and shifts it's weight. It startles Preacher Aldridge who drops his cup.

Dahlia goes for the cup. She reaches down and picks it up, brushing against the Preacher. When she leans back up he makes his move.

Dahlia is shocked. She tries to pull away but Preacher Aldridge isn't taking "no" for an answer. He holds on to her and presses his face against hers.

He tries to push his hand up Dahlia's skirt. Suddenly he recoils in pain.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE

Jesus Christ.

His face is bleeding and there is a clear bite mark on it.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE (CONT'D)

(angrily)

You ought not to have done that Dahlia.

Preacher Aldridge holds his bleeding face.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Preacher Aldridge drives his car at high speed down the drive and out to the main road. Dahlia stands in the dust.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- NIGHT

Dahlia sits in a chair staring out the window. Virginia sits behind her and gently brushes Dahlia's hair. A few tears run down Dahlia's cheeks as she looks out at the gnarled pine trees across the field.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Preacher Aldridge stands in front of the congregation. The bite mark is clearly visible on his face.

The congregation stares at him, eagerly waiting to hear what he will say next.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE

I don't want to shock you. I don't want to incite you to feel unchristian, uncharitable. No. I want you to do the opposite, 'cause there's a troubled soul in our congregation. There's a woman who has lost her direction in the Lord, who has been tempted by the devil to force her flesh upon me.

The crowd GASPS.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE (CONT'D)

And then, when I rejected her, she assaulted my very person.

Preacher Aldridge touches the bite mark on his face theatrically and then acts as though he's deep in thought.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE (CONT'D)

And perhaps we are all to blame. Dahlia Scopes--

There are a few more GASPS from those who have not yet heard the whole story.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE'S WIFE stares at him adoringly.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE (CONT'D)
--we are praying for you. We are thinking
of you.

EXT. TOWN HALL -- DAY

Tammy, Virginia and Dahlia walk through the street to Town Hall. As they pass by the shops the people stare at them.

TAMMY
(to a gawking woman)
What the hell are you looking at you old
bat?

The woman shakes her head in disgust.

VIRGINIA
Be quiet Tammy.

The women enter Town Hall.

INT. TOWN HALL -- DAY

The women walk up to the receptionist's desk.

VIRGINIA
Where's the sheriff?

SANDY
He's meeting with Judge Vance.

Virginia starts to walk toward Judge Vance's office.

SANDY (CONT'D)
Wait, you'll have to make an appointment.

The women ignore her.

INT. TOWN HALL -JUDGE VANCE'S OFFICE -- DAY

The door to the office is flung open. Judge Vance and Sheriff Vance look startled.

VIRGINIA
Preacher Aldridge made a pass at Dahlia
here and now he's spreading lies all over.

The men are a little taken aback by the sudden interruption. They've been looking at a map and Judge Vance quickly rolls it up and puts it away.

SHERIFF VANCE

(to Dahlia)

I saw what you did to his face. You're lucky I didn't come out and arrest you for it. People are crying out for you to get what's coming to you.

VIRGINIA

You ain't going to do nothing are you?

TAMMY

Course he ain't, he's too busy going over to see Miss Archer.

Sheriff Vance looks surprised and so does Judge Vance.

JUDGE VANCE

People don't like to have their men of God accused of--

He searches for the word.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

--molestation.

VIRGINIA

Well that's what he done.

SHERIFF VANCE

It's your word against his.

DAHLIA

It's my word against his.

JUDGE VANCE

Jesus Christ, Dahlia, I thought you were a level headed woman. You sound like your departed husband.

DAHLIA

How dare you bring him up. Ain't it enough that you killed him like a goddamn dog?

The room goes silent for a moment.

JUDGE VANCE

(to Sheriff Vance)

Get her out of here.

Sheriff Vance moves in. Tammy steps up to him and stomps his toe. He quickly knocks her to the ground which causes Virginia to rush to her defense.

A general scuffle ensues that ends with Sheriff Vance pinning Virginia against the wall by her neck.

JUDGE VANCE (CONT'D)

(standing now)

I'll be damned if you're going to start the
shit-ball rolling in this town again
Dahlia. You'd better watch your step.
Everything you have is wrapped up in a
loan. You're not really in a position to
make demands.

EXT. TOWN HALL -- DAY

Tammy, Dahlia and Virginia walk toward home through the dusty street. A storm is gathering. A few loose shutters clack against the sides of buildings.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- NIGHT

Virginia, Dahlia and Tammy sit around the dinner table. They eat in silence.

The wind is howling outside. Tammy looks up. It's getting scary.

TUNK. Something hits the tin roof. The women look up. TUNK, TUNK, two more. Dahlia drops her spoon into her soup.

TUNK, TUNK, TUNK, TUNK. Whatever it is it's increasing rapidly. The women hurry to the window. Huge pieces of hail are beginning to fall from the sky.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- NIGHT

The front door bursts open. Hail is pounding into the ground. The women rush outside toward the pigs. As soon as they clear the porch, THWACK, hail slams into them. A piece knocks Dahlia to the ground. Her head is bleeding. It's too much. They retreat back into the house.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- NIGHT

The sound of the hail is deafening as it impacts on the tin roof. The women hold their hands over their ears. Outside they can hear the squeals of the pigs being slaughtered in the field.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Dahlia sits on a broken piece of fence looking into the pig pen. Tammy stands next to her.

The bodies of dead pigs litter the field. Virginia walks among the bodies with the Spencer Repeating Rifle, mercifully shooting pigs that are not yet entirely dead.

EXT. GRAVE -- EVENING

Dahlia stands at her husband's grave looking at it. She reaches out and touches the grave. She looks back toward the house.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAWN

Virginia lies in bed asleep. A sound startles her awake. She sits up and climbs out of bed.

She walks cautiously through the dark hallway to the kitchen. As she rounds the corner she sees Dahlia Scopes hanging from one of the wooden rafters.

Virginia screams. She tries to lift Dahlia's body up, to get her down somehow. Tammy comes into the room groggy and confused. She recognizes what's happening and tries to assist.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- LATER

Dahlia's naked body is laid out on the kitchen table. Virginia and Tammy wash it with a damp cloth.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- LATER

They wrap the body in a white cloth.

EXT. GRAVE -- DUSK

Tammy and Virginia shovel the last of the dirt onto Dahlia's grave. They have buried her beside her husband and erected a small cross made out of wood.

They stand in the dim light and look down at the grave as a gentle breeze blows through the trees.

EXT. TRENCH -- DAY

Lucius walks through the trench. Captain Sheriden is standing with FIRST LIEUTENANT DALE BARFIELD. They appear to be surveying the parapets.

Lucius raises his hand in salute as he passes. Captain Sheriden casually returns the salute and continues talking.

EXT. TRENCH -- MOMENTS LATER

Lucius continues through another part of the trench until he comes to the closed gas curtain of a dugout. Two men stand on watch outside. They look alarmed when they see Lucius approach. One starts to duck inside.

LUCIUS

At ease Private, I'm not here to break up your operation.

The enlisted men look at Lucius dumbfounded.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)

I want to talk to Liberty Scopes.

One of the enlisted men ducks his head behind the gas curtain and mumbles something to someone inside. He pulls his head out again.

ENLISTED MAN

Go on in sir.

Lucius moves past the men and into the dugout.

INT. DUGOUT -- DAY

It's dim inside the dugout and it takes Lucius' eyes a while to adjust. When they do he sees several men sitting around a table. Liberty is among them.

In the corner the prostitute from Paris mixes drinks. A shoddy phonograph plays a barely audible tune.

