

RED SKY COUNTRY

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FADE IN:

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

SUPER: Gary, Indiana 1933

LAWRENCE STEWART, (30s) serious, concerned, looks over a crowd of MEN, WOMEN, and CHILDREN. Families focused on an event in front of them. In the darkness their faces shine with the bouncing light of a large flame.

Skirting behind the crowd avoiding the light and welcoming the darkness, Lawrence pulls his FEDORA HAT to shadow his eyes. He pays mind to the uneven grass and tree roots.

Lawrence holds back his panic, restrains his legs from running. He breaks a forced smile and slight nod to the MEN who make eye contact. A CRY in the darkness draws his attention. A CHILD, maybe one year old, cries. Instinctively, Lawrence grabs the child in his arms. Frantically looks in the crowd for a mother's desperate eyes.

A hand reaches for the child, the MOTHER. Lawrence looks into the Mother's teared and relieved eyes. For a brief moment, Lawrence watches the Mother and Child move back into the crowd towards the light of the fire.

Lawrence breaks through the edge of the crowd, freedom. Speeding up his stride, Lawrence walks by the many CARS parked along side of the road leading to the park. The darkness of the unlit road closes in on Lawrence when Out of nowhere, a LARGE MAN jumps out of the darkness: BAM!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. COTTAGE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lawrence bolts up in bed from a NIGHTMARE. His breathing is labored; his face and torso covered in sweat. He looks to the other side of the bed:

HELEN STEWART, Lawrence's wife, late twenties, attractive, glow of innocence sleeps next to him.

Lawrence throws the sheet off, sits up and looks at his pocket watch on the night stand. It's 3:40 am.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - AFTERNOON

The clock at the train station reads, 7:30 am. The train's horn BLASTS as people move along the platform.

Porters move luggage on carts. Lawrence carries two suitcases, dodges the crowd.

HELEN STEWART, Lawrence's wife, late twenties, attractive, glow of innocence, sports her best and only traveling dress. She, with a hat box, tries to keep up while scanning the crowd.

CROSS CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN

Lawrence steps onto the train, matches tickets to seats. He shoves the suitcases in the bin overhead. He looks down the car. No Helen. Lawrence darts through the car, searching, as other passengers find their seats and stow belongings.

EXT. TRAIN STATION

The STATION MANAGER monitors his watch, approaches the platform.

STATION MANAGER

All aboard!

Helen looks, waits in the crowd. She jumps when Lawrence grabs her shoulder.

HELEN

She's not here.

LAWRENCE

She's not coming.

SID (O.S.)

Lawrence! Helen!

SID MCCOY, (30s) blonde, clean cut, a "good ol' boy," races toward Lawrence and Helen. He catches his breath.

LAWRENCE

(To Helen)

Go on and board the train. I'll be right behind you.

SID

Thought I would never find you.
 Couldn't believe when I heard.
 Oklahoma City, I just couldn't--

LAWRENCE

(To Helen)

Go on.

SID

Helen, you have a good trip now.
Keep him out of trouble.

Sid gives Helen a peck on the cheek. After a quick glance back to Lawrence who gives her a reassuring smile, she boards the train.

LAWRENCE

Sid.

SID

Old friend, I couldn't let you
leave without saying goodbye.

(Awkward pause)

Is all this about the other night
in the park? I looked up and you
were gone, just like--

LAWRENCE

Found myself a better job. Fool to
turn it down.

SID

I see.

LAWRENCE

I should get on board.

SID

One last thing...

Sid hands Lawrence a piece of paper.

SID (CONT'D)

Look him up at the Santa Fe rail
yard. You'll need friends--

LAWRENCE

Sid, I don't...

SID

Just in case. He's my uncle.

(Beat)

When you get settled, perhaps I'll
come down and see you both.

Out of nowhere a BLACK PORTER, carrying bags, accidentally runs into Lawrence. Sid grabs him.

SID (CONT'D)
 You better watch where you're
 going, boy!

BLACK PORTER
 (Startled)
 I sure am sorry, mister.

SID
 Better be.

Sid releases the Porter and brushes off and straightens
 Lawrence's coat.

SID (CONT'D)
 Clumsy, what else would you expect.

LAWRENCE
 I gotta go.

Lawrence steps up just as the train rolls.

SID
 (calling out)
 You two be careful now!

As Sid waves goodbye, TWO MEN in dark suits stand out in the
 bustling crowd, JOE WILSON, mousy, wears glasses, and DEAN
 MURPHY, heavy set. Murphy walks toward Sid. Sid notices him,
 turns and walks away. Wilson stops him. Sid turns to
 Murphy, hand out as if old friends.

SID (CONT'D)
 Howdy, brother.

Both grab Sid by the arm and pull him towards a waiting car.

SID (CONT'D)
 (shit eating grin)
 Well, if that's the way it's gonna
 be, then you two can just go--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

The train whistle BLOWS. Lawrence settles, pulls out a letter
 and reads. The top of the typed letter states "LETTER OF
 REFERENCE".

HELEN

What did Sid want? You two always whispering secrets like school girls.

LAWRENCE

I'll make you a deal... until we find a place, warm to the job, we don't tell no one where we're going. Not my friends. Let the earth settle under our feet, then you can tell who ever you want.

HELEN

How long to Oklahoma City?

LAWRENCE

Only a day or two.

HELEN

Lois says they still have Indians living in teepees.

LAWRENCE

Well, Lois don't know everything.

HELEN

Says it's turmoil with all the farms dying. One farmer had to look for his land in another man's yard.

Lawrence breaks a smile, shakes his head in disbelief.

LAWRENCE

Lois just blindly believes what people say.

HELEN

I can't imagine my best friend... I am sure she read it somewhere. She's always reading.

LAWRENCE

They write about all this in fashion magazines?

Lawrence gives out a chuckle. Helen gives him a disapproving look. He playfully raises his hands in defeat.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

I'm sure there is an Indian in a teepee somewhere in Oklahoma. Sure as hell ain't living next to us.

HELEN
You sound like Sid.

Helen looks out the window avoiding Lawrence's eyes. Unable to hold it...

HELEN (CONT'D)
A little stability would be nice.

LAWRENCE
I know it's been tough and a change will do us good.
(Beat)
You look me in the eye and tell me you don't want to do this? If'n that's true, then we'll get off. I won't even blame you for the missed opportunity at a new life.

Helen looks at Lawrence's playful eyes.

HELEN
Start a family...

Lawrence leans in with a big grin and grabs her thigh. Helen slaps his hand and gives an approving smile.

Lawrence pulls his pocket watch out, 5:37. Lawrence gives a SIGH of relief as the train whistle BLOWS, then the train wheels POUND and ECHO over a metal TRUSSED BRIDGE.

FADE TO:

EXT. CURTIS-WRIGHT AIRFIELD - NIGHT

SUPER: OKLAHOMA CITY

The THUNDEROUS roar. A model 80 Boeing passenger plane cuts through the night air and lands in an open field, lights make a path. The United Aircraft and Trans Corp plane wheels to a stop at the end of the runway.

A DARK SEDAN pulls up, illuminates the plane with its headlights. The Two Men, Joe Wilson and Dean Murphy, from the train station deplane.

The doors of the dark sedan open. Police Chief JOHN WATT (51), more corporate-type than lawman, exits the passenger side. Another man, GEORGE BELL (40) wears a suit, slicked hair. A wiry snake perfect for undercover work.

WILSON
Chief John Watt, I presume.

WATT

You're the Feds we're expecting?

WILSON

I'm sure the office told you why we're here?

WATT

You wouldn't have stepped on our toes if it hadn't crossed state lines.

(Beat)

So, you're federal cops? I'd heard you boys were just lawyers and accountants...

George moves his suit coat behind his holster revealing his sidearm.

GEORGE

Not sure what to make of the fat one. You sure we can trust them?

WATT

One of my Detectives, George Bell.

WILSON

(Shakes hands)

Mr. Bell.

Murphy clinches his fist, refuses George's handshake.

WATT

We've set you up at the Skirvin Hotel. You need men, fire power, you call Bell. No one else.

WILSON

I need access--

WATT

Bell is your only access. If I've got low-life thugs in my ranks, I want to know about it. But, they don't need to know we're looking.

MURPHY

Saying you don't know your own men?

GEORGE

(Angry)

Sayin' he's got enough to say grace over as it is.

WATT

Mash and bootleggers, that takes up most of my time.

WILSON

Not much longer. Roosevelt promises to eliminate prohibition by the end of the year. Right now booze rings is the least of your problems.

WATT

Tell me more about it in the car to the hotel. Let's load up.

The men load up in the Sedan.

INT. TRAIN - LATER

Pocket watch reads 8:05.

Helen, curled up in her seat, sleeps. Lawrence covers Helen with his coat, gently caresses her cheek. He strides down the aisle as PASSENGERS sleep or read. His gaze lingers on every face.

Lawrence grabs the handle of the railcar door, opens it. The ROAR of the train, jarring. Lawrence steps through...

EXT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence stands on the rocking metal platform between cars. The WIND blows as the SHADOWS of the night race by.

Lawrence buries his head into his hands as he lights a cigarette. The embers glow in the dark night. A LARGE FIGURE steps between the cars.

Lawrence struggles to see the face. Head down, the Large Figure moves through the door into the next car. The shape looks vaguely familiar from his nightmare.

INT. TRAIN CAFE CAR - MOMENTS LATER

A row of booths line the car windows, a bar at one end. The Large Figure from before, RUSTY MALLETT, sits at the bar, drinks coffee. Behind the bar, the BARTENDER dries glasses.

LAWRENCE

Evening.

Bartender gives Lawrence a nod. Lawrence sits, takes out a pack of cigarettes. Rusty flashes the classic salesman grin.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
Do you mind if I smoke?

RUSTY
Why, are you on fire?

Rusty belts an unearned LAUGH. Lawrence gives him an odd glance, lights up.

BARTENDER
Can I get you anything?

LAWRENCE
Coffee. Black. And an egg salad
to take back.

RUSTY
(Laughing)
Rusty Mallet. You can use my name,
just not on me.

Rusty holds out his hand. Lawrence pauses, then shakes it. The Bartender pours a cup of coffee.

LAWRENCE
Lawrence, Lawrence Stewart. Where
you headed?

RUSTY
Anywhere people are buying.

LAWRENCE
Times make it tough these days.

RUSTY
How about you?

Lawrence leans back, reluctant to say.

LAWRENCE
Oklahoma City.

Lawrence avoids eye contact to minimize the conversation. It doesn't work...

RUSTY
Well, you don't say. Oklahoma City
used to be one of my stomping
grounds. You have a place to stay?

Lawrence gives Rusty a cold shoulder.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

Well, that really ain't none of my business now is it? But, if you need a bed for the time being...

Rusty takes out a business card and writes down an address.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

It's the nicest little boarding house in town.

A nicely dressed African-American couple enters the cafe car and sit at a booth. The Bartender watches with interest.

BARTENDER

Sorry, fellas. We don't have a colored's car. But I can make them leave if you want.

RUSTY

Why, they're no bother to me. How about you Mr. Stewart?

Lawrence inspects the couple, then faces back to the bar.

LAWRENCE

Thanks for the address.

Lawrence takes the last drink of his coffee. He picks up Rusty's card. Lawrence leaves a quarter on the bar.

RUSTY

Mr. Stewart?

(Beat)

Your sandwich. I'm sure that wife of yours is hungry by now.

The Bartender hands Lawrence the egg salad sandwich. Lawrence stops, turns to Rusty.

LAWRENCE

Don't recall telling you I was married?

Lawrence's posture becomes guarded, aggressive towards Rusty. Rusty, caught off guard, holds his ground.

RUSTY

You don't say?

(Beat)

Your ring. In sales you notice everything.

Rusty breaks the moment with a hearty laugh. Lawrence looks at his wedding ring, then back to Rusty, suspicious.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA - DUSK

The street busy with people. Next to the train station sits an old Ford Model A truck, hood up - steam blows in the air. Makeshift wood sides bulge with the family's belongings.

Helen locks eyes with a MOTHER holding a CHILD next to the truck. A Grapes of Wrath moment. Helen's gaze breaks as Lawrence steers her to the trolley pulling up to the station.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT

Worn, chipped paint, a window to the parlor, lit by an oil lamp. A figure paces behind old lace curtains.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Victorian era furniture worn from years of wear, JUDITH LEVY (60s), Jewish, pulls back the curtains. She startles when:

RING! RING! The crank door-bell turns followed by a pounding on the front door. MATTIE, a black woman in her early thirties, enters the room. Judith moves to the front door. Mattie follows. Judith signals Mattie to move out of sight.

JUDITH

It's late. Just a moment.

Judith hesitates, then opens the front door. Lawrence stands in the doorway.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

May I help you?

LAWRENCE

You a boarding house?

JUDITH

You just leave your farm? If so, you will have to pay up front.

LAWRENCE

No, train. We come in from Indiana.

JUDITH

Who's we?

Judith looks around Lawrence into the darkness.

LAWRENCE
My wife and me just arrived...

JUDITH
My wife and I. Well, don't just
leave her standing in the dark.

Lawrence and Helen enter the foyer with luggage.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
I'm Judith. And you are?

LAWRENCE
Lawrence Stewart, my wife Helen.
Rusty Mallet said to mention--

JUDITH
You know Mr. Mallet?

LAWRENCE
Actually, no. Met on the train.

JUDITH
(Under her breath)
Such a 'lets'.

LAWRENCE
I'm sorry?

JUDITH
Never you mind. He just tends to
laugh at himself more than others
do, that's all.

Judith relaxes her posture.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Welcome. One dollar a day or five
dollars a week - includes three
meals. You eat when it's on the
table. We're not anyone's maid.

Mattie enters carrying a set of towels and sheets. She hands
them to Judith.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Wash day is Monday. That's the only
day we are guaranteed electricity
for a full day. Leave your linens
outside your door, Mattie will
collect them. She doesn't talk much
so don't expect it.

LAWRENCE
She lives here?

JUDITH
Yes.
(Beat)
Not your concern.

HELEN
We're so thankful you have a place
for us to stay.

LAWRENCE
Do we call you Judith, or Mrs...?

JUDITH
Levy, but Judith is fine.

Lawrence investigates. A Mezusah hangs on the right side of the entry into the parlor.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Is that a problem Mr. Stewart? I
know for some around here it is.

HELEN
No, of course not.

JUDITH
I know times are hard and where we
lie our head can be a challenge
these days.

LAWRENCE
We won't be here long.

Judith, ignoring Lawrence, hands the towels and linens to Helen. She grabs the oil lamp and starts up the stairs.

JUDITH
Follow me.

Helen and Lawrence with the luggage follow Judith up.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Judith enters the room. She lights an oil lamp on the dresser. A single light bulb hangs from the ceiling, exposed wire leads to a switch. She turns on the light.

JUDITH

The electricity has been fairly dependable lately, but use the lamps when you can. Oil is cheaper and more reliable.

(Beat)

You have two washcloths with your towels. When you see red in the sky, soak them in water before you go to bed. Then, place it over your mouth and nose when you sleep.

HELEN

What on earth for?

JUDITH

The dust. When you're sleeping. It will catch it before it goes into your lungs.

HELEN

I've never heard--

JUDITH

People have died, choking to death on the dust while they slept. No one here of course, but better alive than a fool.

(Heads for the door)

Coffee is ready by 5:30 and breakfast is served promptly at 7:00. Eat or not, it's up to you.

Judith leaves the room, closes the door. Helen makes the bed. Lawrence peers out the window.

HELEN

Not as nice as back home, but I guess it'll do in a pinch.

Lawrence catches the glimpse of a Dark Figure standing in the shadows on the sidewalk. The DARK FIGURE lights a cigarette.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAYBREAK

The sky lightens. A BLACK SEDAN sits lifeless. An unrecognizable MAN sits with his hat covering his face. In the distance Lawrence pulls back the curtain from the bedroom window, peers out.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence, half dressed, pulls a shirt from the suitcase.

A ROAR, the Black Sedan turns over. Lawrence pulls back the curtains as the Black Sedan drives away.

HELEN

Lawrence?

LAWRENCE

(Buttons shirt)

Baby, go back to sleep.

HELEN

No, I'm up. What time is it?

LAWRENCE

5:30. Nothing to worry about.
I'll be back later.

Lawrence sits on the bed next to her. He moves her hair behind her ear, smiles.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Going to see about a job. We'll go exploring when I get back. We'll get a jump start on that new life.

HELEN

I'd like that.

Lawrence kisses her and exits.

Helen gets up, puts on a robe, moves to the window. She watches Lawrence stride down the sidewalk.

EXT. STREET - LATER THAT MORNING

Lawrence ventures by quiet shops, not yet open for the day.

