

Caged Birds

Written by
Jessica Traxler

May 1, 2008

justkissalready.com
contact@justkissalready.com

FADE IN:

EXT. CATTLE RANCH - MORNING (TEXAS, 1915)

It's bright out. And hot.

MOVE ALONG, at least half a dozen MEN busy about their duties on the ranch: TWO MEN try to repair a broken water main, a MAN tends to a horse's cut ankle, another MAN repairs a broken fence, an OLD MAN with a ragged, mangy DOG feeds the livestock, and a YOUNG BOY cleans farming equipment.

WRANGLING BIN

TWO MEN try to wrangle a mustang but the horse is far too wild for them. One of the men is knocked over and the horse wildly circles the bin.

He stands. He tries to grasp the ropes dangling from the beast.

The second man grabs hold but the horse merely drags him along the bin before the man let's go and flies into a wooden post. This is MR. HENRY, 60, the crotchety and stern ranch owner.

A small CROWD gathers around the bin.

The horse continues to NEIGH and trot all over the bin.

MR. HENRY
(Texas drawl)
SOMEBODY FIND CRANE! NOW!

MOVE ON, the young boy, SAMUEL, 10, runs off.

OUTHOUSE

He raps on the door.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
I ain't done.

SAMUEL
Granddaddy need you at the bin!

A beat.

A bearded, attractive MAN in denim and rancher's shirt breaks from the outhouse. This is CRANE WILSON, 36, a lonely cowboy.

He takes a look at the commotion at the bin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. HENRY (O.S.)
CRANE! GET YOUR SORRY ASS OVER HERE
NOW!

He puts on a pair of gloves from his back pocket. He runs over.

WRANGLING BIN

Crane hops the bin. The horse maintains it's resistance.

Crane approaches it calmly, easing his way toward it.

CRANE
(easy)
Hey, now. What's all the fuss
about?

The horse NEIGHS at Crane. It moves away.

Crane steps in his path.

Wherever the horse moves Crane moves before him. He blocks his path, but stays harmless.

Gradually, the horse calms realizing there's no place to go and that Crane is not a threat.

The horse is quiet and still, but SNORTS when Crane gets too close.

CRANE (CONT'D)
Alright. Alright...

Crane carefully detaches the lariat from his belt. The horse jumps a little.

Crane whips the rope above his head slowly.

The horse neighs LOUDLY.

Crane throws the rope and catches the horse's neck in the loop. The horse goes wild, but Crane holds steady.

CRANE (CONT'D)
Jose! JOSE!

JOSE, a Latino man, hops the fence into the bin.

The mustang tries to take off with Crane.

Jose lassos the horse's hind legs. The horse tumbles to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The small crowd CHEERS. All except Mr. Henry.

Another MAN approaches the horse with a hot, branding iron. Crane and Jose hold tight to their ropes as the horse is branded.

CHEERS once again.

MR. HENRY'S POV - SAMUEL

Samuel HOOTS and HOLLERS.

A sneer inhabits Mr. Henry's face.

INT. CATTLE RANCH - BARN - CONTINUOUS

Crane ENTERS the barn.

A MAN a few years older than Crane cleans blood from his hands with a rag. This is RICHARD TANNER, 46, a veteran ranch hand and animal caretaker.

RICHARD

Nice how you handled that mustang.

Crane nods a 'thank you'.

A beat.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Her leg is busted up real good.
She's got to be put down. Didn't
think it was right not to tell you.

CRANE

(softly)
Shit.

RICHARD

Want me to do it?

Crane considers Richards offer a moment.

MR. HENRY (O.S.)

For Christ sake, just shoot the
damn thing!

BARN DOOR

Mr. Henry stands in the doorway with Samuel beside him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. HENRY (CONT'D)
There's more work to be done around
here.

Mr. Henry tugs on Samuel's sleeve as he turns to EXIT.

SAMUEL
No. I want to stay.

MR. HENRY
Come on, now, Sammy.

SAMUEL
No. I want to stay with Crane and
Bette.

MR. HENRY
That ain't nothing for you to see.
So, come on...

Samuel shakes his head.

Mr. Henry takes a breath, confused and embarrassed in front
of his ranch hands.

