

**EXT. RODEO PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

The dirt parking lot is filled with pickup trucks. PEOPLE wearing cowboy hats, wrangler shirts, and boots walk toward the entrance to the rodeo, kicking up dust.

COUNTRY MUSIC can be heard as the People get closer to the entrance.

A banner that spans the entrance to the rodeo reads: EL PASO CHARITY PRO RODEO

The HARPER family - EARL, 37, MAXINE, 32, YOUNG CODY, 11 and YOUNG DOYLE, 9 - head toward the rodeo entrance. They are all in western attire - cowboy hats, button down shirts, jeans, and boots.

Earl has sharp blue eyes and a permanent five o'clock shadow. He's a tall man, about 6'2, and well built from years of working assembly lines.

Maxine is a southern belle with a sweet, angelic face and kind eyes. The only blemishes she has are bruises on her neck and a scar that runs the length of her hand.

Young Cody and Young Doyle are inseparable. Cody has Earl's eyes - a deep blue - while Doyle takes after Maxine.

The Harper's enter the rodeo.

**EXT. VENDOR AREA - MOMENTS LATER**

Hay bales line the vending area. Booths are filled with cowboy hats, chaps, saddle raffles, BBQ, beer and toys.

Cody and Doyle take everything in. They frolic ahead, bewildered and mesmerized.

**EXT. PLAY BULL RIDE - MOMENTS LATER**

Four large MEN in cowboy hats and jeans stand at four corners of an amusement ride holding ropes that attach to a suspended fake bull which hangs atop a blow up mattress.

MAN 1 picks Cody up and puts him on the bull.

The four Men start to pull the ropes making the bull buck and sway.

Cody is all smiles as he pretends to be a cowboy, holding one hand high in the air.

Maxine claps for Cody.

**EXT. CORRALS - CONTINUOUS**

The Harper family stands outside the rough stock corrals.

Cody stands on a fence calling to the cattle and the horses which graze the dirt on the floor for remnants of grain or hay.

Doyle kicks dirt around and climbs on the hay bales to get a closer look at the animals.

**EXT. BLEACHERS - CONTINUOUS**

Maxine, Cody, and Doyle sit in the bleachers surrounded by other rodeo SPECTATORS.

Cody and Doyle look around excitedly.

Maxine watches them and smiles. She points something out to the boys. They listen intently to her.

**EXT. BEER VENDOR - CONTINUOUS**

Earl walks away from the beer booth and back toward the bleachers carrying two red cups filled to the brim with beer.

**EXT. BLEACHERS - MOMENTS LATER**

Earl walks up the bleacher stairs and sits next to Maxine.

Maxine watches Earl drink - a mix of sadness and apprehension in her eyes.

**EXT. RODEO ARENA - CONTINUOUS**

RIDER 1, on horseback, gallops into the area holding the American Flag. He does one full circle around the arena then halts his horse in the center of the arena.

**EXT. BLEACHERS - CONTINUOUS**

The Harper family and the rest of the Spectators stand for the *Star Spangled Banner*. All the MEN hold their hat to their heart.

Everyone sings the words softly.

**EXT. RODEO ARENA - CONTINUOUS**

COWBOY 1 comes out of the chute riding a bareback bucking bronco.

He stays on for 8 seconds then gets bucked off.

**EXT. BLEACHERS - CONTINUOUS**

Spectators CLAP and CHEER.

Earl finishes another cup of beer and tosses the cup below him. The empty red cups are filling up the space at his feet. He kicks them as he stands and heads down the stairs.

**EXT. RODEO ARENA - CONTINUOUS**

A RODEO CLOWN lights a few fireworks and tosses them into a BBQ that sits in the middle of the arena. The fireworks blow up the BBQ, sending the lid flying high into the air.

**EXT. BLEACHERS - CONTINUOUS**

Cody and Doyle stand up as they LAUGH and CLAP for the Rodeo Clown.

**EXT. RODEO ARENA - CONTINUOUS**

The steer wrestling event is underway. COWBOY 2 and COWBOY 3 rush out of the gate chasing a steer. COWBOY 2 jumps off his horse and lands on the running steer, wrestling it to the ground.

**EXT. BEER VENDOR - CONTINUOUS**

Earl chugs one more beer as he walks back to the bleachers, tossing the cup into a trash bin. He holds the other cup of beer in his hand.

**EXT. RODEO ARENA - CONTINUOUS**

A dozen GIRLS on horseback gallop around the arena carrying flags with sponsor logos.

ANNOUNCER 1

Hope you folks had a good night!  
Take care now!

**EXT. RODEO PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS**

Earl walks toward his truck in front of the rest of his family.

He looks behind him as...

EARL  
Hurry up Maxine!

Earl reaches the truck, unlocks it and stands waiting. He looks on irritated as Cody and Doyle linger behind playing cowboys.

Unable to wait any longer, Earl takes large, fast steps toward Cody and Doyle.

Maxine steps in front of him...

MAXINE  
Earl, don't.

Earl grabs Maxine by the arm and pulls her hard toward him.

EARL  
(whispering)  
You ain't never been no hero  
Maxine. Don't start now.

Earl shoves Maxine into the truck.