The ECHO of FOOTSTEPS linger behind Lawrence. The FOOTSTEPS pick up pace. Lawrence, aware, moves faster. Someone blind sides him and shoves him into the nearby alley.

ALLEY

SMACK, Lawrence is hit from behind. His EYES BLUR. The alley spins as he falls to his knees. Everything goes BLACK.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

JAMES MITCHELL, an educated and somewhat effeminate man, sits at the dining table, drinking coffee. He speaks with a refined southern accent. Helen comes down the stairs.

JAMES
(standing)
Well, the late night arrival.

HELEN
Helen Stewart. My husband Lawrence is already gone off for the day.

JAMES
It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. James Mitchell.

Judith and Mattie enter with food. Judith and James sit

JUDITH
Mr. Mitchell is here from California... from the Department of Education.

JAMES
Originally from Louisiana, I found the great state of California in the era of progress. But, as you might imagine, things are not what they seem.

HELEN
I'm afraid to a small town girl, you're quite refined.

JAMES
My apologies. California sent me here to study the children. With all the migration to California, they want to know if children from Oklahoma are undermining the fine education of their own.

HELEN
My mother taught me if something smells rotten in the pantry--

JAMES
Quite so. Your mother sounds like a practical woman.

HELEN

Too practical at times. If you can't find what you need within walking distance, then you don't need it at all.

JAMES

And here you are. Something tells me you are not your mother's daughter.

(Beat)

Tell me Mattie, you've seen the morning. What is it like today?

CROSS CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

A Dark Sedan. Murphy drives. Wilson sits in back with Lawrence, burlap bag over his head. The sun bleeds through the loose weave of the bag.

MATTIE (V.O.)

Oh, Mr. James, it's hot apple pie made with brown sugar, cinnamon, lots and lots of cinnamon.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

JUDITH

Mr. Mitchell!

JAMES

Why, the highlight of my day.

(To Mattie)

Now, you go on and tell me are those red delicious apples?

MATTIE

Oh, no. Those apples are tart green Granny Smith apples.

Mattie, special for a moment, grins back to the kitchen.

JAMES

You see. We now know that the day will begin beautifully, but will turn hot and sticky. Not to mention the cinnamon sky.

HELEN

All that from the ingredients of
apple pie?

JAMES

That's her way. I have tried
otherwise. In society, we all
learn to cope in our own way - what
with all its faults.

Judith picks up the plate of biscuits and passes it around.

JUDITH

Mr. Stewart left early this
morning?

HELEN

Work. I'm sure he wanted to be
there early.

JUDITH

It's a surprise he found any.

GERTRUDE (O.S.)

That's because all of the money-
grabbing Shylocks have moved into
town taking the jobs.

GERTRUDE BELL, disheveled alcoholic, enters the dining room,
wears her bed gown, robe and slippers.

JUDITH

Miss Bell, you know the rules. All
guests must be dressed before
taking a meal at the table.

GERTRUDE

I believe I am dressed. But, if
this is not good enough for you
Mrs. Levy, then I would be happy to
tell my brother George to find me
other accommodations.

EXT. DIRT ROAD

George Bell stands on the side of the road, leans against a
car. The black sedan rolls up beside it and stops. George
looks in the back seat and Lawrence with a burlap bag.

GEORGE

Who the hell is this?

I/E. BLACK SEDAN

George reaches for the bag. Wilson grabs his wrist.

INT. DINING ROOM

JUDITH

As difficult as it may be, it
doesn't hurt to try and act as a
proper lady.

GERTRUDE

Well, it seems we have two more we
can add to this harbor of misfits.
(To Helen)
Welcome to the home of a money
grabber, a Niggress...

Gertrude turns to James and smiles.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

And a--

JAMES

Now, that's quite enough... Let's
not have Mattie's delicious
breakfast get cold.

I/E. BLACK SEDAN

George pulls his arm out of the open window.

WILSON

Let's not ruin the surprise. You
know in good time.
(to Murphy)
Drive.

EXT. DIRT ROAD

A dirt cloud swirls around George as Wilson and Murphy drive
away. George lights a cigarette.

GEORGE

(to himself)
Just you wait, you son of a bitch.

HELEN (PRELAP)

May be a boarding house, but you
all sure act like one big family.

INT. DINING ROOM

Gertrude snorts. Helen fills her plate.

JAMES

Ah, we do have our skeletons. What about you Mrs. Stewart?

HELEN

Oh, my... no skeletons. At least none that I know of... of course, I wouldn't judge...

JAMES

I meant, do you come from a big family?

HELEN

Heavens, here I thought you were going to share some awful secret.

James offers an amused chuckle.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - LATER

The Dark Sedan stops. Murphy opens the back door GRABS Lawrence and pushes him to a clearing. Wilson follows.

EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence stumbles, struggles to stand, then charges. Wilson and Murphy stay clear. Lawrence falls to the ground.

Light bleeds through the burlap, distant shadows. The bag moves in and out with each fast breath.

LAWRENCE

Who are you? What do you want?

WILSON

Mr. Stewart. Please calm down.

LAWRENCE

Who the hell are you?

Murphy pulls the bag from Lawrence's head. Wilson tosses a newspaper at Lawrence. It's the Fiery Cross, the newspaper of the KKK. On the cover is a photo of nine men posing. Lawrence and Sid McCoy are in the photo. The headline reads, "Deacons Triumph in Gary, Indiana."

MURPHY

You Deacons are pathetic. Lynching
an innocent man...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - FLASHBACK

Lawrence stands in the crowd. His lips pull a cigarette from his pack. As he strikes a match, a BLACK MAN is brought up to a tree just as a rope flies over a high branch.

Lawrence, shocked, waves out the match and pulls the cigarette out of his mouth. He looks around the crowd at the faces glued to the tree.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. CLEARING

LAWRENCE

I ain't done nothing!

MURPHY

He expects us to believe him.

LAWRENCE

What are you talking about?

WILSON

I went to work for this country to
keep people like you--

LAWRENCE

(Cautious)

Who are you, Feds? I only went to
meetings, picnics...

WILSON

And yet, there's your picture. A
Triumph for Gary.

Wilson picks up the paper as if for a casual read.

LAWRENCE

(Desperate)

That was taken at our church.

WILSON

What about the park? We have sworn
statements you were there.

LAWRENCE

At first, but then I saw... Whoever
said I was there is a liar.

EXT. PARK - FLASHBACK

Lawrence walks backwards to behind the crowd.

MURPHY (V.O.)

Men saw you at the park that night.
They put you at the lynching. We
can prove it. They all but said
you put the noose around that--

Lawrence sees Sid in the crowd. Sid looks at Lawrence, raises
a flask and laughs, then looks back to the tree.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. CLEARING

LAWRENCE

They're liars! God...

WILSON

God has left you behind. Or,
rather, you left him...

LAWRENCE

Who told you this?

WILSON

Don't make this harder on yourself.
Tell us what we want to know!

LAWRENCE

(Pleading)

They said to meet at the park. I
was there, but then when I saw... I
realized... I left, I ran!

MURPHY

And did nothing to stop it.

(To Wilson)

A runner... got no fight. No
courage.

LAWRENCE

(Nothing to lose)

Untie me and I'll show you a fight.

WILSON

Please, Mr. Stewart. Your posturing is merely humorous. We have two choices... we can take you back to Indiana to be prosecuted with the others, or we can let you swing yourself right here, right now.

LAWRENCE

I've been set up, God, believe me. You gotta let me go.

WILSON

Or, we might have a third option.
(Beat)
Redemption comes with a price.

LAWRENCE

A price? I don't need redemption!

WILSON

Murphy, get the rope.

LAWRENCE

I want to know the sonofabitch--

Murphy pulls a rope from the car. Lawrence buckles in fear.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Don't get the fucking rope!

Wilson signals Murphy to stop.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

What's the third option?

WILSON

We need an inside man.

LAWRENCE

Hell, you think I'm more afraid of you than them?

MURPHY

Finally, I get my way.

LAWRENCE

No, no... I got something. Look in my pocket.

Wilson rifles through Lawrence's pockets.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
It's the Klan, here in Oklahoma
City, the rail yard. Sid McCoy
gave it to me. Ain't that worth
something? Please, I have a wife.

Murphy throws the rope over a tree.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
ALL RIGHT!

WILSON
(To Murphy)
Wait.

LAWRENCE
What do I got to do if you let me
go?

WILSON
You work for us. Do you understand?

LAWRENCE
(Conceding)
Making me a God damn snitch.

WILSON
I want names, dates, locations of
lined-up beatings, murders,
anything... you will go to the
front desk of the Skirvin Hotel.
Leave information for a Mr. Spelvin
with the man at the desk. It's a
code name. We'll know it's from
you. Understand?

LAWRENCE
You don't know what you're asking.
I'll be dead inside a week.

MURPHY
You pull a double cross? I got eyes
on you night and day. You take a
shit and I know about it.

Murphy grabs Lawrence by the collar and pushes him to the
car. Lawrence trips and falls. From the weight of the fall
and the burden of his situation, he vomits in the dirt.

EXT. ROAD - LATER

One hundred yards from the Rail Yard, the Dark Sedan slows. Lawrence is pushed out and rolls as the car speeds off. Dried blood on his face, lip and chin bruised.

EXT. RAIL YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Lawrence walks along the fence outside the Rail Yard. He passes men weathered and thin, a melting pot of races. Some play cards, others plead with their eyes for money, food.

Lawrence approaches a RAILROAD GUARD at the fence. The Guard directs Lawrence to a man standing down the tracks. JAKE HERRMANN, a weathered grouch in his fifties.

LAWRENCE
(Uncertain)
Mr. Herrmann?

HERRMANN
I told you bastards to stay behind
the fence, God damn it!

LAWRENCE
I need a job, Mr. Herrmann--

HERRMANN
Who doesn't need a job. Now get the
hell off my yard.

Lawrence stands his ground, then Jake signals Two Thugs, DICK ELROY and WILLIE THOMPSON, good old boys with a streak of mean who walk toward Lawrence.

Dick and Willie grab Lawrence and drag him from Jake. Afraid of another beating, Lawrence struggles.

LAWRENCE
Sid... he said we need to watch out
for each other.

HERRMANN
The hell you say?
(Beat)
Sid who?

LAWRENCE
Sid McCoy.

Jake raises his hand and on cue Dick and Willie stop.

HERRMANN
How do you--

LAWRENCE
Friends in Gary. He says--

HERRMANN
Experience?

LAWRENCE
Coal mines back in Kokomo--

HERRMANN
Rail cars, damn it!

LAWRENCE
Yes. Rail yard at the mines.

HERRMANN
Next time say so. Tim! Damn it.

Dick and Willie release Lawrence, walk away. TIM WHEELER, a good egg, runs across the yard.

HERRMANN (CONT'D)
(To Lawrence)
You going to be trouble? Looks like it just hit you square in the face.

LAWRENCE
No trouble.

TIM
Yes, Mr. Herrmann?

HERRMANN
(To Lawrence)
What's your name again? Never mind.

Jake Herrmann walks off with no more regard to the men.

TIM
Tim Wheeler. Kind of a loner, but can help get you around the yard.

LAWRENCE
(Shaking)
Kind of a loner Tim Wheeler, I could use some help right now.

EXT. RAIL YARD - EVENING

Tim and Lawrence, sweaty and dirty, carry a track rail. They drop it. A HORN BLOWS.

TIM

Get some rest. Gonna be doing the same tomorrow.

LAWRENCE

(Awkward)

So, you run with these guys... get together after work ever, for...

TIM

I don't know where you come from, but booze is illegal here. Punch the clock at 7:30 am.

Tim walks away. Lawrence, wipes sweat from his face, walks off the yard.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Helen, dressed for bed, sits next to Lawrence and gives him a liniment rub on his shoulders and chest. Helen notices the large bruise on Lawrence's belly from his earlier fall.

HELEN

Lawrence?

She gently touches it. He jerks in pain.

LAWRENCE

Nothing... It's nothing. Working in stores the last few years... I got soft, that's all.

HELEN

And here I thought you were going to do the same here. Wasn't the reference letter for--

LAWRENCE

A different opportunity came up, that's all. Let's not talk--

HELEN

Lord knows I have to try and put the pieces together myself. I want to help you, not trying to pry.

After a beat...

LAWRENCE

I'm just tired and hurting.

(Beat)

I'm sorry we didn't get to go exploring like I promised. Don't know why you put up with me.

HELEN

Because you're an honest, kind man. Besides, you'd tell me if something was wrong...

Lawrence rolls over to hide his guilt, squeezing his pillow, holding his tongue.

LAWRENCE

The heat and dust was bad today. I reckon we'll have dust tonight.

Helen gets up and dips two washcloths in a basin of water. She hands Lawrence his washcloth and turns out the light. A red glow filters into the room from the full crimson moon.

EXT. STREET - OKLAHOMA CITY - DAY

Judith and Helen walk by shop windows.

HELEN

Thank you for inviting me out today.

JUDITH

Just picking up a few items.

HELEN

Well, it's such a lovely morning. Nice to be outside.

JUDITH

Can't stay cooped up all the time.

Helen studies Judith for a moment, then:

HELEN

I don't mean to pry... with your accent and all. I'm dying to know. How did you end up here?

JUDITH

I boarded the train in New York and stopped when I couldn't ride anymore. This happened to be it.

HELEN

A week ago, I'd never thought we'd be here... looking to settle down, start a family, build a house...

JUDITH

As good a place, I guess.

HELEN

I believe when we try something new, challenge our ideas, we learn. Wouldn't you agree?

Helen waits for a response. Judith doesn't react.

HELEN (CONT'D)

With Mattie, for instance. Do you find it a challenge, I mean...

JUDITH

Not your concern...

Helen, not deterred, watches Judith with anticipation. Judith sighs, gives in.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

A year ago she came to town with a Negro salesman from Texas. She had worked as a cook since she was ten. People who raised her told her that she was never to talk to whites unless it was about the cooking.

HELEN

And the salesman?

JUDITH

Gone. He got up one morning before the rest of us and took off. I generally find men to be cowards. If it weren't for us, they would be chickens with their heads cut off.

HELEN

It sounds like we're going to get along fine.

EXT. RAIL YARD - DAY

Lawrence waves back as he watches a rail car gently tap into another. Jake Herrmann approaches Lawrence.

HERRMANN

You don't see trash working my yards. Never will.

LAWRENCE

Yes, sir. Keep with our own kind.

Herrmann gives Lawrence an envelope. Lawrence opens it.

HERRMANN

Weeks pay. Looks like you will be getting more of those.

LAWRENCE

Thank you, Mr. Herrmann.

Lawrence pockets the envelope. As Herrmann leaves, Tim steps up.

TIM

Congratulations. I thought you would've quit by now.

Lawrence lights a cigarette, watches Herrmann with disdain.

LAWRENCE

It's amazing what you'll do to keep a job these days.

EXT. STREET - LATER THAT DAY

Judith and Helen carry cloth bags filled with items from a Farmer's Market. Helen sees a dress in a window. She stops.

HELEN

Oh, doesn't that look lovely. Let's go in.

Helen reaches for the door.

JUDITH

You go ahead. I will be at the Rosenthal's across the street. Meet me there when you're done.

Helen watches Judith cross the street. Helen turns back and notices a placard in the window, "No Coloreds, No Jews".

INT. ROSENTHAL'S STORE - MOMENTS LATER

The front door bell CHIMES. Helen enters. A traditional mercantile with fabrics, Kosher cooking supplies, dry goods.

Helen smiles at ITZHAK ROSENTHAL (12); shy, stocks shelves. She spies RUTH ROSENTHAL, in a deep conversation with Judith toward the back of the store. Their words are unclear.

RUTH
 (Loud whisper)
 ... again, this man comes in to
 push Aram into selling our
 building.

Helen moves to the fabric, pretends to shop as she nears earshot of the conversation. Ruth notices her.

RUTH (CONT'D)
 (Nods toward Helen)
 Who is that woman?

JUDITH
 One of my boarders. She's fine.
 Don't worry.

RUTH
 This man, says we must sell, or
 else. Councilman Taylor says not
 to be concerned.

JUDITH
 You think we can trust him?

Helen uncomfortably fidgets, unrolls a bolt of fabric. Ruth rushes to help.

RUTH
 (To Helen)
 Shalom. Welcome. I'm Ruth. My
 friend, Judith. Isn't she a good
 woman?

Ruth takes the bolt of fabric from Helen with a smile. Helen expresses relief. Itzhak rushes to re-roll the fabric.

HELEN
 I'm Helen. Sorry about the mess--

RUTH
 This is my son, Itzhak. He's my
 little helper.

ITZACK
 (Embarrassed)
 Mother!

RUTH
 (To Itzhak)
 Go on, say hello to Judith's
 friend.

Itzhak approaches Helen, extends his hand. Helen shakes his hand as he portrays the perfect gentleman.

