

Dead Birds

a screenplay by
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"DEAD BIRDS"

FADE IN

EXT. CORNFIELD - MORNING

The field is in a state of disrepair, some plants yellowed and rotting, others growing outside of the weathered wooden fence that surrounds the field. Some patterns are still apparent, indicating that at one time the corn was planted in rows.

A wood house rests behind the field, its shutters swaying silently in the breeze. The paint has peeled off the house long ago, if it was ever there, and the outside of the house has been bleached by the sun.

In the field, a scarecrow stands, bound to a wooden cross with twine. This scarecrow is the only thing in the field that looks as if it may have been tended to recently, its dark suit unfaded and neat.

At the base of the scarecrow's cross, ants scurry up and down the wooden pole, teeming over each other.

EXT. BANK - DAY

The year is 1862, the second year of the American civil war. The bank, a large, plain building, rests in the center of a small southern town, on the side of a wide dirt road. A group of six Confederate soldiers, in gray uniforms, ride down the street on well-groomed horses, towards the bank.

INT. BANK - DAY

Four of the six soldiers enter the bank, the middle two each carrying two bags. The bank's counter has two barred windows, one of which is already occupied by an attractive young woman in an expensive dress, who is speaking intently with the teller, a young, awkward man. The four soldiers cross to the other window.

The old male teller at this window looks at the soldiers, surprised, as two of them set their bags heavily on the counter.

TALL SOLDIER
Your manager in?

The elderly teller nods.

TALL SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Go get him.

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CONTINUED:

The soldiers wait, looking around the bank, as the teller hurries away behind the window. Aside from themselves and the woman at the other window, there are no other customers in the bank. A rough-looking man stands next to the door, a large four-chamber revolver stuck prominently into his belt, obviously representing security.

A door in the wall rattles and a middle-aged man steps out, wearing spectacles. He moves towards the soldiers solicitously, the old teller following him. The tall soldier looks at the man levelly.

TALL SOLDIER (CONT'D)

You MacCready?

MACCREADY

Yes, I am. Fred MacCready's my name. How may I help you gentlemen?

TALL SOLDIER

Corporal Williams said you might have a place where we could put this.

He indicates the bags.

MACCREADY

(hesitates)

Did the corporal give you any message for me?

The tall soldier takes a folded piece of paper from his pocket and hands it to MacCready. MacCready unfolds the paper and nervously looks at it.

EXT. BANK - DAY

The two other Confederate soldiers are standing outside the bank, looking around, while one of them feeds the horses. The other soldier, blonde and covered with dust, standing a few feet away, looks down the dirt street.

A few hundred feet away, four more Confederate soldiers are riding horses towards them, moving slowly. A black man leads one of their horses, walking on foot. A medium-sized dog trots alongside him.

The blonde soldier, seeing this, turns to his companion.

BLONDE SOLDIER

Hey, look at that.

The other soldier looks up from his task, squinting, revealing bad teeth.

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BUCKTOOTH SOLDIER
Who the hell are they?

BLONDE SOLDIER
I don't know.

The blonde soldier turns and faces the oncoming gray soldiers, waving.

INT. BANK - DAY

MacCready faces the four soldiers inside the bank, cheerful, pocketing the note.

MACCREADY
Well, it looks like everything's in order, then. You understand my having to check. Security these days.

The tall soldier looks at him, unsmiling.

TALL SOLDIER
You got a safe we should be taking this to?

MACCREADY
The best in the state... But first, I'll need you to sign for this.

TALL SOLDIER
Why?

MACCREADY
(faltering)
Well... I mean, you will want a receipt for it, won't you?

TALL SOLDIER
Oh. Yeah, sure.

MacCready looks at the elderly teller, gesturing towards the counter. The teller shuffles away.

EXT. BANK - DAY

The four soldiers on horseback approach the two soldiers outside the bank. The man in front, with his horse being lead by the black man, has dark hair and eyes and is chewing tobacco. This is WILLIAM.

The black man, TODD, is slender, and watches the two soldiers, unblinking. The blonde soldier addresses William, somewhat hesitantly.

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BLONDE SOLDIER

Where you men in from?

William slides off his horse, landing on his feet, and ties the horse's reins to a wooden post in front of the bank. The three men on horseback behind him do the same.

One of these men is SAM, who looks like a younger version of William and is also chewing tobacco. The other two are JOSEPH, a large, wide-shouldered man, and CLYDE, a smaller, wiry, rugged man. The four move towards the two soldiers, friendly.

WILLIAM

Camp just over that way, about two miles east, near the swamps.

BUCKTOOTH SOLDIER

(somewhat suspiciously)

Who's your lieutenant over there?

WILLIAM

Ain't got no lieutenant right now. Cap'ain Louison's around, though.

The two soldiers relax slightly at this response. William taps Todd on the shoulder, roughly.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Go help the men with their horses, boy.

Todd shoots him a quick look, then walks over to the two soldiers' horses, head bowed. The bucktooth soldier hands him the feed bag.

BUCKTOOTH SOLDIER

What're you doing here in town?

WILLIAM

(gestures)

Got some business at the bank.

BLONDE SOLDIER

Well, you're gonna have to wait a few minutes.

William squints up at the sun.

WILLIAM

Nope. Can't wait.

William begins moving towards the bank. Sam, Joseph and Clyde follow.

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CONTINUED: (2)

BLONDE SOLDIER

(steps forward, nervous)

No, I mean, you really gotta. We can't let anyone in there right now. It'll just be a few minutes, though.

The four men do not pause, continuing towards the door to the bank. The blonde soldier and the bucktooth soldier exchange quick glances, then the blonde soldier draws his rifle, cocking the hammer and leveling it at the William.

BLONDE SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Now, stop right-

He is cut off as the blade of a thick knife enters his neck. Todd spins, tugging the knife out of the blonde soldier's throat, releasing a spout of blood, and stabs the bucktooth soldier in the chest before the bucktooth soldier can react.

Todd looks up at William, stooping over the body of the bucktooth soldier. William nods, and Todd leans over and picks up the blonde soldier's rifle, then begins untying the horses. William opens the doors to the bank.

INT. BANK - DAY

MacCready and one of the other soldiers are carrying the four bags behind the counter when William and his men burst into the bank, drawing guns.

Joseph grabs the security guard as the man reaches for his revolver. They struggle for a moment, then Joseph breaks the guard's neck, dropping him to the floor, and pulls out a gun. William aims his pistols at the men with the bags.

WILLIAM

Hold it there.

MacCready and the soldiers freeze. The tall soldier pulls his rifle from a holster at his bag, swinging it towards William. Sam leans over, aiming his pistol, and shoots the tall soldier in the head.

William empties his guns, hitting both MacCready and the other soldier, as Clyde and Joseph shoot the other two soldiers.

The elderly teller, the young teller and the girl are still standing, staring. Slowly, the younger teller reaches under the counter. The girl, standing across from him, sees this. She flips a straight razor out of her sleeve, leans forward and cuts the teller's throat. The young teller falls back, spraying the girl with blood.

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The soldier who was moving the bags with MacCready is twitching on the ground, gasping, still alive. William and Clyde both notice this. Clyde begins pouring gun powder from a paper packet into the barrel of his pistol, but William sighs, steps forward, and takes out a hunting knife. He walks over to the soldier and stabs him in the chest.

William stands up, surveying the room. His eyes meet the girl's and he smiles.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Hey, there.

William moves over to the girl, ANNABELLE, and they kiss. She wipes her razor clean on her dress, then tucks it back into her sleeve. The young teller lies still on the opposite side of the counter.

SAM

Quick work, Annabelle. You cut him? I didn't even see it.

WILLIAM

Alright, anyone else still alive in here?

Clyde gestures at the elderly teller, who is backed away from them in a corner, trembling and pale.

CLYDE

Him, sort of.

William begins loading one of his pistols.

WILLIAM

Well, kill him.

Clyde aims his pistol at the elderly teller.

ELDERLY TELLER

No, please don't...

The teller chokes, then clutches at his chest. His eyes roll up into his head and he falls to his knees, then to the floor, his eyes closing. The teller lies still on the floor.

Clyde looks at William, frowning, then turns back towards the elderly teller's prone body and shoots him.

CLYDE

Just in case.

Joseph and Sam are holding the four bags.

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CONTINUED: (2)

WILLIAM
Those heavy, Joseph?

Joseph nods, excited.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Well then, let's get the hell out of
here.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Todd is standing in front of the bank with his gun drawn, his other hand holding all six of the soldiers' horses by the reins. He warily looks up and down the street. The dog stands next to Todd, indifferent.

People are watching Todd, and the bank, but nobody is doing anything. Most people have run into buildings to hide, but the rest are watching Todd, unnaturally. He returns their gaze, looking from face to face.

William, Annabelle, Clyde, Joseph and Sam come running out of the bank. Todd turns to them, lifting the dog up into a saddlebag on one of the horses.

TODD
About fucking time.

They each leap up onto a horse, grabbing the reins and taking their horses off down the street at a gallop. Ahead of them, three men in Confederate uniforms run out of a grocery store, aiming rifles.

ANNABELLE
Oh, hell.

Clyde, William and Todd begin shooting at the soldiers as they ride past. One of the soldiers is hit, falling back. Behind him, a woman screams. Next to her, a very small boy is lying on the ground, blood all over his face and neck. Everything grows still for a moment as William sees this.

William flinches and looks away from the boy as the six thunder past the grocery store. Then they are down the street and gone, as the two remaining soldiers run around the street corner, after their horses. The woman kneels over the small boy in the street, weeping.

EXT. PLAIN - DAY

The six ride their horses quickly, Sam next to William. The dog is riding in Sam's saddlebag, and Sam feeds it a piece of dried beef.

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SAM
Good boy, Dog.
(to William)
How many do you think'll be after us?

WILLIAM
Not many, right away, and those'd be the
only that could catch up in time to find
us.

William looks over at Sam, who has a dark circle of blood
growing on his shoulder, over a hole in the shirt.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
You're hit.

Sam looks where William is looking, down at his own shoulder.

SAM
Just in the shoulder. I don't think it's
real bad, I can move it around okay, it
ain't near the bone or nothing. We'll get
it out later.

William looks like he wants to say more, but turns away and
urges his horse on faster.

EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

The six carefully work their way through a dim, wooded area,
carefully guiding their horses through trees. Sam's shirt
sleeve is red with blood, but the bleeding seems to have
stopped and Sam is greedily eating an apple.

Annabelle and William ride near the front, conversing
quietly. Annabelle is holding a compass, watching the needle
sway. Todd moves his horse up next to them.

TODD
We lost?

WILLIAM
No. We got a couple more miles of this,
though, then we'll reach a small stream,
should be easy to cross. Then we stay on
a road through a few fields and we should
be at the place we're staying by
nightfall. After that, day and a half's
ride to Mexico.

Todd is silent for a moment.

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CONTINUED:

TODD

Who runs this place we're staying at tonight?

WILLIAM

No one.

TODD

No one?

WILLIAM

When I was staying at the Union hospital up near Chatsville, getting some metal bits pulled out of my arm by the most beautiful nurse in the world...

(he looks at Annabelle, who ignores him)

...I was put next to this soldier, just a kid, really, had a gut wound somebody put there with a bayonet. We talked all the day, got to know each other pretty good, he was a right enough sort. Around the end, when he was starting to get pretty sick all the time...

Annabelle looks up at them.

ANNABELLE

The bile in his guts spread.

WILLIAM

Yeah. That it did. Kid told me about this place he inherited down south, big 'ol house, couple hundred acres, he got it from some great-uncle he never knew. He gave me pretty good directions to the place, he didn't have no family or a girl or nothing, and said he wanted me to join up with him if he ever made it down there. Kid planned to get rich off farming. He wasn't too bright.

(shrugs)

He died a couple of days after that.

ANNABELLE

(almost to herself)

His name was Jeffy. Jeffy Hollister. He was a good kid. He used to call me 'Belle.

WILLIAM

Yeah, I remember that.

(pause)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WILLIAM(CONT'D)

So, anyway, I guess you could say the place we're headed to is mine. Or anyone's who wants it, anyway.

TODD

What if some folks moved in there?

WILLIAM

It's in the middle of nowhere... I figure if we drop the name Jeffy Hollister whoever's living there might show some hospitality. If they don't, well, we'll have to take care of them either way. It's a place to stay.

They ride in silence for a moment. The forest, overcast with trees, is growing darker.

TODD

How's your brother doing?

William glances over at Sam.

WILLIAM

He's fine for now. We'll get the bullet out when we reach the house, Annabelle can take care of that. After that, he should be good.

The group is silent as they continue through the trees. Something moves in a thick bush as they move past, and Joseph jumps, startled. A bird's harsh, unidentifiable cry comes from the bush. Clyde laughs at Joseph.

CLYDE

Whoa, Joseph, stay on your horse there, big guy. Just a crow or something.

JOSEPH

(embarrassed)

You better shut up.

Clyde smiles, but is silent.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - EVENING

The sun is setting as the six make their way down a narrow dirt road, corn fields on either side of them. The rows of corn cast the field in shadow, so that the road ahead is dark.

At the front of the group, William and Annabelle speak quietly.

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WILLIAM

I think I killed a kid. Back in the town.
Did you see it?

ANNABELLE

Yeah, I thought I saw him fall. You sure
that was you? Could've been anyone.

WILLIAM

I think it was me.

ANNABELLE

Why?

WILLIAM

I don't know.

(pause)

Don't tell the others. If they didn't
notice, they shouldn't know.

Annabelle is silent for a moment, thinking.

ANNABELLE

We almost there?

William nods.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

We're not lost, are we? I haven't seen a
house for awhile.

WILLIAM

They're back there. It's along this road,
we just gotta go until we find it.

ANNABELLE

It's getting dark soon. Too many clouds
for the moon to do us any good.

WILLIAM

I know it.

Up ahead, a clanking sound comes. The six immediately slow
their horses, moving quietly.

CLYDE

(speaking softly to Todd)

What's that?

TODD

I don't know. You got a lantern?

William's eyes are narrowed and cold.

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CONTINUED: (2)

WILLIAM
Don't. Hold up a bit.

The six ride forward in the dark, very slowly, reaching the top of a small hill. The noises from ahead are now more regular, and the sound of a horse's footfall can be distinguished from a regular creaking sound.

Further along the path, in the darkness ahead, a dim light becomes visible. The light sways back and forth slightly, moving towards them. The dog, Dog, looks up and growls slightly. Sam puts a hand on Dog to silence him.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
(whispering)
You see that?

Annabelle draws out her pistol.

ANNABELLE
Yeah.

The group has grown silent, watching the bobbing light move closer.

CLYDE
Will-o'-wisps.

TODD
We ain't near no swamp.

CLYDE
Ain't unheard of.

ANNABELLE
It looks like a lantern.

WILLIAM
Sam?

SAM
Yeah?

WILLIAM
Give us some light here.

SAM
You sure?

WILLIAM
Come on.

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CONTINUED: (3)

Sam strikes a match on his thumbnail and holds it to a soot-caked lantern, lighting the wick. The lantern fizzles, then glows brightly, illuminating a large, black horse several yards in front of the group. They all jump.

CLYDE

Shit!

The horse continues walking passively towards them. As it moves closer, the carriage that the horse is pulling becomes visible. A lantern and several pots, pans and other unidentifiable objects hang from the roof of the carriage. An old man sits at the front, behind the horse, silent.

William clears his throat and addresses the old man:

WILLIAM

Excuse me.

The man does not respond. Joseph stirs on his horse, uneasily. William speaks louder.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Excuse me!

