

M U E R T O E N

VIDA



Written by Colin McGovern



OVER BLACK:

AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY, AMERICA'S WAR WITH THE INDIAN NATIONS IS COMING TO AN END. AS NATIVES ARE SUBJUGATED, RELOCATED AND FORCIBLY ASSIMILATED INTO WHITE SOCIETY, SOLDIERS RETURN TO THEIR FAMILIES. IN THE HILLS OF THE COLORADO WILDERNESS, ONE WOMAN WAITS FOR HER HUSBAND TO COME HOME.

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - HILLSIDE VALLEY - AFTERNOON

Super: SUMMER

Nestled by the forest edge, surrounded by dense sycamore trees, lies a small **CABIN** and **BARN**.

A **YOUNG WOMAN** digs in the dirt nearby. Her hair is dark and thick, with unruly curls that spiral out in all directions. A forceful **CRUNCH** comes with every thrust of her spade.

She wipes sweat off her brow with a handkerchief. Her once-bright prairie dress is faded, well-worn, and as dirty as her hands. She's a hard working woman who takes pride in being self-sufficient.

CRUNCH.

She keeps digging, oblivious to what is coming.

For deep in the bosk of the forest is a **MAN**, stumbling through the brush, searching for escape.

And he's just spotted her.

CRUNCH.

The man creeps out of the wood, coming ever closer to her.

CRUNCH.

He calls out in a hoarse voice through **BROKEN TEETH**.

BROKEN TEETH

You there...

The Young Woman looks up from her work, not even startled. The man's dirt-crusted face is leering at her as he desperately clutches a **SADDLE BAG** draped over his shoulder.

His eyes dart from left to right, as if expecting someone.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)
 You... you got any food?

The Young Woman looks over her shoulder to her small cabin home on the edge of the forest.

INT. CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

The cabin is warm and inviting, with a beautiful oriental rug lying near a fire raging in the hearth.

The man hobbles himself over to the basin in the kitchen and begins washing his hands.

BROKEN TEETH
 Thank you kindly for the invite.

He splashes water in his face and pats it dry before lumbering over to the kitchen table, plopping himself down presumptuously at the head.

The Young Woman notices he walks as if he's been injured.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)
 Stew smells mighty nice.

The Young Woman goes over to the pot and ladles some stew into a bowl.

She carefully carries it to the man and puts the bowl down on the table before him. His eyes watch every move she makes.

He smiles luridly as he looks up and down at her figure.

She flatly smiles as he begins to devour the food.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)
 You all alone out here?
 (beat)
 Seems like that could be dangerous.

Before she can answer, the door swings opens and in walks an older woman, with a bundle of wood under her arm. She's--

MOTHER
 Gonna' be a wee cold one tonight. I
 think summer is almost ov-

She notices the man at the table. He's just finished his stew and holds out the bowl to the Young Woman, wanting more.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 (startled, but cordial)
 Oh! Hello there.

The Young Woman fills up the bowl with more stew and brings it back to the man.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 Didn't know we had company.

BROKEN TEETH
 Sorry to impose, but I ain't had no proper meal in some time... So when I saw this place here...

MOTHER
 No imposition at all. *"You shall treat the stranger with you as a native among you."*

She takes the bundle over to the fire and places the logs in a basket beside the hearth. As she does, she looks to the long **RIFLE** resting on the mantle above.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 ...Or something like that.

BROKEN TEETH
 You ladies are out more than a holler from mucha anything. Hope there's a man 'round to keep ya safe.
 (beat)
 And warm.

He winks to the Young Woman.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)
 Lots of bandits on the roads these days. Unrest with them Ind'ins... hard times like this been known to turn people into demons.

MOTHER
 The violence of this world breeds evil. But we keep ourselves safe.
 (beat)
 The Lord watches over us.

He just keeps glaring at the Young Woman.

BROKEN TEETH
 Does he indeed?

MOTHER

My sons went off fighting three
years this December and we've kept
safe here ever since.

The man looks around the house as he eats and gets a good
look at the old woman. Her fair skin and fading red hair make
it clear that she isn't related to the Young Woman.

BROKEN TEETH

One of them son's of yours...

His eyes go back to the Young Woman.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)

He your husband?

The Young Woman nods her head.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)

And he left ya'll alone out here?
I'd never leave a señorita as
pretty as you. What kind of man
does that?

MOTHER

The kind of man with principle. And
honor. Signed up to take care of
his younger brother. He's a good
man and a good soldier. The kind of
man I don't know if you'd cohort
with.

BROKEN TEETH

Is that so?

He takes a big bite of his stew.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)

(with a mouthful)

Ya know... Ain't nothin more
particular bout a soldierin' man
then there is any other on God's
green. I been a soldier. Soldierin'
man like any other man. Just tryna'
get paid. And stay alive one more
day.

Mother looks over to the Young Woman. *Why did she invite this
man in?*

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)

(Jovial)

Hell, what do I know!?

(MORE)

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)

Your man's probably out there
 makin' a name for himself. Killin'
 ind'ins left and right. Just like
 Uncle Sam tells 'im. War ain't so
 bad. Maybe It will bring your sons,
 what'd you call it, *honor...*

(beat)

Why don't you come over here and
 sit down. Imma tell a story.

Mother reluctantly makes her way over to the table, but
 doesn't sit.

The man chuckles at her stubbornness before he reaches down
 below the table....

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)

War brings different things to
 different people...

And pulls from the saddle bag something the women have never
 seen before.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)

...like this here pretty thing.

The Young Woman gazes upon the object with wondrous awe.... A
PURE SILVER PROSTHETIC FACE MASK. It's magnificently ornate
 and carved to perfection. An eerily handsome face, with a
 permanent half smirk.

The Young Woman is taken aback by that silver face. *Something
 about it is...*

The Young Woman is transfixed by the eyes... one is a cut
 hole to see through, and the other is inlaid with a polished
WHITE MARBLE STONE.

The man **POUNDS** his hand down on the table triumphantly,
 startling Mother.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)

Now ain't that a pretty sight? Bet
 you never seen nothing like that
 before.

He leans back in his chair, feeling a little more
 comfortable.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)

This too.

He slides out the **PISTOL** from his gun belt. Another expertly crafted piece. A **SILVER REVOLVER** with a handle made of the same polished **WHITE MARBLE**.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)
You got any wine?

THUNK. He sets the pistol down on the wooden table.

MOTHER
We don't keep any alcohol in the house.

BROKEN TEETH
None!?! Pity.

He can't keep his eyes off the Young Woman.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)
A little wine makes everything better.

The Young Woman holds his gaze.

After a moment, he looks over to the old woman.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)
Well if you ain't gonna sit, why not make yourself useful and get me some water. I've got a thirst after this stew.

MOTHER
You're welcome to-

BROKEN TEETH
And why don't you go get it from that well outside... I like it fresh.

MOTHER
You ca-

BROKEN TEETH
You can! Now fetch it.

Mother makes her way to the back door, worrisomely looking over her shoulder before she leaves.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)
(to Young Woman)
Don't talk much do ya? You dumb or something? Speak English? Hablo English??

She smiles.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)
 You sure are a sight, that's a
 truth.

UNDER THE TABLE - He puts his hand on her thigh and squeezes.

The Young Woman abruptly stands.

BROKEN TEETH (CONT'D)
 Don't be like that...

EXT. CABIN - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Mother makes her way to the small well and begins to pull up the basket line. She looks back at the house and starts pulling faster.

She looks down into the black well and the bucket slowly appears out of the darkness.

She continues pulling and as the bucket reaches the top, she's about to grab it when-

AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH! A blood curdling scream comes from the house, then **BANG!**

A gun shot.

Mother drops the line and whips her head to the house.

BANG! Another shot.

She runs to the-

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Broken Teeth is on the floor, blood flowing from the two gunshot wounds, one under his chin, the other in his chest... he struggles with his last breaths, gargling on the blood choking him in his toothless mouth as the Young Woman stands over him, the pretty pistol in hand.

MOTHER
 Sweet Jesus!

She makes the sign of the cross.

YOUNG WOMAN
 I had to...
 (beat)
 (MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

He came at me. With his lustful eyes he came at me.

Mother begins to pray. She's in shock at the sight of the dead Man, bleeding on the floor.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

We have to get rid of him.

MOTHER

(snapping out of it)

Yes... yes we must bury him.

YOUNG WOMAN

No... I know where we can put him.

The Young Woman gets down on her knees and takes off the dead man's gun belt and searches his pockets.

MOTHER

What-- what are you doing?

She grabs the saddlebag and rifles through it.

YOUNG WOMAN

We can use this... the gun. We can sell it. It's got to be worth a lot. It could get us through winter. We could-

MOTHER

Look!

She points to what's left in the bottom of the saddlebag... **STACKS of US BANKNOTES.**

The Young Woman pulls them out. It must be thousands.

She puts the bills and the gun on the table and grabs the mask, shoving it back in the saddlebag.

YOUNG WOMAN

Get the rug.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The two women struggle uphill as they drag the man's body, wrapped tightly in the oriental rug.

As they move up the hill, the thicket becomes more dense and dark.

Mother falls down from exhaustion.

MOTHER
(breathless)
I can't...

The Young Woman just keeps dragging. Determined. The saddlebag slung over her shoulder.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

She doesn't answer. She just keeps going. Farther up the hill. Deeper into the darkness.

Eventually she arrives at a rocky plateau and stops.

Between two **MASSIVE STONES** is a dark, foreboding **CHASM**, as if God's hand had come down and stabbed the earth. The dark pit's opening is large enough to fit a human body. Maybe more.

She looks down deep into the dark. A little too long as an *ill breath* seems to call up from the pit.

She unrolls the rug and the dead man hangs on the lip for a moment.

Mother, tears streaming, looks on in horror as the Young Woman puts her foot on the man's back and boots his body down into the void.

After a moment, there is a muffled **THUD**.

The Young Woman takes the saddlebag from her shoulder. She takes out the silver mask and looks it over, losing herself in its features. *Something is odd about it--*

She lets it fall.

The Marble Eye looking back at her as it fades way into the darkness.

YOUNG WOMAN
He's gone.

She begins rolling up the rug.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
He can't hurt us, or anyone else anymore.

She takes the rug and marches down the hill, back towards home.

Mother just looks on, staring at the dark slice in the earth.

FADE TO BLACK:

SUPER: FALL

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - HILLSIDE VALLEY - AFTERNOON

The sun is shining on the Young Woman as we see her in the same spot she was before, but this time she is on her knees, tending to a small garden where she was once digging.

She is clipping the leaves of a dark blue flower contently into a basket, when she hears the soft clatter of horse hooves, before a dark shadow grows from behind, eventually consuming her.

She looks over her shoulder to see an older man astride an enormous, golden clydesdale. He's well put together, with a grey beard with a face seamed by the sun. He has a handsome smile and the ribbons on the lapel of his blue Army coat indicates he is a **COLONEL**.

COLONEL

You keep a mighty beautiful garden,
young lady.

She smiles at him, kindly.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

Wonder if you might allow me to
water my horse and rest here for a
spell?

He **COUGHS** heavily and for a long while before-

COLONEL (CONT'D)

It's been a long journey.