LUCIUS

(astonished)
My God Liberty.

Liberty looks at Lucius bleary eyed.

LIBERTY

You like the her? I brought her in from Paris special--

Liberty cracks a smile.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

--dressed up as a British officer in the dead of night.

The prostitute walks over to the table and serves the men some drinks. She walks back over to a pitiful little crate and takes a seat. She looks bored.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

She makes five times what she made in Paris.

(to the prostitute)

Isn't that right, Rabbit?

The prostitute looks up.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

Le money est grand, oui?

WHORE

(unimpressed)

Oui.

LUCIUS

Can I talk with you?

LIBERTY

You can talk to me if you play.

Lucius thinks about it. He walks over and takes a seat.

LUCIUS

Sure, I'll play with you.

LIBERTY

(to the whore)

Get the Lieutenant a drink.

The whore gets up and serves Lucius a drink.

One by one the other men get up and leave the table.

PLAYER 1

I'm out. I ain't playing with both of you. One's risky enough.

PLAYER 2

Me too.

LIBERTY

(to Lucius)

What'll it be?

LUCIUS

The regular.

LIBERTY

The regular it is.

Liberty starts to deal.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

You know, it's amazing what people will pay for things that's scarce. Amazing.

LUCIUS

It's the way it works.

LIBERTY

Yeah. Women, booze, cards. I'm getting rich.

LUCIUS

Lucky man. I'm just getting crazy.

LIBERTY

That's fair. You already been rich.

Liberty picks up his cards and stares at them.

EXT. TRENCH -- DAY

Captain Sheriden is peering through his binoculars. He's looking at the dead man caught in the wire.

The man is bones and flesh. Hollow eyes plucked clean by crows stare up at the sun. The man's arms are spread out wide as if he is hanging on the cross.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

My God. My God. We've got to get it down.

LIEUTENANT BARFIELD

How, sir?

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

Jesus, I don't know. It's bad for morale. It looks like God is mocking us, him hanging like that out there. Send a raiding party out to get him.

(pause)

It's no wonder there's such a lack of initiative around here.

LIEUTENANT BARFIELD

A man already tried to get him down. He almost got killed.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN
Already tried? Who told him to try?

LIEUTENANT BARFIELD
No one.

Captain Sheriden mulls this over.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN
Give that man a medal. I need more men like
that. More self-starters.

LIEUTENANT BARFIELD
Yes sir.

Captain Sheriden looks at the body again through the binoculars. He
thinks.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN
Can't we blow him up?

LIEUTENANT BARFIELD
Blow him up sir?

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN
Yes. Blow him up. Call in artillery.

He's made a decision. He's getting excited.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN (CONT'D)
Call it in.
(issuing the order
officially)
Lieutenant, call it in. Call in the
artillery.

LIEUTENANT BARFIELD
Yes sir.

Lieutenant Barfield hurries off to the command bunker.

INT. COMMAND BUNKER -- DAY

VIEW OF

A hand on a phone crank turning the crank. The receiver goes up to a
mouth.

VOICE
Red Leg Five, this is Buck Skin Five, fire
mission, over.

EXT. GUN LINE -- DAY

The diaphragm of a field phone vibrates. A SOLDIER who is pissing next to a howitzer looks over at the phone.

INT. DUGOUT -- DAY

Liberty and Lucius sit in front of a pile of money holding their cards to their faces. Liberty pulls the amulet from around his neck and puts it in the pot. He lays a stack of letters in the pot also.

LIBERTY

The letters still smell like perfume and they got news from home in 'em. The necklace, it's genuine handmade Lumbee.

(to the prostitute)

Come over here.

The prostitute walks over. Liberty struggles to pull a ring off her finger. The prostitute is annoyed but lets him do it. He puts the ring in the pot.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

And I'll put this in too.

Lucius looks at the pile. He pulls his sidearm out of his holster and lays it on the table.

Liberty puts his cards down. It's not much of a hand. Two pair, an absurd hand to bet so much on. Lucius lays his cards down. He's got a flush.

THUD, THUD, THUD, The sound of outgoing rounds. Liberty and Lucius look up.

EXT. GUN LINE -- DAY

The howitzers spout flames as the gunners fire their pieces.

EXT. TRENCH -- DAY

Captain Sheriden watches as the rounds impact in No Man's Land, decimating the dead soldier caught in the wire.

EXT. GERMAN TRENCH -- DAY

A GERMAN OBSERVER watches the rounds detonate in the impact zone. He picks up his handset and calls the command bunker.

EXT. GERMAN GUN LINE -- DAY

The German guns fire off salvos.

EXT. TRENCH -- DAY

As the smoke clears in No Man's Land the German rounds come whistling in. Everyone runs for cover. BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, huge plumes of smoke and mud burst into the air.

INT. DUGOUT -- DAY

Lucius and Liberty wince as the bombardment shakes the dugout. Lucius puts the amulet around his neck. He folds the money and puts it into one of the envelopes. He puts the envelope in his boot and puts the boot back on.

LIBERTY

You going to give me a chance to win some
back ain't you?

LUCIUS

(yelling over the
thunderous barrage)
I don't think now's the time.

LIBERTY

Now is the time. Now's the time Lucius.

Liberty looks angry and desperate.

EXT. TRENCH -- DAY

Lucius hurries through the trench. Men are manning the parapets, preparing to go over the top. Lucius happens upon Captain Sheriden.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

We're going! We're going over the top. Our
markers have been spotted in the enemy
trenches. Some of our men have broken
through!

LIEUTENANT BARFIELD

Sir, whose markers?

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

Our markers! Ours! The men of A company,
321st Regiment.

LIEUTENANT BARFIELD

Sir, none of our men have gone anywhere.

Captain Sheriden grabs Lieutenant Barfield by the lapels. Men are scurrying into position all along the line.

CAPTAIN SHERIDEN

That's the word from Headquarters son. Our men are breaking through! The whole division is going forward to exploit it!

(to Lucius)

Get to your platoon.

EXT. TRENCH -- DAY

Lucius stands on the firestep waiting to go forward. Men line the wall of the trench. In the distance, they can see the Allied artillery rounds impacting on the German lines.

The Artillery suddenly stops. Smoke drifts across the battlefield. A flare pops into the air and bursts in a star-cluster. All down the line whistles blow. Lucius blows his whistle as well.

The men charge forward and immediately German rounds impact on the wave of men.

Just as Captain Sheridan gains the top of the parapet his head catches a round and he tumbles back into the muddy trench dead.

EXT. NO MAN'S LAND -- CONTINUOUS

The rest of the men go forward and we are following Lucius. They are gaining ground somehow. Bullets are flying past but they're getting farther than they ever have before.

Lucius and Liberty are running close together now. The men are mixing up in the confusion and they are just running like sprinters, moving on pure adrenaline with no real plan except to run.

As they get close to the German lines the fire increases. The machine guns become more accurate. Wire obstacles channel the runners into areas covered by fire.

TAT, TAT, TAT, machine guns blaze away and men start dropping everywhere.

BOOM, an artillery shell impacts. Men are obliterated, evaporated, turned into red mist that momentarily hangs in the air.

Other men are now hitting the ground, bogging down.

BOOM! A shell lands next to Liberty and Lucius knocking them into a watery shell crater. They are both struck dumb, covered in dirt, out cold.

EXT. SHELL CRATER -- NIGHT

Liberty stares at Lucius. Liberty's back is against the wall of the crater and Lucius lies half out of the watery bottom of the crater.

Lucius' stomach bleeds from a shrapnel wound and he moans in agony.