The old man draws back on the horse's reins. The horse grunts softly and comes to a stop. The old man turns to face William, his eyes looking beyond him. The old man has no pupils; his eyes are pale blue, washed clean by glaucoma.

OLD MAN

Who's that?

WILLIAM

I, uh... Say, we're looking for the Hollister place. Is it far from here?

OLD MAN

Hollister?

(shakes his head)

Never heard of it.

The old man turns away, lifting the horse's reins.

WILLIAM

(surprised)

Are you sure? It's a large farm, should be just up the road. Right after a creek.

OLD MAN

There's no creek around here. Not for miles.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4) OLD MAN(CONT'D)

(pause)
Sorry I couldn't help you.

The old man lashes the reins and the horse starts forward again, easily pulling the carriage into motion. William and his group sit silently, pensive.

As the carriage moves past them, Sam's lantern reveals a boy standing inside the carriage, looking out at them through an oblong window cut into the side of the carriage. The boy appears to be mentally disabled, and watches them completely without movement or expression.

After a moment, the carriage is past the group, its lantern light fading into the darkness of the road behind them.

Todd spits tobacco juice into the cornfield as Joseph coughs uneasily. Annabelle and Sam look at William, who kicks at the side of his horse.

WILLIAM
Well, come on, then.

Annabelle and Sam immediately follow him. Todd, Joseph and Clyde exchange glances, then head after William, one by one.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - EVENING

The road is getting narrower and increasingly covered with tall grass, bent down in some areas but seemingly untouched in others. Annabelle and William can barely ride alongside each other. Sam is riding in front of them, slowly, with Dog running alongside Sam's horse, visible in the lantern's circle of light.

ANNABELLE
I don't like the looks of this.

WILLIAM
We've slept on grass before.

ANNABELLE
We don't even know where we are.

WILLIAM
We've got our compasses.
(he nods over to his left)
Mexico's that way.

Up ahead, Sam's horse suddenly comes to a dead stop. William and Annabelle tug on their horses' reins quickly to avoid running into him, causing their horses to rear up slightly.

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CONTINUED:

SAM

Hey!

CLYDE

(tense)

What is it?

SAM

Well, look at this.

Sam lifts up his lantern in front of him as the others crowd around him, taking their horses into the field, which is suddenly thin and rocky. A creek, about fifteen feet wide, bubbles in front of them, its waters black by the lantern light.

TODD

Well, what the hell.

SAM

(to Dog)

C'mere, girl.

Sam lifts Dog up into his saddlebag, then rides out into the creek. The water, though moving at a good speed, is only about a foot and a half deep. William nudges his horse forward, into the water, looking down.

WILLIAM

Shit. Crazy old man.

William begins riding forward, across the creek.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Come on! It shouldn't be far from here.

The rest of the group follow him forward, along the trail.

EXT. FARM - EVENING

The trail forks up ahead. Perhaps there was a path to the house once, but if so, the path was long ago consumed by the thick corn fields that surround the house on all sides. In front of the house, the yard is so crowded with tall grass and weeds that it appears to be a field itself.

The house sits on the horizon, just visible by the final, orange rays of the sun. There is a stone well to the side of the house, and clotheslines hang at angles just beyond this well. Behind the house is a tall barn, almost as big as the house itself.

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William, Annabelle and Sam are the first to see the house, and they stand in the road, waiting for the other three to catch up. The house, a dark silhouette by the sun setting behind it, presents something of an ominous sight. William wets his lips with his tongue.

SAM

Well. Looks like a nice place.

Sam climbs off his horse, holding its reins. The horse shies away, and Sam pets it, hushing it. Annabelle and William also climb off their horses.

Annabelle watches the house carefully. In one of the windows of the house, a previously indistinguishable shape suddenly shifts and disappears from the window. Annabelle, seeing this, involuntarily takes a step back.

WILLIAM

What is it?

ANNABELLE

I...

(considers)

I saw something in one of the windows.

SAM

I'm sure there was something in one of the windows. That whole place has got to be filled with all kinds of critters. Probably saw a bird or something.

WILLIAM

(to Annabelle)

Something, or someone?

ANNABELLE

Someone. Like they was watching us.

William looks at the house, as Clyde, Todd and Joseph ride up behind them.

WILLIAM

We'll be careful.

William steps out into the cornfield, pushing the stalks apart with one hand, holding his horse's reins with the other.

Suddenly, a creature with glowing eyes leaps out at William from the field, squealing. The creature is about the size of a large raccoon. William shouts and spins to the side as the creature runs past him.

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CONTINUED: (2)

Just as it passes William, the creature is knocked onto its back by a gunshot. Sam holds a smoking gun, frowning down at the creature. Dog begins growling.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ...

TODD
What the hell is that?

The creature has soft white fur on its stomach, but has a pig-like snout, long claws, and a bald, pink tail. The hair on its back is thick and bristled. The creature shakes for a moment, bleeding from its back, its legs pivoting, then is still. Dog quiets down.

SAM
It looks like some kind of giant rat.

TODD
Yeah, right. Did you see its eyes?

SAM
How do you think I knew where to shoot at?

Annabelle softly walks over to the creature and kicks its side, barely. The creature is still.

SAM (CONT'D)
(to William)
You all right?

William stiffens slightly, regaining his composure.

WILLIAM
Yeah. I'm fine. That thing gave me a start, that's all.

TODD
It ain't breathing.

WILLIAM
Well, that's good news. What is it?

CLYDE
Kinda looks like a porcupine. Or a pig.

TODD
Built almost like a baby bear, a little.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOSEPH

Maybe a porcupine and a muskrat had a kid.

Clyde looks at Joseph quickly, to see if he is kidding.

CLYDE

Yeah, maybe.

WILLIAM

Well, let's get going.

William steps back towards the cornfield. Everyone looks at him, hesitantly. Williams moves towards the cornfield, then, when no one follows, turns back sardonically towards the group.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Hey, Sam?

SAM

Yeah?

WILLIAM

Keep your eyes out for more of those things, alright?

William turns and walks into the cornfield. Sam follows, then Todd, then Annabelle and the rest, leading their horses.

EXT. CORNFIELD - EVENING

The six work their way through the dark cornfield, pushing unruly stalks to the side. Sam, Joseph and Todd each hold lanterns, which do little good in the dense cornfield except to create alarming shadows. The horses make nervous sounds every now and then, but continue forward.

Suddenly Annabelle, up ahead, gives a sharp cry. Joseph, Todd and Clyde rush forward towards the sound of her voice.

Annabelle is standing, one hand on her chest, in front of a scarecrow. The scarecrow's limbs are tied to a wooden cross with barbed wire. A canvas sack, filled with peculiar lumps and shadows, forms the scarecrow's head. Joseph looks up at it.

WILLIAM

(annoyed)

Oh, what the hell...

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CONTINUED:

ANNABELLE

That thing scared the life out of me. I thought it was a man.

SAM

It's creepy, alright.

Todd and Clyde stare up at the scarecrow skeptically. Dog stands next to him. Joseph sniffs the air.

JOSEPH

What smells funny?

TODD

(to Annabelle)

You want us to take it down?

ANNABELLE

No! Don't touch it! I mean, there's no point. Let's not bother. It just gave me a start, that's all.

TODD

All right.

William coughs and spits.

WILLIAM

(sarcastic)

Yes, it's a very frightening scarecrow. If I were a crow, I'd go elsewhere. Since I'm not, anyone else want to get a move on?

Annabelle looks down, embarrassed. William rolls his eyes at her and the group moves past the scarecrow. Dog and Joseph give it a wide berth and the horses make nervous noises as they pass.

SAM

What direction is the house in? Hey, Joseph, can you see the house?

JOSEPH

Not over this corn. Want me to climb up on my horse?

SAM

William, you know what direction we're headed in?

William looks back at him, then points ahead, to the left.

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CONTINUED: (2)

WILLIAM

The house is that way.

SAM

You sure? I would've thought we'd be there by now.

WILLIAM

Cornfields always look smaller before you're fighting your way through them.

SAM

I guess that's about right.

They work their way through the field. One of the horses whinnies.

SAM (CONT'D)

Damn, it's quiet.

TODD

I know.

Clyde is in the lead, gruffly shoving his way through the cornstalks. He suddenly stumbles out of the cornfield and finds himself facing the house.

The house is worn, its boards bleached by exposure to the elements. The windows are dark. The front door leans open.

CLYDE

Well, hell.

The others stumble up behind Clyde.

WILLIAM

Well, there it is.

CLYDE

Yeah.

William looks around. Nobody is moving.

WILLIAM

Come on, then.

William walks over to a twisted oak tree, leaning several feet in front of the house, and ties his horse to a hanging branch. William's horse shuffles slightly, rolling its eyes. William consoles it.

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CONTINUED: (3)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Shhh, girl. We'll get you some water in a bit.

TODD

The horses are acting weird.

WILLIAM

Of course they are. They're horses. They're stupid and crazy.

TODD

Huh. Well, someone should rub them down later, if they're gonna be any good tomorrow.

JOSEPH

I'll do it, I don't mind.

The rest of the group tie their horses to the tree. William moves over, towards the house; the others follow. Sam takes a step forward, then quickly steps back, looking at the ground.

SAM

Hell...

ANNABELLE

What?

SAM

I just stepped on a bird.

A dead, slightly decayed bird rests on the ground. Sam examines the sole of his boot.

SAM (CONT'D)

That's a first.

Sam looks around. Another dead bird rests on the ground, a few feet away. Dog sniffs at it.

SAM (CONT'D)

Look, there's another one!

Annabelle is clearly not very interested in this.

ANNABELLE

Huh.

SAM

There must be, like, cats around here or something.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ANNABELLE

Yeah. Come on. I want to get that bullet out of you before an infection can start spreading.

SAM

Sure thing.
(to Dog)
Come on, Dog!

Sam follows Annabelle up towards the house. Dog, after a moment, trots after him.

EXT. HOUSE PORCH - EVENING

William steps up onto the wooden porch. As Joseph steps up next to him, the boards beneath them creak ominously. Joseph and William look at each other, then William takes Joseph's lantern and steps into the house.

Todd looks back at the horses, tied to the oak tree. The horses are silent. Todd moves up onto the porch.

INT. HOUSE FRONT ROOM - EVENING

William's lantern illuminates the front room of the house. A wooden table sits over in a corner of the room, surrounded by several chairs. A thick layer of dust covers nearly everything.

Joseph begins to step forward into the room, but William puts a hand across Joseph's chest, stopping him. Joseph looks at William, questioningly.

William points the lantern down at the floor. Two pairs of footprints are imprinted in the dust on the wooden floor, large boot prints. The boot prints lead off into the darkness of the house.

Clyde and Todd have moved in behind William and Joseph.

CLYDE

What's going on?

Clyde sees the footprints on the floor and is quiet.

TODD

It's probably just some tramps. I'd settle here, if I was them. Let's look around and find 'em.

William looks at Todd.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TODD (CONT'D)

There's only two of them.

WILLIAM

(nods)

Alright. But everyone be careful.

They move into the house, followed by Sam and Annabelle. Dog trots in with them, looking around. Dog's ears are up.

Joseph immediately crosses over to the wooden table and drops the four bags. The table creaks. One of the bags comes open slightly, and a few gold coins spill out onto the table.

Joseph looks at the gold, then picks a coin up and bites it. He examines his tooth marks in the gold.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Don't chew on the gold, Joseph.

Joseph quickly puts the coin back down on the table. William addresses the group:

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Let's split up into pairs, search this floor and the upstairs. And the cellar, if this place has one.

TODD

They might be out in that old barn. That looked big enough.

WILLIAM

We'll check that after we finish with the house.

William steps further into the house, shining his lantern around. A kitchen area, with a coal stove, is barely visible through a doorway; the corners of the kitchen are dark.

ANNABELLE

I want to get to work on Sam's shoulder right away.

WILLIAM

Yeah. That's a good idea.

SAM

It's fine. It can wait.

WILLIAM

Oh yeah, little brother? Bullets just bounce off you now, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Sam grins at William.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Clyde and Joseph, you guys take the upstairs. Todd and I will check this floor.

Clyde and Joseph nod and walk off. William looks over at Dog, who is staring around the room.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Hey, you want to come with us? Sniff something out?

Dog looks at William, then slinks under a chair and curls up.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

That's thing's goddamn useless, Sam. Alright, then.

William and Todd begin moving away.

ANNABELLE

(to William)

Be careful.

WILLIAM

You too. Sam, keep a hand on your gun. I don't want anybody sneaking up on us, tramps or no.

SAM

Don't worry about that.

WILLIAM

I'm sure they've seen our lanterns by now, so they might come looking for us.

SAM

Maybe we scared them off.

WILLIAM

If they've been staying here? Not likely.

William and Todd walk into the kitchen. Annabelle sets her lantern down on the table, turning it up, so that the room grows brighter. She beckons Sam over to a chair; he sits.

Annabelle begins fiddling through a satchel, pulling out tools, as Sam unbuttons and peels off his shirt. He winces as his shoulder stretches.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ANNABELLE

Leave it on, we'll just move it aside.

Annabelle pushes Sam's shirt open, over his shoulders, exposing his torso. The bullet wound in Sam's shoulder is very dark, almost black, and moist with purple blood. A large, bluish welt surrounds the wound. Annabelle winces when she sees the wound.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Jesus.

Annabelle gently presses on the swollen area of flesh that surrounds the bullet hole. Dark blood, almost black, wells out of the scabby wound and crawls down Sam's chest.

Sam, curious, peers down, trying to see his own shoulder.

SAM

Yeah, that doesn't look too good, does it?

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

William and Todd look around the kitchen. Todd opens the stove and sifts the ashes inside.

TODD

This hasn't been used anytime soon.

WILLIAM

Huh.

William is looking at the counter, where a dirty, cloth doll lies, its limbs askew. One of the doll's button eyes is missing.

TODD

Let's keep moving.

WILLIAM

Yeah.

INT. STAIRWAY TO SECOND FLOOR - EVENING

Clyde and Joseph cautiously make their way up the stairs, Joseph in the lead.

CLYDE

This is a pretty nice place. Real fancy. Guy who built it must have been rich.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They reach the top of the stairwell and find themselves in a short hallway, with three doors, one in front of them, the other two at opposite ends of the hallway.

JOSEPH

Think those guys are up here?

CLYDE

Maybe. Don't worry, they'll take one look at you and wet themselves, big guy.

JOSEPH

I could crush them.

CLYDE

I know it. Here, you go check that room down there, and I'll check this one.

JOSEPH

Okay.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Joseph moves down the hallway, away from Clyde. Joseph opens the door at the end of the hall and walks slowly into the room.

Joseph looks around the sparse bedroom. Two small beds rest against one wall. There is a dresser in the room, and a closet.

Joseph carefully walks into the room, checking behind the beds. Nothing is there. He moves over to the closet door, somewhat nervous.

Joseph turns the doorknob slowly and opens the closet door, shining his lantern in. The closet has a few sets of children's clothes, including a small dress. The hanging clothes cast dark shadows inside the closet.

Joseph pushes the clothes apart, to determine that nothing is behind them. He breathes a slight sigh of relief when he sees nothing but wall and walks back through the bedroom.

Just as Joseph reaches the doorway to the bedroom, a slight scratching sound comes from within the room. Joseph stops and turns around, holding the lantern out. He appears to be alone in the bedroom.

JOSEPH

Is anyone there?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There is no response. Joseph narrows his eyes, looking at the beds. He crouches down to peer under them, but it is too dark to see under the beds from the door. Joseph rises to a standing position. A dark figure is standing behind him.

Joseph starts and whirls around to face Clyde, who jumps back.

CLYDE

Shit!

JOSEPH

Oh, man... You scared me.