CRANE
Samuel. Go on with your granddaddy.

Hesitantly the boy EXITS the barn.

SAMUEL'S POV - BARN

He watches as Crane and Richard take Bette, a chestnut
colored Clydesdale, behind the barn.

His grandfather stands watch over the unseen event.

Mr. Henry notices Samuel staring. He motions for him to enter
the house.

Samuel makes his way toward the farmhouse.

A beat.

GUNSHOT!

Samuel stops and notices Bette's hind legs on the ground.

Another SHOT!

Crane appears from behind the barn, gun in hand. He storms
into a bunkhouse.

INT. CHURCH - DAY (ST. LOUIS)

In a small, one-room building, a full congregation of African-Americans dressed in their Sunday best SING along with the choir.

A WOMAN in the second row sings along.

The MAN beside her dozes off.

She takes notice and discreetly nudges him awake.

The man nods awake sleepily.

This is LARK MOOREHOUSE, 28, a disaffected housewife. And her husband, THOMAS MOOREHOUSE, 40, a hard-working farmer content with his life and its routine.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

All the WHITE CUSTOMERS have left with their items. Lark is the only one left in the store.

CLERK

You want something, gal?

LARK

Yes.

She approaches the counter. She lays her items down.

The clerk rings her up.

They exchange money.

Lark turns to EXIT, but--

LARK (CONT'D)

Sir. I don't think I was given the right change.

CLERK

(nose in newspaper)

What you say, gal?

LARK

My change.

He looks up, annoyed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARK (CONT'D)
You didn't give me the right
change.

CLERK
What?! Yes, I did.

He turns back to his paper.

LARK
No, see, I gave you--

CLERK
Look here, I'm tired of you Negras
coming in here and getting all
uppity about every little damn
thing! Now, I gave you the correct
change--

LARK
But--

CLERK
If you have a problem with the way
I run my own damn store than I
suggest you carry yourself
elsewhere! Otherwise, walk your
tail on out of here and quit
bothering me with your nonsense!

Frustrated tears build in her eyes.

LARK
I'm sorry, sir. Goodnight.

His eyes follow her as she EXITS the store.

INT. CATTLE RANCH - BUNKHOUSE - SUNDOWN

The cowboys ENTER, beat and tired from a hard day's work.

Mr. Henry ENTERS.

MR. HENRY
Good work. But let's get a little
more hustle on things. We can move
all that cattle better next time
and let 'em graze in Keller's
Pasture. But first I want those
horses broken and branded.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks around the room at the banal faces staring back at him.

MR. HENRY (CONT'D)
 Alright.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a stack of money.
 He hands out cash to each ranch hand.

MR. HENRY (CONT'D)
 (clears throat)
 Goodnight.

He EXITS.

Crane counts his money. A sour look comes over his face.
 Crane EXITS.

EXT. CATTLE RANCH - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

CRANE
 Mr. Henry.

Mr. Henry turns.

CRANE (CONT'D)
 I ain't get all my money.

MR. HENRY
 No, of course you didn't, son.

CRANE
 You wanna tell me why?

MR. HENRY
 Expenses. For that horse you shot.

CRANE
 And how exactly is that my doing?

MR. HENRY
 Well, seeing as how that coyote never would've gotten in through that fence, and taken a bite out of my horse if you fixed it like I told you to, I wouldn't be out of a good mare.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRANE

And when was I supposed to fix that fence? When you had me moving cattle, breaking in steeds, running this way, running that way...

MR. HENRY

Look here boy, no matter how you slice it, it was your fault my horse got all chewed up! And now you have to pay for it!

CRANE

I want my money. And if you don't give it to me, I'm fitting to take it.

Mr. Henry approaches Crane.

MR. HENRY

Don't you ever threaten me, boy! You puff your chest out to me once more, and you'll be standing in the bread lines with the rest of the bums.

Crane reaches behind him to draw his pistol-- but the front door opens and Samuel EXITS.

SAMUEL

What's all the fussing?

Crane relaxes his hand.

MR. HENRY

Nothing. Just having a talk with Crane here. Ain't that right?

CRANE

Sure is. Me and your granddaddy just working some things out.

SAMUEL

(suspicious)
Alright.