Liberty crawls to the top of the crater. In the darkness he can see the silhouette of a German patrol moving toward the crater in the darkness. He can hear them quietly whispering to each other in German.

Liberty rolls down to the bottom of the crater. He crawls through the water past several dead bodies floating in the swill.

He makes his way over to Lucius.

LIBERTY

Shut the hell up before they find us.

Lucius is fading in and out of consciousness. He continues to moan. The Germans are getting closer.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

Shut up. Shut up you son of a bitch.

Liberty can't take it anymore. He puts his body over Lucius and tries his best to smother him.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

It's what you get. It's what you get for killing Gus you dumb bastard.

Lucius tries to fight back a little but then goes limp. Liberty quickly tries to get Lucius' boot off, trying to get at the money hidden in it. He tries but he's fumbling in the darkness.

The Germans are almost on top of him. He's got to make a choice. He agonizes for a minute, then pulls Lucius' pistol from its holster and scurries back toward his own lines.

The Germans hear the movement and head toward the shell crater. A few of them descend into the crater, splashing into the muddy water. One of them checks Lucius for signs of life.

EXT. NO MAN'S LAND -- NIGHT

Liberty is close to his own lines, moving slowly through the broken barbed wire and debris. He can just make out the Allied trenches in the gloomy darkness.

He pulls the pistol from his pocket and puts it to his leg. He grimaces and then pulls the trigger. POW, the round passes through his thigh and he flinches. He drops the weapon and crawls toward friendly lines.

INT. SMOKEHOUSE -- DAY

Inside the smokehouse the air is hot. It's dark and a few shafts of light spill in through holes in the roof caused by the hail storm.

Tammy stands in the smokehouse looking at the last of the pig meat hanging from the rafters. The meat is bundled in cheese cloth to keep the flies off, but it hasn't worked.

She pulls back the cheese cloth on one of the pieces of meat. Maggots have infested it. Disgusted she recoils. She checks another piece. It seems to be clean. She takes it down and turns around to leave.

Tammy is startled by the sight of John Oxendine standing in the doorway. He's holding two mason jars.

TAMMY

Jesus, mister, you scared me.

John doesn't say anything. He's not sure what to say and it makes Tammy even more nervous. She drops the pig meat and picks up a shovel.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

You better spit it out, mister.

John puts the mason jars down on the ground.

JOHN

It's salt and whisky. I'd give you more,
but it's about all I got.

He turns around and walks off.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- NIGHT

Tammy and Virginia sit at the table and eat the last of the pig. They're dirty and exhausted. The portions are meager. Tammy dips her fingers into the jar of salt and sprinkles some onto the meat.

Virginia spoons some honey out of another jar and smears it on her portion. They eat in silence. Virginia looks up at the rafters above her to the spot where Dahlia hung herself.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- NIGHT

Tammy pulls another piece of wood from the split rail fence that surrounds the field. She lugs it over to a fire built in the muddy field and throws it on. She sits down beside Virginia.

Virginia passes the jar of whiskey to Tammy. Tammy takes a sip and shudders.

VIRGINIA

Read it to me again.

Tammy sighs.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

One more time. I'd read it myself if I could.

(pause)

Read it again.

Tammy unfolds the crinkled up papers she took from Miss Archer.

TAMMY

(reading from one of the papers)

Virginia came to us by her father, who could not keep her due to his--

(Tammy pauses, trying to work out the word debilitated)

--debilitated condition. Virginia's mother was a Cherokee whom, according to Virginia's father, he met while pursuing a mine in the Western part of this state. She returned with him after the mine proved to be a failure. She died of typhoid shortly after Virginia's birth, her constitution not being fit for this climate. Virginia's original name was Adsila, but I have given her a Christian name. There is nothing else remarkable regarding this case. Fanny Archer. April 1st, 1901.

Tammy hands the paper back to Virginia. Virginia looks at it. She takes a swig of whisky and throws the paper into the fire.

VIRGINIA

My name's Adsila. Adsila, Adsila. It's beautiful, like Dahlia.

The girls are clearly drunk now.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

I'm a goddamn Cherokee. I ain't no fucking Lumbee.

Tammy looks woozy.

TAMMY

They call 'em the civilized tribe. I saw a picture of one once. He had a big ol' top hat on.

A gust of wind fans the fire and blows some of the papers across the field. Virginia grabs the rest of them to prevent them from flying away. Virginia looks at the papers.

CLOSE ON

The papers. They seem to be an inventory of some sort.

VIRGINIA

What do they say?

TAMMY

I don't know. I can't make no sense out of them. Numbers and such.

Virginia throws the rest of the papers onto the fire. They go up in flames.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Tammy and Virginia lay next to the smoldering ashes of the fire. The sun rises. Virginia gets up and looks at the smoldering logs. The jar of whisky lies empty on the ground.

EXT. ROAD -- DAY

Tammy and Virginia walk down the dusty road toward town. Virginia carries a burlap sack filled with a few jars of honey. Tammy shakes the turtle shell rattle as she walks.

Tammy notices some wild berries growing next to the road. The two girls stop and hungrily eat the berries.

EXT. TOWN HALL -- DAY

Tammy and Virginia walk through town. People stop and look as they pass.

INT. FEED STORE -- DAY

Virginia and Tammy stand at the counter. Miss Ashley stands behind the counter looking at them with disgust.

VIRGINIA
Any letters for me?

MISS ASHLEY
(coldly)
No.

Virginia pulls the jars of honey out of the sack and puts them on the counter.

VIRGINIA
We need seed.

MISS ASHLEY
What sort.

VIRGINIA
Corn?

MISS ASHLEY
It's all bought.

VIRGINIA
Anything Miss Ashley.

MISS ASHLEY
Tobacco?

VIRGINIA
That we can EAT, Miss Ashley. Please.
Whatever you can give me for this honey.

Miss Ashley can't help but pity them. Still, she doesn't want to be seen doing business with them. She looks around, then goes over to the packets of seed. She grabs a bag full of spuds. She puts it on the counter.

MISS ASHLEY
Potatoes. It's your best bet.

Virginia picks up the sack.

VIRGINIA
Thank you.

Tammy and Virginia walk out. As they do, they pass Preacher Aldridge as he enters the store. He looks at them as they pass.

INT. TOWN HALL -JUDGE VANCE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Sandy Grimes opens the door. She carries Judge Vance's lunch on a tray.

CLANG. Sandy drops the lunch tray to the floor.

VIEW OF

Judge Vance lies slumped over the desk dead, his cigarette burning a long black scar into the mahogany desk.

EXT. CHURCH -- DAY

THUNK, THUNK, heavy shovel loads of dirt fall onto Judge Vance's wooden coffin.

A mass of people walk away from Judge Vance's grave. Sheriff Vance puts his hat back on and hurries off.

INT. BANK -- DAY

Sheriff Vance stands over THADIUS BARLOW'S desk. Thadius knew this day was coming, but he wasn't looking forward to it.

SHERIFF VANCE

I'll be assuming control of the family's accounts.

THADIUS

Of course. Temporarily. Your father's will states that control passes to your brother.

Sheriff Vance pulls a letter out of his pocket.

SHERIFF VANCE

My brother is dead.

Thadius picks up the letter and opens it. He reads it.

THADIUS

My God.

Thadius looks grieved and worried.

SHERIFF VANCE

I'd like a list of all debts owed us.

THADIUS

I'll have it for you this afternoon.

SHERIFF VANCE

Thadius, I know you were close to my father. He was a good man but he had his style and I have mine, just so you know.

THADIUS

Of course.

SHERIFF VANCE

I don't expect you and I will have any problems.