HELEN
 Itzhak, what a fascinating name.
 It's a pleasure to meet you.

EXT. RAIL YARD - EVENING

Tim and Lawrence walk down the tracks in mid conversation. In the distance at the rail house COUNCILMAN TAYLOR, well-to-do, stands with Dick Elroy and Willie Thompson.

LAWRENCE
 What's the names of the guys who
 grabbed me the first day?

TIM
 Dick Elroy and Willie Thompson.
 Always at Jake's side.

LAWRENCE
 You've worked with them a long
 time?

TIM
 I avoid them in the yard. Dick...
 folks say he got an Indian drunk
 one night at some shack Jake owns
 out near Springlake Park and then
 brought him here. Fell asleep, and
 Dick put his head on the tracks.

LAWRENCE
 Hell...

The three watch Tim and Lawrence as they approach.

TIM
 The 9:45 came through, and the next
 morning they found his body, but no
 head. No one could prove it was
 Dick. Not that the cops would do
 anything to him. One guy said he
 keeps the head in one of the
 lockers in the rail house.

...as they get closer, Taylor walks away.

LAWRENCE
And the suit?

TIM
Councilman Taylor, in his
district... always around.

Lawrence makes eye contact with Willie and Dick.

LAWRENCE
Brother.

Dick, chews on a cud of tobacco, SPITS on the ground near Lawrence. Tim slips into the rail house.

DICK
The hell you say?

Lawrence, forced smile, follows Tim inside.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Lawrence walks with a slight limp, worn down from a hard day of work and anxiety. He stops on a stoop, lights a cigarette and removes his shoe wincing at the effort.

Lawrence pulls on his dirty sock loosening it from a blister on his foot. He leans against the wall of a building and watches as MEN with White Collar jobs walk by in their clean clothes. A MAN AND WOMAN arm in arm smile at each other until they reach a NEGRO PANHANDLER and cross the street.

Lawrence takes stock in their reaction, puts out his cigarette and carefully slips on his shoe. As he stands to head home he looks in the window of the Rosenthal's store next to the stoop. A practical dress hangs in the window. He is distracted by the reflection of a more elegant dress across the street. Lawrence walks across the street and looks in the window of the other store ignoring the sign, "NO COLOREDS, NO JEWS".

Touching the glass of the window as if reaching for the dress, Lawrence tilts his head to read the price tag. He hesitates, then continues down the sidewalk.

Murphy steps from an alley and watches Lawrence. Rusty Mallet, the salesman, emerges from Murphy's shadow. Rusty gives Murphy a glance, then trains his eye on Lawrence.

EXT. SPRINGLAKE PARK - BALLROOM - NIGHT

IN THE BACKGROUND: Amusement park lights and sounds. BLUEGRASS MUSIC fills the air. Windows glow with shadows of PEOPLE DANCING. A YOUNG DANCER chases his GIRLFRIEND up the stairs pinching her calves, giggles.

Lawrence and Helen run up to the steps laughing, out of breath. Lawrence pulls a stuffed animal from his back.

LAWRENCE

I thought I was going to have to pitch a third penny to win this.

HELEN

That Carnival Man just knew you were going to miss. I knew better.

They kiss squeezing the animal between them.

LAWRENCE

Let's go dance.

Helen smiles. They run up the steps.

INT. SPRINGLAKE PARK - BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Energetic BLUEGRASS BAND. The room is full of DANCERS young and old, including Lawrence and Helen.

The MUSIC stops. The Dancers erupt in applause. Lawrence grabs two small glasses of RED PUNCH, they find a table.

LAWRENCE

Are you having fun?

HELEN

This is just about heaven. And here I was worried we'd stay locked up and never get out.

LAWRENCE

We'll find friends, get out more.

HELEN

I met some of Judith's friends today.

LAWRENCE

Judith's friends.

HELEN

Yes, the Rosenthals, They're very sweet people.

LAWRENCE

Tim, this fella from work, and his wife would like to get together one night. Proper folk.

HELEN

I am a good judge of character, thank you. And proper I might add.

Suddenly the room goes BLACK. SCREAMS fill the darkness. A VOICE shouts from the stage.

VOICE (O.C.)

Everyone please calm down. We'll check the fuses. Don't move.

MURMURS fill the darkness. Suddenly, near Helen, the sound of CHAIRS falling over.

HELEN

Lawrence, are you alright?
(Beat)
Lawrence!

CUT TO:

BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence slams against a concrete block wall next to an OPEN ELECTRICAL PANEL. Dick and Willie hold Lawrence. CARNIVAL LIGHTS shine through nearby windows casting strange colors and shadows on the wall.

DICK

(Loud whisper)
Don't like a smart ass, brother.

LAWRENCE

It's you, ain't it? And I suppose that's Willie.

WILLIE

You some kind of Jew lover? Bedding down with them under the same roof?

LAWRENCE

(Quick thinking)
Gotta keep your enemy close...
(MORE)

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Under her roof, eating at her table. She's gonna trust me.

WILLIE

You got a big mouth. Don't think we won't shut it.

Lawrence's legs begin to buckle from the stress. Only the brick wall and Dick and Willie's tight grip keep him up.

LAWRENCE

What do I got to do - kill a savage? Come on, you got something going on tonight?

Dick and Willie release their grip. Lawrence sinks to the floor.

DICK

Now you listen--

Lawrence looks up at the men, struggles to get his legs back.

LAWRENCE

Let me in. I've unfinished work...

CUT TO:

BALLROOM

LIGHTS ON followed by CHEERS. The band starts up. Helen looks for Lawrence, but only sees his turned-over chair.

Helen JUMPS UP, KNOCKS the table. Lawrence's punch glass falls over. RED PUNCH runs across the table and drips from the edge to the floor.

INT. ROW HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

A dark bedroom. ROBERT and RUBY SIMMS, a young black couple, lie under a worn quilt. CRASH, glass breaks. Robert jumps from his bed and grabs a board leaning next to the bed.

Robert slowly moves into the living room. A BRIGHT LIGHT shines on his face. He shields his eyes from the light.

Dick holds a railroad lamp aimed at Robert. Willie wields a sledge hammer. From the shadows behind Robert, Ruby SCREAMS.

EXT. SPRINGLAKE PARK - CONTINUOUS

Helen desperately looks for Lawrence. She pulls her shoes off, feet sore from walking. Helen's pained face is a stark contrast to the LAUGHING PATRONS walking by her. The MUSIC of the nearby carousel grows louder in Helen's ears. She lets out a SCREAM as she is grabbed from behind. Lawrence pulls her in tight.

LAWRENCE

I thought I lost you...

HELEN

Lawrence? What happened to you? One minute you're sitting next to me--

LAWRENCE

Please, Helen. Let's go home.

Lawrence turns from Helen, hides his anguish. He gently pulls on her hand as he walks away. He stops when Helen doesn't move. Arms stretched, Lawrence turns back to Helen. She lets her fingers slip from his.

HELEN

You're scaring me, and I don't--

Lawrence approaches, gently covers her mouth. Helen, confused, looks into Lawrence's sad eyes.

LAWRENCE

You're the most important, of anything in my life. You know that, don't you?

Lawrence kisses Helen. They embrace. He leads her into the darkness.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

Helen needle points in the living room. James tunes the radio. Judith approaches the front door. She pulls back the lace curtains and looks out.

Judith moves into the living room. James locates a station. A speech clears through the static...

TAYLOR (ON RADIO)
 ...men and women from all walks of
 life have seen the unity of the
 nation dissolve into a confusion of
 political and personal opinions,
 economic interests, and ideological
 differences.

Judith pulls back the curtains and looks for a better view.

TAYLOR (ON RADIO) (CONT'D)
 Since that day our city has
 presented a picture of
 heartbreaking disunity. We never
 received the equality and
 fraternity we have been promised.
 We have lost our unity of spirit
 and will....

Judith turns quickly to James.

JUDITH
 Turn that noise off!

James, shocked, turns the radio dial to another station
 playing a soft waltz.

JAMES
 And, here I thought you liked
 Councilman Taylor. I know, it's
 because he's not an FDR man.

James jumps up and pulls Judith into a waltz. She
 begrudgingly takes part.

JUDITH
 He's just feeding on the fears of
 desperate people.

JAMES
 (To Helen)
 Judith has a nickname for Mr.
 Roosevelt, Finally Doing Right!

Helen chuckles at their wistful dance. Judith finally breaks
 a smile.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 It is desperate times. We must free
 ourselves of our worries. What
 fears we have--

Judith abruptly stops and moves to the window. Judith pulls back the curtain. James plays up her departure like a bride left at the altar.

JUDITH

That car has been sitting on the street all morning...

James and Helen look at each other confused by Judith's scattered behavior.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

(To James)

Have you seen it here before?

JAMES

Can't say I have. Should I do something?

JUDITH

May just be Gertrude's brother up to no good.

HELEN

I don't understand.

JUDITH

You have no idea how difficult it is for me to have a business. I acquiesce to that woman, that mishigas, so her brother, a policeman, doesn't shut me down.

HELEN

They just can't take it away from you. Can they?

JAMES

Of course not, but they can make your life miserable.

JUDITH

Let's leave well enough alone. They'll leave.

Judith, wrings her hands, disappears into the kitchen.

HELEN

I'll just ask them what they want?

JAMES

Bully for the effort, however I think Judith is right in this case.

Helen, dashes up the stairs to her room.

A laugh travels through the front window. James pulls back the curtains, to reveal Gertrude on the porch swing. She fans herself, smiles, takes a long drink from her glass.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Helen sits at the dresser, unfinished letter in front of her. She scribbles down a couple more sentences, places the letter in an envelope and addresses it to Lois in Gary, Indiana.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Helen steps down off the porch. She takes pause to muster a plan of attack, clutches her letter in her hand.

Helen looks down the street. The DARK SEDAN sits quietly on the opposite side. The FIGURE OF A MAN with a wide-brimmed Fedora hat sits in the driver's seat. Helen jumps when:

GERTRUDE

Been sitting there all morning.

Helen whips around to see Gertrude in the porch swing.

HELEN

My heavens. You gave me a fright.

GERTRUDE

Up to no good, are you?

HELEN

Not that's any of your business.

GERTRUDE

Just as a stranger sitting in a car is yours? Go ahead.

(Laughs)

Venture where you don't belong.

Gertrude's laughter fades as Helen steps into the street and faces the car several yards away. As if expecting a gunfight, Helen slinks toward the car. Murphy sits in the driver's seat, pulls his hat down to cover his face. Helen stops when:

The ENGINE of the car REVS UP. The tires SQUEAL! Helen jumps, covers her mouth. In the background, Gertrude laughs.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIL YARD

Lawrence greases the wheel of a BOXCAR. Willie walks up unnoticed. He grabs Lawrence tight on the shoulder. Lawrence bolts up, SLAMS Willie against the Boxcar.

WILLIE

Hey, now. You wouldn't hit a brother, now would you?

LAWRENCE

What the hell you trying to pull?

WILLIE

Jake wants you in his office.
(Beat)
You don't have to go. You could just walk away and never come back.

LAWRENCE

You'd like that.
(Beat)
Some men don't have a choice.

WILLIE

Always got a choice.
(Beat)
Today, you go in there and tell Jake you want in, you never get out, at least not alive.

Lawrence wipes his greasy hands on Willie's overalls.

INT. POST OFFICE

CLOSE ON: A dirty envelope lands on the counter.

Helen dusts the letter as she calls to the POSTAL CLERK.

HELEN

I would like to post this to Gary, Indiana, please.

POSTAL CLERK

That'll be two cents.

Helen pulls coins out and leaves them on the counter. She turns to leave when she BUMPS into Joe Wilson standing behind her in line. Her purse falls to the floor. The contents spill. Joe Wilson's newspaper falls to the floor.

HELEN

Oh, excuse me.

WILSON

That's quite alright.

They both kneel to the floor and gather the contents. Helen picks up his newspaper and glances at it. It's the FIERY CROSS, the photo with Lawrence on the cover.

HELEN

Why do you have a picture of my husband?

WILSON

Which husband would that be?

HELEN

Lawrence Stewart.

WILSON

Why, Mrs. Stewart. I've heard so much about you. Yes, I'm--

HELEN

Why is he in the paper?

WILSON

I tell you what. Let me buy you a cup of coffee, and I'll explain.

INT. JAKE HERRMANN'S OFFICE, RAILHOUSE

Stark office. Rail Maps fill the walls. Lawrence steps in. One MAP on the wall catches his eye, a growing Oklahoma City, colored dots sporadically placed on the map.

TAYLOR (O.S.)

No greater satisfaction than owning a piece of property.

Lawrence freezes.

LAWRENCE

Puts you on an equal footing with everyone else.

Taylor emerges from a back corner in the room.

TAYLOR

True, but when it comes to our property, we cannot sit idly by when land loses value and its owners, our trust.

Jake, Willie and Dick step into the office.

LAWRENCE

We just take it from them?

TAYLOR

Land of the free. Ironic, ain't it?
The more freedom they get, the more
we lose.

LAWRENCE

Can't be that easy, taking away
someone's land?

George Bell steps into the doorway, pushes his suit coat
behind his holster.

TAYLOR

You let me worry about that.

George makes room, Taylor exits.

HERRMANN

Now, sit down, shut up.

DICK

I don't like his looks. I smell a
northerner.

LAWRENCE

Indiana. Let's just say things got
a little hot, so I moved on.

DICK

Ran with Sid McCoy. Anybody else?

LAWRENCE

Johnny Brewster in Kokomo, we
worked the mines together.

GEORGE

If you girls are through dancing,
let's get on with it.

DICK

Just so you's on our side.

LAWRENCE

My word should be good enough. The
lynching in Gary.

WILLIE

With the FBI snooping around, we
have to be extra careful. You
never know who you can trust.

DICK
You remember the last snitch?

WILLIE
Hell, yeah - We nailed the bastard.

DICK
We were all hooded up. You
remember that George?

Dick makes a gun with his fingers and puts it at the back of Lawrence's head.

WILLIE
Sure he does, popped him right in
the back of the head. Didn't know
what hit him.

GEORGE
Put a little black cross on the
back of his hood.

DICK
Shit, that dog will hunt.

Lawrence, suddenly more uncomfortable, squirms. Willie slowly reaches for something tucked in his shirt. He pulls out a copy of the Fiery Cross. He slaps it down on the table. The group photo with Lawrence is on the cover.

After a brief uncomfortable moment, the boys LAUGH.

HERRMANN
Damn it, Stewart. You don't think
we wouldn't check up on you.

Lawrence LAUGHS. He wipes the sweat from his upper lip.

LAWRENCE
Damn straight.

LAUGHTER breaks out.

INT. ROSENTHAL'S STORE - LATE AFTERNOON

Front door BELL RINGS. The store is empty. Councilman Taylor stands just inside the door, looks around the store.

Ruth enters from the back. Her face lights up when she sees Taylor.

RUTH
 Councilman Taylor. Thank you so
 much for coming by. I didn't know
 where else to turn.

TAYLOR
 Mrs. Rosenthal, it's been a while.
 I was disturbed to hear you are
 having problems in my district.

Itzhak appears from the back, keeps his distance.

RUTH
 You understand. This is our home
 and our business.

TAYLOR
 I will do everything in my power to
 make things right. You tell your
 husband. Count on it.

BELL RINGS. George Bell enters the store. Itzhak moves
 toward his mother.

RUTH
 Thank you.

TAYLOR
 This is Detective Bell. He will
 take your statement.

Taylor acknowledges George and exits the store. The BELL
 RINGS as the door closes. George locks it behind him.

George approaches Ruth. He pulls some folded papers from his
 coat pocket. He hands the papers to Ruth.

CLOSE ON: Bill of Sale

RUTH
 I don't understand? We are not
 selling. Please, bring Mr. Taylor
 back. He will straighten this out.

GEORGE
 There is nothing to straighten out.

Itzhak steps in between Ruth and George.

ITZHAK
 I think you should leave.

George SLAPS Itzhak across the face like a disobedient child.
 Itzhak lunges at George, kicks him. George winces in pain.

GEORGE

You little piece of shit!

George grabs Itzhak by the throat and lifts him off the ground. Itzhak struggles, feet dangle. Ruth beats on George screaming. He easily pushes her away. George pulls out his pocket knife and cuts Itzhak's curls from his temple. Itzhak passes out. George lets him drop to the floor.

Ruth falls to the floor crying over her son.

RUTH

Dear, God! What has he done?

George, watches as the boy regains consciousness coughing. Ruth cries in relief. George tosses the curls on Itzhak.

RUTH (CONT'D)

You monster! Get out! Get out!

George, emotionless, walks out of the store.