She nods and the Colonel dismounts the monstrous horse.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

Thank you.

The Young Woman stands from her work and leads him over to the well.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

Do you live by yourself?

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Mother is sitting by the hearth mending a blanket, almost in a trance, her eyes fixed on the oriental rug. She can't stop looking at the faded blood stains that have seeped into the fibers.

Then she hears something. She comes back to life when she sees through the window, a man and horse, pulling up to the well.

Fear consumes her and her eyes dart over to the rifle on the mantle.

EXT. WELL - CONTINUOUS

The Colonel pulls the bucket from the well and holds it for his thirsty horse.

He freezes when he hears the **COCK** of a rifle.

MOTHER

You there! Stop! We'll have no trouble here.

The Colonel slowly puts his hands up. Still holding the bucket.

COLONEL

Fine by me.

The Young Woman steps between the gun and the Colonel.

YOUNG WOMAN

Mother! This man has asked for our hospitality. Put that rifle down!

MOTHER

I... I didn't realize you had... I didn't even see you there. I thought he might...

She puts the gun down.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. It's just-

COLONEL

(smiling)

It's okay. It's dangerous in these parts. Especially for women on their own.

MOTHER
Please-- Please come in and have
something to eat.

INT. CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

The Colonel's boots **CLACK** on the wood floor as he walks around the house, tentative of his surroundings.

CLACK.

Mother is feverish in the kitchen putting together a plate of food.

CLACK. He peeks through an open bedroom door.

MOTHER
I'll wrap up a sandwich to take
with you, as well.

COLONEL
That's very kind.

THUMPH. His boots muffle as he steps on the rug.

The Young Woman chops some of the fresh leaves she just picked and mixes them with dry tea in a tin cup before filling it with hot water and taking it over to the Colonel, who is having another coughing fit.

YOUNG WOMAN
This tea should put you at ease.

He pulls out a blood-speckled handkerchief from his pocket and covers his mouth until his coughing passes.

COLONEL
Begging your pardon.

He takes the cup from her.

COLONEL (CONT'D)
Thank you, kindly.

The Colonel looks down at the cup in his hand and below that, sees his boots standing on a faded stain in the middle of the carpet, curious as to what it could be.

MOTHER
How goes the fighting?

COLONEL
One last push aught to do it.

MOTHER

Can't come soon enough, if you ask me.

The Colonel keeps up his survey of the cabin and his eyes find a **CRUCIFIX** hanging above the hearth mantle. He snarls at the sight of it.

COLONEL

A horse always fights hardest right as it's about to break. It's no different for Indians.

YOUNG WOMAN

I think the natives are little more sophisticated than horses.

COLONEL

(contemptuous)

That doesn't surprise me.

(beat)

They're a godless people. And must be brought to heel.

The Colonel takes a sip of his tea. *Yum*. He smiles at her, raising his cup. She smiles back, kindly.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

It's God's will for us to settle this country. Destiny is manifested by strong men.

MOTHER

Have you heard of the Black Hills?

COLONEL

I know it well. My-

MOTHER

That's where my son's last letter came from.

She pulls it out of her pocket, grasping it in her hands. The paper is worn and tattered from her constant reading.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

It... It's from my Brion.

COLONEL

My son...

He stops for a moment in reflective pondering. He swallows whatever he was gonna say.

COLONEL (CONT'D)
Lots of men are stationed there.

MOTHER
My youngest died there.

She looks down at the letter in her hand.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Killed by Indians in a battle for
his country.

COLONEL
I'm mighty sorry to hear that. His
sacrifice doesn't go unnoticed.
Everyday we breathe fresh air is
because of boys like your son. What
was his name?

YOUNG WOMAN
William. After my father.

COLONEL
To William.

He raises his cup of tea, then takes a sip.

MOTHER
Please... You must be hungry. Sit
down and eat, before this gets
cold.

COLONEL
I must be on my way.

She places a warm plate of food on the dining table. The
Colonel keeps his eyes on the Young Woman.

MOTHER
Please.

He sits down at the table with the plate before him. Mother
sits down across from him.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
I know he would write if he could.
We've received no mail from him.
(re: letter)
Save this. But that's normal,
right?

COLONEL
Does he have his letters?

MOTHER

Yes, sir, he does. I taught him
myself-- Reading him the bible
every night since he was wee babe.

COLONEL

(snide)
Which bible?

The Colonel takes a bite of the food.

MOTHER

My son could read and write from a
very young age. He's the smartest
man I know.

COLONEL

(with a mouthful)
Then he should be smart enough to
survive.

The Colonel's face contorts. He puts his fork down and gently
pushes the plate away from him, not taking another bite,
instead he leans back in the chair, sipping his tea.

The Young Woman is in the kitchen staring out the window at
the massive horse as it drinks from the well bucket.

YOUNG WOMAN

What's your horse's name?

The Colonel has another small coughing fit before answering.

COLONEL

Theseus.

YOUNG WOMAN

(to herself)
What a horrible name.

MOTHER

Are you headed back to the
fighting?

COLONEL

No, ma'am. I'm retired. Wish I
wasn't though. This country needs
to be cleansed of the savages. And
that's what the army is doing.

YOUNG WOMAN

Do you wish to see all the
inhabitants of this land dead?

His eyes dig into the Young Woman.

COLONEL
Just the ones that don't belong.

He lets out a **HACKING** cough.

MOTHER
So you're just passing through?

COLONEL
I'm looking for someon-

Again he has a coughing fit.

MOTHER
Are you okay?

The Colonel puts his handkerchief to his mouth and coughs up blood.

COLONELS
I'm fine-- I've been robbed, you see. And I'm looking for th--

He begins coughing again...

COLONEL
It's fine, I'm--

His coughing gets worse and he collapses onto the floor. The Young Woman and Mother rush to help him, but they can do nothing... his coughing gets worse and worse, blood coming up with every cough... He's struggling to breathe as his mouth fills up with his own black curdled blood until....

Silence... he dies.

MOTHER
Mary and Joseph...

She makes the sign of the cross.

YOUNG WOMAN
We should bring him to the woods.

MOTHER
What?

The Young Woman begins taking off the dead man's gun belt.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

YOUNG WOMAN
He doesn't need it.

She goes through his pockets. Nothing.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
We'll use the rug again.

MOTHER
I don't--

YOUNG WOMAN
(sharp)
You want we should bury him? I
never seen you pick up a spade in
your life. So it isn't gonna be me
that digs his grave.

MOTHER
What if someone comes looking for
him?

YOUNG WOMAN
We'll tell them what happened.
And give em this.

She holds out the gun belt.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Anyone who'd come looking knew he
was sick.

Mother seems convinced. She goes to get the rug.

The Young Woman notices something as she holds up the belt.
The gun in the holster is exactly the same as the **MARBLE
HANDLED SILVER REVOLVER.**

FADE TO BLACK:

SUPER : WINTER

FADE IN:

INT. BARN - DAY

The golden clydesdale chews a mouthful of hay while the Young
Woman gently brushes his mane.

She smiles as she works. Content with herself. It's cold.
She's in a thick coat and we see her breath in the air as
snow falls outside.

She speaks gently into the horse's ear in Spanish. Her words seem to sooth him along with her methodical brushing.

She finishes with the horse, kissing its nose before making her way to the door, flipping her collar up as she trudges through the thick snow and back to the--

INT. CABIN - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The Young Woman **STOMPS** the snow from her boots. Before she can look up-

MOTHER

(agitated)

This man here says the fighting is over.

The Young woman sees a **STRANGER** warming his hands by the fire, his back to her.

YOUNG WOMAN

Is that so?

The Stranger's collar is pulled up high and his hat is pulled down low with a scarf wrapped around. His face is barely visible.

STRANGER

More or less.

MOTHER

(To Young Woman)

You hear that!? It's over.

STRANGER

You got someone fightin'?

MOTHER

My son. He'll be heading home now I suspect.

STRANGER

If he survived. The fightin' took its toll on so many soldiers.

YOUNG WOMAN

All of us. Not just the ones who left home.

(beat)

You're a soldier?

The Stranger keeps his eyes on the fire.

STRANGER

Was.

MOTHER

Would you like some food?

The Young Woman can't keep her eyes off the revolver that sits in the holster on his belt. She looks to the rifle on the mantle and the Stranger between her and it.

YOUNG WOMAN

Please. Eat with us. Tell us more of the day's news.

Mother is so excited, she is fast at work in the kitchen fixing the stranger a bowl of porridge.

MOTHER

Should still be warm enough. Please- Please- sit.

The Stranger lumbers over to the table, sitting down at the head. The Young Woman sits to his right, on the side of his gun.

Mother comes over and places the bowl in front of the Stranger.

Slowly, the Stranger takes his coat off and loosens his scarf. The Young Woman watching his every move -- there is something familiar about this man... But she can't quite put her finger on.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Where were you fighting?

STRANGER

All over. I was with a unit that never seemed to stay at one place long enough at a time. I'm just tryna make my way home now. Live a simple life.

MOTHER

Do you have family waiting for you?

STRANGER

A daughter... and my wife.

He finally takes his hat off and unwraps his scarf. And the Young Woman can finally see his face.

She freezes her gaze directly at his **GREEN EYES**.

MOTHER

That's so nice. I'm sure she been--

Mother keeps speaking but her voice now seems far off in the distance as we are **CLOSE IN** on the Young Woman's eyes.

Then the Strangers. *Does he know her?*

She knows him.

SCREAMS are heard.

YOUNG WOMAN (O.S.)

Ahhhhhh! HELP! Help me, please!

CLOSE ON THE GREEN EYES --

It's **DAYTIME** now. He's outside in a **FOREST**, looking down at something.

CLOSE ON THE YOUNG WOMAN'S BROWN EYES--

She's terrified. She's on the forest floor, writhing as a **MAN** on top of her holds her down.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Help me. Please! Don't --

Green Eyes just watches with guilt, fear, and loathing as he does nothing.

CLOSE UP OF THE YOUNG WOMAN'S BROWN EYES - We're back in the CABIN.

She smiles slightly.

CLOSE ON THE GREEN EYES -- He places her.

In that moment, the Young Woman grabs a **KNIFE** from the table and **STABS** down on the Stranger's hand **HARD**, pinning it to the table.

He **WAILS** in pain.

Without skipping a beat, she reaches over to the Stranger's gun-belt, unholsters his revolver, points it between his eyes, cocks the hammer and **BANG!**

His brains fly out the back of his head, splashing blood and chunks all over the oriental rug.

MOTHER

AHHHH!!!!!!!!!!

The body leans back in the chair, but doesn't fall. His hand staked to the table keeps him in the chair.

Blood drips from his open head.

DRIP.

DRIP.

Mother can't stop screaming.

YOUNG WOMAN

(cold)

He was a bad man. He would have done bad things to us.

DRIP.

The Young Woman gets up from the table and pulls the knife out from his hand and the man's body flops to the floor with a **THUD**.

EXT. WOODS - HILLSIDE - NIGHT

The snow continues to fall as the Young Woman sullenly drags the bloodstained rug back to the cabin. Alone. Her head down.

She looks up and sees the silhouette of a **MAN** standing on the outskirts of the cabin.