THADIUS

Certainly not.

Sheriff Vance walks from the office leaving Thadius to stare in disbelief at the letter from the Army regarding Lucius' death.

INT. MASTIFF TAYLOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

CLOSE ON

A letter and Mastiff Taylor's hands holding it. The letter is addressed to him and the return address is from Mrs. Oxendine who is apparently now living in South Carolina. Mastiff opens the letter and begins to read it.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

VIEW OF

The blade of a plow struggles to cut through the dry dirt. Tammy walks behind the horse holding the plow. It's slow going and hard work.

Virginia walks just in front of the horse clearing bits of debris out of the way.

THUD, the plow hits something and stops. Tammy moves to the plow's blade and tries to free it from the object. It seems to be a large stone.

Tammy climbs under the horse's legs and works to dig around the stone.

Virginia looks up as a car approaches down the drive. It's Preacher Aldridge. The car gets closer and closer as Tammy digs. Tammy looks up too. Preacher Aldridge turns off the drive. He's coming toward them.

POW, the car backfires. The horse spooks and bucks. The plow is freed from the rock and the horse runs. The plow catches Tammy and she's dragged several yards. Virginia, horrified, runs after the horse.

Preacher Aldridge realizes what's happening. He stops the car and runs to help.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Tammy lies in bed in agony. She's scratched up and bleeding. Her leg is horribly broken. DOCTOR JENKINS stands over the bed. Preacher Aldridge stands next to the doctor and Virginia stands across from them both.

VIRGINIA

(referring to Preacher
Aldridge)

Get him out of here. He's only making her more upset.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE

Come now, you don't mean that. I'm here to help you.

VIRGINIA

Get him out! Get him out!

Tammy moans loudly.

DR. JENKINS

(to Preacher Aldridge)

It might be best if you waited outside.

Preacher Aldridge looks betrayed. He frowns at Dr. Jenkins. He grabs his hat and walks out.

DR. JENKINS (CONT'D)

(to Virginia)

It's a bad break. Complex. It needs surgery. Something I can't manage.

VIRGINIA

We don't have any money.

DR. JENKINS

That's clear enough. You can't keep her here. You've nothing to eat. It's filthy. This is no way to live.

VIRGINIA

Please, you've got to help.

Virginia puts her hand on Dr. Jenkins shoulder.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

I'll do anything. Please help us.

Dr. Jenkins pulls Virginia's hand off his shoulder.

DR. JENKINS
Change the dressing every morning.

He pulls a bottle from his bag.

DR. JENKINS (CONT'D)
This is morphine. It's all I can spare for
you. Give it to her only when the pain is
unbearable.

Virginia takes the morphine and clutches it tightly in her hand.

EXT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -- DAY

Dr. Jenkins knocks on the door of the Orphans' School for Girls. Miss Archer opens the door.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- NIGHT

Tammy lies in the bed sweating, delirious. Virginia wipes her forehead with a wet cloth. Tammy writhes in agony.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- MORNING

Tammy is finally sleeping as the first rays of light come through the window. Virginia, completely exhausted, watches her sleep.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Virginia leads the old horse out of the barn. She holds the Spencer repeating rifle in her hand.

She stops and pets the horse's muzzle. She rips open a box of ammunition and pulls out the last round. She loads the round into the rifle.

VIEW OF

The bees buzzing around the bee house. POW, a rifle shot rings out.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Virginia cuts up the spuds and drops them into a pot of boiling water. She cuts some horse meat into small pieces and drops that into the soup as well.

INT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- LATER

Virginia feeds Tammy a spoonful of the soup and then gives her some water.

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- EVENING

The light is dying. The long shadows of the pine trees lie jagged on the sandy roads.

Sheriff Vance rides his horse next to Miss Archer, who is riding in a small wagon. The two ride down the drive to Liberty's farmhouse.

They pass the butchered carcass of the horse and look at it with disgust. As they pass, Sheriff Vance notices a few pieces of paper trampled down into the dirt.

He stops his horse and swings off her. He picks up the paper. It's one of the sheets of paper that blew away when Virginia burned her records.

Sheriff Vance looks at it and hands it over to Miss Archer.

MISS ARCHER

That goddamned bitch. I knew it was her that took them.

Sheriff Vance looks displeased. He looks angrily toward the house. He can see Virginia tending to the bees in the shadowy light.

MISS ARCHER (CONT'D)

She doesn't know what it means. She was after her records.

SHERIFF VANCE

I told you not to keep that shit.

Sheriff Vance crumples the paper up and puts it in this pocket. He remounts the horse.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

You go get her. I'll tend to Virginia.

Miss Archer smacks the horse's back with the reins and moves off toward the house.

EXT. BEE HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Virginia looks up from her work as Sheriff Vance rides up. Behind her we can see Miss Archer entering the farmhouse. Sheriff Vance stops his horse next to Virginia.

SHERIFF VANCE

Times is tough, ain't they Virginia?

Virginia doesn't say a word.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

You really let this place to go hell.
Should have asked for help sooner. We
maybe could have worked something out.

Virginia notices the wagon near the house and takes a step in that direction. Sheriff Vance moves his horse in front of her, blocking her way. He pulls his pistol and points it at her.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

I'm taking the property. You ain't gonna
pay back the loan and it's long overdue.

Virginia is becoming desperate. She's not sure what to do.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)

Miss Archer's gonna take back the girl. You
ain't got no business with a kid.

Virginia can see Miss Archer carrying Tammy out of the house. Tammy clutches the rattle in her hand.

Virginia tries to run past Sheriff Vance but Vance grabs her by the shoulder and pushes her to the ground. Virginia stands up and smacks the bee house with her hand. Bees start to swarm out.

In a flash, Sheriff Vance rides forward and tears the beekeeper's hood from Virginia's head. He hits her with the butt end of his pistol, knocking her unconscious. Virginia falls to the ground.

Sheriff Vance fires his pistol into the bee house. More angry bees swarm out.

INT. GERMAN FIELD HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

Lucius slowly opens his eyes. The field hospital is full of wounded Americans from the failed assault. Most are wounded horribly, not much chance of survival.

Lucius looks down at his stomach. He's still in uniform but his shirt is unbuttoned. There's a sloppy bandage around his torso. He moves a little and winces in pain.

BEN (O.S.)

Hurts, don't it?

Lucius turns to see Ben Crowfoot staring at him.

BEN (CONT'D)

You're lucky to be alive. But then, you
always was lucky.

LUCIUS

Jesus.

BEN

Hell of an attack, huh?

Lucius sits up a little.

BEN (CONT'D)

You been out for two days. You ain't that bad off. They moved us in here to the "going to die" tent 'cause the "maybe going to live" tent is full up.

Lucius looks around the room. A single guard stands at the door of the tent with his back to the patients.

BEN (CONT'D)

I been watching and I think they've done forgot about us. Ain't seen a doctor come in here in a day. They just roll out a fella when he dies. They're dying all the time.

BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, in the distance the sound of a steady artillery barrage can be heard.

LUCIUS

They counter attacking?

BEN

Yep, and I'll bet if you wait a few more hours, this place will get busy.

Lucius feels around his neck. The amulet is still there.

LUCIUS

Where you hurt?

Ben opens his mouth to reveal a strange bloody mess.

BEN

In the back of my mouth. Something shot in the back of my neck

(Ben points to his neck)

And came out through my mouth. Blowed my back teeth out. Can you believe it? Other than that, I'm fine. Glad I still got my tongue.

Lucius does his best to roll over.

BEN (CONT'D)

You think you can move?