Samuel ENTERS the house.

CRANE

This ain't over.

MR. HENRY

No. I don't think it is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Crane EXITS.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thomas climbs in bed.

He looks over at Lark, trying to tell if she's asleep.

He decides she is and rolls over to his side.

Lark opens her eyes and she stares out the window.

Thomas blows out the lantern. The room goes dark.

EXT. CATTLE RANCH - BUNKHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The ranch hands ENTER drunk with LAUGHTER.

Crane stops. He notices a light is on in the farmhouse.

Richard eyes follow where Crane's attention lies.

RICHARD

You're full of whiskey.

CRANE

Steady as a rock though.

Crane EXITS.

INT. FARMHOUSE - SITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Henry sits at a card table with THREE other MEN about his age. One of which is a slick, oily-looking MAN in expensive clothes, puffing on a cigar. This is LUCIOUS VAN PELT, 59, the town's gold rush pioneer.

LUCIOUS

Three of a kind, gentlemen.

The two men at the table GROAN.

Mr. Henry eyes him suspiciously.

LUCIOUS (CONT'D)

(off his look)

What? Lady luck is on my side.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. HENRY
(stern)
I beg to differ.

CRANE (O.S.)
Mr. Henry.

All four men turn to Crane standing in the doorway.

MR. HENRY
What in the hell are you doing in
my house uninvited?!

CRANE
I was hoping we could finish our
"conversation."

MR. HENRY
I ain't got nothing to say.

LUCIOUS
What conversation?

MR. HENRY
You mind what's yours--

CRANE
Mr. Henry here owes me some money.

LUCIOUS
Borrowing from the help, Hank?

CRANE
Stealing's more like it.

MR. HENRY
You got some nerve--

LUCIOUS
Get in here boy.

Crane steps into the room.

LUCIOUS (CONT'D)
You play?

CRANE
Some.

Lucious kicks an empty chair toward Crane. Crane takes a
seat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LUCIOUS

This is what we'll do: you can play for what Hank owe you. And Hank can play for his land.

Lucious gives Mr. Henry a slick grin.

MAN #1

This don't sound right.

Man #2 nods in agreement.

MR. HENRY

Sound just right to me. Crane?

CRANE

Alright.

LUCIOUS

Good. Hank. Objections?

Mr. Henry takes a brief moment to mull it over.

MR. HENRY

Fine.

Lucious places the deck in front of Crane.

LUCIOUS

You deal. To keep ol' Hank here's suspicions of me in good faith.

INT. FARMHOUSE - SITTING ROOM - LATER

POT

Dozens of bills and the deed to Mr. Henry's farm lies in the pile.

TABLE

All five men play quietly.

(5 beats)

LUCIOUS

Crane, did you know that Hank and I have been friends since we were boys?

MR. HENRY

If you can call it that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCIOUS

Used to go swimming in the creek
behind the house.

MR. HENRY

You going to play or take a stroll
down memory lane?

LUCIOUS

Just saying what a nice piece of
land you got here, Hank. Could do
it some good instead of having cows
take a shit all over it.

MR. HENRY

It's got its purpose and that's
what I'm using it for.

MAN #2

Let's cut the bullying and play
gentlemen.

LUCIOUS

I'm offering you a pretty big chunk
of change, Hank, and being rather
polite about it. We both know I
could just snatch it right from
under you. I'd have three hotels
and a saloon built before you could
take piss.

Crane snickers.

MR. HENRY

We entertaining you, boy?!

LUCIOUS

Don't mind him. He's still sore the
good Lord took his Abbie and saw it
fit his daughter taken off with
that grifter.

MR. HENRY

(angry)

God sees fit for us to either win--

MAN #1

Or lose. I got nothing.

He folds.

MAN #2

Too rich for my blood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He folds.

MAN #1
Goodnight.

Both men stand.

MAN #1 (CONT'D)
Try not to do anything that'll make
it hard for the three of you to
sleep at night.

MR. HENRY
I sleep just fine.

LUCIOUS
Like a baby.

The two men EXIT.

LUCIOUS (CONT'D)
Show your hand cowboy.

CRANE
Full house.

Mr. Henry scoffs.

MR. HENRY
Four of a kind.