EXT. STREET - OKLAHOMA CITY

Helen steps out of a Cafe, in shock. In a daze, she moves slowly down the street bumping into passersby. She stops, looks across the street toward the Rosenthals' Store.

George Bell stands outside the door, he folds his switchblade and tucks it in his inside coat pocket. He calmly gets into his Sedan, drives off.

Helen rushes across the street to the store's front door just as Ruth turns the lock and the sign, CLOSED. Helen tries the door, locked.

HELEN

Ruth? Ruth, are you alright?

RUTH (O.S.)

(Crying)

Go away, Please.

HELEN

It's Helen, Judith's friend. That man, did he hurt you?

Ruth walks away as Helen peers through the glass door.

INT. CHURCH - EVENING

A small African-American congregation on its feet. The choir delivers a fast gospel song. People straggle in as the choir continues. Mattie steps in and looks around the sanctuary.

Mattie sees a FRIEND who waves pure white gloves high above her head to the music. Mattie joins her in the pew.

The choir ends with a big finish as JEREMIAH THOMAS steps to the pulpit. He is an energetic man with a gentle face.

JEREMIAH

A hard worker, shoveling the dung of the beasts of the field. Not a glorious job, but putting food on the table for his family. So good at it he was promoted.

A WOMAN speaks out from the audience.

WOMAN

Oh, God, my Robert.

JEREMIAH

But yesterday, some men who claimed to be of God... Crushed his hands because a white man wanted his job. Now, he can't even shovel dung to pay for the roof over his family or the food on the table.

The CONGREGATION cries out; "GOD HAVE MERCY" and "DEAR LORD"!

JEREMIAH (CONT'D)

We shovel dung of the beef we can't eat in their restaurants. We make the clothes we can't buy in their stores. We carry bags at hotels where we cannot stay. It is time for a change.

CONGREGATION

Hallelujah!

JEREMIAH

In our lifetime, today and now... time for a change.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Helen sits in the chair staring out the window tense from bottled up anger. Lawrence opens the door, takes off his shirt, pours water and washes.

LAWRENCE

Greased up boxcars today. Always something. Can't ever seem to get the stench off ya.

HELEN

Wash all you want, it's not coming off. No matter how hard you try, you can't cover some things up.

Lawrence watches in the mirror, aware of her anger.

LAWRENCE

You gonna tell me why you're so damn mad at me?

HELEN

Do you miss Sid and all your church meetings... talking about--

LAWRENCE

What? Did you call back home? I thought we decided--

HELEN

I thought this was all about us. A better job... A family.

LAWRENCE

It is. I've been keeping my part working in the heat, dust... day in, day out.

HELEN

Some women expect that. Keep quiet, let their husband keep things from them.

(Beat)

Well, I'm not one of them!

Lawrence is caught off guard. He turns away from Helen.

LAWRENCE

What's gotten into you? It's Judith and those friends of hers... filling your head with God knows what ideas.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Judith carries towels and stops in the hall. She hears Lawrence and Helen talking through the door.

HELEN (O.S.)
Don't you dare... Don't make this
about them.

INT. BEDROOM

Lawrence gets on his knees in front of Helen.

LAWRENCE
Let's not do this. Don't you
understand that you are all I have?

HELEN
Don't try and soft talk me--

LAWRENCE
(Frustrated)
I'm really trying to understand...

Helen moves to the bed away from him.

HELEN
I need to go home.

INT. HALLWAY

Judith sets the TOWELS down on a HALL TABLE. She steps closer to the bedroom door.

LAWRENCE (O.S.)
You're just homesick.

HELEN (O.S.)
I can't stay with you.

LAWRENCE (O.S.)
What do I gotta do to have you
start making sense?

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence, angry, grabs a shirt and buttons up.

LAWRENCE
I have to work a late shift.
(Beat)
(MORE)

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

I expect you'll be here when I get
back?

Helen, arms crossed, sits back in the chair, looks out into
the night. Lawrence exits the room.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - CONTINUOUS

As Lawrence closes the bedroom door. Judith glares.

LAWRENCE

Mrs. Levy.

JUDITH

Trouble, we don't need.

LAWRENCE

I reckon I agree with you.

JUDITH

Chutzpah, that's what you have, Mr.
Stewart.

LAWRENCE

Goodbye, Mrs. Levy.

Lawrence exits the boarding house. Mattie crosses to the
stairs, shoots a worried glance at Judith.

INT. SKIRVIN HOTEL - NIGHT

ELEGANT LOBBY... red velvet, plush furniture. Well-dressed
men and women enter and exit. Chief Watt and George Bell
enter. They push their way onto the elevator.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door opens, Watt and George enter. Wilson stands at the
window watching a fly beat itself against the glass. Murphy
sits on the end of the bed eating an overstuffed sandwich.

WATT

Gentlemen, tell me something good.
My wife's got a pot roast waiting
and she'd rather I not be late.

GEORGE

(To Watt)

Like I said earlier Chief, they
haven't said their plan.

MURPHY

You had to open your mouth. Now
I've lost my appetite.

GEORGE

These people don't mess around.
Just want to know you have a plan.

(Beat)

Any word from your inside guy?
Say, who did you say that was?

Wilson slaps the fly and crushes it against the glass. He
wipes the mess from his hand with a handkerchief.

WILSON

Nothing you need to worry about.

GEORGE

Seems like a lot of sitting and not
a lot of doing. You gotta let me--

WATT

Shut up, Bell. I need answers, not
more questions.

WILSON

Let's talk about Councilman Taylor.

WATT

Councilman, chairs the Planning
Board. You know something?

WILSON

Bell, you wanted something to do?
Maybe you dig into his dealings.

MURPHY

Can you do that, Slick?

George, slams the door behind him. The closet door opens,
Rusty Mallet steps out. Wilson gives him a nod.

WILSON

Stick to him.

RUSTY

Like fly paper.

WATT

Would someone like to tell me
what's going on?

WILSON

Have a seat. I'm afraid that pot
roast is going to get cold.

EXT. RAIL YARD - NIGHT

A Pick-up pulls up. The headlights turn off, Willie watches
the building. A LIGHT CLICKS ON in one of the windows.
Willie, concerned, steps out, clicks on a flashlight.

CROSS CUT:

INT. JAKE HERRMANN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

LIGHTS ON, Lawrence moves from the light switch and rummages
through Jake's desk.

He opens a side drawer and looks at a stack of papers,
BUILDING PERMITS. He thumbs through them. He lifts one out
of the drawer.

CLOSE ON: Building Permit, 770 Eastern Ave.

INT. RAIL HOUSE

Willie SHINES the flashlight around an empty breakroom. He
walks toward light bleeding under Jake's office door.

INT. JAKE HERRMANN'S OFFICE

Lawrence moves to the color-coded MAP on the wall. He runs
his finger over the map until he finds Eastern. After a brief
moment, he rushes to replace the Permit, closes the drawer.

The office door flies open, Willie appears in the doorway.

WILLIE

What the hell are you doing?

LAWRENCE

Ain't we suppose to meet tonight?

(Beat)

Or, was it at Jake's shack near
Springlake? I can't remember.

WILLIE

Never mentioned the shack.

Willie moves to Jake's desk drawer, opens the drawer. Looks
at Lawrence, then pulls out the same Permit.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
Well, come on!

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Quiet with closed shops. Willie drives an OLD CLAPBOARD TRUCK. In the bed, Lawrence and Dick hold onto wood rails.

The truck turns a corner and familiar shops come into view. The truck stops in the middle of the street.

LAWRENCE
So, what's the plan?

DICK
Tonight it's all you, Stewart.

Dick nods across the street. Lawrence turns and sees the Rosenthal's Deli and Store. The store is dark. Above the door, the address 770. Upstairs the lights are on to the apartment of the Rosenthal family.

Lawrence holds his breath, waiting for anyone to stop this.

DICK (CONT'D)
Don't worry. I know where all the cops are. None on this street for another few minutes.

Dick pulls two MOLOTOV COCKTAILS from a duffle bag. He hands them to Lawrence, LIGHTS the RAGS.

DICK (CONT'D)
I think you know what to do.

Lawrence sits on the side of the truck, hesitates.

WILLIE
Orders is orders.

The FLAMES from the bottles dance off Lawrence's eyes.

DICK
We have to know we can trust you.

Lawrence runs up to the Rosenthal's store. Then, he throws a bottle through the front window. Fire explodes in the store.

Lawrence tosses the second one into the store. By the time he runs back to the truck, the FLAMES in the store are whipping out of the broken window.

The truck revs up and pulls away. Lawrence lies in the back watching the store in the distance. Before the truck rounds the street corner, Lawrence sees the upstairs apartment windows fly open and smoke billow out.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT

Judith stands in the hallway upstairs. She notices the hall bathroom door closed. Judith knocks and hears Helen vomit.

JUDITH
Are you all right?

The sound of water SPLASHES in the sink, then shuts off.

The door opens. Judith helps Helen to the bedroom.

BEDROOM

Helen climbs into bed. Judith pulls the sheet up. Judith wets a wash cloth from the basin in the room. She places it on Helen's forehead.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
I know what you need, warm milk.

HELEN
Judith, what am I going to do?

JUDITH
All men are a pill. Eventually they come to your way of thinking.

HELEN
A baby needs its father.

Judith realizes Helen's problem, and how her words are not helping the situation.

JUDITH
Oh, heavens... Mazltov! Does Lawrence know? Of course, he doesn't.
(Beat)
You must tell him, then ask if he plans to stand up and be a man.

HELEN
With your husband, did you ever have problems?

JUDITH

Who doesn't? My Rudy threw himself out of a twenty story building on Black Friday.

HELEN

Oh, my. I didn't...

JUDITH

Ah, I'm passed it. Once a year I recite Kaddish. I do miss him.

(Beat)

The funny thing is he jumped because he thought we were ruined. He couldn't live with the shame that we were broke.

HELEN

Men and their pride.

JUDITH

In Brooklyn, I was a teacher. Little did he know that I had saved my whole salary and kept it in that stuffed chair, the one downstairs. The only thing I brought with me when I came out here.

HELEN

You kept a secret...

JUDITH

(Holds back tears)

You are going to tell him. Then, God willing, he will know, and he will do right.

EXT. STREET - HOURS LATER

Lawrence walks down a dark street at a fast clip. He looks over his shoulder. He ducks into a dark alley. His hands are covered in black soot from the rags.

Lawrence spits and tries rubbing it off onto his pants. As he rubs his hands, the realization overcomes him. His hands shake uncontrollably.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

Lawrence charges into the Skirvin Hotel. He reaches the check-in desk, grabs the Hotel Clerk by the vest.

LAWRENCE

You call Mr. Spelvin's room and I don't care who answers! You tell them I want someone, NOW!

The Hotel Clerk, frightened, picks up the phone and dials.

HOTEL CLERK

Someone to see Mr. Spelvin. No, you don't understand.

(Beat)

Yes. I will.

The Clerk hangs up the phone. He points to a door at the end of the lobby marked STAFF ONLY.

HOTEL CLERK (CONT'D)

He will meet you in there.

Lawrence finds the door and goes in.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence closes the door behind him. Large tubs soak sheets and towels. Steam rises and fills the room. Large ironing boards with sheets draped over them.

AFRICAN and NATIVE AMERICANS workers iron and fold. They pay no mind to Lawrence.

The door slowly opens. Lawrence, behind it, sees Murphy enter. Lawrence grabs him. He twists Murphy's arm with one hand and holds his face down on an ironing board with the other.

Murphy struggles, almost gets the upper hand. Lawrence reaches for a hot iron. A figure enters from the steam.

WILSON

Go ahead. Take the iron. Just remember he's not the one you should blame for your actions.

Lawrence pushes down harder on Murphy.

LAWRENCE

I want out.

WILSON

No!

LAWRENCE

Where the hell were you tonight?
You could have stopped it!

WILSON

I know you want to run. You want
to run like hell.

LAWRENCE

Those people--

WILSON

The Rosenthals? I know, tragic. If
I could get around the lies and
deception in this town, I can stop
it. But I can't do this alone.
You get me information that puts me
ahead of this... Then, you can
count on us to step in.

(Beat)

Now, let Murphy go.

Lawrence lets Murphy up.

LAWRENCE

You've got the guys at the rail
yard.

(Thinking)

Jake, he's got this shack in the
woods near Springlake park.

WILSON

Hatchet men. Who's calling the
shots?

LAWRENCE

There's this suit named Taylor...

WILSON

Pulled his tax records. Clean as a
whistle. Get me something that--

LAWRENCE

Damn it, I don't know--

WILSON

Figure it out! Everyone makes
mistakes, find out his.

(Beat)

We'll go back to our contacts, but
they're not inside. You are...

We'll also check out his shack.

(Beat)

(MORE)

WILSON (CONT'D)

We're staring the ugliness of this country square in the face. Let's wipe it out.

Lawrence straightens himself up. He grabs a towel from the laundry and wipes his face and hands.

WILSON (CONT'D)

Don't come looking for us again.

Lawrence charges out the door. Wilson swigs from a bottle of Phillip's Milk of Magnesia.

MURPHY

I'm going to drag his ass back to Indiana. We're done.

WILSON

Not yet.

MURPHY

He's gonna run, you know it. Jail bars are the only thing that'll hold him now.

WILSON

He's different. Others wouldn't have given the Rosenthals a second thought. Unfortunate, but he's invested now. We can use that.

MURPHY

You better be right. Otherwise, I'll punch his ticket, you got me?

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

Judith and Helen sit around the dining room table drinking coffee. Judith holds Helen's hand for comfort.

Their attention is drawn to the entryway where James ushers JENKINS, a farmer, his WIFE and MILLIE, their ten-year-old girl to the front door.

JAMES

Mr. Jenkins, the great state of California thanks you and your family. Take this card and contact this man when you get there. He will assist you with employment.

James bends down to Millie's level and shakes her hand.

JAMES (CONT'D)

My dear Millie, it was a great privilege to meet you, and you will make a fine teacher one day.

They leave. James joins Judith and Helen.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Strike one up for the disenfranchised. The Department of Education in Washington will have to listen to me with the cases I've pulled together.

HELEN

What are you going to say?

JAMES

In truth, they sent me here to prove that children from Kansas and Oklahoma are intellectually inferior to those in California simply because they're poor. I have no intention of confirming that.

RING, RING. The doorbell chime turns. Judith opens the door. Ruth Rosenthal stands in the doorway, her face drawn, eyes red from tears.

JUDITH

Ruth? What is it?

Judith helps Ruth to the Parlor. Helen and James slowly move upstairs to their rooms.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Helen puts on the last of her makeup, hands shaking. Lawrence steps into the doorway of the bedroom.

HELEN

Where have you been? I get a call today from Sarah, someone you've only mentioned--

LAWRENCE

Tim's wife--

HELEN

So excited to go with us to see Cimarron at the picture show tonight.

LAWRENCE

They're looking forward to meeting you. I mention you often to Tim.

HELEN

I'm don't think we should go tonight. Ruth came over distraught. Then Judith left suddenly.

Lawrence steps into the room and reveals a box he was holding behind his back. He drops it down on the bed.

LAWRENCE

I saw this and... anyways. I want to say I'm sorry for earlier. Never meant...

Helen eyes the box and, with some restraint, opens it. She moves back the tissue paper to reveal the dress from the window. She lifts it out of the box.

HELEN

Where did you get this?

LAWRENCE

I don't know. A store. I saw it in the window and thought--

HELEN

A store that won't serve Negros or Jews. Take it back.

LAWRENCE

What? Don't you like it?

HELEN

It's beautiful. I won't ask you again, take it back.

She drops the dress down, Lawrence grabs the dress and box, leaves slamming the door behind him.

EXT. WOODS - SHACK - NIGHT

Dark. Crickets and fireflies. A dilapidated porch. BAM! Murphy's heavy foot kicks open the door of an old wooden shack. Wilson and Murphy step in.

INT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Wilson clicks open a lighter giving off a small glow to the room covered in dust and cobwebs.

MURPHY

You think Stewart's jerking our chain? This don't look like a hideout, let alone anything.

Wilson locates a hurricane lamp on a table. He lights it. The room lights up and blood splatter stains stand out on the walls. Wilson investigates the stains while Murphy goes through cupboards on the wall. Where jugs of moonshine are stored.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

At least they sauced them up before they blew their heads off.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - LATER THAT NIGHT

Lawrence, Tim, SARAH and Helen walk out of the movie theater. Other THEATER PATRONS exit around them, people in their Sunday best smiling at the brief moment that breaks them from their impoverished reality. A HOMELESS FAMILY approaches some of the Patrons looking for a handout.

Lawrence looks at Helen only to receive a cold stare. He turns from her and leads Tim, Sarah and Helen down the sidewalk.

SARAH

I thought Irene Dunne was just wonderful.

HELEN

Yes, but I don't know why she put up with that heel of a husband.