LUCIUS

Yeah. I can move.

Lucius takes the amulet from around his neck and wraps the string around both hands as if testing it out as a garrote. He looks at the guard.

BEN

Ain't no use. They's a hundred more milling around outside.

Nearby a TRAIN WHISTLE BLOWS. Lucius lays back down and closes his eyes a little.

Two men walk in the tent, orderlies presumably. They walk past the beds checking men's pulses. When they find a dead one, they hang a little red flag on the cot.

The men finish their inspection and walk from the tent.

EXT. GERMAN FIELD HOSPITAL- TRAIN TRACKS -- NIGHT

Darkness and the white steam hissing around a locomotive's wheels. Boxcar doors slide open with a clank and German soldiers spill out onto the tracks.

Muddy wagons are pulling into the field hospital from the front. They're filled with the German wounded. The field hospital is bustling with commotion.

INT. GERMAN FIELD HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

Several orderlies rush back into the tent. They're in a hurry.

ORDERLY 1

(in German)

Get them out.

The orderlies begin grabbing the dead and hauling them outside. Lucius and Ben lay on their backs playing dead. Little red flags dangle from their cots.

EXT. GERMAN FIELD HOSPITAL- TRAIN TRACKS -- NIGHT

A ramp is placed up to the side of a boxcar. A wagon filled with the dead is parked next to the ramp. Men carry the bodies up to the boxcar and heave them inside.

CUT TO:

EXT. GERMAN FIELD HOSPITAL- TRAIN TRACKS -- MOMENTS LATER

The boxcar door slams. The latch goes down. The TRAIN BLOWS ITS WHISTLE and lurches forward.

INT. BOXCAR -- NIGHT

Lucius sits up. Ben is already up with his face pressed to the side of the boxcar. He's looking out the slats in the side of the car. The place is filled with dead American soldiers, they're haunting eyes staring blankly in all directions.

BEN

We're going away from the front, back into Germany. We got to get off.

Lucius slides himself over to the door and tries it. It won't open. He peers out at the latch through the crack.

He slides the amulet off his neck and pushes it out the crack in the boxcar door, trying to loop it around the latch. He moves the wrong way and groans in pain from his stomach injury.

Ben moves over to him.

BEN (CONT'D)

Let me try.

Lucius hands him the amulet. Ben looks at it.

BEN (CONT'D)

Where did you get this?

LUCIUS

I won it from Liberty Scopes.

BEN

It's Cherokee made. Anisahoni. Blue Clan.

Ben turns it over. He reads the inscription.

LUCIUS

What's it say?

BEN

It's directions to home.

LUCIUS

To home?

BEN

To someone's home. I know where this is.
Near an old mine up a draw by Thunderhead
Mountain.

Ben continues to look at it for a while, then slides it through the crack in the boxcar door. He tries a few times until he's able to slide the amulet around the latch.

He pulls up and pops the latch open. CLANK, he slides the door open a little and looks at the ground flying by.

BEN (CONT'D)

(turning back to Lucius)

I don't think you can jump, not with your belly like that. It'd come open for sure. Well have to wait until she stops.

Lucius leans against the boxcar wall and unbuttons his shirt some. He looks at the bandage. He can see a little blood starting to show through.

LUCIUS

The bastard tried to kill me.

BEN

Tried to kill me too. Wonder who he was.
Asshole.

LUCIUS

Not the Germans. Liberty Scopes. He tried to kill me.

Ben thinks about it.

BEN

Ah hell, everyone's trying to kill everyone around here. I never seen anything like it.
(pointing to the bodies)
Ask one of them, they'll tell you.
(to the bodies)
Ain't that right fellas?

Lucius buttons up his shirt and rolls over.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS -- DAY

The train rolls along through the German countryside. The beauty of the landscape is a welcome contrast to the stifling suffocation of the front.

EXT. WATERING STATION -- NIGHT

The train is stopped at a rural station taking on water and coal. The boxcar door slides open. Lucius and Ben jump out and hurry across the fields.

EXT. CAMPFIRE -- DAWN

Ben and Lucius huddle around a small campfire. They're eating the last of a rabbit that Ben has caught and skinned.

LUCIUS

We've got to head South. Get out through Italy or Greece. We can't go back through France. We'll never make it.

Suddenly church bells begin to ring in the distance. Ben and Lucius look up. The bells continue to ring.

BEN

Fire?

LUCIUS

Maybe. I don't know.

The bells ring and ring, chiming out over the hillsides and woods. Ben and Lucius try to keep warm as they finish the last of their meager meal.

EXT. ROADSIDE -- DAY

A line of dejected looking German soldiers walk down the muddy road. They look rough and defeated.

Ben and Lucius hide in the woods just beside the road. At the end of the column of men a few stragglers limp by, trailing the main body.

As the last two pass, Ben and Lucius spring from the woods and drag them back into cover. They strangle the wounded men, looking into the pitiful faces as the surprised Germans die of suffocation.

EXT. GERMAN COUNTRYSIDE -- DAY

DISTANT VIEW OF

Ben and Lucius walk South through the fields dressed in the Germans uniforms.

EXT. ROAD JUNCTION -- DAY

Ben and Lucius look at signs at a road junction before taking the road that leads South.

EXT. ROAD -- EVENING

Ben and Lucius are exhausted. They limp down the road as the sun sets. Lucius has the letter from his boot out. He finishes reading it and then looks at the picture of Virginia.

BEN

Let me see her.

Lucius hands Ben the picture.

BEN (CONT'D)

She's beautiful.

LUCIUS

She is. I know her, sort of. She's even prettier in person. She's married to the man that tried to kill me.

BEN

Too bad you didn't kill him instead.

Lucius and Ben round a curve in the road. They suddenly become aware of a German checkpoint. Their first instinct is to turn back, but it's too late. They've been spotted.

One of the GUARDS motions for them to come forward. Ben flips his collar up and pulls his hat down low, doing his best to cover his features. Lucius tucks the letter back in his coat pocket.

GUARD 1

(in German)

Come on, come on.

Lucius and Ben walk forward unsure of what they're going to do.

GUARD 1 (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

Ben opens his mouth revealing the bloody mess and acting as if he can't talk.

GUARD 1 (CONT'D)

(to Lucius)

What about you? Can't you talk.

Lucius hesitates. The guards sense something is wrong. They unsling their rifles and point them at Lucius and Ben.

INT. GERMAN JAIL -- DAY

Ben and Lucius sit in a cell. A GERMAN OFFICER walks up to the bars and looks in at them.

GERMAN OFFICER

You will be officially charged with the two counts of murder.

LUCIUS

We didn't know.

GERMAN OFFICER

Ignorance is no excuse.

LUCIUS

It is. It is an excuse. How could we know?

GERMAN OFFICER

The war was over for seven hours. You are murderers. You will be transferred for trial.

The officer starts to walk off but turns back.

GERMAN OFFICER (CONT'D)

I knew personally one of the men you killed. He did not deserve to die this way. He did not deserve to lie naked in the woods. You are cowards, whatever the circumstances.

EXT. STEAMER LANDING -- DAY

Mastiff Taylor steps off the steamer at the landing. He looks up toward the Orphans' School for Girls. He looks up on the ridge to where the corn is growing. He watches the way the wind blows through the corn.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER -- DAY

Mastiff Taylor walks along the river with two other men. As he walks he notices the sugar cane growing along the shore. He stops and breaks off a piece. He peels it and eats it as he walks.

CUT TO:

INT. VANCE HOUSE -- DAY

Mastiff Taylor and Sheriff Vance sit in the parlor. Sheriff Vance casually leafs through the Letters of Cicero. Mastiff Taylor holds the letter from Mrs. Oxendine and glances over it.