Clyde pauses as they both catch their breath.

CLYDE

Yeah, this place makes me a little jumpy, too... Nothing in there?

JOSEPH

Nah, nothing. Anything in yours?

CLYDE

Just some weird clothes and stuff. Looks like it was a guest room or something that no one ever used, the bed's still made.

(pause)

Let's check the third room together.

JOSEPH

Okay.

Clyde and Joseph walk down the hallway.

INT. SITTING ROOM - EVENING

William stands in a room, shining his lantern around. The room features a large, black piano, covered with dust. A few plush chairs are lined against one wall. Stacks of sheet music are piled on a small table.

Moving forward, William sees that a dirty picture frame is propped up against the side of the piano, its back facing outward. William reaches out and turns the picture frame over, directing his lantern light onto it.

The picture on the front of the frame is of a man seated in a chair, with what appears to be two small boys and a very young girl standing around him, facing forward. The four figures are all clad in formal attire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It is a very traditional family portrait, but it does not seem to have been fully finished, giving the portrait an eerie quality; the facial features of the children are absent, as if the artist never got around to the details on their likenesses, and the man's facial expression looks inappropriately somber. William stares at the portrait, eyes narrowed, and the man's image on the canvas gazes back out at him.

William nervously looks behind him, into the darkness.

WILLIAM

Hey, Todd, get a look at this.

There is no response. A creaking sound comes from the darkness just outside the doorway, then silence.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Todd?

TODD (O.S.)

Yeah?

William reacts to Todd's voice with visible relief.

WILLIAM

What are you doing?

TODD (O.S.)

There's a door here, I'm trying to get it open.

William moves forward, towards Todd's voice.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - EVENING

William moves into a hallway, where Todd has his shoulder braced against a thick wooden door.

TODD

This looks like it might go down to a fruit cellar or something, it's in the right place for it.

WILLIAM

You can't get it open?

TODD

Nah, it's like there's something up against it.

William places his lantern on the floor and moves to the door, next to Todd.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They brace themselves against the door and try to force it open, straining against the door. The door bends but does not give.

WILLIAM

Hell.

They stop trying. Todd stretches his back.

TODD

It doesn't feel like it's locked or anything, though; the door gives near the handle.

WILLIAM

Yeah. We'll get Joseph back here, see if he can force it. Failing that, we'll chop it down. Wouldn't want anyone to have barricaded themselves in there, especially if we're going to get any sleep tonight.

TODD

Yeah.

Todd puts his head against the door, listening, then taps on it with his hand.

WILLIAM

Come on, let's get back and see how Sam's doing.

TODD

Sure.

INT. FRONT ROOM - EVENING

Annabelle pulls a small lump of metal out from Sam's shoulder, using a pair of thin pliers. Sam grits his teeth, his eyes clenched shut.

ANNABELLE

There. We're done.

Sam opens his eyes, relaxing slightly. Red blood flows from his wound. He reaches forward, grabs a bottle of whiskey from the table and drinks deeply from it.

Sam stops drinking to gasp:

SAM

Christ.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNABELLE
Hopefully that'll help matters.

SAM
You got anything to bandage it up with?

ANNABELLE
Just a second.

Annabelle takes the bottle of whiskey from him and takes a quick drink. She then bends forward and pours whiskey onto his wound. Sam jerks away.

SAM
Shit! Ow!

Annabelle takes another drink of whiskey, then passes the bottle back over to Sam, who stares at her resentfully.

ANNABELLE
That'll do.

Annabelle pulls out some cotton bandages and begins lacing them over Sam's shoulder.

SAM
You could've told me you were going to do that.

ANNABELLE
Quit whining.

Sam tenderly touches his shoulder, still wincing. His face is flushed and covered with sweat.

Annabelle suddenly turns towards a window, which faces outside.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)
Did you see that?

Sam turns, following her gaze. The window is completely dark.

SAM
What?

ANNABELLE
I thought I saw someone standing on the porch.
(pause)
It might have just been my reflection.

Sam tightens his grip on his pistol, watching the window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM

Yeah?

Both Annabelle and Sam look over at the front door, which is slightly open. A breeze moves the front door open a few inches.

Behind them, William and Todd walk into the room. William nods over to Sam.

WILLIAM

How you doing?

Sam glances over at William, surprised.

SAM

Just splendid.

WILLIAM

(to Annabelle)

Were you able to get it out?

ANNABELLE

Yeah. It's weird... It wasn't that deep.

TODD

We should start lighting these lanterns around here.

Todd indicates two lanterns, mounted on the wall.

WILLIAM

Yeah, good idea.

Todd moves over and lights the two lanterns, which flare immediately to life.

TODD

They've still got oil in them.

WILLIAM

Good.

The front door creaks open further. Everyone in the room looks at this nervously, and the lanterns flicker slightly.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Fucking wind.

Sam rises to his feet and crosses over to the door, holding one hand over his bandage.

EXT. PORCH - EVENING

Sam steps out onto the porch and looks around. There is nothing on the porch. It is almost completely dark outside, and he can see very little. He squints into the darkness, then turns and walks back into the front room.

INT. FRONT ROOM - EVENING

Joseph and Clyde walk into the room from the kitchen at the same time as Sam, dimming their lanterns as they enter. Clyde has something slung over his arm. Annabelle and William turn to regard them.

CLYDE

Look what we found in a bedroom upstairs.

He holds out the object. It is a gray Confederate army jacket. Everyone regards this silently. Sam sits back down across Annabelle, a pensive expression on his face.

SAM

Deserters?

WILLIAM

Maybe. Did you find anything else?

CLYDE

Nothing important. This was hung over a bedpost.

WILLIAM

That changes matters.

CLYDE

They might have just moved on.

WILLIAM

Maybe. Why would they leave their jacket?

CLYDE

Probably 'cause they found a better one. There's plenty of clothes upstairs. If you're a deserter, sometimes the best idea isn't to go around in your army uniform.

William nods.

SAM

Still, we should check out that barn now, just to be sure.

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CONTINUED:

CLYDE

I agree.

Clyde pulls out a pistol and cocks it. He grins over at Todd.

CLYDE (CONT'D)

You want to go hunting?

Todd shrugs.

TODD

It's nothing to me.

WILLIAM

Regardless of whether we find anything, we'll sleep in shifts tonight. I know I'll sleep better knowing someone's on watch. We'll keep the lanterns on in this room so someone can stay up.

SAM

I'll take the first shift. I'm not tired.

WILLIAM

Okay.

Dog, underneath the chair, begins edging forward, its hackles rising. Dog is looking at an empty corner of the room. Nobody notices Dog.

TODD

This place isn't exactly turning out to be the safe haven we hoped for.

WILLIAM

I know it. We'll move on at first light tomorrow.

Dog begins growling at the empty corner of the room. Dog quickly looks over at the open front door of the house, then looks back at the corner, slowly backing away.

TODD

What the hell?

Dog continues growling and edging away from whatever has its attention in the corner. William and Clyde move over to stare at the corner of the room from Dog's angle.

CLYDE

Do you see anything over there?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WILLIAM

Nope.

SAM

(to Dog)

What the hell's wrong with you?

Dog does not acknowledge Sam. Suddenly Dog leaps back with a yelp, turns and runs out of the house. Sam rises to his feet, moving after Dog.

SAM (CONT'D)

Hey! Dog! Get back here!

Sam steps forward, but clutches his shoulder, wincing.

SAM (CONT'D)

Damn...

Annabelle moves over to Sam.

ANNABELLE

You alright?

SAM

Yeah, I'm fine... I just got a little dizzy there. Let me sit down.

Sam sits back in his chair. Clyde and William move outside, William turning up his lantern.

EXT. HOUSE PORCH - EVENING

The yard is completely dark. The lantern barely illuminates the cornstalks that surround the house. Clyde moves down the porch steps, calling out:

CLYDE

Dog! Hey, dog! Come here!

Clyde claps his hands and whistles. The horses, nearby in the front yard, stomp their feet anxiously, making noises. In the cornfield, something rustles and moves the stalks. William and Clyde turn towards this sound.

WILLIAM

There he is.

CLYDE

Dog! Come on, boy!

The rustling sound does not come again. A light breeze gently stirs the corn stalks around them.

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CONTINUED:

CLYDE (CONT'D)

Maybe we should get some of that jerky,
set it out for him. He'll come back when
he wants to, I reckon.

WILLIAM

Setting out jerky will probably just get
us possums.

CLYDE

Yeah.

William kicks at the ground.

WILLIAM

We'll do it anyway. Just in case.

CLYDE

Yeah.

Clyde and William head back towards the house. Todd and
Joseph are in the doorway, watching.

TODD

He's not out there?

WILLIAM

He took off. He'll be back. He's run off
like this before.

TODD

Never like the hounds of hell were after
him.

CLYDE

That was damn weird, wasn't it?

WILLIAM

He's a dog. Dogs are weird.

They walk inside.

INT. FRONT ROOM - EVENING

William looks at Sam, who is still seated. Sam is playing
with the gold coins.

WILLIAM

You doing alright?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

Yeah, I'm fine, I just got a little queasy. I must have lost more blood than I thought.

WILLIAM

You still want first watch?

SAM

Yeah. I might pass out, but I won't be falling asleep.

(pause)

Just kidding.

In the distance, thunder rumbles. They look up at the sound.

TODD

That's just great.

WILLIAM

Hey, it ain't bad. A good storm could get rid of any tracks we might have left.

SAM

But if the ground gets muddy, we could leave tracks that'll last for days.

William smiles at Sam.

WILLIAM

Hey, Sam? Cheer up.

Thunder rumbles again.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Yeah. Anyway, who's going out to the barn?

ANNABELLE

I will.

CLYDE

Sure.

EXT. BARN - EVENING

Joseph, Clyde, William and Annabelle step out of the back door of the house, facing the large barn. A stone well and an outhouse are positioned near the side of the house. Between the house and the barn, two empty clotheslines hang between oak trees, swaying in the wind.

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CONTINUED:

ANNABELLE

I'll be just a second.

Annabelle walks towards the outhouse. William, Clyde and Joseph walk over to the barn.

The large, double doors to the barn stand open; it is dark within. Clyde walks inside the barn, holding his lantern high. William and Joseph follow.

INT. BARN - EVENING

The barn is large, with a loft. The lanterns William, Clyde and Joseph hold illuminate the tall walls. Beneath the loft are three rooms, divided by wooden walls. These rooms each contain thin mattresses on the floor.

JOSEPH

What's that?

CLYDE

Slave quarters.

Clyde looks up at the roof of the barn.

CLYDE (CONT'D)

The roof looks tight. I wouldn't want to sleep in the hay up there, though. Who knows what's up there.

WILLIAM

Let's find out.

William walks over to a tall ladder that leads up to the loft. Holding his lantern with one hand, he begins scaling the ladder.

CLYDE

Careful up there.

WILLIAM

Yeah.

About halfway to the loft, the rung under William's feet breaks with a dry snap. William grabs onto another rung with his free hand, but it is also rotten, and comes off in his hand.

William falls to the ground, about six feet, landing on his back. His lantern hits the ground next to him, shattering and spilling flaming oil onto the ground. William rolls away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLYDE

Shit.

Clyde begins attempting to kick dirt onto the flaming pool of oil, to no avail.

JOSEPH

Hold on!

Joseph runs away, as William sits up, coughing. A moment later, Joseph runs into the barn again, carrying a bucket of water. He throws the water onto the fire, dousing it.

William rises to his feet, brushing himself off.

WILLIAM

Damn.

CLYDE

You alright?

WILLIAM

Yeah. Well, forget that. Whatever's up there isn't getting down, anyway. Goddamnit.

William kicks the ladder, breaking another rung. Behind him, Joseph wanders off, towards a corner of the barn.

Lightning flashes, filling the barn with pale light, abruptly casting strange shadows across the barn. The large shadow of a figure looms over the shadows of William and Clyde.

They jump and whirl around, to face Annabelle. Clyde grabs at his chest.

ANNABELLE

What?

CLYDE

Hell. This place is turning me into a little girl.

WILLIAM

Let's go back inside.

ANNABELLE

We should put the horses in here. Before the storm really spooks them.

WILLIAM

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

William moves ahead of them, towards the house. Annabelle looks at Clyde.

ANNABELLE

What happened?

CLYDE

William broke the ladder.

Over in the corner, Joseph is kicking at a pile of straw. He bends down and extracts an object from the straw.

JOSEPH

Hey!

William looks over at Joseph, who holds the object out. It is a worn, damaged book, which appears to be bound in dark leather.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I thought I saw something in there. It looks like a bible.

Joseph flips through the book, then shuts it. Joseph hands the book to William, then examines one of his fingers and begins sucking on it.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Damn.

WILLIAM

What?

JOSEPH

Paper cut.
(indicates the book)
What's it say?

William flips through the pages of the book. There are no images, just page after page of indecipherable writing in dark ink. The writing appears to be Arabic.

WILLIAM

I don't know.

Joseph looks at William suspiciously. William holds the book up, pages out.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

It's not in English, Joseph.

ANNABELLE

Let me see that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

William hands the book to her. Annabelle flips through it, frowning.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Weird. Is this a code?

WILLIAM

How should I know?

TODD

I wonder who left it here.

WILLIAM

Come on, let's get out of here before that storm comes any closer. You can play with the book inside.

Joseph picks up the bucket and they exit the barn.

EXT. BARN - EVENING

As William, Clyde, and Annabelle walk back into the house, Joseph moves over to the well and ties the bucket back to a rope, which hangs over a bar above the well.

INT. FRONT ROOM - EVENING

Todd and Sam are both drinking from the bottle of whiskey and counting gold pieces at the table. Clyde nods at them as he, William, Annabelle and Joseph walk into the room from the porch. Annabelle sets the book down on the table, next to the gold.

CLYDE

(to Todd)

That's not all the whiskey we have, is it?

TODD

I got two more bottles.

CLYDE

Pass that here.

Sam passes Clyde the bottle. Clyde drinks and passes it to William, who drinks.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Annabelle and William stand in the hallway, close to each other. Behind them, Todd, Sam, Clyde and Joseph are playing cards at the table, two half-empty bottles in front of them.

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CONTINUED:

ANNABELLE

They said there were some beds upstairs.

WILLIAM

You want to lie down for a little while?

ANNABELLE

Or something.

They kiss, lightly, then Annabelle pulls away from William. He leans towards her and they kiss again, longer.

WILLIAM

Sounds good.

William and Annabelle surreptitiously exit the hallway.

INT. MAIN BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Annabelle and William are entangled on a large bed, making love by the light of a candle mounted on a thick, wooden dresser. Annabelle is on top of William. The flickering candle flame casts strange shadows over her face.

INT. HOUSE FRONT ROOM - EVENING

Joseph throws down his cards and stretches. Sam, Clyde and Todd continue covertly staring at their cards. Sam is sweating and pale.

JOSEPH

That's it. I'm out.

TODD

Wise decision. Wiser than our friends here, who are going to lose their share before they even get to count it.

Clyde chuckles.

CLYDE

You'd be better at bluffing, Todd, if you'd play it down a little. I'll see you, and I'll raise you five more.

Todd whistles slowly, shaking his head. Sam frowns. Outside, lightning flashes, illuminating the horses. One of the horses rears up with a snort.

JOSEPH

Aw, hell, I should get those horses into the barn before this storm gets any closer.

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CONTINUED:

Joseph rises to his feet. Clyde looks up at him.

CLYDE
You need any help?

JOSEPH
I'm fine.

CLYDE
'Kay.

Clyde returns his attention to the cards. Joseph steps outside.

EXT. BACKYARD - EVENING

Joseph leads three horses through the backyard, into the barn.