SARAH

Tim, do Groucho Marx for Helen.

TIM

(Imitates Groucho)

You know you've got the brain of a four-year old child, and I bet he was glad to get rid of it.

Helen laughs at Tim. Lawrence smiles as he watches Helen enjoying herself, a first in a long while.

TIM (CONT'D)
 (Imitates Bella Lugosi)
 Aren't you a trifle afraid,
 monsieur?

SARAH
 You're not suppose to scare them!
 He dragged me to see White Zombie.
 Never again.

TIM
 I know, Edward G. Robinson...
 (Imitates Robinson)
 You'll never get me G-Man, see...

All laugh, but Lawrence.

LAWRENCE
 I asked Mattie for coffee and pie
 for us, back at the house.

HELEN
 Well, she does make a mean pie.

SARAH
 I think that sounds splendid.

As they approach the Boarding House, Lawrence stops abruptly.

EXT. PORCH - CONTINUOUS

George stands on the porch, puffs on a cigarette. Lawrence leads the others down the sidewalk to the porch, tense.

GEORGE
 A night on the town. Ain't that
 nice. George Bell, Gertrude's
 brother.

George extends his hand to Lawrence and Tim. George and Lawrence pretend to meet for the first time.

TIM
 Tim, my wife Sarah. Ain't I seen
 you at the--

LAWRENCE
 Lawrence Stewart.

GEORGE
 (To Helen)
 And you must be--

HELEN

Why are you here? Where is Judith?

Helen enters the house, Sarah follows.

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

Judith?

INT. PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Judith sits on the couch sobbing. James tries to comfort her. Helen and Sarah take a seat. Tim enters, stands in the doorway, listens to the women.

JAMES

She returned about an hour ago and has been like this ever since.

HELEN

What happened?

JUDITH

Aram, Ruth... Their store burned down.

SARAH

(Whispering to Helen)
Maybe we should go.

HELEN

Oh, I'm so sorry. Judith, this is Sarah and her husband, Tim.

Tim grabs Sarah by the arm and turns to go. As Judith talks, Sarah pulls back to listen.

JUDITH

Itzhak, their poor boy, broke both of his legs jumping from the second story window. His room was taken over by the fire. He had no choice.

SARAH

Sweet Gussie Marie. Do they know who did it?

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence stands on the porch smoking. He watches a smirking George Bell as the faint voices come through the windows.

JUDITH (O.S.)

They have a fair idea. Someone saw
a truck leave down the street.

Tim steps out onto the porch.

LAWRENCE

Those women will go all night if
you let them. Helps them figure it
out in their head, I reckon.

TIM

It's not hard to do the figuring.

GEORGE

The police are looking into it.
They'll get the culprit.

TIM

(To George)

I say you look into the men at the
rail yard, like Willie--

Lawrence shuts Tim down.

LAWRENCE

If I were you I wouldn't air my
suspicions. For your own good.

TIM

They're bad news Lawrence and you
know it. You've seen--

LAWRENCE

The police don't tell you how to do
your job, do they?

Tim charges into the house.

TIM (O.S.)

Sarah, time to go.

SARAH (O.S.)

Tim, something wrong?

TIM (O.S.)

Get your hat. Let's go.

(Beat)

Helen, I'm sorry. It ain't nothing
you did.

Tim and Sarah charge out of the house. George enjoys the
drama. Lawrence looks away as they leave down the sidewalk.

SARAH

Tim, let go. I've been walking on my own for years, thank you.

Gertrude comes out sloppy drunk, carries a drink.

GERTRUDE

Whoopee! More fireworks than the Fourth of July.

GEORGE

You're drunk.

GERTRUDE

Now, Georgie. I ain't that drunk.

GEORGE

You need to control yourself. I'm running out of boarding houses.

GERTRUDE

Oh, now. Madame Levy ain't gonna throw me out. She knows you'll shut her down just like--

Gertrude tries to snap her fingers, spills her drink.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

Like with those other Jews... eh, Georgie?

(Beat)

Who did you say was going to take over that place?

GEORGE

When will you learn to keep your big mouth shut.

(To Lawrence)

Our mother was a sloppy drunk. Drove our daddy off. Now I'm saddled with this. Should've taken after him.

Gertrude walks over to Lawrence seductively.

GERTRUDE

You don't think I'm embarrassing, now do you?

Gertrude stumbles and falls into Lawrence. He catches her and holds her at arms length. Then, he leads her to a chair.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

You're a true gentleman. Don't know why that woman of yours would give you the cold shoulder.

(Loud whisper)

Walls paper thin around here. We all got our little secrets.

LAWRENCE

What are you getting at?

GERTRUDE

Seems there's some trouble and not a lot of wall banging, if you get my meaning.

(Beat)

She almost flew the coup the other day. But, now she's got that bun...

(Vomits)

GEORGE

Oh, dear God. Why I put up--

LAWRENCE

She's got what?

GERTRUDE

Georgie, I'm not feeling so good. Would you take me up to my room?

George helps Gertrude up. They enter the house.

Jeremiah walks down the sidewalk to the porch. Jeremiah wears civilian clothes, takes off his hat as he approaches.

JEREMIAH

Good evening, mister.

LAWRENCE

Could be better.

JEREMIAH

I'm just here to see my Mattie. She makes me the best buttermilk pie. You ever had--

LAWRENCE

Joints a powder keg tonight and don't want anything setting it off.

Jeremiah breaks a sweat. He tugs at his shirt collar for relief. Lawrence notices a rope burn around Jeremiah's neck.

JEREMIAH
Don't want to be no--

LAWRENCE
Trouble.

Jeremiah smiles while holding his ground.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
She's in the parlor with the other
women. You can wait for her in the
kitchen around back.

JEREMIAH
Around back to the kitchen.
(Beat)
Buttermilk pie, it'll make you a
better man.

Jeremiah tips his hat to Lawrence and disappears around back.
Lawrence takes off down the sidewalk into the dark of night.

BACK PORCH

Jeremiah taps on the Kitchen screen door.

JEREMIAH (CONT'D)
(Whispering)
Mattie, we better hurry now.

Mattie emerges from the door wrapping a dark shawl around her
shoulders. Jeremiah looks around the corner of the house.
They both sneak off into the darkness.

EXT. ROSENTHAL'S STORE - NIGHT

Lawrence takes a seat on the stoop across the street from the
charred store. The ECHOES of the SCREAMS from earlier fill
his ears. His hands shake. Flames reflect in his wide eyes.

Lawrence is brought out of the horrifying memory by the sound
of footsteps. Lawrence looks, the BEAT COP checks the dark,
empty stores. Lawrence gets up discretely and moves in the
opposite direction.

INT. FILLING STATION - CONTINUOUS

Service Garage. Jeremiah and a small GROUP stand near stacks
of tires and a car on the rack. Mattie stands with them.
Jeremiah passes out flyers. Mattie looks at one.

It reads, "Revival for Injustice. Bring your friends and family to plan an action for change."

CROSS CUT:

EXT. PORCH

Lawrence, exhausted, shuffles down the sidewalk to a dark Front Porch. In the shadows, the porch swing CREAKS.

LAWRENCE
(Suspicious)
Who's there?

James steps out of the shadows to the light of the moon.

JAMES
I hope I didn't startle you.
Thought I'd sit out here for a
respite. How about you?

LAWRENCE
Can't seem to sleep lately.

Lawrence, exhausted, sits on the porch steps.

JAMES
A great man once said, "The
occasion is piled high with
difficulty. And, we must rise with
the occasion."

LAWRENCE
Lofty words when simple will do.

JAMES
Words from a plain man born in your
great state of Indiana - Abraham
Lincoln.
(Excited by the moment)
"As our case is a new, we must
think anew and act anew." Words to
live by, wouldn't you say?

James looks into the stars, then back at Lawrence. Coy, he starts to walk toward the screen door. He stops when:

LAWRENCE
I can't remember what I live by. I
reckon I'm hopeless.

JAMES

Hardly.

(Moves back to porch post)
Take Helen for instance. She only wishes you would include her in your difficulties. She married you for better and for worse.

LAWRENCE

I never intended to hurt no one, especially her. All I ever wanted was to start a family, pay mind to my own business. Then, other people back you into a corner and you find yourself all alone with no way out.

James joins Lawrence on the porch step. Lawrence shifts, leaving space between the two of them.

JAMES

Have you ever heard of Storyville?
It was a part of New Orleans?

LAWRENCE

Never been.

JAMES

Unsavory bit of earth, women for hire, ruffians.

LAWRENCE

Can't seem to picture you there.

JAMES

Two boys from school took me there under the pretense of hearing the great jazz music. But when we got there I quickly found out their true intent was to steal from me, to buy their pleasures.

LAWRENCE

These were friends of yours?

JAMES

Acquaintances... They beat me until my eyes filled with blood. For a moment everything from the earth to the sky appeared red.

Lawrence relaxes in his sympathy.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Then this image of a man, an elderly Negro man, out of nowhere, beat them back with his cane.

LAWRENCE

They couldn't take him on?

JAMES

(Dramatic)

The determination of the old man was my salvation. Against the odds, he saved my life.

LAWRENCE

You both could have died.

JAMES

And here I am.

(Beat)

When you think you're all alone...

James reflects on the moment, squeezing his arms to soothe the phantom pains.

The moment is broken as a PICKUP pulls in front of the Boarding House. Willie and Dick catch Lawrence's eye. As if on command, Lawrence gives James a desperate smile.

James gives Lawrence an understanding nod. Lawrence piles in the back of the truck with other MEN.

The pickup SPEEDS down the street.

James looks on.

EXT. FILLING STATION

Jeremiah, Mattie and the Group carry stacks of flyers as they exit the back door into an alley.

A pickup races down the alley and skids to a halt. All the Men jump out of the back, form a line in front of the headlights gripping clubs, pipes. Both groups stand their ground. Willie locks eyes with Jeremiah. Lawrence hides in the shadows.

WILLIE

Time for all of ya'll to go home!
Not going to let you spread your
Socialist filth in my town.

JEREMIAH

Causing no trouble. You let us be.
Or, pay for your sins.

Willie raises his club and charges at Jeremiah.

A BLACK MAN jumps between Willie and Jeremiah and throws the fliers in Willie's face. Willie beats him to the ground.

Lawrence watches Dick grab Mattie. He runs up behind Dick and hits him in the back of the head. Dick falls to the ground. Lawrence picks Mattie up and drags her out of the fight and hides her behind the corner of the building. She watches Lawrence with angst.

Before Lawrence can leave, Jeremiah grabs Lawrence, pins him up against the building.

JEREMIAH (CONT'D)

Knew you was trouble the first time
I laid eyes on you.

LAWRENCE

You're making a big mistake.

Jeremiah punches Lawrence across the face. Lawrence loses patience, but holds back his anger.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Boy, you need to let me go!

JEREMIAH

Like hell. If the cops won't stop
you, then I will.

LAWRENCE

Listen to me, don't trust the cops.

Lawrence knees Jeremiah in the gut and runs. Jeremiah drops to his knees, SCREAMS with frustration.

INT. DRUG STORE - DAY

A Pharmacist, RUFUS, shines the soda glasses behind the large counter. George Bell walks in, looks around the store.

GEORGE

Rufus.

RUFUS

What can I do you for?

GEORGE
Looking for Gertie. Seen her
today?

RUFUS
Can't say I have.

GEORGE
Damn it, Rufus.

RUFUS
Hell, George. You gotta tell me
when you're, you know... George.

GEORGE
Well?

Rufus nods to the back of the store. George approaches a red velvet curtain that leads to the back. He throws his coat behind his holster, walks through the door on the other side.

Rusty Mallet walks in the store, watches George disappear behind the curtain.

RUFUS
What can I do for you?

RUSTY
Good day, sir. My name is Rusty
Mallet. You can use my name...

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

One DRUNK is passed out on the bar. Gertrude, drunk, talks with the bartender. The BARTENDER wipes down the counter when George busts in. The Bartender throws up his arms.

GEORGE
Take it easy.

The Bartender dries glasses keeping an eye on George as he approaches Gertrude.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Gertie, you need to be back at the
boarding house.

GERTRUDE
I don't like it there.

GEORGE

I don't care - Get your ass home.
And call me if fancy pants or any
of them gets any visitors.

GERTRUDE

Like who, Georgie?

The drunk comes alive at the bar.

DRUNK

Hey, you buying drinks there,
Georgie?

George grabs Gertrude by the face and squeezes tight.
Gertrude, even in her state, feels the pain.

GEORGE

I'm not going to tell you again.

George shoves her to the floor. He walks out the door.

GERTRUDE

Sure, Georgie, whatever you say.

INT. DRUG STORE

George charges out of the store. Rusty pays for a bottle of
Milk of Magnesia and follows George out of the store.

EXT. RAIL YARD - LATER

FAR END OF THE YARD. In the distance, men dig up and reset
ties. WIND blows a tumbleweed. Jake stands under a tree,
smoking a cigar. Lawrence sprints up to him out of breath.

HERRMANN

What the hell happened over there?

LAWRENCE

(Catches his breath)

Not sure.

(Beat)

Nabbed Dick. Not sure about anyone
else. Everyone's scattered.

HERRMANN

That Preacher. Caught him and his
boys sneaking around.

LAWRENCE
 (Walking away)
 Things are getting out of control.

HERRMANN
 When you run the yard, you can have
 an opinion!

Herrmann stammers off.

INT. RAIL HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Lawrence walks through the BREAKROOM. He checks the room, empty. He moves to JAKE'S OFFICE, tries the door, locked. Lawrence pulls out his pocket knife, jimmies the door open.

CROSS CUT:

RAIL YARD

Jake PUFFS his cigar as he walks through the yard. He eyes the Rail House door slamming open and shut with the wind.

JAKE HERRMANN'S OFFICE

Lawrence, distracted by the slamming door, opens Jake's desk drawer and thumbs through the building permits. He locates one in the stack, pulls it out. BUILDING PERMIT: 770 Eastern Ave., June 8th, 1931.

LAWRENCE
 (To himself)
 Rosenthals'...

RAIL HOUSE

Jake enters the BREAKROOM secures the door shut. He looks around the tables, then to the lockers.

JAKE HERRMANN'S OFFICE

Lawrence folds up the paper and shoves it in his pocket.

RAIL HOUSE

Lawrence closes Jake's Office door so the lock hardly makes a noise, just as Jake emerges from the LOCKERS.

Lawrence exits. Jake opens his door, looks around with suspicious eyes. Jake jumps as the outside door SLAMS open and shut again, the wind blowing harder.

INT. PARLOR - DAY

James reads and makes notes in his journal. OUTSIDE the porch swing creaks and bangs against the porch. The bell on the front door RINGS. Mattie answers the door.

A POSTMAN has a special delivery. Mattie signs with an X. The Postman leaves the package. Gertrude stops half way down the stairs. Mattie takes the package into the Parlor.

MATTIE

Mr. James?

JAMES

Come on, Mattie. You can do it. I give you permission to use the words you so want to use.

Mattie tries to speak, but the words won't come out. She stutters her next line.

MATTIE

A s...sp...special, special dish.

JAMES

That's okay. What is it Mattie?

MATTIE

Um, um a cherry pie baked with an upper crust.

JAMES

I'm sorry Mattie. Let me see.

James takes a look at the package.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Oh, my goodness. You are brilliant Mattie. It's a special delivery from Washington D.C. That was a wonderful cherry reference.

Mattie, pleased with herself, returns to the kitchen.

James steps into the hallway and pulls out the documents from the Department of Education.

Gertrude makes her way down the stairs.

GERTRUDE

My, oh my. Why aren't you just the important man. Special instructions all the way from Washington, D.C.

JAMES

Important, indeed.

James retreats up the stairs to his bedroom. Gertrude waits until he has closed his door, then goes to the phone.

GERTRUDE

Hello? Yes, downtown precinct please. I would like to speak to Detective Bell. Yes, I'll hold.

GEORGE (ON PHONE)

Detective Bell.

GERTRUDE

Georgie. James, got a letter...

GEORGE (ON PHONE)

What the hell, Gertie.

GERTRUDE

No, Georgie, from Washington D.C. I think it said the Department of the F.B.I. Honest to God, Georgie...

GEORGE (ON PHONE)

You need to be sure.

GERTRUDE

That's what you said, the F.B.I.? I did good, right Georgie?

CLICK, the line disconnects.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Lawrence rounds a corner and finds himself at the newsstand across the street from the Skirvin Hotel.

Traffic clears. Lawrence steps out from behind the stand and, as if choreographed, runs into a large man - Rusty.

RUSTY

Of all the people, Stewart, right?

LAWRENCE

Good memory. How are sales?

Lawrence tries to maneuver around Rusty, but Rusty uses his large frame to push Lawrence back behind the newsstand.