SHERIFF VANCE

Mrs. Oxendine always was excitable. Always jumping to conclusions.

MASTIFF

Says here you told her the Locklear boys killed him.

SHERIFF VANCE

Yep.

MASTIFF

Who are they?

SHERIFF VANCE

Just some local boys. Used to live back in the swamps. Took off after the incident. No one's ever heard from them since.

MASTIFF

I see.

Mastiff thinks for a little while. He glances out the window at his men waiting outside.

MASTIFF (CONT'D)

Listen Vance, I knew your daddy. I didn't like the man but at least I could reason with him. Since he died, illegal whisky coming out of this county has tripled. I'm gonna shut it down. I'd ask you to help me but I think you're more mixed up in it than your daddy ever was.

SHERIFF VANCE

I don't have to sit in my own living room and listen to this.

MASTIFF

I'm going to have a look around your county myself. I know about your little speakeasy back in the sticks.

SHERIFF VANCE

What speakeasy?

MASTIFF

Big John Cummings' place.

(pause)

Legislation's just about to go through Vance. Illegal booze is going to be even more illegal, once the prohibition act goes into effect.

(sarcastically)

But I expect you know that, being Sheriff and all.

SHERIFF VANCE

Big John's been dead for weeks now. Place is shut down.

MASTIFF

That a fact?

SHERIFF VANCE

Yep.

MASTIFF

I'll just go out and have myself a look. See if there ain't no stills around that maybe you missed.

Mastiff stands up and starts to walk outside.

MASTIFF (CONT'D)

One more thing Vance.

Sheriff Vance stares at him indignantly.

MASTIFF (CONT'D)

I'll need to see them land deeds, the ones that entitle you to all these people's land. I could never find them in your records vault. If you don't have them, we'll have to defer to the state records, and they're from 1851.

EXT. SPEAKEASY-- DAY

Mastiff Taylor and his men ride up to Big John Cummings' place. The Locklear boys sit outside drinking booze from mason jars. Mastiff walks up to them.

MASTIFF

Afternoon boys.

The Locklear Boys eye the men, recognizing them as some sort of officials.

MASTIFF (CONT'D)

Big John around?

BEEDY

He's dead. Dead as hell.

MASTIFF

And who might you be?

BEEDY

Jeff Davis.

The rest of the Locklear boys laugh a little. Mastiff cracks a smile. He walks around to the back of the speakeasy and his men follow. He looks around. A wagon is parked there. He walks over to the wagon and pulls the tarp back. The wagon is empty.

EXT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -- DAY

Mastiff knocks on the door. He stands on the steps with his hat in his hand. Miss Archer opens the door.

MASTIFF

Afternoon, ma'am.

MISS ARCHER

Afternoon.

MASTIFF

Name's Mastiff Taylor.

MISS ARCHER

I know who you are.

MASTIFF

(pointing toward the
steamer landing)

You ever see anything strange down there?
Any traffic at odd hours?

Miss Archer shakes her head no. Mastiff looks at the ground, then looks out at the crops.

MASTIFF (CONT'D)

Thank you.

(pause)

Got a good crop of corn out there. Girls
must eat a lot of corn.

MISS ARCHER

We sell some of it. Might plant potatoes next year.

MASTIFF

I love potatoes. I surely do.

Mastiff puts his hat back on and walks off.

MASTIFF (CONT'D)

Good day to you, Miss Archer.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -TAMMY'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Tammy lies in the bedroom covered in sweat. The place is a mess. She holds the rattle in her hand. She looks on the verge of death.

She stares out the window in a daze and watches Mastiff Taylor and his men as they board the boat at the landing. As they do, she sees Liberty Scopes disembark from the boat in uniform. He carries his duffel bag and walks with a cane. Tammy stares hard, unsure if what she's seeing is real.

INT. BARN -- DAY

Virginia crouches in the corner of the barn where she has obviously been living. The door slowly creaks open, spilling light onto her.

Her face is terribly scarred up from the bee stings. Liberty Scopes stands in the doorway looking at Virginia. He's still in uniform and holding his cane.

Virginia runs to him but Liberty takes a step back. He looks coldly at her scarred up face.

LIBERTY

Fine job you've done keeping the place up.

VIRGINIA

If you only knew.

Virginia starts to cry.

LIBERTY

Place is all boarded up.

VIRGINIA

Sheriff Vance took it back. Came to claim the debt.

Liberty seems distant, unaffected. He picks up Virginia's hand and looks at it.

LIBERTY

What happened to your ring?

Virginia doesn't respond. She's exhausted.

EXT. GRAVES -- DAY

Liberty stands in front of his parents' graves looking at them. He wants to say something but the words won't come.

INT. TOWN HALL -JUDGE VANCE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Sheriff Vance sits at Judge Vance's old desk. Liberty enters the room.

SHERIFF VANCE

If it ain't our war hero.

Liberty walks across the room and sits down in the chair. He looks at the big gold ring on Sheriff Vance's finger.

LIBERTY

I want my farm back.

SHERIFF VANCE

I can't give you that Liberty. I'm going to tear down the place. Plant the whole acreage with corn. A deal's a deal.

LIBERTY

I got nothing left.

SHERIFF VANCE

I got a better proposition for you.

LIBERTY

What's that?

SHERIFF VANCE

I hear you know a thing or two about cards. Come back a bonafide card man.

LIBERTY

I know something about 'em.

SHERIFF VANCE

I need someone to run Big John's place. I'll cut you in on half. There's a lot of money's gonna be rolling through there. Gonna rename it. Get some whores out there. Call it "Jack of Diamonds".

INT. GERMAN JAIL -- DAY

Ben and Lucius sit in the jail cell. BALDWIN, a young guard of about 17, sits just outside of the cell looking at Ben.

LUCIUS
(to Baldwin)
He's genuine.

BALDWIN
(in broken English)
A real Red Man?

BEN
That's right Baldwin. I'm an Apache brave.

BALDWIN
But you still came to fight for the
Americans?

BEN
Times change. Things change.

Baldwin looks amazed.

BALDWIN
I cannot believe it.

LUCIUS
Would you like to hear him do a war cry? A
real war cry? Would you like that Baldwin?

Baldwin nods his head.

LUCIUS (CONT'D)
Bring him his necklace. It's where he gets
his power from.

Baldwin looks around nervously.

BEN
It's okay. We won't tell them.

Baldwin stands up slowly and walks over to a safe.

BALDWIN
It's in the safe.

LUCIUS
Don't you know the combination?

BALDWIN

Sure I do. I pay attention. I see more than they think I do. But I'm not supposed to know it.

BEN

When's der commandant coming back? Huh?

BALDWIN

Tonight.

LUCIUS

You've got plenty of time.

BEN

(as if he's changing his
mind)

I don't want to do it. I don't feel like it anymore.

BALDWIN

No, no...I'll get it.

Baldwin thinks for a minute and then opens the safe. He pulls out the amulet and looks at it.

Baldwin walks over to the bars. He's holding the necklace out at arm's length.

Ben holds a hand out through the bars. Baldwin hands him the amulet. Ben drops it close to the bottom of the bars. Baldwin instinctively goes down for the dropped necklace. When he does, Ben grabs him by the neck and pulls him into the bars. Lucius helps. Baldwin is choking.

LUCIUS

Give me those goddamn keys or I swear to God I'll kill you.

Baldwin tries to resist for a minute but Ben and Lucius choke him harder. He gags. He's turning white. He reaches onto his belt and hands them the keys to the door. Ben lets go and unlocks the door. Baldwin looks panicked.