INT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Joseph ties the three horses next to the other three horses. The horses seem somewhat calmer in the barn. One of them leans down to chew on some hay.

JOSEPH
There you go. I'll go and get you some water, how's that?

Joseph pats one of the horses and exits the barn.

EXT. WELL - EVENING

Joseph walks up to the well, holding onto the bucket and rope with one hand. At the bottom of the well, a slight splashing sound is audible, followed immediately by a small voice, that of a child's.

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)
Please... Please help me...

Joseph freezes, then leans over to look into the well, still holding the bucket. The well is completely dark; nothing is visible inside.

JOSEPH
Hello?

The voice comes again, as if from the bottom of the well.

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)
Please help me! Help me out of here!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSEPH
(confused)
Are you in the water down there?

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)
Yes. Help me!

JOSEPH
Are you okay?

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)
Please, help me! My daddy threw me in
here, mister. The water's too deep!

JOSEPH
(to himself)
My god.

Joseph looks around, as if looking for help, then calls down
into the well.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Hang on just a second, kid. I'm lowering
a bucket down, okay?

No sound comes from the bottom of the well.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Okay?

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)
Please hurry! It's cold.

Joseph quickly begins lowering the bucket.

JOSEPH
Okay. Don't worry, I'll pull you up out
of there in just a moment.
(to himself, angry)
Then we'll talk about what the hell's
going on here.

The rope goes slack in Joseph's hands.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Can you see the bucket? It's down there.
(pause)
Have you got it?

The rope is pulled taut again. Joseph grips it with one hand.

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)
Yes. I've got it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOSEPH

Okay. Now just hold on to that bucket,
alright?

Joseph begins pulling the bucket up, dragging up the rope,
hand over hand. The child clearly weighs more than Joseph
expected, and he grits his teeth as he pulls.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Jesus.

Joseph begins dragging the bucket back up, straining against
the rope.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

(calling out)

How are you doing?

There is no response from the well. Joseph continues pulling
the bucket up.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Almost there...

Joseph reaches forward into the darkness of the well, to take
hold of the rope, and a child's small hand reaches out from
the darkness, grabbing onto Joseph's wrist. Joseph's eyes
widen in surprise.

Quickly, Joseph is yanked off his feet, down into the well.
The bucket moves with him, the rope twisting after it. There
is a large splashing sound, then silence from within the
well.

The wind tosses the grass around the well. Lightning flashes.

INT. FRONT ROOM - EVENING

Clyde reacts to the lightning, looking around. Sam and Todd
are still playing cards.

CLYDE

I wonder what's taking Joseph?

Todd shrugs, then looks at Sam curiously.

TODD

Hey, Sam, you okay there?

Sam is rubbing at his collarbone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

I don't know. This wound's kind of itching.

TODD

That means it's healing.

SAM

Yeah.

(pause)

What the hell is taking Joseph?

Todd looks up. The three exchange glances.

EXT. BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Todd, Sam and Clyde walk out into the backyard, holding guns, looking around.

CLYDE

Hey, Joseph! You out here?

The wind tosses the branches of a nearby oak tree. Sam scowls up at this.

TODD

I'll check the barn.

INT. MAIN BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

William and Annabelle lie in bed together, naked under the covers. Annabelle is asleep in William's arms.

A slight creaking sound comes from outside the bedroom, followed by a soft knock on the door. William opens one eye.

The soft knocking comes again, followed by a whisper:

SAM (O.S.)

Hey, William!

William grimaces, then carefully extricates himself from Annabelle's arms. Annabelle moans in her sleep and rolls over. William quickly slips his pants on and walks to the bedroom door.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - EVENING

William steps out of the bedroom. Sam is standing there, looking anxious. Sam's face is pale.

WILLIAM

What is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM
Joseph disappeared.

WILLIAM
What do you mean?

SAM
He's gone. He went out to take the horses to the barn and he never came back. We all just went around looking for him.

WILLIAM
Nothing?

SAM
Nothing.

WILLIAM
Any tracks?

SAM
None that I could see.

William frowns for a moment.

WILLIAM
Okay. Let me get my clothes on, then I'll be right out.

Sam nods. William goes back into the bedroom.

INT. MAIN BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

William quickly buttons his shirt next to the bed, his boots already on. He then leans down and gently shakes Annabelle's arm.

WILLIAM
Hey. Hey, honey.

Annabelle opens her eyes, looking tired.

ANNABELLE
Mmm?

WILLIAM
Joseph wandered off somewhere. I'm gonna go look for him.

ANNABELLE
Joseph's gone?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLIAM

Yeah, the boys can't find him. I'll go see what's up, you stay here.

ANNABELLE

Okay.

(she yawns)

Maybe he went off looking for Dog.

WILLIAM

Could be. You wanna get up and do me a favor, though?

Annabelle smiles up at him.

ANNABELLE

What's that?

WILLIAM

Lock the door to this room after I step out. Just in case.

ANNABELLE

I've got my gun.

William leans down and kisses her.

WILLIAM

I know, but I want you to get some sleep.

ANNABELLE

Uh. Okay.

Annabelle stretches.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

William exits the bedroom, shutting the door behind him. Immediately the sound of a latch turning and locking is heard. William heads off down the hallway.

EXT. FRONT YARD - EVENING

William and Sam walk off the porch, into the front yard. Sam gestures to the rear of the house.

SAM

Clyde and Todd are back there.

William walks off quickly, towards the rear of the house. Sam stands in the front yard for a moment. He rubs softly at his shoulder, wincing. The fabric of Sam's shirt is dark and wet in a small circle just over his bandage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Something falls to the ground directly in front of Sam, hitting the ground hard. Sam looks up at the empty sky above him, then holds out his lantern and steps forward.

A medium-sized bird is curled up in the grass, having just fallen from the sky. The bird's eyes are closed and it is not moving. Sam looks at the bird, then looks back up at the sky. Lightning flashes, followed immediately by thunder.

A dog's bark comes from the cornfield, nearby. Sam jumps and turns to face the sound.

SAM (CONT'D)

Dog?

Sam steps forward, then stops, slowly moving his arm, wiggling his fingers.

SAM (CONT'D)

Ow. Damn.

Sam walks through the yard and steps into the cornfield, lightly moving in between the haphazard rows, making his way through the stalks. Sam is following the trail the six of them made with their horses when they first moved through the field, trampling down a wide path of corn. Sam moves towards the path, alert.

Sam's lantern is not doing much good in the field, illuminating only the stalks around him, all of which are near enough to touch.

Sam stops and slaps his leg.

SAM (CONT'D)

Dog! Come'ere, boy!

Sam continues making his way through the cornfield, looking around. He whistles for Dog, clapping his hands. A moment later, Dog's bark comes again, further ahead in the cornfield, to Sam's right.

SAM (CONT'D)

Come on, boy! What the hell are you doing out here?

Sam pushes his way through the cornstalks to his side, moving more quickly now, sweating. Dog barks again; again, Sam heads towards the noise, pushing through the stalks.

SAM (CONT'D)

Dog! Hold up, there!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Suddenly, Sam stumbles into a clearing.

Briefly disoriented, Sam raises his lantern. Directly in front of him is the wooden cross where the scarecrow was hung. Strands of barbed wire are still attached to the cross, but the scarecrow is gone.

Sam backs away, then looks around.

SAM (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 Where the hell...

The cornfield is still, except for the wind lightly moving the stalks.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Dog?

There is no response. Sam slowly begins backing away from the cross, then turns and moves back into the cornfield.

EXT. BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

William, Todd and Clyde are standing near the well, looking dejected, as Sam quickly walks up to them, still covered with a thin sheen of sweat.

WILLIAM
 Well, could he have just wandered off for a little while? Maybe he's pulling a joke or something.

TODD
 I sure hope so. I'd hate to think of anything that could take Joseph without making enough noise for us to hear.

Clyde cups his hands and shouts into the wind:

CLYDE
 Joseph!

There is no response. After a moment, William shrugs and the four men walk back towards the house.

WILLIAM
 I think we'd better each hold onto our guns from now on, though, particularly if we go out alone.

SAM
 I'm way ahead of you there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLIAM

Where've you been?

SAM

I think... Nevermind.

(shakes head)

I heard Dog in the cornfield and I went after him. I guess I got a little lost, turned out I wasn't headed in the direction I thought I was. Got turned around.

WILLIAM

You're lucky you made it out of there. You can't see where you're going in that field in the daytime, much less at night with a storm coming. Whoever tended that field's long gone.

Clyde falls back a little from the group as they walk through the yard.

CLYDE

I gotta take care of something, I'll be around in a minute.

Clyde walks towards the outhouse.

INT. FRONT ROOM - EVENING

William, Sam and Todd sit in the living room. William throws a knife at the wall; the knife plunges into the wood. William rises to his feet, crosses over to the knife and takes it out of the wall. He then walks back to his chair and throws his knife at the wall again.

SAM

You should get some sleep.

WILLIAM

Not likely.

Todd picks up a handful of gold coins and begins stacking them.

INT. MAIN BEDROOM - EVENING

Annabelle lies in bed, breathing softly. In the bedroom, the closet door slowly creaks open.

Annabelle opens her eyes; the room is silent. Annabelle frowns, then blinks and shuts her eyes again. The sound of quick footsteps moving across the room is heard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Annabelle opens her eyes wide and sits up in bed, looking around the dark room. Her hand goes over to her pistol on the pillow next to her. Annabelle lifts the pistol and pulls back the hammer. Seeing nothing in the room, Annabelle shifts slightly, still craning her head around. She then leans back and blows her hair out of her face.

ANNABELLE

(to herself)

You're dreaming, honey.

Annabelle stretches, then looks around the room again. Sighing, she climbs out of bed and cautiously crosses over to the closet. Annabelle gingerly pushes some clothes out of the way and looks inside; the closet contains only clothes.

INT. OUTHOUSE - EVENING

Clyde sits in the outhouse, looking straight ahead, passively. He is chewing on a piece of hay.

Just outside of the outhouse, a rustling sound is audible, like something moving through the tall grass. Clyde straightens, reaching down for his shotgun.

The rustling sound comes closer to the outhouse. Then a sniffing noise, like that of an animal, comes near the bottom of the outhouse door. Clyde relaxes slightly, though he is still tense. He lowers the shotgun.

CLYDE

Hey. Dog?

The sniffing at the bottom of the door stops. There is silence for a moment, then the sound of claws raking against the bottom of the door. Clyde jerks back.

The clawing sound continues, with a quiet, animalistic grunting noise. Clyde stands, hitching up his pants, and points the shotgun at the door.

CLYDE (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Fucking hell?

Clyde moves to the door as the clawing continues and, in a swift movement, throws the door open and lowers the shotgun. There is nothing outside of the door. Clyde steps quickly out of the outhouse and looks around; no creature is in sight.

CLYDE (CONT'D)

Dog?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Clyde stands for a moment, looking confused.

INT. MAIN BEDROOM - EVENING

Annabelle shuts the closet door, then turns around and surveys the room. She looks at the bed. After a moment, Annabelle crosses over to the bed, kneels down on the floor and peers under the bed.

Under the bed, in the opposite corner, something large is just visible in the shadows. Annabelle cannot make out its features; it could be crouching animal, or a pile of clothing. Very slowly, Annabelle reaches for the lantern next to the bed and holds the lantern out at floor level.

Illuminated under the opposite corner of the bed is a small boy, crouched in a fetal position, silently rocking back and forth. Annabelle frowns, peering closer. Just then, the boy lifts his head up and looks straight at her, his face dark.

Moving with unnatural speed under the bed, the boy crawls towards Annabelle, scuttling like a crab. He is immediately face to face with her.

The boy grins at Annabelle in the light of the lantern; he is toothless and his eyes are completely black, with no irises.

Annabelle screams and falls back away from the boy, knocking over the lantern. It goes out, plunging the room into complete darkness.

INT. FRONT ROOM - EVENING

Annabelle's scream is audible from upstairs. William, Sam and Todd react, then run out of the room for the stairs, William in the lead.

INT. MAIN BEDROOM - EVENING

Annabelle is standing in the corner of the room, facing the open bedroom door. William runs into the doorway, Todd and Sam coming up behind him.

WILLIAM

What? What is it?

ANNABELLE

There was a boy in here!

WILLIAM

Where is he?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNABELLE

He ran out.

Annabelle points towards them, in the doorway. William looks at Sam and Todd, who look at each other and head for the opposite rooms.

William crosses over to Annabelle. He puts an arm around her.

WILLIAM

You alright, honey?

ANNABELLE

Yeah... I'm fine. He just scared me...
The lighting or something.

WILLIAM

This a young kid?

ANNABELLE

I don't know. He couldn't be too old. He
was small. His face...

WILLIAM

Well, they'll find him in a second.

Todd and Sam appear in the doorway again. Todd shakes his head.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

What?

TODD

We're the only ones on this floor. He's
not here.

William stares at him.

WILLIAM

Well, could he have gone out of a window?

Todd shrugs. Sam walks into the bedroom, looking sick, and sits down heavily on the bed.

SAM

He couldn't have gone downstairs, we
would've passed him.

TODD

I don't know. A lot of these big houses
have passageways.

William and Annabelle both look around the walls, nervously.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WILLIAM

I sure hate the thought of that. We should start checking around, see if any of these walls are hollow.

Annabelle is watching Sam.

ANNABELLE

You okay, Sam?

SAM

Yeah. I'm just feeling a little tired.

ANNABELLE

You should lie down and get some rest. I know I'm not going to be sleeping for awhile.

WILLIAM

Yeah, well, we'll see about that. One way or another, we're moving on at first light tomorrow, and we all need to get some sleep before then. Sam, you go ahead, we'll wake you if anything comes up.

Sam nods and stiffly lies back on the bed.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

(to others)

Let's go.

They exit the room, Todd in the lead. Sam, lying on the bed, unbuttons his shirt and pushes it open. He pulls back the bandage to look at his wound. The area around where the bullet entered is red and swollen, and the skin around it is purple and glossy.

Sam touches his chest, near the wound, and flinches. He lies back in the bed and closes his eyes, sweating.

EXT. FRONT YARD - EVENING

William, Annabelle and Todd walk out onto the front porch. The wind tears at the branches of a tree in front of them.

TODD

This is turning out to be a hell of a night.

WILLIAM

No kidding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

William steps off the porch, then bends down, picks up a rock and throws it into the field.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Christ.

A drop of rain falls and hits William's forehead. He looks up at the sky as more raindrops plunk onto the ground around him.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

That's great.

William turns back to look at Annabelle and Todd, who are still on the porch, protected from the rain.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I'm gonna look around a little.

ANNABELLE

I'll go with you.

TODD

Yeah, I might look around myself.

WILLIAM

No, somebody should stay up in the front room, in case anyone comes back or tries to get into the house.

(pause)

Speaking of which... where's Clyde?

ANNABELLE

Oh, god.

TODD

He was going to the outhouse.

WILLIAM

You'd think he'd be done by now. Stay here.

William and Annabelle walk around to the side of the house, as Todd steps back into the front room.

INT. SIDE YARD - EVENING

It is raining harder as William and Annabelle walk back towards the barn. The rain splatters off William's hat and has soaked Annabelle's hair and dress.

ANNABELLE

William?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

William stops and looks at her.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

It's just...

(pause)

There's something wrong here. I know it.
We should leave.

William looks up into the rain.

WILLIAM

Not much chance of that now. Besides, we
can't just leave Joseph here. He could
have just gone for a walk.

ANNABELLE

He didn't just go for a walk, William!

William looks somewhat taken aback by the panic in
Annabelle's voice. He reaches out hesitantly and touches her
arm.

WILLIAM

You okay?