She lets go of the rug and reaches for the **REVOLVER** that is tucked into the back of her dress waistband.

She takes a few steps down the hill, closer to the Man. He sees her.

MAN

Angela?

That name. She stops in recognition of herself.

MAN (CONT'D)

(convinced)

Angela.

She knows that voice and it's as if the sound of it has brought her back to life.

She drops the gun and runs to her husband. Embracing him in a monstrous hug, nearly knocking him over.

She checks his face to see if it's really him. Tears welling in her eyes.

It's him. It's **BRION**. She kisses him relentlessly.

INT. CABIN - DOORWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens and Angela stands in the threshold.

ANGELA

Mother.

Mother is on her hands and knees, furiously cleaning the floor in a trance like state. The blood all gone.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Brion's home.

Mother doesn't move.

BRION

Momma...

Her head pops up. She stops scrubbing. She is in disbelief. Brion smiles and makes his way over to his mother, embracing her tightly.

She can't stop crying.

BRION (CONT'D)

It's okay, Mom. I'm here now.

MOTHER

Oh, my boy. My lovely boy.

BRION

(re: the scrubbing)

What's all this?

Mother looks down at wet floor.

MOTHER

(honestly bewildered)

Oh.... I can't even remember.

She hugs him tight.

INT. CABIN - FIREPLACE - LATER

Angela sits alone staring at the rifle that rests on the mantle above the fire, lost in thought.

Brion walks in and sits on the couch beside her.

BRION
She's asleep.

He takes his wife's hand in his, so happy to be home.

BRION (CONT'D)
You look different.

She puts her hand on his cheek.

ANGELA
So do you.

Brion leans back on the couch, his eye lids heavy.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
So much has changed.

He's asleep. Angela slowly gets up and puts a blanket on him, looking down at her husband who seems so vulnerable there.

She puts one more log on the fire to keep him warm and then softly runs her fingers across the wooden butt of the rifle before leaving to bed.

THE NEXT MORNING - The snow has accumulated high around the cabin, blanketing everything.

INT. BARN - MORNING

Angela is brushing and feeding the horse, content.

Brion approaches from the doorway.

BRION
Must be more than a foot out there.

Angela just smiles and continues brushing.

BRION (CONT'D)
Who is this handsome fella?

ANGELA
His name is Theseus. But I don't think it suits him.

BRION
How could you afford him?

Angela continues brushing.

ANGELA

He kind of just... became ours. His previous owner died.

BRION

Let me.

He takes the brush from her and begins working on the horse.

BRION (CONT'D)

All this seems like a dream... I didn't know if I'd ever make it back.

Angela picks up another brush and continues to work.

ANGELA

Why didn't you write? We only got that one letter.

Brion thinks on this a moment, a hint of shame in his eyes.

BRION

I...

(beat)

I wrote... The mail must have been intercepted or... it was war. Things were hard.

ANGELA

We had it hard, too. Years, Brion. Years not knowing if you were dead on some hill in God-knows-where. Your mother's been...

She swallows what she was going to say.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

A letter would have put her heart at ease.

Brion looks dejected.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

And mine.

BRION

After Will died... I... You don't know what it was like to be out there all alone.

ANGELA

And you don't know what it was like here.

The two stand in silence for a moment until Angela notices smoke coming from the kitchen chimney.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Looks like your mother is awake.

Brion notices the smoke and wishes the conversation wasn't ending.

Angela makes for the door and brushes her hand on his tenderly as she passes.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Vamos... Let's get you some
breakfast. You're too skinny.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Angela and Brion stomp the snow off their boots. Mother is hard at work in the kitchen.

MOTHER
I thought it was all a dream. I had
a horrible nightmare-- about all
the violence in the world. I
thought you were shot. I... But
when I saw your coat this morning
when I woke, I knew. I knew it was
just a bad dream. And my baby was
home.

Brion smiles.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
I've got biscuits coming... We've
plenty of lard left... and the
last of the eggs. But you deserve
it. We can go into town and get
more.

ANGELA
I don't think anyone's going to
town today. The snow is so thick.

BRION
We don't need all this mother. If
there's another storm--

MOTHER
Nonsense, nonsense. Winter is
nearly gone. This was the last of
it. I know my moons. Sit. Sit.

The three sit at the table and Angela is about to dig in when-

MOTHER (CONT'D)
(remembering)
We have to say grace!

Angela stops.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Brion, would you?

BRION
Why don't you, mother.

They all take hands.

MOTHER
Praise God, from whom all blessings
flow. May this food restore our
strength, giving new energy to
tired limbs, new thoughts to weary
minds. May this drink restore our
souls, giving new vision to dry
spirits, new warmth to cold hearts.

Brion can't keep his eyes off his wife. But she just keeps her head down while Mother says grace.

Mother finishes and they eat in silence for a moment.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
I remember when you were a boy, you
always wanted to go west and see
America. Tell us what you saw. You
must have traveled a great deal.

Brion chews his food while he ponders a moment.

BRION
Maybe saw too much.... The land is
beautiful. But it's soiled by the
ugliness of war.

MOTHER
I can only imagine. There are
savages on this earth... Those
natives you fought-

BRION
The Natives are just fighting for
their homes... You wouldn't believe
the things I saw done by my-- It
doesn't matter.

He takes a big bite of his food and everyone knows that's the end of the discussion.

BRION (CONT'D)
It's over now.

EXT. CABIN - LATER

Brion is chopping wood in the yard.

The sun is shining on the picturesque snowy landscape.

Angela comes out to the porch and watches for a moment.

ANGELA
We have plenty of fire wood. Come inside and warm up.

BRION
This is warming me up.

CHOP!

He splits a log and immediately places another on the chopping block.

BRION (CONT'D)
I don't understand. You two have everything. I want to make myself useful but... You've got a new horse in the barn, enough wood to last three winters. Food stores are full... I-

ANGELA
We've been without you for a long time. We didn't know if you were ever coming back.

BRION
...I'm sorry.

ANGELA
You don't need to be. We took care of ourselves. I kept your mother safe.

CHOP!

BRION
Following my brother was the worst mistake of my life. I never should have left.

ANGELA

But you did leave.
 (beat)
 You told me when you left it was
 for honor. Did you find it?

Brion stands in silence.

Angela's eyes are looking past her husband, deep into the darkness of the forest thicket, looking, as if something out there is beckoning her...

She hears the same *ill breath* that called out... deep from the fathoms of the pit...

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Come inside. You'll catch your
 death out here.

INT. HOUSE - FIREPLACE - NIGHT

Brion is looking deeply into the fire as Mother reads aloud from her bible.

MOTHER

*If we died with him, we will also
 live with him; if we endure, we
 will also reign with him. If we
 disown him, he will also disown us;
 if we are faithless, he remains
 faithful... for he cannot disown
 himself.*

Angela's not listening. She can't keep her eyes off the rifle above the mantle. An uneasy feeling inside her. It's so close...

Mother notices Brion wasn't paying much attention.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I used to read passages to your
 father too... He didn't believe any
 of it either. Said he'd just as
 soon believe in the faeries than an
 old geezer in the sky. Stubborn old
 boot.

(melancholic longing)

Said he just liked hearing my
 voice...

Mother gets up from her chair and goes over to her son, putting her hand under his chin.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
You look just like him.

She kisses his cheek and goes off to bed.

Brion gets up and puts another log on the fire.

ANGELA
The faeries?

Brion chuckles.

BRION
Spirits of the forest.
(playfully malevolent)
They'd steal people who wandered
in too deep.

He plops down next to Angela, wraps his arm around her and pulls her close.

BRION (CONT'D)
Folk tales to scare children.

They sit for a moment, listening to the cracking fire.

ANGELA
Did you kill people?

Brion pulls away.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
In the fighting.

Brion ponders for a moment. He gets up from the couch and stares out the window.

BRION
I was stationed where some of the
worst fighting happened, all over
the Dakota's, with the 7th
cavalry...

Brion rustles through kitchen cabinets and drawers, searching for something.

BRION (CONT'D)
Do we have anything strong to
drink?

Angela shakes her head. Brion gives up.

BRION (CONT'D)

I saw many men die. I saw bodies mutilated by both us and them. Fields of women and children... The gun smoke so thick it would choke you right where you stood. And I would cry... not knowing if it was from the smoke burning my eyes or the weight of what we'd done... But I never fired my gun. Not once. Not at another man at least.

Angela seems somewhat relieved.

BRION (CONT'D)

But I...

He sits down next to her on the couch.

BRION (CONT'D)

They said I was 'too valuable a commodity' to be in close battle. Guess they thought I was too smart. Guns aren't the only thing that can kill a man. Sometimes it's words written on paper. The charity of a blanket. Or just an order to move.

He looks away from her, shame in his eyes.

Angela's attention goes to the window...

CLACK.

She hears something outside... **CLACK.** Boots on wood.

BRION (CONT'D)

We knew they'd starve...

CLACK... Another footstep.

Angela sees it. Something out the window. *Was it a person?*

CLACK... Brion doesn't notice. He takes her hand in his, trying to confess something.

The fire **POPS!** Startling her.

ANGELA

Someone is outside.

BRION

The things we did... The things I was part of...

THROUGH the window - Angela sees a **CLOAKED FIGURE** walk past.
SHE JUMPS TO HER FEET.

ANGELA

Brion!
(stern)
Someone is outside.

Brion gets up and grabs the rifle from the mantle.

He walks to the door.

BRION

HELLO!?

He swings it open pointing the gun out into the cold world.

He steps outside, cautiously. His eyes razor focused on the dark, freezing land around him.

Angela comes to the doorway, anxiously watching.

We follow Brion as he walks around outside, but he finds no one. Not even footprints in the snow. There seems to be no one there... But Angela can see past that... she knows someone is out there. *She can feel it.*

Brion walks a little farther out yonder, but finds nothing.

When he gets back to the cabin door, Angela is gone. Off to bed.

INT. HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING

Angela stands over a pot of water, waiting for it to boil so she can make coffee. Her tired eyes look out the window to the woods at nothing in particular. And she hears something... the wind softly calling to her... Drawing her attention deep into the dense forest.

Up the hill in the snowy thicket she spots something poking out of the melting snow.

THE CARPET! Her eyes go wide.

BRION

Snow looks like it's melted a bit.

Brion comes out of the bedroom, buckling his belt, ready to leave.

BRION (CONT'D)
I think I'll head into town today.

ANGELA
Stay for breakfast.

BRION
I don't think so. Want to get an early start. You think the pass through the woods is still in good shape? Over near the little river.

ANGELA
(sharp)
No! Take the road, it's much safer. I'll saddle Theseus.

BRION
I can do that.

ANGELA
Don't go.

She puts her arms around him, trying to persuade him.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
You've only just arrived. I'm sorry if I've been sour. Stay for coffee. We don't need anything from town.

BRION
I have business to attend to. You might not need anything, but the government owes me money for my service. I intend to collect.

Mother comes out of her room.

BRION (CONT'D)
I'm headed to town, mother. I'll be back later.

He kisses her on the cheek, slings his bag over his shoulder and heads out the door.

MOTHER
Mmmm. I'll take some of that coffee.

EXT. FOREST HILLSIDE - DAY - LATER

Angela is up the side of the hill where the rug sticks out.