CLANK, the door opens and Ben hurries to the safe. He pulls out the letter with the money in it and shoves it in his pocket.

Ben grabs a rifle from the wall and points it at Baldwin. Lucius lets go of Baldwin and hurries over to the weapons.

As he does, Baldwin scrambles to his feet. He goes for his pistol.

BEN

Baldwin don't. Don't.

Baldwin ignores him. He's panicked, terrified of the trouble he's going to be in.

POW, Ben fires and Baldwin slumps of the floor. POW! Baldwin discharges his pistol into the wall.

LUCIUS

Shit! Shit.

Baldwin looks around confused as he drifts out of consciousness.

CUT TO:

INT. GERMAN JAIL -- MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON

Lucius slides his hand down a map hanging on the wall. He traces a path from Germany to Switzerland to Italy.

Lucius and Ben scrounge what supplies they can from the jail, pistols, bullets, a compass.

EXT. GERMAN COUNTRYSIDE -- NIGHT

Lucius and Ben ride on horses through the countryside.

EXT. SWISS ALPS -- DAY

Ben and Lucius ride horses through the Swiss Alps. They stop for a moment looking South to the valleys of Italy.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF GENOVA ITALY -- NIGHT

Lucius and Ben wearily ride past Roman ruins as they enter the Italian town of Genova. The sound of the horse's hooves clacking on the cobbled streets echo off the old mortar covered buildings.

EXT. GENOVA ITALY -- NIGHT

Lucius and Ben stop their horses outside of a building that flies the American flag. A single light still burns in one of the rooms.

CLOSE ON

Lucius' hand pounding on the door.

He continues to pound for a while until the door slowly opens. The tired face of WILL THOMPSON, an American diplomat, peers out.

LUCIUS
(excitedly)
Sir, I'm--

WILL THOMPSON
(interrupting)
You're Lucius Vance.

Lucius looks surprised.

WILL THOMPSON (CONT'D)
You're wanted for the murder of three
Germans.

Lucius looks at Will Thompson dumbfounded. His hand slowly moves down to his pistol.

WILL THOMPSON (CONT'D)
The Germans called ahead. Don't worry, I
won't give you up. I don't care if you did
kill them. Kill them all I say after what
they put us through, but I can't help you,
times being what they are.

Will pulls a piece of paper out of his pocket and writes down a name.

WILL THOMPSON (CONT'D)
Do you have money?

Lucius shakes his head yes. Will hands him a little more.

WILL THOMPSON (CONT'D)
Take this as well.

Will hands him the piece of paper.

WILL THOMPSON (CONT'D)
See this man. He's a merchant marine. He's
expecting you. Pay him. He'll take you back
to The States.

Lucius takes the paper. His eyes express his thanks. He flips his collar up and heads back into the darkness.

EXT. MERCHANT VESSEL -- DAY

Ben and Lucius sit on the deck of a merchant ship. The gray water of the Atlantic spreads out in all directions. Lucius stares at the picture of Virginia. He holds the envelope up to his nose and smells it.

INT. SPEAKEASY-- DAY

CLOSE ON

Whisky being poured into a glass. Virginia fills the last of several glasses on a tray. The speakeasy is filled with men drinking and gambling at multiple tables.

Liberty sits at one of the tables playing a high stakes game with the Locklear boys. The blind woman scrapes out the tune Jack of Diamonds on her fiddle.

LIBERTY

(to Virginia)

Hurry it up goddamn it. These men are thirsty.

Virginia scrambles to get the drinks over to the tables. She's working hard and sweating.

EXT. DOCTOR JENKINS HOUSE -- DAY

Virginia walks up to the door of Dr. Jenkins house. She looks exhausted.

INT. DOCTOR JENKINS HOUSE -- DAY

Doctor Jenkins stares at Virginia from across a table. He's clearly concerned.

DR. JENKINS

You should have come to me about those stings sooner. Maybe I could have helped keep that scarring away.

Virginia ignores the comment. She doesn't care.

VIRGINIA

Have you seen her? Is she OK?

DR. JENKINS

I don't know, Virginia. It doesn't look good. If the leg doesn't come off, she'll probably die. It's gangrenous. She doesn't have long.

Virginia is horrified.

VIRGINIA

Can't you help her? Can't you?

DR. JENKINS

It's beyond my means. You'll have to go to the city and it'll cost money.

VIRGINIA

But surely they won't let her die if I bring her?

DR. JENKINS

They won't let you have her back Virginia. You can't take care of her. Archer won't have it.

(Dr. Jenkins looks defeated)

There's people dying all over the place around here. Nobody's got any money. The doctors won't work on her for free. It's in God's hands. She may live.

Virginia stands up and walks out. Dr. Jenkins looks down at the table ashamed.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -TAMMY'S BEDROOM -- DAWN

Tammy is on the verge of death. She stares out the window toward the steamer landing.

Wagons are lined up at the landing, their contents covered in tarps. A boat approaches and stops at the landing.

Tammy watches as two men get off the steamer and walk toward the road. She can't make out their faces in the dim light.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS - DINING HALL -- MORNING

Miss Archer also watches as the two men head down the road. If she was closer to the landing she'd see that the two men are Lucias Vance and Ben Crowfoot.

EXT. VANCE HOUSE -- MORNING

Ben and Lucius open the door of the Vance house and go inside.

INT. VANCE HOUSE-SHERIFF VANCE'S BEDROOM-- MORNING

Sheriff Vance lies in bed, a pistol on the night table beside him.

Lucius stands over him and Ben stands at the door. Sheriff Vance senses something and groggily opens his eyes.

LUCIUS
Hello, Sheriff.

Sheriff Vance goes for his pistol but Lucius knocks it away. Sheriff Vance tries to sit up but Lucius forces him back down with a pistol to his nose.

SHERIFF VANCE
You're supposed to be dead.

BEN
He's back from the spirit world.

Ben cracks a smile.

LUCIUS
Word in town is you got things all fucked up. You been working with the man who tried to kill me.

SHERIFF VANCE
What do you mean?

LUCIUS
You know what I mean. Liberty tried to kill me, or didn't he tell you.

SHERIFF VANCE
I swear he didn't say a word.

LUCIUS
But it'd suit you just fine. Where is he?
(pressing the gun harder
to Sheriff Vance's face)
Where is he?

Sheriff Vance tries to think of what to do.

SHERIFF VANCE
Lucius, I'm your brother.

Lucius cocks the hammer back on his pistol.

SHERIFF VANCE (CONT'D)
He's running Big John Cummings' place.

INT. VANCE HOUSE- SITTING ROOM -- DAY

Sheriff Vance is tied up, a burning Kerosene lamp sits next to him on a table.

LUCIUS

I ought to shoot you.

EXT. JOHN OXENDINE'S HOUSE -- DAY

Ben and Lucius walk down the road to Big John Cummings' place. As they do, they pass John Oxendine's house.

INT. VANCE HOUSE- SITTING ROOM -- DAY

Sheriff Vance struggles to free himself. He rocks back and forth more and more violently.

As he does, he hits the table with the kerosene lamp on it. The lamp falls on the floor and busts, catching the curtains on fire. Sheriff Vance struggles harder. The room is going up in flames. Suddenly, Preacher Aldridge busts in.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE

Jesus!

He rushes over to Sheriff Vance and unties him.

PREACHER ALDRIDGE (CONT'D)

Archer says two men arrived at dawn and saw the shipments going out. Maybe Mastiff.