ANNABELLE

I'm... I'm sorry. But, I mean... You feel
it, don't you?

WILLIAM

Uh, I can't say that I do. Not really. I
mean, weird stuff's been going on, and
maybe someone's messing with us, but...

He trails off as Annabelle shakes her head.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

What?

Annabelle shakes her head again.

ANNABELLE

Nothing. I don't know.

WILLIAM

Come here.

Annabelle moves closer to him and he embraces her. They hold
each other in the pouring rain, then William moves away from
Annabelle, smiling at her.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Now, look...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Annabelle looks over William's left shoulder, her eyes widening. William whirls around.

Clyde is standing behind him, scowling. The light of Clyde's lantern is subdued by the rain.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Clyde! Good god, man. We were worried you'd fallen in.

CLYDE

Yeah. Did you guys see Joseph come by here?

WILLIAM

Well, no, we didn't.

Clyde squints into the nearby cornfield.

CLYDE

I could've sworn I saw him moving around in there.

Annabelle and William look at each other.

WILLIAM

Are you sure it was him? I mean, I can barely see the stalks.

CLYDE

Yeah, I saw a head and shoulders moving around in the rows, but then...

WILLIAM

Then what?

CLYDE

Well, then I didn't see him anymore.

(pause)

It was either him, or something else real big.

There is a short silence while they consider this.

WILLIAM

Well, I don't think they have bears down here, so it was probably Joseph. I bet he's playing some sort of game.

CLYDE

Yeah. I might have had a run-in with Dog earlier, too.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CLYDE(CONT'D)

It could have just been a raccoon, I guess. Whatever it was, it ran off before I could get my hands on it.

WILLIAM

That's good news. I was worried Dog might've spooked off for good.

William looks at Annabelle, smiling optimistically. Annabelle returns a faint smile.

INT. FRONT ROOM - EVENING

Todd sits at the table, in front of several stacks of gold coins. Todd drinks from a bottle of whiskey.

A sudden noise comes from the hallway nearby. Todd starts, then looks into the hallway, seeing nothing.

INT. MAIN BEDROOM - EVENING

Sam lies in bed, sweating, looking up at the ceiling. He looks down at the foot of his bed.

As Sam watches, the older boy child, the same one that Annabelle saw, slowly rises up from the foot of the bed and looks at Sam, putting his hands on the mattress. The boy's eyes and mouth are dark holes.

Sam stares at the boy, frozen with fear. The older boy addresses Sam calmly:

OLDER BOY

My parents used to lie together in this bed. This is where my mother was when the consumption took her.

The boy looks down at the floor, then crouches down beneath the bed, disappearing from Sam's view. Sam squeezes his eyes shut, pulling the blankets up around his neck.

Sam begins quickly muttering to himself, an incoherent litany of barely audible prayers.

SAM

Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. Amen.

When Sam opens his eyes, a large man is standing in the corner of the room, barely visible in the darkness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The man is holding a long object, obscured by the shadows, in one hand. The FATHER speaks, possibly to himself:

FATHER

I had to do it. If I hadn't done it, it would have been so much worse for them. I put them where they'll never be found, by anyone. You understand, don't you?

The man steps forwards slightly. The object in his hand is a small, bloody scythe. The man's head is lowered.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Tell me you understand.

Sam, trembling with fright, tries to speak.

SAM

Sure... Sure, I understand.

The man stops. Then he slowly turns and looks at Sam.

FATHER

Who are you? Where is she?

Sam shuts his eyes again and begins muttering inarticulately to himself. The room is silent. Sam slowly opens his eyes.

The man is standing above Sam, leaning over the bed. The man raises his scythe above his head.

FATHER (CONT'D)

I asked you a question!

Sam screams.

EXT. FRONT YARD - EVENING

William, Clyde and Annabelle walk through the rain, up to the front porch.

CLYDE

Well, what now?

WILLIAM

I wouldn't mind getting some rest. Anyone else for that?

Annabelle laughs drily.

ANNABELLE

You can count me out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLIAM

Well, sit up with Todd then. I'll sit with you guys for a second, then I'm going to get some shut-eye.

CLYDE

I guess I could use it.

They walk into the house.

INT. FRONT ROOM - EVENING

William, Annabelle and Clyde step into the front room, looking around. The gold is still piled on the table. Todd steps out from the kitchen, holding his lantern.

WILLIAM

What're you up to?

TODD

Thought I heard a noise back here, near the basement door. Guess I was wrong. Anything happening?

WILLIAM

Not that I can see. Clyde here says he saw Joseph and Dog.

CLYDE

Or at least it was some kind of animal.

TODD

You should've shot it. Then at least we'd have something fresh to eat.

William sits down on the floor, heavily, and begins rolling a cigarette. Annabelle sits down next to William. She reaches for the book, flips through it, then sets it back down on the table. She then lightly rests her head on William's shoulder.

ANNABELLE

Roll me one.

WILLIAM

Sure thing.

Clyde sits down at the table with Todd, who shifts the deck of cards over towards him. Clyde begins shuffling.

INT. FRONT ROOM - LATE EVENING

Clyde throws down five cards, disgusted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLYDE

I swear you're cheating.

Todd lifts a finger to his lips, tilting his head over towards William and Annabelle, who are fast asleep on the floor. Annabelle is curled up next to William, who is still sitting against the wall, his mouth slightly open, breathing deeply.

TODD

Shhh. You'll wake the dead with your pernicious lies.

Clyde grins at William and Annabelle.

CLYDE

Aw, ain't they sweet?

Clyde yawns and arches his back.

CLYDE (CONT'D)

I'm getting a little weary myself.

TODD

Sure you are. Or maybe you don't want to lose any more gold?

CLYDE

Ah, you're just scared to stand watch alone.

TODD

Nonsense.

CLYDE

You gonna let me get some sleep, then?

TODD

Sure. I think you could use it. You're getting grouchy.

Clyde looks at Todd askance, then rises from the table and begins moving towards the stairs.

TODD (CONT'D)

You're sleeping upstairs?

CLYDE

They got beds there, don't they?

TODD

I guess.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Clyde shrugs and climbs the stairs. Todd puts down his cards and looks out into the rain.

INT. CHILD'S BEDROOM - LATE EVENING

Clyde walks into the dark bedroom. He walks over to one of the beds, leans down and knocks a doll off of it. The doll hits the ground and rolls over, onto its back, staring up at the ceiling with painted eyes. Clyde scowls at it, then sets his lantern down next to the bed.

Clyde lies down on the bed, which he is slightly too large for, and pulls an old, torn blanket up over the lower half of his body. He then bends down and turns the lantern down low. Clyde curls up and shuts his eyes.

INT. FRONT ROOM - LATE EVENING

Todd flips a gold coin languidly across the fingers of one hand, looking slowly around the room. He yawns, then pulls out his gun and begins cleaning it.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

William and Annabelle are still asleep, in the same positions. At the table, Todd's head is resting on one hand, his arm propped up on the table. The lantern next to him has been turned down low.

Todd blinks, very slowly. His eyelids close, then he opens his eyes wide, looking around quickly. Nothing in the room is different.

Todd's eyes slowly start to shut again. He blinks twice, then his eyelids close.

A thumping noise comes from beyond the kitchen. Todd's eyes fly open and he sits up straight, looking towards the kitchen.

Todd swiftly surveys the room, then slumps back in his chair, rubbing at his face.

The noise comes again, from somewhere on the other side of the house, and Todd jumps to his feet, his eyes narrowed.

Todd looks down at William and Annabelle, who are still asleep. He then walks past them, into the kitchen.

INT. FIRST FLOOR CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Todd walks through the dark kitchen, holding his lantern in one hand, his gun in the other. He walks into the corridor, stopping near the door to the basement.

Todd looks around. The windows facing outside are dark, though the sound of the rainstorm can still be heard. The wind whistles and rain splatters against the glass windowpanes.

Todd turns around and faces the door to the basement. He puts the handle to his lantern between his teeth, reaches down and grips the doorknob. Slowly, Todd turns the doorknob.

Todd pushes on the door. It does not budge. He leans against the door, still holding onto the doorknob, but the door will not move.

Todd sighs and releases the doorknob. He steps across the corridor, to one of the windows. Todd raises his lantern, but only illuminates the water against the glass.

Todd moves his face closer to the glass, but cannot see anything in the darkness outside; all he can see is his reflection in the window. Todd stares at his reflection, brushing slightly at his hair.

Just then, lightning flashes, illuminating the outside world. Sam is facing the other side of the window, looking in at Todd from the outside. Todd jumps back with a yell as the sound of thunder cracks against the house.

On the outside of the house, Sam's face is directly in front of Todd's, looking straight into Todd's eyes, twisted into a mask of hate. They are separated only by the pane of glass. Sam's hair is matted and his clothes are drenched by the rain.

Sam runs to the side, then the outside world goes dark again as the lightning ends. Todd fumbles with his lantern, turning it up higher, and holds it to the window. He can see nothing outside.

Todd pants, catching his breath. He moves over to another window, calling out:

TODD

Sam!

There is no response.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TODD (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 What the hell...
 (shouting)
 What the hell are you doing out there?

Only the sound of the rain can be heard. Thunder rumbles slightly, far off.

TODD (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 What the hell is he doing?

Todd walks back towards the kitchen. Just as he passes the door to the basement, a loud thumping sound comes from against the other side of the basement door, as if a person were throwing their body against it. There is a stifled whimper, like a person in pain, from the other side of the door, then silence.

Todd jumps back, staring at the basement door, his eyes wild. The sound does not come again. Todd looks around.

TODD (CONT'D)
 Sam?

Todd moves slowly towards the basement door. Holding his gun out, with his lantern between his teeth, he again turns the doorknob and shoves.

The door to the basement swings open. Todd steps away from the door, raising his gun. Nothing but darkness is visible.

TODD (CONT'D)
 Alright. Come on out, now.

There is no sound from the basement. Todd steps forward and pushes the door open further with his foot. He holds his lantern forward.

The basement steps are visible, but there is no one on them. Todd sticks his head into the doorway, looking around.

After a moment, he begins walking down the stairs, slowly. The wooden steps creak as Todd moves down them.

INT. CHILD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Clyde lies still in the small bed, quietly breathing. From across the room, the sound of a female child softly sobbing can be heard. Clyde frowns in his sleep, shakes his head slightly, then opens his eyes, confused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The sound of the child crying is coming from the corner of the room, which is not visible. Clyde frowns and looks around, blinking. He sits up in bed, rubbing his eyes.

Clyde cannot see anything in the dark room. Carefully, without making a sound, he reaches down and turns up the lantern next to the bed.

The older boy is standing immediately in front of Clyde, next to the lantern. The boy's eyes are completely black and his face is expressionless. Before Clyde can react, the boy looks away from him and steps back into the darkness of the room, disappearing from sight. The crying sound continues.

CLYDE

What- Who's there?

Clyde rapidly turns the lantern up all the way, illuminating most of the bedroom. His hand is unsteady and the lantern light sways as he sets the lantern back on the floor.

The boy is nowhere to be seen. In the corner of the bedroom, a small girl is crouched, her arms around her knees, facing the corner. The girl is wearing only a pair of underwear. Her back, which is facing Clyde, trembles with her sobs.

Clyde rubs his eyes, looks around again, then looks at the girl.

CLYDE (CONT'D)

Hey, how'd you get in here? Where'd that other kid go?

The girl does not respond, continuing to face the corner and cry. Clyde rises to his feet, standing next to the bed.

CLYDE (CONT'D)

Look here, are you okay? What's the matter?

The girl does not respond. Clyde moves closer to her, walking over to the corner.

CLYDE (CONT'D)

It's okay, don't cry. Tell me what's wrong. Did that kid do something bad to you? You just tell me who did it, and I'll take care of him, okay? Did something happen?

The girl suddenly stands and whirls to face Clyde, who is now only a couple of feet away from her. The girl's ears are slightly pointed and her nose is unnaturally flat;

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

she has vertical pupils, like a cat, and her teeth are also inhuman, long and thin. There is a large, deep gash across the front of the girl's neck; her throat has been ripped away. The front of the girl's body is soaked red with blood.

YOUNG GIRL
(screams)
My father did this!

Clyde leaps backwards, stumbling, and falls onto the floor, bumping his head. He jolts into a seated position, scooting desperately across the floor, away from the corner. The corner is empty. The girl is gone.

Clyde stops, seeing this, and sits on the floor, leaning back against the bed, breathing heavily. He looks quickly around the room, reaching for his gun.

CLYDE
What the... fucking hell...

A shout comes from outside of the house.

JOSEPH (O.S.)
Hey, Clyde!

Clyde looks up at the sound of Joseph's voice. He rises to his feet and rapidly crosses over to the window. Lightning flashes.

Outside, just next to the cornfield, Joseph is standing, looking up at Clyde's window. He is crouched over, hunched like an animal. Joseph looks up at Clyde over his shoulder, out of the corners of his eyes. The lightning subsides and the yard goes dark again.

Clyde lifts up the window sash, looking outside.

CLYDE
(shouting)
Joseph?

Lightning flashes again. Joseph is visible in the cornfield, about ten feet from where the field meets the yard, making his way deeper into the cornfield, still hunched over unnaturally. Joseph is leaving a path of broken and smashed cornstalks behind him.

CLYDE (CONT'D)
Joseph?

Joseph does not look back. Clyde pauses, then turns and runs out of the bedroom.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Todd reaches the bottom of the basement stairs, sweating. He murmurs to himself, softly:

TODD

I know you're in here.

The floor of the cellar is earth; the walls of the cellar are comprised of damp stone. Todd holds both the lantern and gun out in front of his body, turning around, surveying the basement, which is too dark to see across. Todd begins to move past the staircase, keeping his back to the wall.

In the center of the room, on the cracked, earthen floor, a precise pentagram, approximately five feet in diameter, has been drawn in yellow paint or chalk. Inexplicable symbols surround the pentagram.

Four posts have been driven into the floor along the circumference of the pentagram, forming a square. Above the pentagram, lines of rope have been hung from floorboards, as if for drying food.

Todd glances at this, then slowly moves to the other side of the stairwell, still carefully keeping his back to the wall. On the other side of the basement, the space is equally bare. Todd moves closer, looking around.

Against the stone wall, a set of iron shackles, with cuffs, has been nailed into the stone. Todd frowns at this, then turns away.

The only other object in the room is a short, squat wooden chair. Todd moves closer to the chair, shining his lantern on it. The chair has thick leather straps bound to its arms and the two front chair legs.

Next to the chair, on the floor, is a piece of hide, rolled into a tube. Todd kicks lightly at the hide, unrolling it. The hide contains several metal tools, all in various states of decay and rust. Many of the tools are sharp and pointed. Some are recognizable, such as a pair of pliers and a ball-peen hammer, while others are not.

Next to the chair, on the ground, lies a small, white object. Todd glances back at the chair, then kneels down and picks up the object. It appears to be a broken piece of bone or tooth. Todd drops it, disgusted.

Todd quickly backs away from the chair, still peering around the room, heading back towards the stairwell. A sharp voice suddenly comes from the other side of the cellar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLACK WOMAN (O.S.)

Help me!

Todd jumps and spins around. On the floor, in the center of the pentagram, a black woman is lying. Her wrists and ankles are bound to the four posts. She looks over at Todd, straining her head to see him, tears in her eyes.

BLACK WOMAN (CONT'D)

Help me! Oh, god, please!

The woman is wearing only a short, sloppy dress made out of thick muslin; it barely covers her torso. Todd looks around the room quickly. There is no one around except the two of them.

TODD

Who did this to you? How the hell did you get there?