She pulls it out from under the snow, shaking it. The red blood-stains are ripped and scratched. The wolves had got after it.

ANGELA
(deflated)
Mierda...

She starts searching the ground, getting on her hands and knees, feeling under the snow for the gun she dropped.

When her hand finds it, she pulls the revolver out from under the packed snow, relieved.

Then she hears something. That subtle whisper again. The voice just under the wind. Calling to her from deeper in the wood.

She tucks the gun into her waistband, grabs a corner of the carpet and trudges up the snow, leaving a trail as she drags it behind her.

INT. FOREST - LATER

Angela continues trudging up the hill, strange sounds in her ear... Like a woman calling out... screaming... Growing with each step she takes... Until she crests a hill and we see--

THE PIT

She stares down the deep chasm in to blackness for a moment before she tugs on the rug and drops it down into the nothingness.

She pulls out the gun from her belt and handles it for a moment and is about to toss it in when--

TICK! A stick breaks.

Angela whips around to see who is there, pointing the gun at nothing but the air.

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE
(whisper)
Help me...

ANGELA
Who's there?

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE
I don't want to die...

Angela recognizes that voice.

Her face goes cold.

Out from behind a tree steps a figure, a man... *but not...* it's wearing the Stranger's cloak, and the Colonel's hat pulled down low, covering it's face.

It's head tilts up, revealing a **MASKED FACE**. The same silver prosthetic face we saw Angela throw down the pit.

Angela stumbles back, her heels coming dangerously close to the edge of the pit.

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I'll do it...

A FLASH - [Angela is on the dirt ground, **GASPING** for breath]

ANGELA

What are you?

YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE

I'll kill them all...

A muffled laugh comes from underneath the mask... or is it from the pit below?

ANGELA

I've done what you wanted.

The Masked Man's gaze fixes upon Angela's left hand.

She covers her wedding ring.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

You can't. He's my husband.

The expressionless prosthetic face just looks through Angela. Laughing while stepping closer, as if growing right before her eyes.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

He's not like the others. He didn't hurt anybody. He's a good man.

The Masked Man keeps coming closer to her.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Stay back!

She levels her gun.

The Masked Man takes another step closer.

BANG! She fires.

The Masked Man stops for a moment. He looks down at the bullet hole in his stomach. It's meaningless.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
He's good. You can't have him.

The Masked Man takes a step back.

Angela seems relieved.

FRIENDLY VOICE (O.S.)
Hello...?

Angela whips around to see a **TEENAGE BOY**.

The Teenage Boy throws his hands up, dropping his bag, as Angela frantically points her gun at him.

TEENAGE BOY
(frightened)
I'm sorry ma'am. I-- I was down by the river and I heard a shot.

She looks around. The Masked Man is gone.

Seeing the boy's scared face, Angela lowers her gun.

ANGELA
No... No, I'm sorry. You startled me. I was...
Thought I saw a bear. So I shot...
He must have run off.
(calm, friendly)
I'm sorry for scaring you.

The boy smiles.

TEENAGE BOY
It's a'right ma'am.

The boy picks up the pack.

TEENAGE BOY (CONT'D)
You live around here ma'am? You need accompanying? These hills can be dangerous.

The boy slings the pack over his shoulder and Angela notices an **ARMY PATCH** on it.

ANGELA
You're... a soldier?

TEENAGE BOY
 (smiling proud)
 Yes, ma'am. Just signed up to fight
 them Indians.

Angela makes a sullen smile and tightens her grip around the revolver.

EXT. WOODS - HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING THE CABIN - TWILIGHT

Angela is making her way down the hill when she sees two horses in the barn. The cabin is lit up and smoke billows from the chimney.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Angela enters to the boisterous laughter of men in her home. She is a little confused when she enters, a **GUEST** is in the middle of telling a story to Mother and Brion.

GUEST
 ...shoot him!? I damn near killed
 him! HAHA!

Brion and his mother laugh uproariously at the punchline.

The Guest's eyes find Angela.

ANGELA
 What's all this?

BRION
 Angela! Darlin'.

Brion springs up from his chair, bounding over to his wife, a cup of wine in his hand.

BRION (CONT'D)
 Come. Sit. Meet my friend, Casey.
 We ran into each other in town.

Casey is bearded, balding and too fat for his own good, wearing dirty clothes, crusted with mud.

Brion takes Angela's hand and playfully drags her in to the living room around the fire where they all sit.

BRION (CONT'D)
 Let me pour you some wine!

ANGELA
 Wine?

BRION
We've got plenty! Picked it up...
along with some extra good cheer
while in town.

Angela shakes Casey's hand.

ANGELA
How do you do?

CASEY
Pleasure, ma'am. Brion's told me
much about you. His descriptions
don't do you justice.

Brion darts over with an extra cup in hand, spilling a slosh
or two on the floor as he moves. Clearly he's already had a
few.

BRION
You watch it now! She's taken.

Brion gives Angela the cup.

ANGELA
What are we celebrating?

BRION
Christmas!

ANGELA
It's February.

BRION
Yes... but I missed Christmas. And
now that Uncle Sam has finally
decided to pay me! We can
celebrate.

He takes a big gulp of his wine and pours some more.

ANGELA
(to Casey, skeptical)
You met in town today?

CASEY
No ma'am, we-

BRION
We met in the Black Hills. Soldier
Town near Rapid City.

Casey gives a handsome smile.

ANGELA
You fought together?

CASEY
(beat)
We all played our part.

Brion smiles a fake smile. Something foul lingering beneath it.

ANGELA
What brings you out here to-

BRION
Casey's a tracker! Best I've seen.

Casey smiles, grateful for the compliment.

BRION (CONT'D)
For a white man that is!

The two laugh heartily. A joke Angela doesn't get.

BRION (CONT'D)
(to Angela)
Are you hungry!? I've brought roast pheasant and some pudding and-

ANGELA
No. No, I'm fine with the wine.

BRION
Casey here is on the hunt. That's why he's in town.

Brion sits down on the couch next to Angela, his rosy cheeks plastered with a smile as he takes his wife's hand in his.

CASEY
After the fighting stopped, not all of us were so lucky to have such beautiful families to go home to. So I just kept at doing what I do best.

ANGELA
And what is that?

CASEY
Hunting people.
(cheeky)
Bad people only, I assure you. Lots of lawlessness out there and, well...

(MORE)

CASEY (CONT'D)

people pay good money for justice to be done. I gave the US Army five years of my life and The US Army gave me skills. And I intend to use them for my monetary benefit.

BRION

Don't be selling yourself to those rich dandies though... I remember the ones from wealthy families in our unit. Upper class trash... some of the worst people I'd ever met.

MOTHER

Spoiled boys grow up to be horrible men.

CASEY

Ain't that the truth.

BRION

You know this man here plays a mean fiddle.

MOTHER

Do you indeed? I should like to hear that.

CASEY

Only if your son will play with his new toy.

Casey points to a black leather case by the door. Brion gets up to grab it.

BRION

I got myself a little bit of a present.

Brion unlatches the box and opens it to reveal a mandolin.

ANGELA

(dreamy)
I almost forgot...

MOTHER

The music is in his blood. Like every good Irish lad.

Casey puts his fiddle on his neck and begins to play. Brion joins and the two *play a song*.

Brion sings. A folk song, melancholy and lovely. About the love of his dear wife while he is off to war.

Angela smiles, happy and content. She'd forgotten what it was like to be so adoring of her husband.

The song fades away as she looks at the love of her life.

CASEY
(to Brion, jovial)
Such a lovely voice.

BRION
Shut it! I've got something else
too. I didn't just indulge for
myself.

Brion hops up from his seat and bounds to the door, opening it and bringing in a rolled up **CARPET**.

He drops it on the floor with a **THUD** and pulls a knife from his hip, cutting the twine that binds it.

BRION (CONT'D)
I noticed this room was missing
something.

He **KICKS** the carpet. As it unrolls, Mother's eyes are fixed on it.

BANG! A flash of blood platter.

BRION (CONT'D)
Don't know what happened to the old
one. But I think I like this one
nicer.

Mother tries to shake off the bad memories. Casey notices.

CASEY
You alright ma'am?

MOTHER
I-- I'm fine. I'm gonna go to bed.
I think the wine has got to me. It
was so nice meeting you.

Mother gets up and makes her way to bed. Casey stands politely.

Mother's eyes keep on Angela as she walks to her room.

CASEY
Pleasure was mine.

Mother closes the door to her room.

ANGELA

So Casey, what is it exactly that you are hunting?

Casey sits back down.

CASEY

A bandit. Common thief. He ripped off a mighty rich man who's not liken to let his money be run off without some recompense.

ANGELA

What did he steal? This bandit.

CASEY

Some money. These people don't really mind about that though. He made off with a family treasure of the like. A six shooter. Supposed to be one the most intricate pistols you ever did see. And it's got a damn recognizable marble handle. A man with a pretty little piece like that on his belt doesn't go unnoticed long. And a man like that was spotted around these parts this past summer. So... here I am.

ANGELA

Last summer. Seems like he'd be long gone by now.

CASEY

Someone went looking for him soon after, but they ain't been heard from. It's funny, he took a mask too. Like a prosthetic.

(to Brion)

You know the like. For the men that been hit in the face.

Brion nods sullenly.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Damn shithead stole the man's face. But this one ain't plaster. It's pure silver, if you can believe it. These rich people and their ornaments. But they're paying me. Oh boy, are they paying me. So I guess it's a good thing all in all. Anyway! I'm boring you. I should be off.

Casey makes to pack up his fiddle.

BRION
At this hour?

ANGELA
You can stay here. We've got room.

CASEY
Thank you kindly, but it seems foolish. I have a room in town that I've already paid for. And I've an early morning tomorrow. My employer arrives on the first train.

BRION
I'll see you soon, though?

CASEY
I have no doubt.

Casey tips his hat to Angela.

CASEY (CONT'D)
It's been some time since I've had this much fun.
(to Brion)
See ya soon, sharp shooter.

He leaves. Angela holds her hand out to Brion, beckoning him over to the couch. He takes it and snuggles close to her.

ANGELA
Sharp shooter?

BRION
Oh yeah!

He playfully pantomimes shooting from the hip.

BRION (CONT'D)
(sly smile)
No body could beat me. I could bullseye a can 50 yards out with my pistol.

ANGELA
You could have joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West show... *The singing sharp shooter.*

Brion laughs.

BRION

Now that would be something.

Brion smiles for a moment... remembering something.

BRION (CONT'D)

At the camp I'd listen to the natives singing their songs... What a sound that was. There was something so deep in their voices... it'd strike your soul.

(beat)

It got me thinking about my songs... the songs I remember hearing as a kid. Songs that brought me comfort when my mom sang 'em...

(a new thought)

Then we met Casey, and he had all sorts of song books, so after Will had found this banjo in town we...

A tear hits Brion's eye as he stops. Remembering his brother.

BRION (CONT'D)

...now he had a beautiful voice.

Angela puts her hand on his cheek, hoping to take his pain away.

BRION (CONT'D)

I got something for you.

Brion bounds up from the couch.

ANGELA

You didn't...