LUCIOUS
And here, all I have is...a
straight flush.

Lucious cackles. He reaches for the pot, but Mr. Henry grabs
his arm.

He turns Lucious' hand over-- there's an ace up his sleeve.

MR. HENRY
(growl)
You cheating snake!

LUCIOUS
Look here Hank--

MR. HENRY
You were going to take my land.
Right from under me!

LUCIOUS
It was a joke. It's just a card--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Without hesitation Mr. Henry stands, draws his pistol, and shoots Lucious in the chest!

Crane bolts from his chair.

Lucious grunts at his bloody wound and drools on himself.

His eyes turn up at Mr. Henry. Mr. Henry shoots again, hitting Lucious in the head! Lucious collapses on the table!

Crane and Mr. Henry draw on each other!

A beat.

MR. HENRY

I don't think this concerns you
none.

CRANE

How you figure?

After a moment, Mr. Henry gradually lowers his weapon.

MR. HENRY

Put the money in the card case.

Crane doesn't move.

MR. HENRY (CONT'D)

The money, the pot, put it in the
card case.

Crane eyes him cautiously a moment.

Keeping his pistol on him, Crane puts the whole pot in the case.

MR. HENRY (CONT'D)

Leave the deed. Take the case.

Mr. Henry takes a seat. He tosses his gun onto the table.

MR. HENRY (CONT'D)

That's more than what I owe you, so
you take that money and go. I don't
want see you around here no more.
Ever.

CRANE

And what you plan on doing?

MR. HENRY

You never mind that, boy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CRANE
Seems I should.

MR. HENRY
Not if I'm paying you to keep you
trap shut.

Crane stares at Lucious' lifeless body, his blood crawling
along the card table.

MR. HENRY (CONT'D)
I SAID 'GO' DAMNIT!

Crane grabs the case and turns to EXIT.

CRANE'S POV - MR. HENRY

Mr. Henry sits at the table with his back turned, head in his
hand.

Crane EXITS.

INT. FARMHOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Crane moves toward the door.

A DOOR CREAK from upstairs.

He stops.

He stares upstairs for a moment.

The cracked door to a room closes shut.

A beat.

Crane EXITS.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Crane flees through the woods and open fields.

Crane continues on through a stream.

He makes his way across and to another patch of woods.

He crosses through the woods again and comes upon train
tracks.

TRAIN WHISTLE!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He runs along the track! Crane heads in the direction of the train!

Crane runs faster toward the train!

He struggles to catch up!

He grabs hold of the handle to a box car. He tosses the card case inside.

He pulls himself up and hops into the car.

INT. BOX CAR - MORNING

BANG, BANG, BANG!

Crane awakes to a CONDUCTOR beating against the side of the car.

CONDUCTOR
Hey! Out of the car, buddy! This
ain't no motel!

Crane sleepily staggers out of the car carrying the card case.

The conductor hops out of the car, too.

CRANE
Where am I?

CONDUCTOR
Oklahoma. And don't let me catch
you in there again!

The conductor EXITS.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

Crane stretches and looks around the station. Nothing looks familiar to him.

He takes a seat on a bench.

He opens the card case and stuffs the money into his boot.

He approaches the road. East or west it all appears the same: long road, lots of grass.

He heads east.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS

Crane walking along the road under the hot sun.

A couple approaches in a Ford Model T. Crane extends his thumb, but they keep on down the road.

Crane bathes in a river.

Crane comes across a sheep farm. He approaches the front door, but the lady of the house EXITS pointing a rifle at him. Crane bolts.

Crane continues down the road. He spots a open field with a handful of horses quietly eating grass. He watches for a moment. Suddenly, a SHEEPDOG approaches the horses and BARKS at them, scaring the horses off.

A wagon with a FAMILY within trots near and stops beside him. The driver nods at him and Crane hops in. They EXIT.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - DAY

A TEENAGE BOY walks up, carrying a large sack, as Lark tends to her garden in the front yard. This is BENJAMIN LAFFERTY, 16.

LARK

Benjamin!

She approaches him.

He appears saddened.

LARK (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

BENJAMIN

I can't stay, Misses Moorehouse.