BLACK WOMAN

Oh god, please help me. Please let me go!
I didn't do anything. I'll never tell
anyone about the others!

Todd steps closer to the woman, frowning. She shrinks away from him, constricted by her ropes.

TODD

What's going on here?

BLACK WOMAN

(shaking her head wildly)
I didn't see nothing! I didn't see
nothing!

Todd starts to say something, stops, then walks over to the woman and kneels down next to her. He begins trying to untie her hand from one of the posts, but seems to be having a difficult time with it. Suddenly Todd stops and stares.

TODD

Shit... You're bound with dried rawhide.

The woman's hands are indeed swollen and purple. The rawhide is cutting into the flesh of her wrists.

BLACK WOMAN

(whimpering)
It hurts...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TODD

(grim)

I know it.

(he stares at her)

How long have you been down here?

BLACK WOMAN

(whispering)

Please hurry.

The black woman's eyes dart around the room, looking for something.

TODD

Okay. I'm going to go to the other side of the stairwell and get something to try to cut this with...

Todd trails off, as the woman has focused her eyes on something across the room from them. Her face is frozen in terror, her mouth open.

BLACK WOMAN

He's here.

Todd looks where she is looking. There is nothing there.

TODD

I don't see anything.

The woman ignores him. She is breathing quickly, her eyes still riveted on a spot about a yard in front of her legs. There is still nothing visible there.

BLACK WOMAN

(whispering)

Please... No...

Todd looks around the room, his eyes narrowed. He rises to his feet.

The woman is paralyzed with fear; tears run out of the corners of her eyes. She is now ignoring Todd completely, focusing her attention on the area opposite from them. She shakes her head, back and forth, but is quiet.

Todd watches this, then quickly grabs his lantern and gun and heads for the opposite side of the room, leaving the woman on the floor.

On the other side of the cellar, Todd reaches the chair and kneels down next to it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Suddenly Todd freezes. Very slowly, he looks up at the chair in front of him. It is empty. Todd shivers, then shakes his head and begins rooting through the rusted tools.

Todd comes across a serrated, thin blade, with a curved handle. He grabs this and a pair of shears. Todd stands and walks over towards the stairwell, holding out his lantern.

Todd stops as soon as he enters the other side of the basement. The woman is still there, lying in the pentagram, but now her back is arched. The front of her dress has been cut open to expose her stomach and torso.

The woman's eyes lock onto Todd's. As Todd watches, frozen, a thick cut appears on the side of the woman's stomach. The cut continues across her belly, moving just above the navel, in a curved line under her ribs.

The woman's mouth opens and her eyes squeeze shut. It appears that she is screaming in pain, but the only audible sounds in the room are Todd's breathing and the sound of the woman's skin and flesh separating.

Blood wells out of the long cut on the woman's stomach, soaking into her dress and the dirt floor. She shakes her head wildly, her mouth still stretched open.

As Todd watches, his eyes wide with horror, the cut in the woman's stomach suddenly widens, as if it is being pushed open. From the open wound, the woman's guts are roughly pulled from her body, straight into the air above her. Her entrails hover above her stomach, dripping blood and fluid.

The woman's scream cuts through the air, a loud, awful shriek of pain that tears through the quiet of the room.

Blood splatters the floor as Todd turns and leaps away, the woman's agonized screaming filling the basement. Todd's feet hit the first step of the basement stairs and he stumbles, falling to his side, on the other side of the basement.

Todd hits the ground hard, cracking his elbow against the wall and dropping his gun and lantern. The woman is still screaming.

Todd's lantern lies on its side in front of him. Todd reaches for it, looking forward, towards the chair. As Todd's eyes meet with something in front of him, his face goes slack with fear and he shrinks away, screaming, his back against the wall.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

William and Annabelle are still asleep on the floor. The sound of footsteps running down the stairs comes from behind them.

William opens his eyes and looks around the room, just as Clyde runs through the front room. Clyde grabs the front doorknob, opens it, and runs outside, into the storm.

WILLIAM
What the hell...

William rises up, rousing Annabelle, who looks up at him blearily.

ANNABELLE
What's going on?

WILLIAM
Clyde just ran through here. I don't know what he's after. I'm gonna go check.

ANNABELLE
Okay. You do that.

Annabelle immediately puts her head back down and closes her eyes. William looks troubled.

WILLIAM
Well, I don't really want to leave you alone in here.

ANNABELLE
(mumbling)
Don't worry about it. I'll be fine.

WILLIAM
Well...

William looks up suddenly. Sam is standing in the darkness of the hallway, barely visible, his eyes glowing with the lantern light. His clothing is drenched. Sam stares at William without speaking.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Sam! Good thing you're up. Clyde just ran through here faster than lightning.

William rises to his feet, rubbing the arm that he slept on. He looks around the room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The gold is gone from the table; only the cards, whiskey bottles and book rest on the table.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Holy shit. The gold.

William looks around the room again, quickly. The gold is nowhere to be seen. William looks back at Sam, his teeth bared.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Hang in here just a second, watch over Annabelle. I'm going after Clyde. I'll be right back.

William turns away from Sam, who has not changed expression, and runs out the front door, shutting it behind him.

Sam slowly steps out of the darkness of the hallway. He looks down at Annabelle, his nostrils flaring slightly, then walks over to the table and lowers himself into a chair. Sam sits, staring straight ahead.

EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT

William runs out into the rain, holding his lantern aloft. Clyde is nowhere to be seen, but there is a spot in the rows of corn, near the yard, where several stalks have been pushed aside or trampled.

William runs across the yard and into the cornfield. The broken stalks form a haphazard trail through the tall corn, though William can still only see a couple feet in front of himself, and cannot see over the corn.

William continues staggering through the corn, along the trail, holding his lantern in front of him. William calls out:

WILLIAM
Clyde! Hey, Clyde!

The sound of the rain splattering off the cornstalks drowns out William's voice.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Sam sits at the table. He has the book in his hands and flips through the pages, pausing occasionally. After a moment, Sam slowly looks down at Annabelle, sleeping on the floor.

SAM
Annabelle...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Annabelle stirs slightly on the floor.

SAM (CONT'D)

Annabelle.

She opens her eyes and looks up at Sam, squinting.

ANNABELLE

Sam? What are you doing?

Sam does not respond for a moment, turning his attention back to the book.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

What is it? What's going on?

SAM

I'm reading.

Annabelle smiles at Sam, then, when he continues to look at the pages of the book, frowns, puzzled.

ANNABELLE

You're reading that book?

SAM

Yes.

Annabelle straightens her back, tilting her head to see Sam better.

ANNABELLE

What does it say?

SAM

It's about how to contact the Old Ones.

ANNABELLE

Who?

Sam's face darkens.

SAM

The Old Ones, I said. Most think of them as spirits. They can walk between worlds, and time is different for them. When they appear in our world, they mostly show themselves as animals, unless they are given greater power. Because they walk between worlds, their physical power is limited in each one. They should not be given mortal power, the power to change us, unless they can be controlled.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Sam smiles down at Annabelle, a haunted look in his eyes. His smile trembles.

SAM (CONT'D)

I just got to that part.

Annabelle rubs her eyes and speaks slowly.

ANNABELLE

Sam. What are you talking about? You're not making any sense. Are you okay?

Sam straightens up, his face blank, and sets down the book on the table.

SAM

The hole in my shoulder hurts. I think something might be wrong.

Annabelle sits up on the floor, stretching.

ANNABELLE

Well, you'd better let me take a look at it. Hang on.

Annabelle unsteadily rises to her feet. She steps forward and takes a seat at the table opposite from Sam.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Can you unbutton your shirt?

Sam reaches up and begins slowly unbuttoning his shirt. Once he is finished, he pushes his shirt open and tears off the bandage.

The area around Sam's wound, expanding to cover most of his chest, is a black, swollen bruise. Thin tendrils of purple infection crawl up Sam's neck and down his stomach. The wound itself is oozing a thick, viscous fluid.

Annabelle shrinks away, holding her hand to her mouth.

SAM

It doesn't smell so good, huh?

ANNABELLE

My god... How long has it been like this?

Sam shrugs slightly.

SAM

I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ANNABELLE

Sam, we've- We've got to get you to a hospital. You've got some sort of infection. I don't have anything here that can take care of it.

Annabelle opens her bag and begins rooting through it.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

I might be able to give you something for the pain...

SAM

(smiles)

It doesn't hurt anymore, 'Belle.

Annabelle looks up at him.

ANNABELLE

What? What did you just say?

Sam reaches forwards, towards Annabelle.

SAM

Here, I want to show you something.

ANNABELLE

What is it?

Sam holds out his hand to Annabelle.

SAM

Here.

ANNABELLE

Sam, I think you're delirious. Hang on just a second, and I'll give you a shot that will make you feel a little better.

SAM

Okay.

Sam lowers his head, looking down at the floor. He then looks up at Annabelle. Sam's green eyes are dark and his voice is thick.

SAM (CONT'D)

Don't you want to know what they did to me?

Annabelle takes a glass vial from her bag, and begins drawing fluid from the vial into a syringe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ANNABELLE

You got shot, Sam. I was there, remember?

SAM

The preacher said shooting's too good for me.

(Sam shows his teeth)

They just left me up there to rot for what I did. Them and the Old Ones. They left me here. Forever.

Annabelle taps the syringe.

ANNABELLE

What are you talking about, Sam?

Sam leans forward suddenly and grips Annabelle's arm. His eyes are pale.

SAM

(hissing)

Stop calling me that.

Annabelle gasps, then blinks. Her eyes roll up into her head and her body goes rigid.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

From the Father's POV, the cornfield is upside-down and swaying from side to side, unevenly. A thick trail of blood runs from the Father's nose into one of his eyes, filling the eye with blood. The Father blinks rapidly. He is being dragged by his feet through the field.

A group of men are dragging him through the neat cornfield. The Father, now fully visible, is the same man that Sam saw up in the main bedroom. The Father tries to twist away from the men, who drag him into a small clearing.

The men release the Father's legs; he curls up on the ground, breathing heavily. A large fly settles on a bloody spot on the side of his face. He swats at the fly.

Another group of men stand in the clearing, many of whom are holding rifles. They stare at the Father, their faces twisted with anger and disgust. In front of the men stands a PREACHER, wearing the formal attire of the cloth.

Behind the men is a tall wooden cross, with a scarecrow attached to it, in a position to survey the cornfield. The preacher addresses the Father.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PREACHER

Where did you put the bodies?

The Father is silent. One of the men who was holding him kicks the Father in the stomach. The Father curls up on the ground, gagging.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

Where are they? And where are your children?

The Father coughs, choking out his words.

FATHER

Where they belong.

The preacher leans closer to the Father, staring into his eyes.

PREACHER

What happened to their mother?

The Father looks away from him, then looks back into the preacher's eyes.

FATHER

They had no mother. Not that you'd know.

A look of confusion passes over the preacher's face. Then he looks up and nods to one of the men.

The man leans down with a burlap sack, pulling it over the Father's head. The Father struggles.

FATHER (CONT'D)

No! Goddamn you! What are you doing?

One of the men, holding a rifle, quickly steps forward, aiming his rifle at the father.

HYSTERICAL MAN

Shut that sick bastard up!

The preacher quickly reaches over and puts his hand on the barrel of the hysterical man's rifle, aiming it away from the Father.

PREACHER

Shooting's too good for him.

The man looks at the preacher. The preacher nods over to the rest of the men.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PREACHER (CONT'D)

Cut that scarecrow down.

One of the men looks over at the preacher, then jumps up on the cross with a knife and cuts the ropes binding the scarecrow. The scarecrow tumbles to the ground, falling to pieces, hay spilling out of its tight clothing.

The preacher grits his teeth.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

Hoist him up there.

A few of the men exchange glances, then move to follow the preacher's order.

Using ropes wrapped under the Father's shoulders, the men pull him up onto the cross, using the arms of the cross as pulleys.

Two men climb up onto the cross. Gripping the Father's arms, they bind him to the cross with loops of barbed wire, twisting the wire into knots with pliers.

The Father struggles and kicks. Two men on the ground begin wrapping barbed wire around his legs. The father is tied tightly to the cross above them. The barbs dig into the flesh of his arms, legs and torso, raising dark droplets of blood.

The men step away from the cross, looking up at the straining figure of the Father. The Father twists against the cross, but the wires around his body are tight. The burlap sack still covers his face.

One of the men looks down at the crumpled, broken scarecrow on the ground, then reaches down and picks up the scarecrow's hat.

MAN WITH HAT

Hang on a second.

The man walks over to the cross, lifts himself up and pulls the scarecrow's hat down tightly over the top of the Father's twisting head. The man then drops off the cross and looks up at the Father again.

MAN WITH HAT (CONT'D)

There we go.

With the hat and burlap sack over his head, the Father looks just like a scarecrow. The Father stops straining against the ropes and hangs from the cross, his body limp. The preacher addresses him:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PREACHER

You still don't want to tell us what you did with them?

The Father hangs from the cross, silent.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

Fine. We'll see you get a little taste of hell in this world before you pass on to the next. You'll answer to a higher form of justice than ours there.

The Father's voice is muffled by the burlap sack.

FATHER

I'm not going to die, if that's what you're hoping.

The preacher looks up at him, then exchanges glances with several of the men.

PREACHER

We'll see about that.
(to the men)
Come on.

The man who put the hat on the Father addresses the preacher, his voice subdued.

MAN WITH HAT

Do you want to search the house again?

The preacher's face is tense, with either fury or strain.

PREACHER

We'll find nothing in there that we did not find before. Let us leave this place immediately. There is nothing more we can do.

The man nods slightly, then the men and the preacher walk through the cornfield, away from the cross and the house. The sun glares down on the field.

Up on the cross, the Father begins vainly straining against the barbed wire again. In front of him, the men work their way through the cornfield without looking back, the preacher in the lead. The Father shakes his head vigorously, then screams, his shriek muffled by the burlap.

BEGIN MONTAGE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

A) A bloody, skinless figure, tied to the basement floor, twitches in a wide pool of blood. The Father's scream is still audible. A shadow moves across the figure's head, where the face used to be.

B) A child's eyes fly open. A large hand is clamped over the child's mouth. The child, a young boy, tries to yell, but cannot. The child has no eyelashes or eyebrows.

C) By candlelight, the Father flips through pages of the book. He speaks unrecognizable syllables to himself as he reads, cutting at the top of his wrist with a knife.

D) A closet door flies open. Inside the closet, the young girl is huddled, hiding in the clothes. She cowers away from the shadow that falls over her and makes a hissing sound.

E) Blood flows across a wooden floor. The pool of blood seeps over towards a bed, underneath which a slightly older boy is hiding, his eyes and mouth completely black. He is shaking and crying. The blood moves closer to the boy, who edges away from it, trying to move soundlessly. Then a large boot steps down into the pool of blood, directly in front of the boy.

F) A child's body is dragged down the hallway; the child's ankles, sliding along the floor, leave two trails of blood.

END MONTAGE

END FLASHBACK

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Annabelle jerks in her chair, staring around the room wildly. Across from her, Sam is slumped back in his chair, his eyes shut. His arms hang limply at his sides.

Annabelle scoots her chair away from the table and vomits onto the floor.

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

William continues walking quickly through the cornstalks, following the path of broken and bent stalks. Rain splatters off William's hat.

Suddenly, William is faced with tall, upright stalks in front of him. The only bent stalks are behind William. The trail has come to an abrupt end in the middle of the field.

William looks around. There is nothing but cornstalks around him, and no indication of Clyde or where he may have gone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

William looks behind himself, at the bent cornstalks, but can see nothing.

WILLIAM
Clyde! Where the fuck are you?