He goes over to his pack that sits by the door and pulls out a bright and beautifully patterned rebozo.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

(overwhelmed)

It's beautiful.

BRION

Like you... It reminded me of the one you wore the night we met. Do you remember?

ANGELA

I remember you were drunk that night too.

BRION

Maybe... but I was sober enough to
know that you were the prettiest
thing I'd ever set eyes on...

Angela rolls her eyes at his flirting.

BRION (CONT'D)

And that I was gonna be with you
forever...

Angela kisses him.

ANGELA

Y siempre.

The serenity from the kiss flows over Brion. He relishes it for a moment before quickly kissing her back, and their two bodies remember the passion they stir within each other.

Brion gets on top of Angela on the couch and takes his shirt off.

Angela's eyes are closed as he kisses her neck.

She's hasn't felt the touch of a man in so long. The rapture she feels is overwhelming as she indulges in every sensual kiss.

She pulls back for a moment to look her husband in the face, she opens her eyes and sees the **MASKED MAN** staring back at her.

Angela rears her hand back and **SLAPS** him across the face as hard as she can.

Brion holds his face, his lip bleeding.

Angela stares at him breathless, before--

The two fall into each other again, passion overtaking them.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Brion is asleep as Angela lies awake. She looks over to her naked husband, a soft smile on her face.

She sits there for a moment before gently sliding out of bed. She gets on her knees and pulls out a **BOX** from beneath.

She slowly opens it, revealing the contents: **THE TWO ORNARE SILVER PISTOLS.**

CLACK.

She hears something.

CLACK.

Footsteps.

CLACK.

Boots on wood.

She looks to the window.

The Masked Man is peering at her though the glass.

She holds one pistol tightly in her hand. She stands, looking down at Brion, so vulnerable as he lies naked.

The Masked Man looks in through the window emotionless. As if controlling Angela.

She pulls the hammer back slowly.

CLICK.

Brion begins **STIRRING** in his sleep.

He stirs again. More violently this time.

BRION

AGH!!!!

Brion wakes in a fright.

The trance Angela is under seems to break.

Catching herself, Angela quickly puts the pistol in the box and hides it under the bed.

She goes to him.

ANGELA

Are you okay?

BRION

I'm fine...

He's breathing heavily.

Angela looks back at the window. No one's there.

BRION (CONT'D)

I just... I need some water.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Brion guzzles from a mug. Water drips down his chin as Angela watches, waiting for him to speak.

BRION

Oh god that's better... My head.

ANGELA

What was it about... your nightmare.

He takes one more swig of the water before starting.

BRION

I can see them. All their faces.
Standing in line. Looking down at me...

DRIP!

A drop of water falls from the ceiling and hits the kitchen floor.

ANGELA

Who?

BRION

The people we killed.

ANGELA

You said you weren't in the fighting. That you didn't kill anyone.

He takes a moment. Another sip while he clears his thoughts.

BRION

Might as well have with the processing I did. Herding them people up like cattle. Not letting them hunt, but giving them rations. I told 'em we weren't giving them enough food. Anyone with basic math could see that they'd starve... But... They didn't care. They didn't listen.

Angela says nothing. She doesn't know how to comfort him.

BRION (CONT'D)

I see them when I sleep. All of 'em.

(MORE)

BRION (CONT'D)

The men, the women, the children we sent to those schools...

(beat)

They must be all dead now.

ANGELA

You don't know that.

BRION

(broken)

I can see their faces... If I can see their faces... I know they're dead.

(beat)

My brother is there. Will is in that damn line, standing in the back with that cocksure smile...

DRIP!

BRION (CONT'D)

I look down at my roster and I see all their names. Black Feather, Kicking Bird, Sitting Bull... all of them. And then there's Will's name. And when I see it I know. I know that that list is of every death I'm responsible for in this life.

ANGELA

He died fighting... you can't blame yourself for what the natives did.

BRION

They call us *Wasichus*. Do you know what that means? '*Those who takes more than they need.*' And we did...

(beat)

They didn't do nothing to him. Most of the fighting was done when we arrived.

ANGELA

In your letter you said that he was-

BRION

I know what that damn letter said. Ain't a word of it true...

Angela looks confused.

DRIP!

She goes to the stove, grabs a pot and places it under the leak.

BRION (CONT'D)

We'd only been there a few weeks. We hadn't even seen any Indians yet... He'd been drinkin'... we'd all been drinkin'. And we heard some commotion down the edge of camp. Will grabbed his rifle and charged towards it. Just like the hero he always wanted to be. But there was no fighting. A horse had got spooked and gone mad. Bucking around the camp. When Will arrived he had the damn thing calmed like a baby. It was a marvel to see. He was always so kind. Gentle... I never understood why he wanted to join the army.

DRIP!

BRION (CONT'D)

He got that horse tied back up and he smiled at me... that damn smile... He went to pick up his rifle and the horse kicked.

DRIP!

BRION (CONT'D)

I heard his skull break. It was over in an instant. I saw him laying there.... Didn't look nothing like my brother. His whole face had warped... no more smile... No more brother.

DRIP!

BRION (CONT'D)

I sat down to write that letter and... The thought of telling my mother what had really happened... So, I spun a yarn that would make her proud... make her happy her boy had died honorably. Not like a drunken fool... I knew it was wrong as I was writing it, but the words just kept flowing in that grand tall tale of bravery... I gave him the death he would have wanted.

DRIP!

BRION (CONT'D)

After we buried him. I tried to write you... So many times I tried. To explain what I'd done. What had happened. Every time I put pen to paper nothing came. I'm a coward. I was in a haze after that. Trapped in some nightmare. Just another soldier in the camp. I just kept taking names... filing papers... drafting up treaties that we never kept. It was like I was here on earth... but wasn't even alive anymore...

DRIP!

ANGELA

Muerto en vida.

Angela takes his hand.

BRION

I saw what evil looked like out there. I'll never forget it's face.

She hugs him.

DRIP!

BRION (CONT'D)

If I stayed, none of this would have happened. I'm sorry.

DRIP!

BRION (CONT'D)

All of it seems so meaningless... all the killing.

She kisses him.

ANGELA

It's greed. This land gives us all we need, but some people just want everything for themselves.

DRIP!

Angela sees out the window, the Masked Man standing deep in the darkness of the forest, his bright **MARBLE EYE**, sparking against the moonlight.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Now, let's go back to bed. We're
not gonna solve this problem
tonight.

Brion finishes his water and follows her back to the bedroom.

Angela looks back over her shoulder, out the window. The
Masked Man is still there. Lurking.

DRIP!

EXT. CABIN - THE NEXT MORNING

The sun is shining and the snow is melting. It's a beautiful
day as spring feels just on the horizon.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Angela comes out of the bedroom to see Mother already awake.

MOTHER
Coffee is on the stove if you like.

Angela goes over and makes herself a cup.

ANGELA
Where's Brion?

Banging can be heard from on the roof.

EXT. CABIN - MORNING - MOMENTS LATER

Angela comes out of the house with her coffee in hand,
looking up to the roof, seeing her husband hard at work.

ANGELA
What are you doing?

BRION
That damn leak in the kitchen.
Maybe there's something I'm good
for after all.

Angela smiles.

ANGELA
Do you want breakfast?

BRION

No, I'm content enough with the
sunshine.

ANGELA

I'm going to go for a walk. It's
such a lovely day.

(beat)

Will you come with me?

BRION

I want to finish this, but you go
enjoy the morning.

ANGELA

We can go by the little river. I
need to show you something.

BRION

Next time. I promise.

INT. CABIN - BEDROOM

Under the bed Angela pulls out the small box. She takes out
the pistols and packs them away in a small satchel and throws
it over her shoulder.

MOTHER

Headed out?

Angela **JUMPS** as Mother's words startled her.

ANGELA

Just for a walk.

MOTHER

In the woods?

ANGELA

Yes.

MOTHER

Would you like some company?

Angela makes her way out of the room and to the door of the
cabin.

ANGELA

No, thank you. I'd like to be
alone.

MOTHER

I think I'll come anyway.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Angela and Mother walk through the thicket, the silence between them grows mountainous before one of them finally speaks.

MOTHER

Are you going to throw those in that pit, too?

Angela says nothing and keeps trudging along.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I don't understand... What you did to those-

ANGELA

They were bad men. All of them.

MOTHER

How do you know that?

ANGELA

(angering)

Didn't you see them? Hear their words?

MOTHER

You poisoned that Colonel, didn't you? Who grows monkshood in a vegetable garden?

ANGELA

You saw his ribbons. How many innocent people do you think he's killed? Lives he's destroyed? Mothers he's left grieving? I did the world a mercy.

Mother thinks about those words.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Men put on those uniforms and it makes them think they're important. Better than the rest of us.

(beat)

I remember the uniforms the Mexican Army wore when they took my father to fight for them. And I remember the uniforms of the French Army who killed him. It doesn't matter the uniform. In them, men become something else.

MOTHER

I didn't know that... about your father.

ANGELA

He was a farmer. He grew tomatoes. The most delicious you ever tasted. I remember how it felt... to squish them in my hands...

She looks down at her hand, slowly squeezing the tomato in her mind. A childish smile comes to her face for just a moment.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Our family had farmed that land for generations.

She makes a fist with her hand and grits her teeth, the happy memory gone.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

They took that too.

MOTHER

I'm sorry.

ANGELA

Any man in uniform deserves whats coming to them.

MOTHER

And what about your husband? He wears a uniform.

ANGELA

Not anymore.

Angela stops... she looks up the hill, past the thick trees... And she hears it... *that voice*.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

(agitated)

Haven't I kept us safe? Your sons should have been here to take care of you. Not me.

MOTHER

They did what they thought was right.

ANGELA

By leaving? So he could go off and be like the soldiers who killed my father. Fighting for land that isn't theirs.

MOTHER

He went for his brother.

ANGELA

You people choose to come to this country and all you bring is war. You think I would hurt Brion, don't you? My love for him is stronger than anything you could understand.

Angela stares harshly at Mother before turning around and continuing up the hill.

MOTHER

Brion's father was a farmer too, ya know? He farmed acres. Potatoes. Then the blight came. Everyone was touched by it. Crops were just dying. Hardly anything grew. He managed to keep a good portion from the scourge. We thought we'd be okay. But that didn't mean nothin. We'd lived there for generations. But we didn't own the land, and our landlords didn't do nothin' for us. Then the English came and took all our good crop. We watched our friends and my family starve to death. You talk about a choice to come here. What's a choice when if you stay in your own country, you'll die?

ANGELA

Don't you see that's what's happening here. These soldiers perpetuate it. So if any one of them steps foot in my house--

MOTHER

My husband built that house you live in!

ANGELA

On land that wasn't his!

(beat)

(MORE)

ANGELA (CONT'D)

You people didn't escape your problems, you just brought them here with you.

MOTHER

We live in an unjust world, child. You say this country isn't mine... Well, I've birthed two children here, buried a husband, and my baby son in its soil. So you can't stand there and say that that don't make this place my rightful home. We all live on the whims of mad men. Their quarrels become our wars, good men die and we become widows.

(beat)

I lost a son, but I gained a daughter. I've watched you suffer without Brion. But he's back. By God's mercy he made it out alive. Your husband is home.