RUSTY

About the same. If I had a divining rod for cash it wouldn't even get me to my own pocket. You?

LAWRENCE

Boarding house turned out fine.

RUSTY

Stopped by there the other day. Mrs. Levy said she was all full up. She just didn't trust herself to be that close to me, is what I figure.

Rusty forces a laugh. Over Rusty's shoulder, Lawrence sees a POLICE CAR pull in front of the Skirvin Hotel - in the car A POLICE OFFICER and George Bell. Lawrence uses Rusty to hide.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

God, you gotta love a woman like that. A real piece of modern.

Lawrence, nervous, watches George. Rusty glances over his shoulder and spies George in the car.

LAWRENCE

One way of looking at her.

RUSTY

Say, you check out that sky? Yes siree, gonna be a bad one. You better get yourself home straight away.

Rusty slaps Lawrence on the back and walks him around the corner before George can see them.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - LATER

The street is eerie and quiet. Lawrence walks down the street a few houses from the BOARDING HOUSE. He spies a SEDAN that's parked across the street with two men inside.

Lawrence ventures closer to the Sedan. He looks across the street into the car. George lifts his hat and makes eye contact. An OFFICER in the passenger seat leans forward and looks at Lawrence.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence enters to a similar eerie quiet. He looks downstairs, then upstairs, opens the door to the Bedroom, no Helen. He notices James's bedroom door open.

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

James writes at his desk. His room is wall-to-wall books. KNOCKS at his door, James looks up.

JAMES
Well, look who's--

LAWRENCE
I need your help...

James closes the door. Lawrence pulls the BUILDING PERMIT from his pocket.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
Would you take a look at this?

JAMES
This address, 770 Eastern, it's very familiar.

LAWRENCE
It's the Rosentals'.

JAMES
This is curious. The date, June 8th, two weeks prior to the fire.

Lawrence grabs the paper. He looks at the date, then the ISSUED TO: White Camelia Industries.

INT. HALLWAY

Mattie CREEPS up to James' bedroom door. She PUSHES it gently. The door cracks open.

The door opens enough so Mattie can make out Lawrence who sits on the end of the bed. James in his desk chair. They examine the paper in Lawrence's hand.

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM

LAWRENCE
I need you to do something for me.
(Beat)
(MORE)

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

George Bell is outside. All day,
it's like he knows where I'm going
to be. I reckon he suspects.

JAMES

I've been waiting...

CROSS CUT:

INT. HOSPITAL

PEDIATRIC WARD. A NURSE wheels a young girl down the hall.
An array of NURSES move in and out of rooms with charts.

Judith and Helen walk down the corridor, inspect NAME CARDS
on the door frames. They stop at the card that reads:
ROSENTHAL.

HELEN

You go in. I'm going to go down to
Maternity and will meet you back
here in just a little bit.

JUDITH

They would appreciate it if you
visited Itzhak.

HELEN

I'll only be a moment.

Judith enters the room. Helen travels down the corridor.

JAMES' BEDROOM

LAWRENCE

... Leave it with the Hotel Clerk.
Don't do nothing else, just leave
it. He'll know what to do. I need
to go back to the Rail Yard and get
as many of these permits to the
F.B.I. as I can carry.

Lawrence opens the door, turns back to James.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

No one else can know you have that.

JAMES

Someone would have to walk in my
shoes to know where to find it.

Lawrence leaves the room.

INT. HALLWAY

Mattie wipes down the BASEBOARDS. Lawrence notices Mattie, but pays her no mind. He enters his room. Mattie crawls back to the edge of the bedroom door, watches James fold up the Building Permit and place it under the insole of his shoe.

INT. HOSPITAL

Helen looks up and down the hallway in search of the Maternity Ward. She approaches a Swinging door to another hallway. She looks through the square window in the door.

She looks through the glass at rows of beds in an open room with sheets for dividers. The beds and equipment appear to be seconds from the rest of the hospital. Black NURSES and ORDERLIES tend to sick Black PATIENTS. Helen looks up at a sign above the door. "COLOREDS ONLY"

Helen backs away and turns a corner and sees the LARGE GLASS WINDOW of the Maternity Nursery. She peers through the glass at the newborn WHITE BABIES in the cradles.

A White NURSE approaches one of the babies and picks it up. The Nurse cradles the baby as Helen looks on holding back tears.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence takes a chair and sits next to the window. He looks out into the street. The Oklahoma wind picks up. The Sedan sits. Gertrude leans into the car talking with George. Her dress flaps in the wind.

In the hallway, the sound of James' bedroom door closes with a THUD. Lawrence listens for him traveling down the stairs.

Lawrence watches as James make his way down the sidewalk.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE

James pulls the brim of his hat down to shield his eyes from the dust. Gertrude imitates James' walk as she goes back to the house, smothering a laugh.

INT. BEDROOM

Lawrence stands and heads for the door. He notices Helen's EMBROIDERY BASKET open on the bed. He lifts up her latest work, a needle point of a BABY'S CRADLE.

Just as he realizes what this means, he hears the SEDAN TURN OVER. He runs back to the window. The car pulls away from the curb and speeds down the street.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence rushes down the stairs. Mattie polishes a silver menorah at the dining room table. Gertrude digs into the buffet, glass in hand. She pulls the moonshine bottle out and pours. Lawrence steps into the dining room.

GERTRUDE

Doing that just to get my goat.
You see how they stick together?
(To Mattie)
Don't ya, you little--

LAWRENCE

Gertrude, do you know where George is headed?

GERTRUDE

Not here, in the Parlor. You can't trust her kind. You never know who she talks to in the dead of night.

Lawrence follows Gertrude into the parlor.

LAWRENCE

Don't play games with me.

GERTRUDE

I know about you and Georgie. So, I feel I can confide.
(Beat)
George and I have found the snitch. You know, the one working with the F...B...I. James just left and has no idea what he's walking into.

Lawrence grabs her arms and shakes her.

LAWRENCE

What have you done?

Mattie moves closer to the parlor to overhear.

GERTRUDE

I told Georgie how I saw him getting special instructions from Washington D.C.

LAWRENCE

What are you talking about? That's the Department of Education.

GERTRUDE

So he says. And I told Georgie all about it. Just like I was told.

LAWRENCE

He believed you? God damn it. He's not a snitch, you stupid cow!

Lawrence pushes her down on the sofa and races out the door. Mattie ducks out of his way.

EXT. HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Helen descends the steps of the Hospital. The wind blows her down the sidewalk.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Lawrence PUSHES PEOPLE out of his way as he hurries down the street. He stops in his tracks when he sees:

Helen standing at a TROLLEY STOP. Lawrence rushes the other direction. Helen recognizes Lawrence and follows him.

HELEN

Lawrence!

Lawrence stops, turns as Helen runs up to him.

LAWRENCE

What are you doing out alone? Come with me.

Lawrence takes off pulling Helen by the hand. She tries to keep up.

A FEW BLOCKS LATER...

The Skirvin Hotel, a block away. Lawrence stops at a corner to catch his breath and survey the street. Helen stands behind him winded and confused.

Lawrence sees James at the newsstand down the street. Lawrence hurries down the street, keeps James in his sight. Helen follows.

HELEN

What's going on? Does this have to do with the F.B.I.?

Lawrence keeps moving, closing in on James. The wind howls.

LAWRENCE

No time to explain.

INTERCUT - DOWN THE STREET

James looks up and down the street. No sign of George Bell. He checks for oncoming cars - it's clear. James steps out onto the street and places the newspaper under his arm.

Lawrence gets a glimpse of someone behind the newsstand, Willie. Willie emerges in full view and waves to a truck idling at the curb. In the driver's seat, Dick tilts his hat up, hands tense on the steering wheel.

James steps into the middle of the street, a SCREECH from around the corner startles him. He turns and sees Lawrence down the street. They lock eyes.

Willie turns to look down the street.

Lawrence ducks into a store alcove. He grabs Helen and shields her face from the action.

Willie turns back to see the truck racing toward James. James sees the truck, but it's too late.

The truck hits James and rolls over his body.

Lawrence looks around the alcove just as the horrific act occurs. Lawrence struggles against his instinct to run and help. He watches the truck drive away.

James lies lifeless, his newspaper pages blow down the street with the dust.

Willie greets a second figure from the shadows of the newsstand -- it's Sid McCoy. Sid slaps Willie on the back, walks away.

LAWRENCE

God Almighty.

Helen pulls away from Lawrence and turns to see James lying in the street. The wind drowns out Helen's SCREAMS. She darts away from the alcove. Lawrence yanks her back.

HELEN
 (Screaming)
 Lawrence Stewart, you let me go!

Helen struggles against Lawrence's grip.

LAWRENCE
 Helen, stop. We can't!

Helen SLAPS Lawrence across the face.

HELEN
 That's James out there!

Lawrence pulls her into a hug. Tears fill Helen's eyes.

LAWRENCE
 Damn it! I know it's James.
 (Beat)
 I have to keep us safe. I can't do
 that if we go over there.

Lawrence's face tightens as the anger builds. With strength and determination Lawrence looks into Helen's eyes.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
 Can you make it home alone?

HELEN
 Lawrence?

LAWRENCE
 I'm going to get the man
 responsible for this. You hear me?
 (Beat)
 Now go.

Dazed, Helen starts down the street. Lawrence darts across the street. He sprints to:

INT. TAYLOR'S SECRETARY'S OFFICE - DAY

Lawrence rushes into the office, sees Taylor's SECRETARY typing while wearing earphones and listening to Dictaphone. Lawrence slams his hand down on the carriage of the typewriter.

The Secretary, startled, pulls off her earphones and stands.

SECRETARY
 May I help you?

LAWRENCE

I'm here to see Councilman Taylor.

SECRETARY

I'm sorry, he is not accepting appointments today due to the dust storm. You can try back tomorrow.

LAWRENCE

This is urgent. So, just go and get him for me.

SECRETARY

I cannot.

LAWRENCE

Do it I said!

The Secretary picks up the phone, taps the switch hook several times.

Lawrence lifts his hand from the typewriter and reveals "WHITE CAMELIA INDUSTRIES" as the reference on the letter.

SECRETARY

Operator... operator, please get me the police.

Lawrence holds down the switch hook. Taylor's door opens, Councilman Taylor steps out.

TAYLOR

What is... Oh, you. Stewart is it?

LAWRENCE

Yes.

TAYLOR

Well, get in here.

(To Secretary)

Get Jake Herrmann on the phone.

COUNCILMAN TAYLOR'S OFFICE

Lawrence enters, fists tight and teeth tight.

TAYLOR

I don't appreciate you--

LAWRENCE

He hasn't called you with the news?

TAYLOR

What news?

LAWRENCE

He's dead. James... the snitch.

TAYLOR

By your hands was it?

A stab through Lawrence's heart.

LAWRENCE

More or less.

TAYLOR

And the Rosenthal store, you really know how to get your hands dirty.

LAWRENCE

I think the Feds got something on all of us. We need to just stop for a while.

TAYLOR

You come in here and... Stupid rail yard workers.

(Beat)

Wait here.

Taylor steps out of the office. The shadows through the glass and muffled sounds of Taylor conferring with his Secretary. Taylor takes the phone from the Secretary.

Lawrence looks around the office. On a bookshelf a photograph catches his eye. Taylor and other men pose in front of a banner, White Camelia Industries. Lawrence pulls the picture from the frame and stuffs it in his shirt. Steps close to the door to listen.

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

What do you mean he wasn't there? He just told me about it. I'm starting to feel like you've got a loose cannon Jake.

(Beat)

I don't care. Send Sid over here with one of your guys. I want him watched every minute. You get that?

Lawrence looks through a crack in the door.

TAYLOR'S SECRETARY'S OFFICE

Taylor opens a drawer in his Secretary's desk, pulls out a revolver.

TAYLOR'S OFFICE

Lawrence strikes to the window. He opens it and climbs out on to the ledge.

EXT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

FIVE STORIES UP the wind and dust pound Lawrence as he skirts along the edge to a conference room nearby. He looks in; it's empty. He pulls up the window, balancing himself, crawls in.

INT. COUNCILMAN TAYLOR'S OFFICE

Taylor steps in, notices the window open as dust covers his desk and papers fly. He runs to the window ready with the revolver. He looks out the window. Lawrence is gone.

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

Helen sits, stunned. Judith paces in front of her.

The phone RINGS. Judith darts into the hallway to answer it.

JUDITH (O.S.)
Hello. Yes, this is Mrs. Levy.
(Beat)
Oh, I see...

Judith stands in the doorway of the Parlor. She holds back tears and shakes her head, NO.

Lawrence enters through the front door.

Helen looks at Lawrence, charges at him, rage in her eyes.

HELEN
What have you done?!? James was a
better MAN than you'll ever be!

Helen runs up the stairs.

EXT. SKIRVIN HOTEL - NIGHT

Lawrence approaches the front of the hotel. He stops and looks up at the hotel window. Willie jumps out of a parked car sitting in front of the hotel.

WILLIE

What the hell are you doing? You sure know how to stir the hornets.

LAWRENCE

How bad is it?

WILLIE

Sid smoothed things over with Taylor. Said they'd handle it. I'd still stay low if I were you.

Lawrence lights a cigarette.

Murphy, Wilson, George Bell and a POLICE OFFICER come out of the hotel. They approach Lawrence and Willie. Lawrence looks at them with disdain.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

Nice night, ain't it?

GEORGE

Nothing better to do than sit outside this hotel?

WILLIE

Screw off, George.

Murphy stands close to Lawrence with revenge in his eyes. Lawrence sees it.

MURPHY

(To Lawrence)
You follow me.

Lawrence hesitates, puts out his cigarette. Murphy grabs Lawrence. Willie jumps for Murphy. George and the Police Officer grab him. They hold Willie back.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

Got a few questions.

Murphy drags a struggling Lawrence into the alley. Wilson looks to George as he starts to follow Murphy and Lawrence.

WILSON

Keep him here.

George and the Police Officer tighten their grip on Willie.

In the alley, Murphy shoves Lawrence face first into the brick wall and wrenches Lawrence's arm behind his back.

LAWRENCE

Enough, God damn it!

Murphy grabs Lawrence's hair and pulls his head back and whispers in his ear.

MURPHY

Don't ever pull what you did to me at the hotel again. We're working for the same side.

(To Wilson)

Now, I say we're even.

He lets Lawrence go. Lawrence rolls against the wall to face the men and rubs his twisted shoulder. Lawrence gives them a "let bygones" smile.

WILSON

That's better.

LAWRENCE

What the hell is George Bell doing with you?

WILSON

He's on our team.

LAWRENCE

You realize--

MURPHY

We ain't stupid. We've had one of our own watching him.

WILSON

You might know him. Rusty Mallet?

LAWRENCE

(Exhausted laugh)

Oh, that's rich.

WILSON

Now, what are you worth?

LAWRENCE

James Mitchell, you got it right?

WILSON

What was Mr. Mitchell trying to deliver when...

LAWRENCE

Didn't you check his body after?

MURPHY

Nothing.

WILSON

Come out with it. Bell won't leave us alone for long.

LAWRENCE

There's this company that's stealing homes, businesses, land... White Camelia Industries.

Lawrence pulls out the photograph.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Look, here's a photograph of Taylor and the other men of the company.

Wilson takes the photo from Lawrence.

WILSON

In New Orleans the Knights of the White Camelia were just another version of the Klan, but made up of wealthy socialites and politicians. The paper with his signature makes the connection?

LAWRENCE

That's what James was bringing you!

Lawrence hits his fist on the wall and shuffles aimlessly down the alley. He stops with thought and returns to Wilson.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

James must have hid it.

WILSON

We'll investigate the men in this picture.

LAWRENCE

(Quick realization)
Taylor's secretary was listening with something... typing.

WILSON
Must have been a Dictaphone.

LAWRENCE
Yeah, I don't know. She was typing
something about the company.
(Beat)
There's got to be a connection. I
just gotta find it.

Lawrence, defeated, heads out the other end of the alley.

MURPHY
You still got your money on this
guy?

WILSON
Now more than ever.

EXT. RAIL HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

In the dark a single lamp on the building provides a pool of light near the door. Lawrence tries the door; it's locked. He walks to the side of the building. A stack of pallets lead to an old window up the side of the building.

Lawrence climbs the pallets and uses his elbow to knock out the glass. He climbs through the broken window.

INT. RAIL HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence jumps down on to a table near the wall. He scrambles through the dark.

BREAK ROOM

He reaches Jake's Office door. He uses his knife, jimmies the door, turns on the light.

INT. JAKE HERRMANN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence rushes to the desk and opens the drawer that contained all the permits. It's empty. He pulls all of the drawers open. They are all empty. Lawrence looks around and notices the maps are missing from the walls.