William's words are swallowed by the cornfield.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Annabelle jumps out of her chair as the front door opens and William steps in. She then throws herself against him, sobbing.

WILLIAM
Jesus, honey. What is it?

ANNABELLE
I saw- I saw- I saw everything.

WILLIAM
What did you see? Here, sit down.

Annabelle sits back down in her chair, William's hands on her shoulders. William then notices Sam.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
What's wrong with Sam?

ANNABELLE
I- I don't know...

William reaches forward and shakes Sam's arm, then shakes it again, harder. Sam does not stir. William leans forward and pushes Sam's shoulder. Sam slumps over onto the table.

William slowly steps forward and puts his hand to Sam's face. He holds his hand against Sam's unmoving face for several seconds, then William bows his head slightly.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)
What?

WILLIAM
He's... He's dead.

Annabelle quickly puts her fingers to the side of Sam's neck. Sam is not breathing.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
What the hell happened?

ANNABELLE
I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLIAM

What... Was it his wound?

ANNABELLE

It's this place! This place did something to him!

William gives her an incredulous look.

WILLIAM

What do you mean, this place?

Annabelle puts her hand to her face, breathing deeply. She then lowers her hand and returns William's gaze, her eyes hard. She speaks calmly.

ANNABELLE

Jeffy Hollister was in love with me, you know.

William frowns, barely paying attention to her, as he leans forward and feels for a pulse in Sam's neck.

WILLIAM

What are you talking about?

ANNABELLE

Jeffy was in love with me. He used to say it all the time, before you got there. He hated you because of it. I could see it, William. He did.

William looks at her.

WILLIAM

So what?

Annabelle opens her mouth to answer William, then looks up at the kitchen doorway. Todd is leaning against the door, barely able to support himself.

William and Annabelle both stare at Todd, who stares back at them.

TODD

Didn't you... Didn't you hear the screaming?

WILLIAM

Todd, what are you talking about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Todd stumbles over to the table and collapses into a chair. He reaches forward for the bottle of whiskey, grabs it and drinks heavily. Todd's eyes are glazed from fright.

TODD

The screaming. Didn't you hear it?

WILLIAM

We didn't hear any screaming, Todd.

Todd buries his face in his hands.

TODD

I think I'm going insane.

ANNABELLE

Why? What did you see?

Todd grins, his eyes serious.

TODD

I don't ever want to talk about that.
Ever.

Todd takes another drink.

TODD (CONT'D)

What's the deal with Sam?

ANNABELLE

Sam's dead, Todd.

Todd looks over at Sam's slumped form. He reaches out and touches Sam's shoulder, puzzled.

TODD

How the hell did that happen?

William steps forward, towards Todd.

WILLIAM

I was wondering if you might know
something about that.

Todd looks at William, confused, then looks around the room. Realization dawns in Todd's eyes.

TODD

I don't know what you're talking about.

WILLIAM

Don't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Todd looks around the room again, slowly.

TODD
Where's the gold, William?

WILLIAM
I don't know, Todd. We left you watching
it.

Todd looks into William's eyes. They stare at each other for a moment.

William's gaze is locked on Todd, but William's right hand is moving up towards his waistband, where his pistol is stuck.

ANNABELLE
William?

Todd kicks out at a chair, knocking the back of the chair into William's waist. As William stumbles back, pulling out his pistol, Todd lunges across the table and grabs Sam's gun from the holster on the side of Sam's pants.

Partly lying across Sam and the table, Todd has Sam's pistol cocked and aimed at William before William regain his balance.

William freezes, looking at Todd. Todd is still slumped over Sam. He holds the gun aimed at William, regarding William with dead eyes. William's gun is aimed uselessly at the floor.

TODD
Where's the gold, William?

The very tip of a scalpel blade gently enters the side of Todd's neck, just under his earlobe. Todd goes stiff.

ANNABELLE
Two against one, Todd. What are you
thinking about?

Todd blinks, slowly.

TODD
I'll kill him, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE
Maybe. He won't be lonely long if you do.

William remains still, holding Todd's gaze. Todd sighs, then speaks with venom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

TODD

You lousy, filthy, double-crossing bastards.

WILLIAM

You watch yourself, Todd. You've ridden with me for three years now. I've saved your life more times than I can count.

TODD

That doesn't make it yours.

ANNABELLE

We don't know where the gold is, Todd. We didn't take it. You can check.

(pause)

Why don't you put the gun down?

Annabelle turns the scalpel slightly in Todd's neck, letting a little more blood flow down into his collar. Todd shows no visible reaction to this, though he is sweating.

TODD

If you didn't take the gold, who did?

WILLIAM

We left you watching it, Todd. Remember?

TODD

I didn't fucking take it. Where would I put it?

Annabelle looks at William.

ANNABELLE

We know you didn't take it, Todd. An unaccompanied Negro with four bags of gold stands very little chance of getting through Texas. We know you wouldn't try that.

William blinks and does not look entirely convinced, but cautiously sticks his pistol back into his waistband, still holding Todd's gaze.

WILLIAM

Yeah.

Todd exhales slightly, then pushes the hammer on Sam's pistol back into place and places the pistol on the table. After a moment, Annabelle tucks the scalpel back into her sleeve and steps away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Todd slumps back into his chair, leaving the gun on the table. He puts his palms to his forehead and looks around the room. After a long moment of silence, he speaks.

TODD

Well, I guess if you were planning to kill me and take the money, you would have just done it.

WILLIAM

You really don't know what's going on?

TODD

I know we've got bigger problems than that money. We need to get the hell out of here.

ANNABELLE

I'm with you there.

Todd frowns.

TODD

Where's Clyde?

WILLIAM

He ran off into the cornfield a little while ago. I went looking, but I couldn't find him.

Todd slowly grows very still, looking around the room. He looks out the window, then looks back at William and Annabelle.

TODD

(softly)

Can you hear that?

ANNABELLE

What?

TODD

That voice. Can you hear it?

William and Annabelle look at each other, then at Todd.

TODD (CONT'D)

You can't hear it? Out there in the storm. It's speaking right now. Listen.

Todd cocks his head to the side, listens, then shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

TODD (CONT'D)

Now I can't hear it. Now it's gone.

WILLIAM

Todd-

TODD

(sighs)

Okay, let's forget Clyde then, he's gone. Let's get on our horses and get the fuck out of here. Right now.

WILLIAM

Without the gold?

Todd looks into William's eyes.

TODD

Yes, without the gold.

WILLIAM

No way.

Todd stands up, knocking his chair back.

TODD

I don't care what you decide. I'm getting out of here.

Todd grabs Sam's pistol and the half-empty bottle of whiskey. He looks at William.

TODD (CONT'D)

I'll take these, if you don't mind.

Without another word, Todd storms out of the front room, through the front door. William and Annabelle look at each other, then quickly head out after him.

EXT. SIDE YARD - NIGHT

Todd rapidly walks through the side yard, almost running through the rain. William and Annabelle hurry after him.

WILLIAM

Todd! Wait up!

Todd does not slow his pace. William and Annabelle continue after him, towards the barn. Lightning flashes.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Todd, in the lead, comes to an abrupt stop in the entrance to the barn. William and Annabelle almost collide with him.

WILLIAM

What?

Todd is silent. He stands in the entrance to the barn, his shoulders heaving slightly. After a moment, William moves forward, standing next to Todd and looking into the barn.

The horses have been shredded, their bodies ripped into small pieces that have been strewn all over the inside of the barn. The stacks of hay are splattered red with blood. Blood drips from several spots on the barn's ceiling. One of the horses appears to have been bisected across its middle, and lies in two halves directly in front of Todd.

Annabelle involuntarily steps back from the sight.

ANNABELLE

Oh my god...

Todd steps forward and picks up the severed leg of one of the horses. The bloody end of it is ragged, with cracked bone sticking out of the flesh. Todd looks at the horse's leg and begins laughing quietly.

William and Annabelle exchange a look. Todd glances at them, then looks back at the mangled horses.

TODD

Looks like I'm walking.

Todd glares at a horse's severed head. The horse's eyes are open, and its tongue sticks out of its mouth.

TODD (CONT'D)

What are you looking at?

Todd throws the leg at the horse's head, but misses.

TODD (CONT'D)

Ugly son of a bitch.

WILLIAM

Todd. You alright?

TODD

No. I'm not.

Todd turns away from William.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TODD (CONT'D)

If you'd seen what I saw, you'd know what's going on here.

WILLIAM

What did you see?

Todd does not answer William, just walks further into the barn, gesturing angrily.

TODD

You'd fucking know something, that's for sure.

William looks over at Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

What could do this to the horses, William? It would... It would have to be the size of a bear...

TODD

(screaming)

What the hell could do this to the horses, William?

Todd points at William and Annabelle, his arm rigid.

TODD (CONT'D)

There are things that exist alongside us, things that were once like us but just kept going, who live not in the places we know but in the spaces between them. Do you think it matters how big they are?

There is a silence. Thunder rumbles. Todd pauses, lowering his arm.

TODD (CONT'D)

Listen!

Todd crouches down slightly. From no visible source, a VOICE begins speaking to Todd. The voice speaks softly, slurring its words together.

VOICE (O.S.)

There were once others here, whose skin was like yours. The one whose skin was like theirs gave them to us. We enjoyed them very much. Are you tired?

Todd turns to William and Annabelle, his face stricken.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TODD
Please... Please, William, Annabelle...
Can you hear it?

William looks at Annabelle, who shakes her head at Todd. Todd looks around the barn, listening to the voice, shaking.

VOICE (O.S.)
I'm up here.

Todd looks up at the loft section of the barn. The loft is dark; nothing is visible there.

ANNABELLE
It's just the storm, Todd.

Todd shakes his head. The voice continues speaking to him.

TODD
(to Annabelle)
It's up in the loft...

VOICE (O.S.)
They call you Todd.
(pause)
The man brought us here so we would bring him back his wife. He gave us strength so we would help him. We liked that, but we could only bring parts of her back. Those weren't enough for him. So we took parts of his children to make more of her. We understood him then.

Todd squeezes his eyes shut, tears running down his face. He begins swaying back and forth as the voice continues:

VOICE (CONT'D)
He didn't like that either. And now we can't go. Now this is where I live.
(pause)
Are you tired? Would you like to lie down here for a little while?

Todd suddenly clamps his hands to his ears and screams:

TODD
Stop talking!

The voice is silent. Todd stares around the barn. William and Annabelle are watching him. Todd looks back up at the loft. Nothing is there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

WILLIAM

Todd... Do you want to leave now?

Todd slowly lifts his hands up to his face. His eyes are wet.

TODD

I can't trust my own eyes anymore, I think.

Todd gestures at the horses.

TODD (CONT'D)

Did this... Did this really happen?

WILLIAM

Come on. We're going to get out of here. We're going to leave this place.

TODD

There's worse things than dying, you know.

WILLIAM

I know. Come on.

Todd follows William and Annabelle outside of the barn.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

William, Annabelle and Todd stand by the well. William looks up into the rain.

Todd reaches for the rope to the well's bucket. He pulls on it, trying to pull the rope up, but cannot. The bucket appears to be stuck on something. Frustrated, Todd throws down the rope, lifts his head to the sky and opens his mouth, drinking the rain.

WILLIAM

God damn this storm.

ANNABELLE

The sooner we get out of here, the better.

WILLIAM

What do we do about Sam?

ANNABELLE

He's dead, William.

William is silenced for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLIAM

I'd like to know who's doing this to us,
that's all. If they'd just show
themselves...

Todd shakes his head, wiping the rain across his face.

TODD

I don't think you want that at all.

ANNABELLE

Come on, William.

William stares at Todd and Annabelle.

WILLIAM

You two seriously want to just leave
here. Without our gold?

TODD

(shivering)

Are you fucking kidding me? You want to
look for the gold, William, that's fine.
I'm sure it's somewhere around here. Good
luck with that. I just want to get out of
here and forget everything about this
place. Then I'll be happy forever.

(pause)

Shit.

Annabelle puts her hand on William's chest.

ANNABELLE

We've got our guns. We can get more.

William looks at her; she holds his gaze. Todd looks around,
then walks past them, towards the front of the house. After a
moment, Annabelle and William follow him.

EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Todd, Annabelle and William reach the front yard. William
stops, looking into the house.

WILLIAM

Just let me... I need to go in and say
goodbye to Sam.

Annabelle nods. Todd looks around, quickly wiping rain off
his face.

TODD

Hurry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

William nods and walks into the front door of the house. A moment later he steps out, lantern held aloft.

WILLIAM
He's not here!

Annabelle and Todd look at each other, quickly, then move towards the house.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Sam's chair is empty. William, Todd and Annabelle look around the deserted room.

TODD
They took his body. Let's go.

WILLIAM
What? Who did? Why would they do that?

TODD
Lots of reasons. How should I know?

Annabelle looks sharply at William.

ANNABELLE
What?

WILLIAM
Maybe... Maybe he's not dead.

ANNABELLE
You checked for a pulse yourself, William.

WILLIAM
Maybe I was wrong. Maybe I missed it.

TODD
He looked pretty dead, man.

WILLIAM
I could've been wrong. Maybe he just walked out of here.

TODD
He didn't look like he was about to start walking anywhere.

WILLIAM
Well, he's not here right now!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TODD

I agree with you there, William. And I think we should go.

William looks at Annabelle, who slowly nods.

ANNABELLE

He was dead, William. The infection from the bullet wound spread to his heart. Whoever took his body took it to keep us here.

William looks at the floor, then looks outside.

WILLIAM

The first thing I'm gonna do when we get to Mexico is hire some guys and send them up here to burn this place to the fucking ground.

TODD

That might not be such a good idea.

WILLIAM

I don't care.

William walks out into the rain.

EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Todd, Annabelle and William move over towards the cornfield. When they reach the rows, William suddenly reaches down and picks an object up off the ground.

WILLIAM

It's Sam's shoe.

William holds the leather boot out, for Annabelle and Todd to see.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

He's got to be somewhere in the cornfield!

Todd and Annabelle look at each other.

ANNABELLE

We've got to head this way anyway.

WILLIAM

Come on!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

William pushes his way into the cornfield, roughly shoving rows to the side. Todd and Annabelle move after him, along the trail he is creating.

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

William stumbles through the cornfield, Annabelle and Todd close behind him. Abruptly he stops, reaching another trail going through the cornfield.

TODD
What's this?

WILLIAM
Another trail.

William looks closely at the stump of a broken cornstalk. He feels at it with his thumb.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Someone came through here recently.

TODD
Let's just get out of here.

WILLIAM
Come on. We have to head in this direction.

William begins heading down the trail he has just discovered, his feet sinking slightly in the mud of the trail as he walks. Annabelle follows him.

Todd looks around the cornfield, squinting against the rain. After a moment, he follows Annabelle and William.

EXT. CORNFIELD - MOMENTS LATER

William and Annabelle stumble against the rain. Visibility is poor in front of them.

They stagger into the clearing with the wooden cross. The form of the scarecrow is tied to the cross. William looks up at the scarecrow, wiping rain from his eyes.

Annabelle backs away, clearly terrified to be near the scarecrow.

ANNABELLE
Come on, William.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLIAM

I could've sworn this is where we were
before...

Todd steps into the clearing.

TODD

What?

WILLIAM

Well, at least we're headed in the right
direction.

TODD

Wait a minute.

Todd is looking up at the scarecrow intently.

TODD (CONT'D)

Something's wrong.

William squints up at the scarecrow, barely able to see
through the rain. Just then, the scarecrow on the cross
suddenly twists and emits a moaning sound.

Todd, Annabelle and William all take a quick step away from
the cross. The scarecrow arches its back and twists against
the ropes that are binding it to the cross.