(beat)

Brion's face is brightest when you're around. Remember the plans you two had when you first married?

Angela contemplates those words.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Think of the future you can make. Not of the past suffered.

The two have reached **THE PIT**. Angela opens her satchel and pulls out the two guns. Looking at them for a moment.

ANGELA

How many men do you think these have killed?

MOTHER

Not one more.

Angela drops the guns, they fall, disappearing into the darkness of the pit.

Angela and Mother take a reflexive moment, now gone of the weapons. They turn to head back to the cabin when-

CASEY (O.S.)

Angela?

Angela and Mother turns to see Casey staring at them queerly. *Did he see her drop the guns?*

CASEY (CONT'D)

I thought I saw you two there.

MOTHER

Mr. Casey, what brings you out here in the deep woods?

CASEY

Could ask the same of you ladies.

MOTHER

We always like to take walks around here. It's so peaceful.

CASEY

I can see that. Beautiful country here.

Casey spots the deep cavern cut into the earth and takes a step to the edge.

CASEY (CONT'D)

And dangerous...

He looks down into the well of darkness.

Angela is so close to him, she could push him in if she wanted to. *And she just might...*

CASEY (CONT'D)

(smiles)

Wouldn't want to fall in there.

Casey steps away from the precipice, Angela's moment gone.

CASEY (CONT'D)

I was out here walking by the little river. I was told it would eventually take me back to your cabin.

MOTHER

Did you miss our company already?

CASEY

Of course. That, and your delicious biscuits.

MOTHER

Well, I've got more at the house. Why not come have some?

ANGELA

Told by whom?

CASEY
I'm sorry?

ANGELA
Who told you about the little river
to our home?

CASEY
(lying?)
A man in town.

Casey keeps cool eye contact with Angela.

CASEY (CONT'D)
It's a small town. And I've found
people in small towns notice queer
things better than most, and love
to talk about them more than
anything.

ANGELA
Is it queer to live away from
people?

CASEY
No, ma'am.

The trio keep walking through the wood in silence for moment.

ANGELA
I think it's safer out here.

CASEY
Is that so? I'd feel it was the
opposite. Out here alone in the
forest.

ANGELA
Are you frightened of the forest
Casey?

CASEY
Not much out there scares me these
days.

ANGELA
Oh, I'm sure there's something.

They begin to walk down the hill together.

After a moment.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

I thought your employer was arriving in town this morning?

CASEY

Nothing gets past you.

(beat)

He did arrive, yes. And I'll be meeting with him later. He needed to arrange some things first.

ANGELA

Seems strange. Why would you come back to see Brion if your boss was in town?

CASEY

Well... this job seems to be a more serious one than originally anticipated. And, well, I wouldn't want to impose on you, but I may need Brion's help.

MOTHER

Is this job dangerous?

CASEY

Remains to be seen. But it's serious. Brion is a good man. We wouldn't get him involved in anything too contentious.

ANGELA

Who exactly is your employer?

CASEY

He's a rich man. Used to be a bit of a dandy. He was marred bad in the war, though. I think it changed him. Life has a way of giving people exactly what they deserve, don't it?

ANGELA

And what has life given you?

CASEY

Many beautiful days on God's earth.

They keep walking until they arrive back at--

EXT. CABIN - AFTERNOON

From the roof, Brion spots the group on the hill. *Curious*. He eyes them for a moment before he makes his way down the ladder and calls out.

BRION
Back so soon!?

Brion's boots land on the solid earth with a **THUMP**.

CASEY
Got a proposition for ya, my friend. Let's go inside and have a chat.

Casey winks at Mother.

CASEY (CONT'D)
And I was promised some of those delicious biscuits.

Angela's cold eyes are untrusting of Casey.

INT. CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Brion sips coffee gently from a mug as he watches Casey stuff his fat face with biscuits.

CASEY
These are something else.

He rudely keeps chewing while he talks.

CASEY (CONT'D)
Things got complicated, Brion. You remember Elliot? Company commander for one of the cavalry units. Son of that Colonel?

BRION
The fella too handsome for his own good?

Casey laughs heartily, biscuits flying from his mouth. Angela grabs a rag and cleans up the debris as Casey's laughter subdues.

If something is funny, Brion doesn't know what.

BRION (CONT'D)

I never met him, personally, but saw him around camp. He had a reputation.

CASEY

Ain't that the truth. Well... He ain't so handsome no more. Few months back he was shot but good. Canon blast damn near took half his face off. Ladies can't even bear to look at him no more.

(chuckles)

He was sent home to convalesce, found God, if you believe it...

Casey takes another biscuit.

CASEY (CONT'D)

(to Mother)

These are so good. How do you do it?

MOTHER

I mix in butter to the lard.

CASEY

Butter!? How 'bout that. Fancy.

He takes a big bite.

CASEY (CONT'D)

(To Brion)

You- You remember how he used to always have a little lackey follow him around. Someone who he could treat like shit to make himself feel better?

BRION

(trying to remember)

Yeah... What was his name?

CASEY

Remy.

BRION

That's it! Remy.

CASEY

Yeah, well, Remy was takin' care of him, ya see. Like an at home nurse... and well now... You remember how Elliot could be?

(MORE)

CASEY (CONT'D)

(to Angela)

He was a very vain man. You can imagine what an injury could do to someone like that.

(back to Brion)

So Remy got tired of all the name-calling, thrown objects and overall unpleasant fits he was forced to endure. Well... he figured he wasn't getting paid enough to deal with that type of torment --not many men could-- and he didn't want to be his toadstool no more. So one night, he gives Elliot a little tincture... nothing deadly of course, Remy was always a coward. No, he gave him just enough to keep him sleeping while he helped himself to the family silver.

BRION

And you're after him.

CASEY

Nah. I'm thinking he's dead.

Brion seems confused.

ANGELA

(sharp)

So why are you here?

Brion shoots her a look.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

If he's dead...

CASEY

Elliot's father went out looking for him. Took the slight as an insult to himself because it happened in his own home. You know how these fancy pants can be about honor, pride and all that horseshit.

(to Angela)

Men who never really fought on the front always have high opinions of themselves.

Brion swallows whatever he really wants to say.

BRION

And he hasn't come back I take it?

Casey shakes his head.

BRION (CONT'D)

So you're tracking him now and need extra men, is that it? I-- I can't help.

He looks to Angela.

BRION (CONT'D)

I just got home, I'm not leaving my wife again to go on some bounty hunt with you.

Casey smiles mightily.

CASEY

Nah, you got it all wrong. I don't need you to come with me, I just need to know one thing...

He chews his final bites of biscuit and then takes a long pull of the coffee in his mug before--

CASEY (CONT'D)

Where'd you get that big horse?

Mother looks agitated. Brion looks to Angela. She is stone-faced.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Clydesdale is a noticeable horse.

The silence grows to an uncomfortable level.

CASEY (CONT'D)

I never liked Elliot.

Casey wipes his greasy hands on his thighs, gets up and goes over to the window that looks to the path out yonder.

CASEY (CONT'D)

He was always an ass. But he pays. Oh, he pays. Better than Uncle Sam ever did. It's funny... two men have gone out lookin' for this damn shit that was stolen and neither returned... Both were last heard from before heading into these woods.

Brion's eyes are fixed on the gun that hangs on Casey's hip, as the man's palm rest on the butt gingerly.

Brion's eyes then go to the rifle above the hearth next to Casey. The only other gun in the house.

CASEY (CONT'D)
Spooky ain't it?

Casey keeps his eyes out the window and in the distance he sees a lone man, astride a horse, coming his way.

MOTHER
That Colonel died. Right here in
this living room.

Casey turns around to face her.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
He spun the same yarn about a
missing pistol and a thief in the
night. Then he had a coughing fit
and fell down dead. Right where
you're standing.

Brion seems surprised at the story he's hearing.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
That man was not well. Anyone who
knew him would have seen. But yes,
we kept the horse.

CASEY
And you buried him?

ANGELA
He's in the earth.

Brion gets up and tries to position himself closer to the rifle. If it comes to it, he'll fight to get it.

BRION
You want the horse, take it.

CASEY
Honestly, I don't care about the
horse. Or the Colonel. Or Remy... I
just gotta job to do.

Casey takes a deep, reflexive breath.

CASEY (CONT'D)
And I didn't want it to come to
this.

BRION
Come to what?

KNOCK! KNOCK!

CASEY
Better open that.

Brion opens the door and we see a cloaked man make his way in without being invited.

He takes off his hat upon entering and we see his **HIDIOUSLY** disfigured face. Only one eye remains and it's the meanest eye that was ever set in a man's head.

Mother looks away, squeamish, but Angela isn't scared a bit.

Brion looks the **DISFIGURED MAN** up and down, he's dressed in all black, with a white, clerical collar tight around his neck. Brion is most interested in the two guns on his belt and a long, ornate rifle he leans on, using as a kind of cane.

DISFIGURED MAN
Heard you folks have something that belongs to me.

BRION
The horse is in the barn. Take it and go.

DISFIGURED MAN
My father's pistol, where is it?

CASEY
Don't make us tear this house upside-

ANGELA
Out in the woods. I threw it down a pit in the forest. I'm sorry about your father and about the man that robbed you. But we didn't need nothing of his in this house, so I got rid of it.

DISFIGURED MAN
(skeptical)
Out in the wood...

ANGELA
I can show you.

DISFIGURED MAN
Well that wasn't so hard. And Casey was concerned. A pit you say?

Angela stands from the table.

CASEY
I knew it...

ANGELA
Let me take you.

CASEY
I know where it is.

DISFIGURED MAN
Why don't you go then, Casey.
(re: Brion)
Take him with you too. I just
arrived. I'm a little tired. I'll
stay and look after the women.

Brion hates this situation, but both men have guns on their hips and he is unarmed.

Casey walks to the back door and opens it, beckoning Brion.

CASEY
C'mon now. Let's get this over with
easy like.

Brion gives Angela a look.

She gives him a smile-- *it'll be okay.*

Brion makes his way over to Casey at the door.

ANGELA
You'll need a rope. I don't know
how far down it goes.

Casey closes the door as they leave.

The Disfigured Man sits at the table with Angela and Mother.
He smiles as best he can through his mangled scars.

MOTHER
(filling the silence)
So nice to have a priest in the
house.

DISFIGURED MAN
Pastor.

MOTHER
(nervous)
I see... Can I offer you something
to eat or coffee?

DISFIGURED MAN
Coffee sounds nice. Thank you.

MOTHER
*Do not neglect to show hospitality
to strangers, for some have
entertained angels without knowing.*

DISFIGURED MAN
(smiling)
You know your scripture. I'm no
angel, I assure you. Just a man.

Mother hastens herself in making the coffee.

DISFIGURED MAN (CONT'D)
So you two were the last to see my
father alive?

MOTHER
(somber)
God rest his soul.

She makes the sign of the cross over her chest.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
I'm awfully sorry about it. He
seemed like a... strong man.

DISFIGURED MAN
That is one way to put it. Strong
willed and strong tongued.
(beat)
Truth be told he was not a gracious
spirit. In fact he was an awful
man.

MOTHER
Not good to speak ill of the dead.

DISFIGURED MAN
I assure you madam, the dead can't
hear us. Only God.