In frustration, Lawrence turns everything over, looking for anything that can help. The whole room has been cleared out.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAWN

The sky is a beautiful mix of blue and violet.

Lawrence sleeps against a post on the porch step. His face is scratched and bloody from the brick wall, arms crossed to keep warm. He awakes.

Lawrence stands and looks up at his and Helen's bedroom window. The window curtains move in and out with the breeze.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

With the room tidy, Helen folds clothes and tucks them into her suitcase. She stops when she hears the door creak open.

Lawrence stands in the doorway. Helen lets out a deep sigh, continues to pack.

HELEN

I'm spending the evening with
Sarah, then I'm leaving first thing
in the morning.

Helen notices his face. She finds it hard to feel angry at him in light of his appearance. She stops packing and pours water into the basin and wets a cloth. She gently hands it to Lawrence. Lawrence holds on to her hand. After a brief moment, she pulls her hand away.

Lawrence stands at the mirror and wipes his face. In the mirror, Lawrence can see Helen pack her embroidery.

LAWRENCE

When were you going to tell me?

Helen stops packing again.

HELEN

I suppose we're both guilty of
keeping secrets.

LAWRENCE

Will I ever see...

HELEN

I don't know.

(Beat)

Until the baby's born, I think I
need to go back to Gary.

LAWRENCE

I reckon that makes sense.

(Beat)

Suppose there's nothing I can do to change your mind?

HELEN

Why didn't you tell me about--

LAWRENCE

What do you want me to say?

HELEN

I assumed all your church meetings were stuffy, boring men talking about budgets and buildings. Not about hateful, murderous--

LAWRENCE

It's not that simple.

HELEN

You lied to me. I had to hear about it from some government federal agent who bumped into me at the Post Office.

LAWRENCE

That son of a bitch. Then you know it's not my fault... I was set up.

HELEN

And a dog don't have fleas!

LAWRENCE

I did things I'm not proud of. I... they believed we were doing right. The meetings were meant to unite us, help us protect our jobs. They were scarce and foreigners were coming in.

(Beat)

But, I never hurt no one. You gotta believe me.

HELEN

You were there.

LAWRENCE

It was a big mistake. They moved the Deacon's meeting. I showed up, and there was this man, a colored, he had come into town and taken a job meant for a white man.

HELEN

It was only a job.

LAWRENCE

Don't you think I know that! When I found out what was going on I got out of there.

HELEN

You didn't stop it? Oh, my God. I think I'm going to be sick.

LAWRENCE

Well, now you know.

HELEN

All I know is that I married a man I know nothing about.

LAWRENCE

I've been beaten, kicked... all trying to make things right. And if you can't understand--

HELEN

Understand? Try walking a day in my shoes. Then we'll compare bruises.

Lawrence, surprised by her comment, grabs her arms.

LAWRENCE

What? Say that again?

HELEN

You let go of me, this instant!

LAWRENCE

... have to walk in my shoes.
(A light bulb goes on)
I have to go.

Lawrence darts out of the room.

HELEN

(Miffed)
Lawrence?

Helen charges the door and SLAMS it!

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - MORNING

Lawrence walks toward the front door of the HOPKINS FUNERAL HOME. He carries a brown paper bag. He tucks his dirty shirt in, enters the front door.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

In the entry way there's a lectern with sign-in book, floral wool carpet and velvet drapes. A FUNERAL DIRECTOR greets Lawrence as he enters.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR
Good morning. How may I help you?

LAWRENCE
You have James Mitchell?

FUNERAL DIRECTOR
Making final preparations now.

LAWRENCE
I brought his clothes.

The Funeral Director grabs the bag. Lawrence, pulls it back.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR
I promise to take care of it.

LAWRENCE
Sorry I look so awful. It's been a difficult few days. You understand.
(Beat)
You see, the family asked me do the exchange myself. I am to leave the new clothes and bring back the old... all of it... even the shoes.
(Beat)
Did you discard his clothes?

FUNERAL DIRECTOR
Just received the body. We haven't started any preparations just yet. Follow me.

EMBALMING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Lawrence stands over James. He looks at the blood stained clothes and shoes.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR
I'll give you a few moments.

With tender care, he pulls James' shoe off and lifts the insole and pulls out and unfolds the permit he gave him.

Lawrence shoves the permit in his pant pocket, leaves the bag of clothes on the table with James' body. He guardedly looks around. In the clear, he charges for the exit but as he approaches the door he stops. He turns back and looks at James's body. After a brief moment, he calmly opens the brown bag and pulls the clean suit out and begins to gently undress him. Tears fill his eyes. With each button undone, the weight of his guilt grows larger.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Lawrence steps into the house and hears muffled voices of a conversation in the parlor. He finds Helen and Sid McCoy. Helen wrings a handkerchief in her hand. She sees Lawrence. Off her look, Sid turns to Lawrence as well.

LAWRENCE

Sid?

SID

You old dog, you. It's been too long. I've been looking for you.

Helen picks up a stack of letters tied with ribbon.

HELEN

He brought me letters from Lois. Tell Lawrence what you were just telling me.

SID

Well, Lois and I have been seeing each other for some time now.

HELEN

Isn't that a surprise? It seems she has been letting him read all my letters.

LAWRENCE

You've been sending her letters?

SID

She sure has.

HELEN

Lawrence, you surely are not going to visit in filthy clothes. Let's go upstairs and get you a clean shirt.

Lawrence connects with Helen.

LAWRENCE
Sid, you don't mind. Wait here and
I'll be right down.

SID
I'm not going anywhere.
(Tense laughter)
You better not either.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence closes the door behind them.

LAWRENCE
What did you say to her?

HELEN
I haven't written to her about the
F.B.I. or any... Lois... she
doesn't know. I promise.

Lawrence removes his shirt and pours water into the basin.
He washes his face and hands.

LAWRENCE
You can't trust no one.

HELEN
Including you.

Lawrence freezes in the moment.

LAWRENCE
I went to James. I couldn't leave
him that way. I put on that suit he
always liked to wear at dinner.

Helen begins to cry. Lawrence offers comfort. She pushes him
away and gather's herself quickly.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Lawrence and Sid step out onto the porch. Lawrence lights up
shielding his match to the wind. He offers Sid a cigarette.

LAWRENCE
Well, this is quite a surprise.
What made you up and leave Lois?
Anything wrong with Gary?

SID

Nothing's the matter with Gary. I called Uncle Jake, and he asked if I could come down and spend a little time.

(Beat)

I think I should be asking the questions.

LAWRENCE

How do you figure?

SID

You old dog. You took my advice and met up with Uncle Jake.

LAWRENCE

Looks that way.

SID

And you're still keeping Helen in the dark. So much so, she's befriending coloreds and Jews.

LAWRENCE

Let's just say that I need a little help. She didn't need to know.

SID

You're in for the ride, brother.

LAWRENCE

What's that suppose to mean... brother?

Sid stamps out his cigarette and steps off the porch. He calls back as he disappears down the sidewalk.

SID

I'll be back in a couple hours to pick you up. We have some unfinished business with those Nigger Socialists. Be here when I get back.

When Sid is out of sight, Helen and Judith step out and walk down the sidewalk.

LAWRENCE

Helen...

Helen carries a small overnight bag, passes and ignores Lawrence.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Helen!

Lawrence grabs the handle on Helen's bag. Helen hangs on to it. Lawrence draws both of them closer to him.

HELEN

There's nothing more to say.

LAWRENCE

I know I've hurt you. But, when this is over it'll be like we planned. Please, look in my eyes!

(Beat)

Tell me you still see the man you fell in love with back in Gary. Tell me I haven't lost you.

JUDITH

Helen?

Helen turns to Judith for reassurance, then back to Lawrence.

HELEN

Goodbye, Lawrence.

Lawrence releases Helen and watches as they walk away.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - LATER

The wind HOWLS the porch swing BANGS against the house.

A clock on the wall TICKS away the minutes.

Lawrence sits numb in the Parlor. The GOLD SUNSET pours through the window. He holds the BUILDING PERMIT.

Lawrence starts up the stairs when:

RING, RING of the door bell. Mattie comes out of the kitchen, opens the door. Sid and George stand in the doorway. Mattie turns to Lawrence frightened. Lawrence slowly puts the paper in his pocket.

LAWRENCE

Hey, boys. Mattie, it's okay. You can let them in.

Mattie goes back into the kitchen. Sid and George come in, close the door. They both take a look around the dining room and parlor. Mattie cracks the kitchen door and watches.

SID
Wind's really picking up out there.

LAWRENCE
So what's this unfinished business?
Last I saw, you cleaned out Jake's
office, and there was nothing--

SID
That wasn't us. That was those
holier-than-thou niggers.

LAWRENCE
How did they...

SID
Someone from the rail yard, Tim
Wheeler, let them in one night.
We'll take care of old Tim.

LAWRENCE
Right now?

GEORGE
I've got Tim. You've got something
much bigger to deal with. Revival
going on at the Wildwood Church.
Expecting over a hundred.

LAWRENCE
The fliers from the other day.

SID
We're going to burn it down unless
they give those permits back.

LAWRENCE
Let me tell Helen we're heading
out. She's just upstairs. Don't
want her getting spooked and
calling the wrong people.

GEORGE
Make it fast. That dust storms
getting worse.

George steps out on to the porch. Sid, the Parlor. Lawrence
runs upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence opens the drawers at the dressing table. He pulls
out a pen and a piece of paper. He scribbles out a note.

He stuffs it in an envelope from Helen's stationary with the Building Permit.

Lawrence reaches for the door and stops. He goes to the window. Opens it. The wind tears through the curtains. He puts one leg out on to the roof, then stops suddenly as he sees the smoke from George's cigarette trail over the porch roof. Lawrence quietly retreats.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE

George puffs on his cigarette. His attention is drawn to Lawrence's upstairs bedroom window. The curtain FLAPS by a sudden gust of wind. George, like a sentry, walks the perimeter of the house making his way to the back.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lawrence tiptoes down the stairs. He cringes when one of the steps CREAKS under his foot. He waits, but no movement in the house. He steps down to the bottom and spies around the corner into the Parlor.

Sid stands looking out the front window. Lawrence slinks past and heads for the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Mattie stands at a center work table with a metal bowl snapping a large pile of fresh green beans. Lawrence steps into the kitchen and places his finger over his lips signaling Mattie not to speak.

Mattie shakes her head YES. She continues to snap the beans as she watches Lawrence cut through the kitchen. He places the envelope in his pants. Just before he exits the back screen door, a puff of smoke floats into the kitchen.

George leans against the back porch. Lawrence paces in frustration. He paces faster. Mattie snaps in rhythm. SNAP, SNAP, SNAP!

Lawrence reaches to stop Mattie from snapping and knocks the metal bowl full of beans to the kitchen floor. Mattie runs over and kneels on the floor, picks up the beans. Lawrence sits on the floor and runs his fingers through his hair, defeated.

Lawrence looks at her, realizes what he has done, crawls on the floor and picks up the beans with Mattie.

LAWRENCE

I am so sorry, Mattie. You are the last person...

(Beat)

I don't know what to do. God, if only you understood...

MATTIE

Bad apples.

LAWRENCE

Can't make a good pie with bad apples.

MATTIE

No, Mr. Lawrence. Those men are bad apples.

Lawrence looks at Mattie realizing all may not be lost.

LAWRENCE

I gotta find a way to get rid of the rotten apples, don't you see? And not just any way - I need to make sure all the good apples...

MATTIE

You's a good apple. Mattie's a good apple too. You give that message to me, and I will take it to the hotel.

LAWRENCE

Tell them it's urgent.

MATTIE

I know what needs to be done. So, you just give it to me. Then you can go to the church.

LAWRENCE

Got to make everyone safe.

MATTIE

That church, it's my church. When you get there you tell the preacher, Jeremiah, that Mattie says you're good folk.

(Beat)

Tell him you're buttermilk pie!

Lawrence pulls out the envelope and gives it to Mattie. He grabs her hand as reassurance, rises from the floor. Reaching the kitchen door he turns back to Mattie.

Mattie stands with confidence and gives Lawrence a heartfelt smile. Lawrence holds on her smile.

INT. WHEELER HOUSE - EVENING

A modest house. Sarah and Helen sit on the couch. Judith sits in a chair, watches Tim pace.

SARAH

Going home... tomorrow?

TIM

I knew there was more going on with Lawrence. Should call the police. What about that George Bell?

JUDITH

Don't be a fool. He's no more our friend in these matters--

TIM

Jeremiah should give the papers to somebody and stop this nonsense.

Tim pulls back the front curtains. Shrubs shake in the wind.

SARAH

Lordy, that wind is going to blow all night. You mark my words.

HELEN

Could I possibly lie down?

SARAH

Why, of course, honey.

Helen and Sarah walk down the hall. Tim watches, then back to Judith.

TIM

We have to do something. Sitting here and fretting ain't going to do anyone no good.

JUDITH

Any good, any good! The patience of Job. That's all I'm asking.

(Beat)

I'll take some water to Helen. Then, I need to get back home. I can't leave Mattie alone in this dust storm.

Judith fills a glass and takes it down the hall. The bedroom door closes. Tim starts down the hall when:

There's a KNOCK at the front door. He runs to open it. George Bell stands at the doorway.

GEORGE

I'm sorry to bother you. But we received a call that there is a gas leak in the neighborhood? We're going from house to house checking all the connections.

TIM

Is the world going to hell tonight? There must be a mistake.

GEORGE

It's just a precaution. I would hate for your house to be the only one that blows.

TIM

Come in. The connection is in the basement. Here, let me show you.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Tim uses a flashlight as he takes George down the stairs.

They reach the bottom. Tim points out the gas line with the flashlight. George comes up behind Tim.

TIM

Odd. Seems you were just the topic of discussion earlier--

BAM, George hits him over the head with his pistol. Tim falls to the ground.

EXT. ROAD - EVENING

Two pick-up trucks race down the road kicking up dust. They're cramped with KLANSMEN. In the back of the second truck, TWO KLANSMAN sit near the tail gate, carry shotguns. Their faces are covered with bandanas to block the blowing dirt. Lawrence and Sid sit in the bed, lean against the cab. They yell over the wind.

SID

I've known you a long time. Something you want to tell me?

LAWRENCE

Lois, can't see her with you.

SID

That stupid bitch. Her and her fashion magazines.

Sid looks over at Lawrence who is tensing every muscle in his body not to throw Sid out of the truck. Sid leans into Lawrence's ear.

SID (CONT'D)

So, why did you leave Gary that day? All hell broke loose after--

LAWRENCE

None of my doing.

SID

Those Federal sonsofbitches. Took me right off the train platform just as you was safely heading out of town.

LAWRENCE

Not by my hand.

SID

I know. I held out as long as I could til I gave them every name in that picture, except yours. Then I just couldn't hold out any longer.

(Beat)

They were going to find out sooner or later.

LAWRENCE

So, you gave them my name?

SID

I told them what they wanted.

LAWRENCE

You god damn bastard.

SID

What I find real curious is you had nothing to give 'em. Why ain't you in jail? Or, you're the god damn snitch. Ain't ya?

Sid chuckles, pleased with himself.

SID (CONT'D)

I'll take your silence as a yes.

(Beat)

I tell you what, since I considered you my best friend, I'll give you one chance to redeem yourself. If your up for it?

Sid pulls out a package wrapped in brown paper and tied up with twine from behind his back. He gives it to Lawrence.

Lawrence opens the package, a white robe and Klansman hood.

Sid pulls out the other robes and hoods from a duffle bag. He hands it out to the other Klansman while holding on to his. Lawrence takes his out. He looks at the hood and turns it over. On the back is a small cross marked with charcoal.

Lawrence's eyes flash wide as he realizes what this means. He scans the men on the truck. No one notices the hood or Lawrence's panic.

EXT. SKIRVIN HOTEL - EVENING

Mattie wears her best Sunday dress, hat with veil and guards her purse. She walks up to the door. A large African American DOORMAN steps in her way.

DOORMAN

I'm sorry Sister, but I can't let you go in there.

MATTIE

No, you just move out of the way and mind your own business.

DOORMAN

Huh, uh, you're not going to make me lose my job over you.

Mattie pulls him down to her. She whispers in his ear.

DOORMAN (CONT'D)

Alright, but you're on your own. I never let you in.

He opens the door, Mattie blows in with confidence.

INT. SKIRVIN HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Mattie stands in the center of the lobby. The Desk Clerk sees her and snaps his finger.

A BELLMAN hears the snap and charges at Mattie, grabbing her by the arm and escorting her to the door.

MATTIE

Stir until done! Stir until done!

She pulls away from him and heads for the desk. The Patrons gasp, appalled by her gall. The Bellman quickly goes after her. The elevator doors open, and Wilson steps off. He sees the commotion. The Bellman reaches Mattie and forcefully escorts her to the door.