ANNABELLE

(almost crying)

Let's go!

TODD

No, wait...

Todd moves closer to the scarecrow.

TODD (CONT'D)

Clyde?

The scarecrow's body twists again, sharply. William steps
forward.

WILLIAM

My god. Those are Clyde's clothes.

TODD

Is it him?

William looks at Todd.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WILLIAM
Let's find out.

William hands his lantern to Annabelle.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Here.

William carefully approaches the wooden cross, removing a knife from his boot.

With the knife between his teeth, William climbs up the back of the cross, carefully avoiding contact with the scarecrow, which is no longer moving. Todd and Annabelle watch William anxiously. Todd has a hand on the butt of his gun.

Using the knife, William begins cutting at the ropes wrapped around the scarecrow's body.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
He's tied up with hemp. Hold on a second.

Todd moves closer to the scarecrow. The scarecrow writhes and moans again. The moan is muffled by the burlap sack over its head. Todd looks nervous.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Hang on, Clyde. Don't move so much, we're cutting you loose.

The scarecrow continues writhing. In a moment, William has cut through the rope around the scarecrow's right arm and torso.

The scarecrow sways forward, then slips out of the remaining ropes and falls forward off the cross. Todd reaches out to catch the scarecrow. The scarecrow hits Todd and they both fall to the ground.

William jumps off the cross and moves over to Todd, who rolls away from the scarecrow. Todd rises to his feet.

The scarecrow twists miserably on the ground, as if barely able to move its body. Annabelle, William and Todd look down at it, hesitating.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Here, hold on.

William bends down and reaches for the burlap sack over the scarecrow's head. Annabelle edges away. Todd surreptitiously reaches into his holster and removes his pistol, cocking it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

William pulls off the burlap sack, revealing Clyde's face. Clyde's eyelids, mouth and nostrils have been sewn shut with black yarn. The flaps of Clyde's ears have been sewn forward to the sides of his face. Clyde struggles to speak, pulling at the stitches on his mouth and eyes, but is only able to moan.

ANNABELLE

Oh my god.

William and Todd stare at Clyde with horror. After a moment, William leans forward with his knife, as if to cut the stitches on Clyde's face. He hesitates near the yarn on Clyde's mouth as Clyde writhes in pain.

WILLIAM

Uh... Annabelle, do you have a scalpel or something in your bag?

ANNABELLE

Yeah, sure.

Annabelle begins fumbling through her satchel.

WILLIAM

We'd better use that.

Todd leans forward to pluck some of the hay out of Clyde's shirt, which is bloody in spots. Todd pauses, then feels lightly at Clyde's chest.

TODD

Uh...

Todd presses down on Clyde's chest, hesitates, then pushes up Clyde's shirt.

Clyde's torso has been torn open and filled up with bloody hay. Broken ribs poke up through the sides of Clyde's torso, as if his sternum was cracked away from his rib cage. Wads of dried hay have been plunged into Clyde's stomach and lungs.

WILLIAM

Oh.

William staggers back a step, looking faint. Todd, as if unable to stop himself, pulls at Clyde's sleeves. Clyde's wrists have been slit, and hay has been shoved into the cuts.

Clyde continues to twist and moan on the ground as Todd checks his body.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ANNABELLE

What... What did they do to him?

William's looks up at her, his face crumpling.

WILLIAM

What is going on...

Clyde suddenly stops moving, then his head slowly lolls to the side, to face Todd. With his stitched-shut lips and eyes, Clyde smiles widely up at Todd. Todd recoils in fear.

TODD

What the hell!

Todd shoves at Clyde's head. Clyde's head immediately rolls away from his body, into the rows of corn, out of sight. Clyde's neck is a bloody stump, from which a few stalks of dried hay protrude.

Clyde's body lies still on the ground, hay sticking out of his clothes.

Todd rises to his feet, shaking uncontrollably. William is still squatting, looking at Clyde's body, in shock.

WILLIAM

What is going on here?

ANNABELLE

Come on, William. Get up. We need to go.

Todd, still not looking at William or Annabelle, looks around the cornfield.

TODD

We're never going to leave here.

ANNABELLE

Yes, we are, Todd. We're going right now.
Come on.

TODD

No, we're not.

Todd's mouth twists, as if he is about to cry.

TODD (CONT'D)

I don't want to die here. I don't want to
have to stay here.

ANNABELLE

Come on, then.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Todd ignores Annabelle, looking around the cornfield. Just beneath the sound of the wind whipping the cornstalks, several voices can be heard, whispering under the wind. The voices sound like those of small children. They babble over each other, possibly in foreign tongues, their words impossible to understand.

Annabelle watches Todd. Todd stands, transfixed.

TODD

Tell me you hear it now, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

Hear what?

(pause)

I just hear the wind.

Todd looks around.

TODD

They say I'm next.

ANNABELLE

No, you're not, Todd. No one is. We're getting out of here.

William shakes his head and rises to his feet.

WILLIAM

Come on, Todd. You're hearing things.
It's just the storm.

Todd shakes his head slightly. The voices grow louder over the wind, becoming urgent and angry.

TODD

(softly)

No, it isn't.

Todd steps forward, towards the cornfield, almost stumbling over Clyde's body. Todd looks down at Clyde's body, his face stiffening. Todd then looks up, clear-eyed, and addresses the cornfield:

TODD (CONT'D)

You may not let me leave here, but I won't let you take me.

With that, Todd places the barrel of his pistol in his mouth, cocking the hammer.

WILLIAM

Todd! No!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Todd pulls the trigger. The round bullet sends blood and bone fragments spurting out of the back of Todd's head.

Todd stays upright for a moment, looking dazed, then blood flows from his open mouth and he crumples to the ground, dead.

William stands above Todd, astonished. Todd's body lies next to Clyde's. Annabelle grabs at William's arm, pulling at him.

ANNABELLE

Come on!

William mutely follows her further into the cornfield. Annabelle begins to run; William follows.

EXT. CORNFIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Annabelle and William rush through the cornfield, occasionally slipping in the mud, with Annabelle in the lead. Annabelle is running intently through the corn. William staggers after her, trying to keep up.

WILLIAM

Slow down!

ANNABELLE

Come on!

Annabelle continues rushing forward, through the cornstalks. The wind and rain whips into her face, and the cornstalks are being blown back towards her.

Behind her, William slips and falls, flat on his face, in the mud. He struggles to his feet, slips and falls back down again. Grabbing onto the cornstalks, William hauls himself upright and stumbles forward again.

He can no longer see Annabelle; she is too far ahead. William runs forward, in her general direction.

WILLIAM

Annabelle!

William's words are drowned out by a sudden clap of thunder. He plunges forward, through the cornstalks.

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

Annabelle continues racing forward, still lighter on her feet than William. She runs through the dark cornfield, shouting out:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNABELLE

We've got to be near the road by now!

There is no response from behind her. Still running, Annabelle looks over her left shoulder. There is nothing behind her but cornstalks. She comes to a stop, looking back.

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

William continues running, looking around. Inside the cornfield, it is impossible to determine what direction he is headed in.

Winded, William slows to a stop, looking around. He is surrounded on all sides by thick cornstalks.

WILLIAM

(screaming)

Annabelle!

There is no response. William gasps for air, looking around.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Christ.

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

Annabelle puts her hands to her mouth and shouts, trying to be heard over the rain.

ANNABELLE

William!

There is no response from the cornfield. Annabelle takes a step forward, moving deeper into the cornfield, then stops, looking behind her, in the general direction of the trail.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Come on, William... Where are you?

Annabelle shifts her feet nervously, her eyes wide with fear, unwilling to move in either direction.

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

Deeper in the cornfield, William catches his breath.

WILLIAM

Annabelle!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

William looks around, then takes a step forward and freezes. A few feet to William's right, a dark figure is just visible moving in the cornstalks. The figure immediately disappears, obscured by the cornstalks.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Annabelle?

William moves in the direction of the figure, peering forward anxiously. Suddenly, a child's giggle comes from directly behind William.

William stops moving and stands very still. He slowly moves his right hand onto the butt of his pistol, staring straight ahead into the cornfield.

In a sudden motion, William spins around, drawing his pistol out in front of him. No one is there. William takes a step back, brandishing his pistol.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Who's there?

In the cornstalks directly in front of William, in a space in between two haphazard rows, the figure briefly appears again, passing between the rows.

The figure's body is lumpy and large and the figure is wearing a hat; it is clearly not Annabelle, but it is too dark to see any further details before the figure moves behind another row of corn.

William cocks the hammer on his pistol, nervously moving forward, looking around as he does so. He whispers, almost to himself:

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Annabelle?

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

Annabelle looks around again, then clenches her jaw and begins moving forward, deeper into the cornfield.

ANNABELLE

William!

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

William looks around, shielding his eyes from the rain. Lightning flashes, followed immediately by thunder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A wild animal cry comes from the cornstalks near William. The cornstalks move, as if something small is running through them.

William jumps, twisting his gun towards the direction of the sound. Nothing is visible in the cornstalks. A low, gentle human sobbing softly comes from the cornstalks near William. William's face fills with fear.

WILLIAM

Who's out there?

There is no response, and the sobbing noise gradually fades away. William looks around.

Lightning flashes, and, ten feet away from William in the cornfield, the figure of a scarecrow is visible. The scarecrow pushes its way through the cornstalks, angrily making its way through the field, towards the house.

As William stares at the scarecrow, the scarecrow suddenly stops moving and turns its head towards William. The scarecrow has no eyes or face, just a burlap sack. The scarecrow and William face each other, frozen, then the scarecrow cocks its head slightly.

The lightning ends and the field is immediately dark again; the scarecrow is no longer visible. William quickly raises his gun and fires towards the direction of the scarecrow. The gunshot echoes through the field.

There is no response from the section of the cornfield William just aimed at. William pauses for a moment, staring ahead, then quickly breaks his pistol and begins urgently reloading it, looking in front of himself while doing so.

William's hands are shaking so badly that he can barely load his pistol, but he finally manages to do so, instantly cocking his pistol again and holding it out in front of him. He looks around the field, backing up.

In front of William, the cornstalks move to the side; the dark figure of the scarecrow is briefly visible passing through the stalks, towards William. William points his gun at the figure, but does not fire as the figure immediately disappears from view.

William's lower jaw is trembling, and he breathes in short gasps.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Shit...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A splashing sound comes from William's other side; he spins around, aiming his pistol in this direction, his hand shaking. Just then, a howling noise, like that of an animal in pain or dying, comes from in front of William; he twists in that direction with a sharp cry.

From behind William, a dark figure suddenly bursts through the cornstalks, moving directly towards William's back. William spins around, stumbling away, and immediately fires at the dark figure.

The figure instantly comes to a stop, then takes a step backwards and falls back in between two stalks of corn, unmoving. The figure lies still on the ground, shrouded by the darkness of the cornfield. Only the figure's shoes are visible.

William falls to his knees in front of the figure, sobbing hysterically.

EXT. CORNFIELD - EARLY MORNING

The sun's first rays shine over the cornfield. The rain has ceased, though the cornstalks are still damp in appearance. The morning light is faint, but illuminates the entire cornfield.

William is still sitting in the mud. Annabelle's body lies in front of him. Her eyes are shut. The blood on her forehead has congealed and is almost black around the bullet wound where William shot her.

William stares straight ahead, his face blank. His hair is pasted to his head. He looks aimlessly into the cornfield.

EXT. CORNFIELD - MORNING

The cornfield is now bright with the morning sun. William is still sitting next to Annabelle, staring straight ahead. He then turns his head and looks at Annabelle.

Reaching out, William puts his hand to the side of Annabelle's face. His jaw trembles, then he takes his hand away, looks away from Annabelle's corpse and rises to his feet.

William's gun lies several feet away from him, half-buried in the mud. William moves towards the rows of corn, then freezes as a sudden growling sound comes from directly in front of him.

William looks down slowly, his body still. Dog is standing in front of William, between two haphazard rows of corn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dog's hackles are up and Dog's teeth are bared. Dog snarls at William, saliva dripping from its mouth.

WILLIAM
(softly)
Dog?

Dog growls again, eyes fixed on William's. All the hairs on Dog's back are sticking up straight.

William slowly reaches into his coat, for his gun. His gun is not there. William realizes this, then slowly looks for his gun. William's gun is about a yard in front of him. The gun is between William and Dog.

William carefully begins edging forward, toward the gun. Dog growls again, crouching down. William comes to a stop, then, when Dog does not move, begins moving towards the gun again.

Dog lunges forward at William, snarling. William raises his arm to block Dog and Dog's teeth clamp down on William's forearm. William yells.

The weight of Dog knocks William to the ground. William flails against Dog, trying to pull his bloody arm out of Dog's mouth. The dog thrashes its head wildly, mangling William's arm. William screams.

William rolls over onto Dog, yanking his arm out of Dog's teeth. A chunk of William's arm is left in Dog's jaw. Dog immediately twists away from William's grasp and bites onto William's upper leg, tearing at William's flesh.

William yells again, then lifts his other leg up and kicks Dog in the head. The blow knocks Dog back, away from William, towards William's gun. The dog scrambles, regaining its balance.

William immediately rises to his feet. He sees that Dog is nearer to the gun than him, then turns and runs. Limping badly, William stumbles forward through the cornfield, in the general direction of the trail.

Dog is immediately after William, running quickly through the cornfield. The fur on the front of Dog's body is slick with William's blood.

William runs as fast as he can, plowing through the cornstalks. He looks behind himself and can see Dog rushing up just behind him, growling. William plunges forward.

Wounded, William cannot possibly outrun Dog, and Dog is gaining fast. Dog is within ten feet of William's heels as William stumbles forward.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Dog comes closer, snapping at William's ankles. Then Dog suddenly comes to a stop, staring straight ahead.

William continues desperately running forward, oblivious to the fact that Dog is no longer directly behind him.

Suddenly, William bursts out of the cornfield, into the light. Blinded, William squints, trying to shield his eyes from the sun. A gunshot booms from directly in front of him.

William's chest explodes. He falls back into the cornfield.

EXT. TRAIL - MORNING

A group of ten Confederate soldiers stand on the trail, looking at something on the ground. Half of them are perched on top of horses; the others hold the horses' reins. One man, JOHNSTON, is holding a smoking rifle. He looks down at the object on the ground with evident revulsion.

JOHNSTON

What the hell is that?

One of the men shakes his head, moving closer.

On the ground, with half of its body inside the field, lies a medium-sized furry creature. It is dead, a wide, blood-soaked bullet wound gaping in the soft white fur of its chest. The creature has a face like a furry pig's; it is the same type of creature that Sam shot.

A confederate soldier with a thick mustache leans forward and spits, then squints up at the house in front of them.

MUSTACHED SOLDIER

That's the damned ugliest thing I've ever seen.

JOHNSTON

(laughs nervously)

That thing sure jumped out at us, didn't it? Gave me a scare.

One of the men on a horse, wearing a more elaborate uniform, clears his throat. This is the CAPTAIN.

CAPTAIN

Well, unless you're fixing to eat it, leave it alone. Johnston and Kormer, you two go check out that house and barn. I'm sure they've moved on if they came this way, but just make sure nothing's there. The place looks abandoned and it wouldn't have been a bad spot to spend the night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Johnston and another, red-haired man step away from the group, towards the cornfield.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

The rest of us will continue. You two water your horses and give them some grain; see what you can find. You can catch up with us later in the day.

Johnston and Kormer nod, pulling their horses with them.

The captain and the seven other soldiers continue down the trail. Leading their horses, Johnston and Kormer step into the cornfield and begin working their way through the tall stalks, towards the house. A light breeze sways the cornstalks that surround them.

FADE OUT

THE END