Mother sits back down at the table as the Disfigured Man sips
his coffee.

DISFIGURED MAN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about all this. Casey has
told me all about his relationship
he had with your son... your
husband. This whole ugliness was
caused by my father and I mean to
clean it up.

ANGELA

Casey says you found God after your injury.

DISFIGURED MAN

God found me. He saved me.

ANGELA

And you needed saving?

DISFIGURED MAN

Don't we all?

He sips his coffee.

EXT. WOODS - TWILIGHT

The sun sets on Casey and Brion as they trudge up the hill.

BRION

So you're his lackey now? After all that shit you were spewing last night.

CASEY

Like I said, he pays.

BRION

So it's just about money.

CASEY

It's only for a time. And I don't take no talk like Remy did. Just gonna work with him for a job or two, til I save up enough to make my way west to California. Lots of free land out there. I could remake myself any way I like.

BRION

You think that happens? People change their nature? That boss of yours... If I remember correctly, didn't he smash out Remy's teeth with this gun I'm about fetching?

Casey chuckles.

CASEY

I suppose he did... I don't know if he's changed... But, I think he's been humbled some since his face got taken.

(MORE)

CASEY (CONT'D)

You've seen it, he's found God. The way I figure it, I work for a man of God, I might got a better chance of getting into heaven.

BRION

Is that so? You really think you'll find absolution workin for him? Or in California?

CASEY

I don't know what I'll find in California, all I know is, whatever I find, it will be a right side better than what I leave behind. And whatchu planning on doin' with your life now, huh? Your place ain't much of a farm. You gonna make a livin' playin that mandolin of yours? Like the world needs more musicians.

BRION

I recall you telling me once you got your uniform off you were gonna live a peaceful life. Now you're a mercenary.

Casey smiles roguishly.

CASEY

Bounty hunter... Sounds more romantic.

BRION

Call it what you will, I just don't understand how after everything you saw. And did, you cou-

Casey stops walking.

CASEY

What we did. We all was doing our part. I got no qualms about that. My country told me to kill Indians, I killed 'em. My country told me to burn villages, I burned em. My country paid me to take a scalp... hell, I took a scalp. And as far as those kids... well 'nits make lice', ain't that what they told us? Look, I'll meet my maker with no regrets. Because it wasn't me out there doing what was done...

(MORE)

CASEY (CONT'D)

it was the United States of
America.

(beat)

I never understood it, why you was
never in the field and always in
the office. Never out there in the
dirt. In the blood. I can't figure
how you got on the General's good
graces.

Casey continues walking.

BRION

Probably because I could read.

Casey lets out a big laugh.

CASEY

(jovial)

Ain't that the truth! Ha! Smart
ones know how to avoid real war.

(serious)

But just 'cause you never fired a
gun killin' no Indian don't make
you better than me.

BRION

Never said it did.

INT. CABIN - TWILIGHT

The Disfigured Man sits at the table with Angela and Mother.

He notices Mother can't bear to look at him.

DISFIGURED MAN

Does my face frighten you?

MOTHER

No... it's just I--

DISFIGURED MAN

It's okay. I know what it is. I
used to be a vain man... like my
father...

He looks down at the ornate marble on his rifle.

DISFIGURED MAN (CONT'D)

His father was a vain man... Guess
it's a family trait...

(MORE)

DISFIGURED MAN (CONT'D)

My great-grandfather laid claim to a quarry in New Hampshire and fashioned two pistol stocks from the marble. One for him, the other his son.

(beat)

My daddy used to say 'the bullet is the pioneer of civilization.' Like the quarry, the guns are a family legacy. The father, would give his son his father's gun... and so on, down the line. So you never had you daddy's gun, you always took his daddy's as a symbol. His gun was his, and yours had the legacy. And you needed to make it your own. Silly tradition, but... Who are we without tradition?

ANGELA

And do you have a son?

DISFIGURED MAN

No.

He looks over at Angela lasciviously.

DISFIGURED MAN (CONT'D)

Haven't found that right woman yet.

(beat)

One I don't bore of easily, at least.

There is something about this man that uneases Angela. She doesn't shrink at the sight of his face, but there is something there... As if she knows him, but can't remember how...

EXT. WOODS - TWILIGHT

CASEY

You remember what else they told us... '*Save the man, kill the Indian*'?

Brion sullenly nods his head. He remembers.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Well, I killt plenty of Indians... you was the one who was supposed to do the savin'.

(MORE)

CASEY (CONT'D)

Movin' 'em so we wouldn't have to deal with 'em no more. That was your job. I did mine.

BRION

You think we were saving them? Issuing warrants for people who never did anything wrong, writing deeds to lands we never shoulda owned. We starved them Casey, moved them, poisoned them and took their kids... ain't none of us getting in to heaven doing what we did. I never fired my gun at a man, but I killed plenty. I know I killed plenty...

Another moment of reflection.

BRION (CONT'D)

So when you ask me what I'm gonna do with my life.... I haven't figured it out quite how yet, but I'm gonna make amends for all the wrongs I've done. Because I know my country sure ain't.

CASEY

Why Brion, it sounds like you lost your sense of patriotism.

BRION

I never claimed to be a patriot.

CASEY

You may think yourself different because of your conscience, but you're part of something bigger than you. And you never wont be.

(beat)

What I can't reckon is why you joined the Army in the first place?

BRION

For my brother.

CASEY

Right... You remember I helped you bury him?

BRION

That's the kind of thing a man don't forget.

CASEY

I'm sorry it was you, Brion. I really am. I never thought I'd see you again. But when I was in town and saw you sitting atop that golden stud I... Something happened. I thought my heart would break. But ya know what... It didn't. Sometimes you do something so miserable and you hear inside you that little voice say 'no', 'don't do it' but you push past it... That's what the Army teaches you. And that barrier inside you... that little morsel of your soul you pushed past, dies. They don't tell you that. That once you go past, you ain't never gonna hear from that part of you again. You know the voice I'm talkin' about. The one that lives in the pit of your belly. Last time I heard that voice was at wounded knee... I ain't never heard it since. I thought I'd hear it when I saw you... but nothing. That's when I knew. There ain't no coming back for me.

(beat, smiling)

So what can ya do?

Brion stops. Turns around and gets close in Casey's face.

BRION

(through gritted teeth)

I can hang you with this rope.

CASEY

You might get that chance.

Casey gently puts his palm on the gun on his hip.

Brion takes a breath and turns around, continuing his walk up the hill.

CASEY (CONT'D)

All you gotta do is get that pistol. You do that, when we all go home and you go back to your life of makin' amends.

Casey and Brion crest the hill.

They've reached--

THE PIT.

They both lean over and look down into the deep.

CASEY (CONT'D)
How far down could it be?

Brion has already begun tying the rope to the trunk of a sturdy tree, then walks back to the edge and throws the slack down.

After a moment we hear it hit the base with a soft thud.

CASEY (CONT'D)
Here.

Casey hands him a small lantern and some matches.

CASEY (CONT'D)
I want you coming back up with that
gun tucked in your belt you hear?
We gotta get back to your house
together... or who knows what could
happen.

Brion grits his teeth, desperately wanting to rip Casey apart.

He swallows it and takes a tight hold of the rope before he descends down into the pit. The farther down he goes, the more the darkness consumes him until everything is completely black.

INT. CABIN - TWILIGHT

Angela is staring straight into the Disfigured Man's face.

ANGELA
I think I recognize you...

DISFIGURED MAN
That so?
(beat)
I have a memorable face.

ANGELA
It's not the face... you look like
the monster I know you to be. I'd
forgotten so much. But I'm starting
to remember...

Angela stands up and begins walking towards the Disfigured Man.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
 You don't recognize my face?

The Disfigured Man tries to place her with his one good eye.

As he looks at her, his mangled face **MORPHS** into what he once looked like, when he was a **HANDSOME MAN**.

It's **DAY** now. And we're in **THE WOODS**. It's springtime.

HANDSOME MAN
 (looking off at something
 we can't see)
 You there....

The Handsome Man is in his full US Army Blues, walking his horse with two others mounted behind him. We can't see their faces.

HANDSOME MAN (CONT'D)
 Stay with the horses, Skunk.
 (to the other man)
 You come with.

One of his companions dismounts. We've seen those sharp **GREEN EYES** before.

HANDSOME MAN (CONT'D)
 (calling off into the
 distance)
 Do you need help?

We see who he is calling to.

Angela.

She is a little ways up the a hill, carrying a basket with herbs and plants she's collected. She looks younger somehow.

ANGELA
 Oh, I can manage. But thank you gentlemen.

The Handsome Man climbs the hill to get closer. Green Eyes follows.

HANDSOME MAN
 I wouldn't be much of a gentleman
 if I didn't help.

Angela reluctantly lets him help, handing him the basket she carries.

HANDSOME MAN (CONT'D)
 Well you are a pretty sight.
 (to Green Eyes)
 Is she not?

Green Eyes blankly smiles and nods. Angela looks over the two men in their pristine Army uniforms.

ANGELA
 My husband... He is in the Army as well.

Angela stresses the word *husband*, thinking it will assuage the Handsome Man from the thoughts she knows he's having.

HANDSOME MAN
 Is he indeed?

The Handsome Man doesn't care at all, and his eyes continue to burn through Angela.

ANGELA
 Yes, he's gone to fight-

HANDSOME MAN
 Now where'd you come from?

ANGELA
 I live over the glade with my--

HANDSOME MAN
 Oh, you know what I mean.

His pompous smile sets puts Angela ill at ease.

CUT TO:

ANGELA'S FACE - WERE BACK IN THE CABIN

Her face is resolved. Confident.

ANGELA
 You're a man who's had everything given to him, aren't you?
 (beat)
 And you take what hasn't.

DISFIGURED MAN
 Does God not want us to be fulfilled on his earth? He has blessed us *Americans* with abundance.

Angela moves to the kitchen counter.

DISFIGURED MAN (CONT'D)
Uhh-ahh.

He fingers his rifle.

DISFIGURED MAN (CONT'D)
I suggest you sit back down.

She doesn't.

MOTHER
What kind of priest could-

DISFIGURED MAN
(sharp)
Pastor. The filthy Catholics are called priests.
(gently)
Listen, if you've been truthful, and your son comes back with what I want, we'll be on our way and this will be but a bad memory.

ANGELA
Memories have a way of haunting us. Especially the bad ones.

The Disfigured Man eyes her for a moment. Something is off about her...

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Wouldn't you agree?

Angela smiles, sinisterly.

MOTHER
Brion will be back soon. This is all just a misunderstanding. He'll come back with both those guns and-

DISFIGURED MAN
Both?

Mother knows she messed up.

DISFIGURED MAN (CONT'D)
Why would he find *both* guns?

Mother doesn't know what to say. Fear consumes her.

Angela is dead calm, her smile unwavering.

ANGELA

Some time before your father arrived at our door we were visited by a man. If you could call him that. He looked like he'd been beaten down into something else. You know what I mean? When a man ceases to be a man any longer... and they become a beast.

(beat)

Some men are like that naturally, others have to become it. This man was filthy and with a mouth full of broken teeth.