EARL (CONT'D)  
Cody! Doyle! Get in the god damn  
truck! Now!

Cody and Doyle, seeing their father's burgeoning anger, run up to the truck and crawl inside.

**INT. EARL'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS**

The truck can really only fit three people. Maxine sits next to Earl.

Cody and Doyle squeeze next to each other on Maxine's right.

The truck is drifting slightly as Earl drives.

COUNTRY MUSIC plays on low.

Everyone in the car is quiet - a nervous silence.

Maxine, hands in her lap, picks at her fingernails.

Earl notices Maxine's nervous behavior.

EARL  
Quit it!

Earl swings his hand to strike Maxine, hitting her hands hard.

Cody and Doyle cower away from Earl.

As Doyle starts to tear up, Cody holds his hand.

Maxine stops fidgeting and sits perfectly still.

**EXT. HARPER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Earl's turns off the main road and drives up a short dirt road. He parks the truck on a patch of brown grass next to an old, single story home that is in dire need of repair. Aluminum foil covers some of the windows. Junk litters the porch.

Unintelligible YELLING is coming from the truck.

As Earl opens the door...

EARL  
...worthless cunt!

Earl gets out of the truck, leans in and pulls Maxine out by her hair.

Maxine SCREAMS.

MAXINE  
Let go Earl! Please, let me go!

Tears stream down Maxine's face.

Earl shoves Maxine forward...

EARL  
Get in the house.

As Maxine heads toward the house, Cody and Doyle climb out of the truck, horrified.

Doyle is sobbing now.

Cody continues to hold Doyle's hand.

Earl stumbles toward the house after Maxine. He turns back to the boys as...

EARL (CONT'D)  
Doyle! You better shut the hell up  
boy!

Cody and Doyle freeze in their tracks.

EARL (CONT'D)  
Forget it, you little pussy.

Earl follows Maxine through the front door and inside the house.

**INT. HARPER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The house is clean but filled with old furniture. It feels cluttered and on the verge of becoming dusty were it not for Maxine's diligence.

Maxine walks toward the kitchen quickly as Earl stalks after her.

Cody and Doyle enter the house and stand in the doorway.

MAXINE  
Cody, put Doyle to bed y'hear?

Earl slaps Maxine across the face as...

EARL  
Shut up!

CODY  
Yes mama.

Cody and a terrified, bawling Doyle head quickly into a small bedroom off the living room.

**INT. CODY AND DOYLE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The room has one twin bed shoved into a corner. A large dresser takes up the remainder of the space. The drawers are half closed and filled with old, hand-me down clothes. A few raggedy stuffed animals sit on the unmade bed.

Cody tries to calm Doyle by handing him a stuffed animal.

CODY  
Everything's gonna be just fine.

Doyle sits on the edge of the bed cradling the stuffed animal.

Cody bends over and helps Doyle take off his boots.

Blood curdling SCREAMS can be heard from the kitchen.

Doyle continues to cry as Cody tucks his brother into bed.

CODY (CONT'D)

Stay put and don't come out no  
matter what.

Doyle nods his head, pulling the sheets up to his eyes.

CODY (CONT'D)

I mean it.

Cody leaves the bedroom, closing the door behind him.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Cody walks to a small coat closet in the living room. He opens it and sitting in front of piles of junk is a twin barrel shotgun.

**INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

Maxine is cowering in the corner of the kitchen, near the sink.

Earl raises his hand high and brings it down hard across her face, drawing more blood.

Maxine begs for her life...

MAXINE

Please... please...

EARL

I told you not to piss me off  
Maxine. Now see what you done?

Cody walks shakily into the kitchen holding the shotgun.

Maxine freezes, immediately quiet and terrified.

MAXINE

Cody? What you doin' with that? You  
need to put that down. Y'hear me  
Cody?! Put it...

Earl turns slightly in Cody's direction.

Cody pulls the trigger.

BANG!

Maxine SCREAMS.

Earl drops to the floor at Maxine's side, bleeding profusely.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

What have you done Cody? What have  
your done?

Maxine crawls to Earl and cradles him in her arms as he  
bleeds out on the kitchen floor.

As Maxine rocks a dead EARL in her arms, she tearfully  
repeats...

MAXINE (CONT'D)

What have you done? Oh Cody, what  
have you done?

Cody stands expressionless.

**INT. BAR AND DANCE HALL - DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT - 15 YEARS  
LATER**

LINE DANCERS, all over 60 years old, do a two-step to the  
MUSIC on a small, wooden dance floor.

The LADIES wear form fitting jeans or flowing long skirts,  
patterned button down tops, cowboy hats, boots, and bolos.

The MEN wear cowboy hats, large belt buckles, and western  
shirts tucked into their jeans.

**INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS**

Cody, now a 26 year old, strong, handsome looking man if not  
a little gaunt, stands behind an empty bar counter. He spins  
a quarter on the wooden bar top. He looks bored.

**INT. DANCE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS**

The MUSIC winds down.

ANNOUNCER 2

That'll do it for this evenin'.  
Lets give a big hand to our band,  
Dust n' Strings.

The Line Dancers stop and CLAP for the BAND which sits off to  
one corner - also all in their 60s.