MATTIE (CONT'D)

Mr. Spelvin! I got to get to the desk and leave a message for Mr. Spelvin.

WILSON

Wait!

EXT. WHEELER HOUSE - EVENING

A car drives down the street, pulls in behind George's Sedan and parks. Rusty Mallet steps out of the car. He looks inside George's Sedan. Looks up and down the street, covers his eyes from the blowing dirt. He walks to the Wheeler house, moves around back.

INT. WHEELER HOUSE - EVENING

Judith comes back into the kitchen with an empty glass. She sees the basement door open and looks around.

The front door blows open from the wind. She runs to the front door to close it. She sees George's Sedan, she drops the glass. CRASH, the glass breaks into a million pieces. She looks back toward the kitchen.

INTER CUT:

INT. BASEMENT

George takes a wrench and loosens the pipe. He opens the valve and gas HISSES into the air. He walks up the steps.

INT. HOUSE

George steps into the kitchen. The basement door slowly closes and CREAKS behind him. He stops. Judith stands with a frying pan high over her head.

George pulls his revolver and slowly turns, when:

WHACK, Judith slams the pan on George's head. George lands unconscious on the floor. Rusty busts into the house, finds George on the floor. He looks at a startled Judith.

RUSTY

Woman, I guess you don't need my help after all.

JUDITH

(Realizing)

Tim! In the basement!

Rusty runs down the basement stairs.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Sparse with just a few row houses and thick woods. The two trucks pull into a clearing off the road. In the distance, an old traditional whitewashed church. The windows glow with light. MUSIC plays in concert with the whistling wind and blowing dust.

Sid sets his robe and hood down on the truck bed floor. He jumps out of the truck and turns to Lawrence and the boys.

SID

I'll find out what we do next.

The Two Men in the back of the truck put their hoods and robes on. Lawrence watches them as he SWAPS THE HOOD WITH SID. The Two Men grab their rifles and jump out of the back of the truck.

INTER CUT:

INT. CHURCH

A church full of African American women, children and men stand. Some of them clap and others fan themselves to fend off the summer heat. The MUSIC stops. The howl of the wind, more prominent. Jeremiah stands in front with Bible in hand.

JEREMIAH

It is our destiny to bring ourselves out of the oppression. Remove the strings that somebody else pulls. We must do it. Do it ourselves!

CONGREGANT
Alleluia!

EXT. WOODS

IN THE DISTANCE OFF SCREEN: The congregation repeats the words, "WE MUST DO IT. DO IT OURSELVES."

The Klansmen in robes and hoods stand in a circle. Jake's voice can be heard from behind the red robe and hood of the Imperial Wizard. He walks around the backsides of the men.

HERRMANN
We have worked very hard to bring
our message to the nation. Now,
the ones who have stolen what is
justly ours are fighting back.

Jake stops behind the hood with the black cross on the back. He moves to the middle of the circle.

HERRMANN (CONT'D)
There is one among us who came into
our very homes. Who got close to
us. Who has betrayed us. Who
sympathizes with our enemy.

Jake Herrmann grabs a rifle from one of the men. He raises it, aims at everyone as he follows the circle of men.

HERRMANN (CONT'D)
The only way to kill a snake is to
take off its head.

INT. CHURCH

JEREMIAH
Can I hear an Amen!

CONGREGATION
Amen! Amen!

Jeremiah lays his hand on a big bible on the pulpit.

Outside: A single rifle SHOT. The congregation's enthusiasm is swallowed by their gasps.

EXT. WOODS

The shot Klansman falls on his knees. His deep breaths pull his hood in and out of his mouth.

He takes a final breath and then collapses to the ground. The men gather around. The red blood is quickly absorbed into the white hood.

INT. CHURCH

The front door flies open. Lawrence, winded, stands in the doorway. The wind bangs the door against the church.

LAWRENCE

All of you have to get out.

JEREMIAH

You are interrupting our service.
Someone close that door.

A CHURCHMAN jumps up and pulls the door closed.

LAWRENCE

I'm trying to save your life!

JEREMIAH

Like you did at the filling station
the other day?
(To congregation)
Bring him down.

EXT. WOODS

HERRMANN

Take it off!

One of the men pull off the hood and reveals Sid.

HERRMANN (CONT'D)

Stewart! Willie, go find him. The
rest of you light the torches. We
have to get a move-on.

Willie takes off with his rifle.

The other Klansmen pull torches out of the back of trucks. They form a line, and Jake lights the torches creating ghastly shadows as the flames whip in the wind.

INT. CHURCH

Lawrence, pinned down in front of the alter by Two Men.

LAWRENCE

Wait... Mattie..., I'm buttermilk pie. She said to tell you.

(Beat)

I'm good folk, please!

JEREMIAH

Our Mattie sent you?

Lawrence pleads with his eyes. Jeremiah hesitates and then nods his head YES.

JEREMIAH (CONT'D)

The men will stay. Everyone else should leave.

Women and Children shuffle out of the church.

LAWRENCE

That shot we heard ain't gonna be the last. If you got those papers, bring em. We don't have much time.

JEREMIAH

We will stand our ground.

LAWRENCE

Don't be a fool. I'm working with the Feds. I have to get you out.

Jeremiah sends the men out, except four CHURCHMEN stay. They stand their ground as Lawrence and Jeremiah stand off. The Churchmen gather around Jeremiah and the altar. The light of the torches flicker through the windows. Lawrence pulls back a lace curtain. Klansmen move with torches toward the church.

They hear a rifle cock. Lawrence whips around to the door. Willie aims his rifle at Jeremiah.

WILLIE

What the hell do you think you're doing?

Lawrence stands between Willie and Jeremiah.

JEREMIAH

Come on in, brother, we welcome everyone in our church.

LAWRENCE

Willie, it's over. Everyone's gone. It's over.

Willie grinds his teeth with his enraged eyes locked on Lawrence. Lawrence, on guard, watches Willie's hesitation.

In a burst of speed, Willie runs to one of the windows and smashes it. He sees Parishiners heading toward the woods.

WILLIE

(Shouts out the window)

They's--

Lawrence tackles Willie to the ground. They struggle and the rifle goes off. Willie stands, backs away from Lawrence. He is wide-eyed with shock. He wipes blood on his robe.

Willie turns around, realizes he is surrounded by the Churchmen. They pounce on him and take him to the ground. Jeremiah runs to Lawrence.

Lawrence sits up and props himself against the wall. His shoulder and arm are bloody.

LAWRENCE

Go on, get. They'll be more.

JEREMIAH

(To the Churchmen)

Put the Bible inside the altar table.

The men slide back the marble top and place the Bible inside.

Windows smash and torches fly into the church. The curtains and pews catch fire.

Jeremiah pulls the Clergy Stole from around his neck and wraps Lawrence's arm and shoulder into a sling.

LAWRENCE

What do you think you're doing?

JEREMIAH

This will help with the bleeding.

EXT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Jeremiah steps out of the church with his arm around Lawrence's waist to steady him. The wind blows them off the steps. Lawrence carries Willie's rifle. They run for the woods as men come around the corner.

Klansmen fire. Bullets SNAP branches and WHIZ by their heads. A Churchman goes down.

HERRMANN (O.S.)

I want you to go into those woods
and find every one of them.

Off the road, several police cars race onto the grass after the Klansmen. They come to a stop in a clearing. Police Officers - with Murphy and Wilson - jump out of the car. Some of the Klansmen direct their fire at the Officers. The Officers return fire, while others tackle and cuff Klansmen.

Jake sees them and runs into the woods.

Wilson runs to a small group of Officers barricaded by one of the Police Cars.

WILSON

Someone get out there and find me
Stewart!

EXT. WOODS

Lawrence and Jeremiah run around tree branches as they stumble through the brush. Lawrence falls and leans against a tree to catch himself. He is out of breath. The tree creaks and cracks with the wind.

Jeremiah looks up at the swaying branches.

LAWRENCE

You can't stop. They're not far
behind. Keep going.

JEREMIAH

No way I'm leaving you behind.

Jeremiah scans the darkness. He sees the shack, Jake's shack, in the distance.

JEREMIAH (CONT'D)

That shack. We'll hide in there.

LAWRENCE

When did you know it was about the
property?

JEREMIAH

One of my own. They tried to steal
his property, then crushed his
hands. Says it was because of a
job. I know better.

They hear the sound of a twig breaking. They go silent and look into the darkness, but see nothing.

Jeremiah wraps Lawrence's good arm around his shoulder. They sprint through tall grass.

BANG, a shot rings out through the darkness. Jeremiah loses his footing and they both fall to the ground.

Lawrence crawls over to Jeremiah.

Jeremiah holds on to his chest, blood oozes between his fingers. He winces in severe pain.

LAWRENCE

God, no!

Jeremiah is overcome with the pain. Lawrence takes the sling and pushes it against Jeremiah's chest to stop the bleeding.

JEREMIAH

The papers, what you're looking for... Lord, Jesus... All you need can be found in the Good Book.

Jeremiah takes his last breath. In the distance, BARKS and YELPS, blood hounds. Lawrence closes Jeremiah's eyes.

CLICK! Lawrence doesn't move, but slowly puts his hand on the trigger of the rifle laying next to Jeremiah. He cocks the hammer back. A boot crushes Lawrence's fingers on the trigger. Lawrence cries out.

Jake pulls his hood off. He grins as he towers over Lawrence. The BARKS and YELPS grow louder.

HERRMANN

Get up!

Jake jerks Lawrence up by his wounded arm. Lawrence grits his teeth and groans through the pain.

FADE TO:

INT. SHACK - MOMENTS LATER

Jake pushes Lawrence into the dark shack. The loose clapboards vibrate in the wind.

HERRMANN

Sit down!

Lawrence falls into a chair holding his shoulder.

Jake lights the hurricane lamp on the table. Dust fills the air like a fog. The light reveals Councilman Taylor standing in the corner.

TAYLOR

You've made a mess for me.

LAWRENCE

You mean White Camelia Industries.

TAYLOR

Where are those documents?

LAWRENCE

Like I'd ever tell you.

Taylor lifts a pistol and holds it to Lawrence's head.

TAYLOR

You're just shit on my shoe.

Lawrence looks in Jake's grinning eyes. Lawrence jumps up and grabs the pistol, struggles with Taylor.

EXT. SHACK

Wilson and Murphy run up to the shack followed by several POLICE OFFICERS. Murphy signals them to circle the building.

From inside: a SHOT and muzzle flash lights up the window.

WILSON

Bust down that door, now!

INT. SHACK

CRASH! The door flies open. Wilson, Murphy and TWO POLICE OFFICERS charge in. Jake lies on the floor groaning at his bleeding gut.

Lawrence points the pistol at Taylor's face. He trembles with his finger on the trigger.

Wilson moves next to Lawrence.

LAWRENCE

I think we should take care of this here and now!

WILSON

Noted. Now put the gun down.
(Beat)
We got them.

LAWRENCE

So many people died. For what? All this dirt and dust? You talk about staring the ugliness of America in the face, now I've got a gun pointed right at it! I can end this!

WILSON

You want to prove you're better than them? Let me do my job.

LAWRENCE

The home of the free? When does it mean something? Huh?

WILSON

I can say you helped us get a little closer to that tonight. You done right.

Lawrence lowers the gun. Murphy and another Officer pull Jake to his feet and lead him out, grimacing at his gut.

Murphy handcuffs Taylor. An Officer walks Taylor out. Wilson grabs the gun. Lawrence, unable to release the pistol, looks at his shaking hands. Wilson pulls it from him.

EXT. CHURCH - DAYBREAK

A clear, windless day. The Sedan pulls into the brush. The morning sun STREAMS through the trees. Lawrence gets out of the car with his wounds dressed.

Lawrence stops at the place where the doors once stood. He looks at the now shell of the walls. Lawrence walks to the marble altar, still standing. Wilson and Murphy follow.

Lawrence nods to Wilson and Murphy who help him slide back the marble top. Lawrence reaches in, pulls out the Bible, slowly opens it. The documents, building permits, all from Jake's office, rest in a center cut out of the large Bible.

WILSON

It was McCoy who ratted you out.
Shot in the back of the head.
Thought you should know.

LAWRENCE

Please, I need... take me to Helen.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - MORNING

CAB pulls up to the house, HONKS horn.

Helen steps out onto the porch carrying her suitcase.

SCREAMS echo out of the upstairs window. Clothes fly out the window, one by one. Helen looks up at the garments floating down to the ground. Helen, emotionless, gets into the cab.

SLAM, the screen door flies open, Gertrude runs into the yard. She picks up her clothes off the ground and tries to catch pieces flying through the air.

The cab pulls away.

Mattie comes out onto the porch, laughing.

GERTRUDE

You'll regret this, Judith Levy!

Judith sticks her head out the window.

JUDITH

The house needs a little cleaning.

Judith disappears, pieces start flying again.

A Sedan pulls up in front of the house. Wilson and Murphy get out. Lawrence steps out.

LAWRENCE

Helen!

Lawrence runs to the porch.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Mattie, where's Helen? Sarah said--

MATTIE

So sorry Mr. Lawrence. She's gone.

Lawrence runs back to the Sedan signalling Wilson and Murphy to get in. The Sedan speeds off.

EXT. TRAIN DEPOT - MOMENTS LATER

The Sedan SCREECHES to a halt in front of the Train Station. Lawrence jumps out, runs inside.

INT. TRAIN DEPOT

Lawrence navigates through the crowd to the platform. FAMILIES and arriving PASSENGERS happily greet each other. Desperate, looking at faces to find Helen.

Lawrence approaches the train as it pulls away from the station and disappears down the track.

The platform clears, Lawrence stands alone devoid of life.

FADE OUT.

INT. TRAIN DEPOT - A YEAR LATER - DAY

Lawrence, worn and drawn, clothes threadbare. Now with a beard, which could use a trim, as he stands on the platform. He watches as the train pulls away from the station.

BILL, the Station Manager approaches.

BILL
Hello, Mr. Stewart.

LAWRENCE
Bill.

BILL
It's been a year and the staff were wondering... after a year--

LAWRENCE
I'll see you tomorrow.

Bill sighs in defeat. Lawrence unmoved, head low, walks away.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Itzhak, out of breath, runs down the street. He turns, looks behind him as he weaves in and out of a PASSERSBY. He stops dead in his tracks when an arm wraps around his waist. It's Lawrence who lifts him in a playful way.

LAWRENCE
What's the hurry?

ITZHAK
The fixtures, they just took them off the train!

Lawrence lets Itzhak down and follows him into the Rosenthal's Store.

INT. ROSENTHAL'S STORE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Refinished floors, new rock lathe on the walls... like a new building. Tim and a few other MEN sand the dried plaster on the walls. Sarah sweeps the floor.

LAWRENCE
(To Itzhak)
Go help Tim.

Itzhak rushes to Tim, who Smiles at Lawrence, but Lawrence doesn't reciprocate. Tim's concern is broken as he gives Itzhak a woodblock of sandpaper.

Mattie enters from the back of the store with a tray of glasses. She sets it down and all the Men except Lawrence swarm the lemonade. Judith jumps in and rescues a glass from the tray and approaches Lawrence.

JUDITH
(Hands glass to Lawrence)
You should be proud.

LAWRENCE
It's the least I could do.

Lawrence takes a drink, hands it back to Judith. He inspects the sanding. Mattie catches Judith's eye. Judith, behind Lawrence's back, shakes her head "NO" to Mattie. Sarah watches the interaction as she pretends to sweep.

JUDITH
I wish you would get rid of that scraggly beard.

Lawrence ignores her as he runs his hand over the new wall. Judith looks at Sarah and Mattie who shoo her with their hands. Judith turns back to Lawrence.

JUDITH (CONT'D)
Why didn't you go to the train station today?

Ruth Rosenthal followed by a long LINE OF MEN carrying new fixtures enter the store. Lawrence directs the Men.

LAWRENCE
Just put it anywhere for now.

JUDITH
Lawrence?

LAWRENCE

It's been a year. People were talking... I suppose it's time--

(Beat)

Tim, we'll need to cover these or that dust will get all over them.

Tim and Itzhak grab sheets and cover the fixtures.

JUDITH

I just wondered since I didn't see you there when...

Lawrence takes pause from the noise and activity.

LAWRENCE

Why were you at the station?

Mattie and Sarah join Judith. Lawrence, curious, watches their pensive faces lock on to him.

As if time stood still, Lawrence's gaze is drawn to a silhouette in the doorway. Helen, picture perfect, holds their baby.

Judith, Sarah and Mattie watch the two with restrained excitement.

Lawrence, stunned, walks to Helen. He runs his finger over the baby's cheek. He looks to Helen, who greets him with a smile.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Helen.

HELEN

This is James. We've come home.

They look deeply in each other's eyes.

FADE OUT.

THE END