SHERIFF VANCE

It's my brother. My fucking brother.

The room is really burning now. Sheriff Vance tries to go for the land deeds but it's too late. The fire drives him back. The men flee the house.

CLOSE ON

The land deeds going up in flames.

EXT. JOHN OXENDINE'S HOUSE -- DAY

John Oxendine watches as Sheriff Vance rides furiously past his house on the main road toward Big John Cummings' place.

INT. SHACK-MAIN ROOM -- DAY

The Locklear boys sit around the table with their guns out finishing their drinks.

INT. SPEAKEASY- BACK ROOM -- DAY

Liberty is passed out in the back room where he and Virginia now live. Virginia stands in the half-light looking at him sleep.

She creeps over to the bed and bends down. She gently pries up a floorboard just under the bed.

POP, the board comes up. Virginia freezes for a moment terrified, but Liberty doesn't wake.

Virginia looks into the hole under the board. There's a tin box in it. She pulls it out. She opens the box. It's Liberty's money stash. She reaches in to grab the money.

KA-BLAM, there's a ruckus in the other room. The Locklear boys have started arguing about something. Liberty's eyes open. It takes a second until he figures out what's going on. He bolts upright. He looks at Virginia.

VIRGINIA

I was checking it, checking to see it was safe!

Liberty doesn't want to hear it. POW, he hits her hard on the face and she falls to the floor.

LIBERTY

You going to steal from me!? From me!?

BAM, he hits her again.

VIRGINIA

I'm sorry. I wasn't--

Liberty punches Virginia. She's dazed.

LIBERTY

After all you put me through? After all you've lost of mine?

Liberty climbs on top of Virginia and strikes her again.

INT. SHACK-MAIN ROOM -- DAY

The Locklear boys are looking toward the back room, listening to the commotion. The door to the back room bursts open and Liberty pulls Virginia out, leading her by the hair. She's scrambling to keep up.

Liberty flings her forward and she falls onto the table that the Locklear boys are sitting around, spilling the whisky all over.

LIBERTY

Caught the bitch stealing from me. You boys believe that?

(MORE)

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

After all I done for her. Who else would
keep her, looking the way she does.

Virginia tries to stand up but Thud Locklear holds her down on the
table.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

That's the last straw. You hear me
Virginia? The last straw.

Liberty walks over and leans in close.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

You on your own now.

Virginia spits on the floor.

VIRGINIA

You're a gutless bastard, working for the
man who killed your best friend.

He glares at Virginia.

LIBERTY

(to the Locklear Boys)

What do you say you take some turns with
Virginia here? Consider that your payment
for the money I owe you.

The Locklear Boys think about it.

LIBERTY (CONT'D)

Just turn her face away from you. The rest
of her looks fine.

Beedy and Thud hold Virginia down on the table.

Tux moves around behind Virginia and pulls her dress up.

CLOSE ON

Virginia's terrified eyes. Her sweating face. She glares toward the
door.

The door bursts open and Ben and Lucius enter. POW! Lucius shoots Tux
between the eyes and he falls backwards to the floor, his pants around
his knees.

Thud goes for his gun but Ben pumps two rounds into his chest sending
him skidding back onto his ass.

Liberty goes down for a dropped pistol then comes back up.

Beedy manages to get off a shot but in his panic he shoots left and hits Ben in the arm. Ben goes down on his knees in pain, dropping his pistol. Lucius fires into Beedy's chest. Beedy drops to the floor dead.

Liberty has the drop on Lucius. He points his pistol at his head. CLICK-misfire.

LUCIUS

Ain't so lucky as you thought.

Lucius trains his gun on Liberty.

BANG, BANG, BANG, Lucius empties his pistol over Virginia into Liberty who goes down to the floor in a pool of blood.

Lucius stands there with the smoking gun in his hand. Virginia can't believe it. It all happened so fast. It's over but--

CLICK. Sheriff Vance stands in the doorway. He pulls his hammer back on his pistol. It's pointed at the back of Lucius' head.

SHERIFF VANCE

You always was a softy. You should have shot me.

Just as Sheriff Vance is about to pull the trigger he hears something behind him, a twig snap, a footfall.

He turns and fires just as John Oxendine fires. The two men hit each other. John's round finds its mark right between Sheriff Vance's eyes. Sheriff Vance's round hits John in the chest. The two men lay sprawled out in the dust.

Virginia walks over to Liberty who lies bleeding on the floor. She bends down. He's still breathing. She puts her hand over his nose and mouth and holds it there. The breathing stops.

INT. SPEAKEASY- BACK ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Virginia, Ben and Lucius stand around the hole in the floor. Virginia pulls out the tin box and opens it. She pulls out the money. It's a few measly dollars.

VIRGINIA

Dumb bastard lost it all. Lost everything he made. Lost it all.

EXT. SPEAKEASY-- DAY

Ben, Lucius and Virginia ride away from the speakeasy on the wagon that was parked out back.

EXT. GRAVES -- DAY

Ben, Lucius and Virginia finish burying John and Liberty beside Dahlia and her husband.

CUT TO:

EXT. LIBERTY'S FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Ben, Lucius and Virginia ride out to the main road in a wagon.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS- HALLWAY -- DAY

Miss Archer, in a panic, tries to stop Virginia as she hurries toward Tammy's room.

MISS ARCHER

You can't do this. You can't bust up in here like this.

Virginia forces her way past Miss Archer and flings open the door to Tammy's room. She walks in and Miss Archer follows.

INT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -TAMMY'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Tammy is bad off but alive. The rattle lies on the floor beside her. Virginia goes over to the bed to get her. Miss Archer tries to stop her.

They struggle. Virginia hits Miss Archer with all her might, with all her pent up anger. Archer falls back onto the floor crushing the rattle as she rolls across it.

Virginia looks down at the crushed rattle. Something catches her eye. She bends down. On the floor, in the midst of the debris, two big emeralds gleam.

EXT. CITY DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Virginia stands in front of a doctor's office in the city. She looks down at the two emeralds in her hand and then walks inside.

EXT. ROAD -- DAY

CLOSE ON

The bandages around Tammy's thigh where her leg has been amputated.

Her face has regained its color and she rides in the back of a wagon with Lucius who tends to her bandages.

Virginia and Ben ride in the front of the wagon. Ben holds the amulet looking at the writing on the back of it.

In the distance, the Appalachian mountains rise up out of the blue haze in the direction the company is traveling.

EXT. ORPHANS' SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -- DAY

CLOSE ON

An axe smashes through a side door. Mastiff Taylor and his men peer inside. Barrels and barrels of whisky are stored beneath the orphanage. Miss Archer stands next to the men.

MASTIFF

(to Miss Archer)

Girls can't live on corn and sugar cane
alone Miss Archer, but good moonshine can.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Mastiff Taylor walks away from a big still operation hidden in the basement of the church. He walks out into the daylight.

EXT. CHURCH -- DAY

Preacher Aldridge struggles to run away across the fields. Mastiff and his men watch him run, then one starts a car and drives after him.

EXT. MOUNTAIN HOME -- DAY

The wooded crests of mountains rise into the air in all directions. The wagon stops in front of a small house beside a stream.

The windows are boarded up and the house looks like it hasn't been used in many years. Ben, Lucius and Virginia dismount.

Ben hands Virginia the amulet. The two men go around behind the wagon to help Tammy out.

Virginia looks at the house and smiles. She slips the amulet around her neck.

She slowly walks inside as the others follow.

DISTANT VIEW OF

The misty hills and green valleys spread out around the little cabin and disappear into the golden light of dusk.

FADE OUT.

THE END