The Disfigured Man perks up at this detail.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

The kind that jerks at the slightest move. Like a scared dog. And those are the worse kind of people. You wouldn't believe the way he looked at me. With his disgusting smile. Thinking he had the right to touch me. To take whatever he wanted. I knew what he wanted. What all men want. And when he put his hands on me I took that pretty little gun he was carrying. The one with the marble handle and I put it under his chin and blew his brains to the ceiling.

The Disfigured Man hold his rifle tight.

DISFIGURED MAN

I always knew he'd end up with a bullet through his skull. I only regret it wasn't me that pulled the trigger. But if you want to confess your sins, I'm all ears...

ANGELA

I seek no forgiveness.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PIT

Brion reaches the bottom of the pit. He's in complete darkness.

He **STRIKES** a match.

The fire bursts into being and the surroundings become visible for just a small moment and we see-- lurking behind Brion-- the Masked Man.

Brion lights the lantern and the soft glow from the fire illuminates the surroundings.

Brion is standing on the blood stained carpet, it's lumpy and uneven. He steps back and off onto even ground.

The Masked Man behind him shirks back into the shadows. The white **MARBLE EYE** in the mask floating in the black.

CASEY (O.S.)
You find 'em down there??

AT THE TOP OF THE PIT - Casey looked down into the deep, seeing only the flicker from Brion's lantern.

AT THE BOTTOM - Brion looks around. He sees there is a pile under the carpet. As he looks closer, he sees the bloody hand of a dead man poking out from underneath.

Brion inches closer. Behind him, watching intently is the Masked Man, his demonic presence always lurking.

Brion pulls up a part of the carpet and sees a pile of dead bodies.

BRION
I found the Colonel!

Brion notices the other dead men piled before him... but there is another body that draws his attention.

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Angela stands closer to the Disfigured Man. He takes a step back, his hands tight on his rifle.

ANGELA
I can see fear in your eyes...
well... eye.

DISFIGURED MAN
I'm the one with the gun in my
hands, darlin'.

MOTHER
Angela, don't!

ANGELA
 Don't worry, this man can't hurt
 me. Not anymore.

Angela takes another step closer, the barrel of the rifle
 hits her stomach.

CUT TO:

BOTTOM OF THE PIT

Brion looks at the pile of bodies underneath the carpet. The
 Colonel, Green Eyes, the Teenage Boy, Broken Teeth... and
 under those men lies another body. A woman's...

Behind him the Masked Man draws ever closer.

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN

The Disfigured Man holds onto his gun tightly. He cocks it.

DISFIGURED MAN
 I'll do it.

ANGELA
 Then do it.

BANG! He pulls the trigger.

Mother screams.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PIT

Brion holds out his lantern to get a better look at the dead
 woman.

He stumbles back in fear at the sight of her face. He drops
 the lantern and as the flame slowly begins to flicker out, we
 see the face of the dead woman. It's Angela.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Angela briskly walks up the hill trying to get away from the
 Handsome Man, but he grabs her arm hard, stopping her.

HANDSOME MAN
Where are you going?

She tries to fight him and falls to the ground. He gets on top of her pulls out a knife from his belt, pressing it to her throat.

Angela looks to the other man.

ANGELA
Help me! Please!!

Green Eyes just looks away with shame and guilt.

HANDSOME MAN
Don't you fucking make a sound or
I'll slice your throat open right
here.

He starts to unbuckle his belt. Angela keeps struggling.

ANGELA
Help me!

Nothing.

HANDSOME MAN
Quiet now...

Angela **SCREAMS** as loud as she can and **KICKS** and **PUNCHES**. But still she is in the Handsome Man's clutches.

She hits him in the face, splitting his lip.

HANDSOME MAN (CONT'D)
(pissed)
God DAMNIT!

He slits her throat.

And her life begins spilling away onto the forest floor.

The Handsome man gets up.

HANDSOME MAN (CONT'D)
Fuck!

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN

The Disfigured man looks down at his smoking rifle. A bullet should be in her belly.

Mother keeps wailing.

ANGELA
You can't hurt me.

In one movement Angela pulls the knife from his hip and slits his throat where he stands.

CUT TO:

THE WOODS - DAY

Angela lies bleeding on the ground as the Handsome Man stands.

HANDSOME MAN
Fuck.

He looks around for a moment and sees **THE PIT**.

HANDSOME MAN (CONT'D)
(to Green Eyes)
Come on.

Each man takes an arm and **DRAGS** Angela to the edge of the pit.

He gives her one last look.

HANDSOME MAN (CONT'D)
What a waste.

He kicks her in. Her body falls, consumed by the darkness landing with a **THUD**.

CUT TO:

THE PIT FLOOR

The light from the lantern slowly flickers as it begins to fade out.

But it's still enough for Brion to see the face of his wife. Her dead eyes looking past him.

He shuffles himself back, frightened, he feels something on his hand... **A PISTOL**.

Over his shoulder, as the last flicker of light dances on the marble eye, we see the Masked Man. It's almost as if he's handed the Pistol to Brion.

All goes dark.

AT THE TOP OF THE PIT - Casey peers over the edge. Nothing but black below.

CASEY

Brion...?

A **FLASH** comes from the darkness before the sound.

BANG!

His head flies back as the bullet shatters his skull, spraying his warm brains into the cold night air.

His body crumbles onto the forest floor with a **THUD**.

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN

The Disfigured Man's body slinks to the floor. His life escaping him as Angela looks down on him with disgust.

Mother is horrified.

MOTHER

What.... You....

She begins shaking uncontrollably. Pointing at Angela-

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Demon... You're a demon.

Angela just turns and looks at Mother.

CUT TO:

THE WOODS

Brion is running as fast as he can with the pistol firmly in his hand. His breath is heavy but he won't stop running. He can't stop running.

CUT TO:

THE PIT FLOOR

Angela lays alone on the floor of the dark cavern. Her body broken and blood spilling from her neck, seeping into the dirt... and still she breaths.

Staring off into the infinite blackness of the cavern, she sees something. A **FIGURE**, darker than all the surroundings. And with each drop of her blood spilt, it seems to grow larger... as though it is the darkness itself.

It comes closer to her. Its shadow looming.

Angela's eyes don't show fear. Only anger.

The Figure reaches out to her... its hand touches her throat and the flow of blood from her wound begins to **REVERSE**...

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

MOTHER

What have you done?

Angela shakes her head.

ANGELA

He was a bad man. He did bad things to me. All men like him are bad. They beat us. They rape us. They take everything from us. They all deserve to die. I'll kill every last one of them I set eyes on.

(beat, remembering)

That was the deal I made. To see Brion again... To be alive again...

Mother's eyes catch the rifle propped above the hearth.

MOTHER

What about Brion? Are you gonna have to kill him too!?

Mother runs for the gun. Angela doesn't try to stop her.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You said-- You said you'd kill them all.

Mother levels the gun at Angela.

ANGELA

I wouldn't hurt Brion. I love him. I had forgotten who I was until I saw him again.

MOTHER
 God shall strike down the wicked...
 and you are wicked!

BANG!

The door **BREAKS** open and Brion **BURSTS** in. He's confounded at what he sees.

The dead Disfigured Man, Angela with a bloody knife standing over him, and his mother with a gun pointed at his wife.

BRION
 Mother! Mother, put that down.

He slowly starts to make his way to her.

MOTHER
 You don't know what she is...

BRION
 It's okay Mother...

MOTHER
 She'll kill you! Like she did all
 those other men that walked through
 that door. She's a demon!

Brion positions himself between Angela and his Mother. He slowly reaches out to grab the barrel of the rifle.

BRION
 Give me the gun, mother.

MOTHER
 No. She'll hurt you. I know it!

Her eyes are burning, fixed on Angela.

BRION
 Mother, give it to me.

Mother's fingers go tight on the trigger.

Brion takes the barrel of the rifle in his hand.

BRION (CONT'D)
 (softer)
 Mother...

She relaxes a bit... easing her trigger finger.

BRION (CONT'D)
 It's okay...

Mother seems to be calming a bit... the tension abating.

Until-

She sees something behind Angela, a dark figure looming over her... The Masked Man... Staring right back at her.

MOTHER
Sweet Lord above.

The Masked Man comes closer. Mother is transfixed.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
She's possessed.

BRION
No, mother.

The Masked Man is now behind Brion... moving ever closer.

MOTHER
There's a demon in her!

She watches as the Masked Man towers over her son forebodingly. And as he steps closer, his form appears to **CONSUME** Brion, passing **THROUGH** his corporeal body and towards Mother.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
NO!

Brion tries to pull the gun away-

BANG!

It goes off. Brion's been shot. He looks down at his stomach.

ANGELA
Noooooooo!!!

Brion collapses and Angela catches him in her arms.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Amor!!

MOTHER
No.... No... My... My boy.

She drops the rifle. Disgusted with what she has done.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
My boy....

As if in a trance, Mother starts walking away... leaving the cabin, and going off into the woods.

Brion looks up at his beautiful wife's face as she smiles at him.

ANGELA
(almost a whisper)
Amor...

BRION
I saw... I thought...

ANGELA
It's okay. I'm here... I'm here...

Brion smiles through his tears as Angela holds him in her arms, watching the life fade from his body.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Please...

Standing over the two lovers is the Masked Man.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Please help.

Brion can see him... but he's not scared.

BRION
I know that face...

ANGELA
(fierce)
Help him!

The Masked Man just looks down at them. Doing nothing.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
I know you can do it. You can bring
him back... HELP HIM!!

Brion's breath becomes erratic.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
(softer)
He's innocent...

Angela can do nothing.

BRION
Angela...

She holds her husband as he dies.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Mother is walking through the woods under starlight. Mumbling to herself.

MOTHER
My boy. My baby boy.

She walks past Casey's dead body without even giving it a glance.

She steps to the edge of the pit. Looks down for a moment.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
My beautiful baby boy...

Mother throws herself into the darkness of the pit.

FADE TO BLACK:

OVER BLACK : SPRING

FADE IN:

EXT. CABIN - MORNING

Two soldiers on horse back ride down an empty road.

After a moment they see something sitting on the edge of the forest. A small cabin.

The garden is green and lush, with dozens of tomato plants in bloom. Flowers grow around the well and the barn has two horses eating from a trough. It's a serene sight.

The soldiers heel their horse, heading them to the cabin.

As they walk by, the men look in the window but see no one.

As they dismount and head over to the well, in hope of watering their horses, a voice calls out.

ANGELA (O.S.)
Hello there.

The soldiers are startled. They turn to see Angela standing on the porch. All smiles.

SOLDIER 1
Hello. Sorry to impose, might we water our horses here, ma'am?

ANGELA
No imposition at all. Help
yourself.

The Soldiers pull up the well bucket and let the horses
drink.

SOLDIER 1
You're garden is so beautiful.

ANGELA
Thank you.

SOLDIER 2
Do you live out here all by
yourself?

Angela just smiles.

ANGELA
Ya'll boys look hungry. Why not
come in and have some food. I got a
stew on.

SOLDIER 1
We'll just water the horses and be
on our way.

ANGELA
Nonsense. Any man is welcome in
this house. Please. Come inside.

The soldiers relent. *Why not?* And walk towards the hospitable
Young Woman.

FADE OUT.