LARK

Well, that's alright. You can come by tomorr--

BENJAMIN

No, Misses, I can't. I can't stay here...in St. Louis. I'm leaving, Misses.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

I wanted to say 'goodbye' to you
and Mr. Moorehouse. You been good
to me, and my mama.

LARK

I don't understand. Why do you need
to leave?

BENJAMIN

Ain't safe. Not for no colored man.
Not in the south anyway. Just
trying to stay alive coming too
hard. And can't nobody make
something of themselves down here.

She grows quiet at the truth.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

They killed him, Misses. They
killed my brother. Stripped him
naked as the day he was born and
hung him from a tree. Folks around
here know it, but don't nobody do
nothing. We all too scared. And my
mama just about sick over it.

LARK

I reckon she ain't taking your
leaving all too well, either?

BENJAMIN

No, ma'am. That's why I need to ask
you to look after her for me.

Lark nods.

Thomas approaches.

THOMAS

Ben! How's it go?

BENJAMIN

Good, Mr. Moorehouse.

Thomas nods at Benjamin's sack.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

I'm leaving, sir.

THOMAS

Where to?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BENJAMIN

Up north, sir. New York, maybe.

Thomas nods.

He extends his hand.

They shake hands.

THOMAS

Good luck to you. You're a smart young man. Good things'll happen for you.

BENJAMIN

Thank you, sir.

Thomas EXITS, back to his chores.

LARK

You want something to eat? To take with you?

BENJAMIN

No, ma'am. My mama gave me plenty.

They hug.

The boy parts.

Lark watches solemnly as the boy makes his way down the road.

INT. CATTLE RANCH - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

THREE LAW MEN stand before Mr. Henry. They're BOI Agents: IRWIN, 50, a by-the-book operative, JONAS, 20, an attractive, flirtatious agent, and FRED, 33, a observant man with a dry humor.

Richard and Samuel stand by.

MR. HENRY

I knew he was trouble from the moment I let him on my farm.

RICHARD

Then why'd you let him on your farm, Henry?

Mr. Henry doesn't have an answer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IRWIN

No matter. He's a felon of the United States government now.

RICHARD

He ain't no murderer!

FRED

Until he kills a wealthy man in a innocent card game, then scampers off with the winnings.

RICHARD

He didn't do this. Not like it was said.

MR. HENRY

You calling me a liar?

RICHARD

I'm saying there's a chance the events that unfolded last night may not have happened like you say it did.

SAMUEL

Might be some truth in that.

Samuel glares at Mr. Henry.

FRED

You see something, son?

MR. HENRY

Samuel--

SAMUEL

Maybe. Depends.

IRWIN

On?

SAMUEL

What you plan on doing if you find him.

MR. HENRY

My grandson was fond of him. He's just a child.

IRWIN

(to Samuel)

Talk to him. Just talk to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAMUEL

Liar.

FRED

Young man, the United States government does not lie, so if you got something you want to say you ought to spit it out.

Samuel eyes his grandfather again.

Mr. Henry appears anxious.

A beat.

SAMUEL

I don't.

FRED

Well, then I suggest you carry yourself to bed and don't waste grown folks time.

Samuel looks to Mr. Henry.

He nods to his grandson.

Samuel EXITS.

MR. HENRY

Will you find him?

IRWIN

Yes, sir.

FRED

You bet your life.

JONAS

We always get our man.

RICHARD

Not him you won't.

FRED

And why is that?

RICHARD

He's been just about everywhere and knows damn-near everything. I reckon he'll make it so you don't ever find him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

IRWIN

Well, we believe we're smarter than
your cowboy.

EXT. INDIAN CAMPGROUND - SUNSET

The wagon stops. Crane gets off.

CRANE

(to Patriarch)

Thank you, sir.

He nods at Crane.

CRANE (CONT'D)

(to wife)

And to you as well ma'am.

She nods with a smile.

Wagon EXITS.

Crane looks about the scattered area.

He ENTERS and roams the desolate campground.

Sad eyes and painful glares come his way.

A SMALL GIRL runs up and playfully takes his hand.

Her MOTHER appears and snatches her from him.

CRANE (CONT'D)

(in Lipan)

Where is the chief?

She spits at his feet.

MOTHER

(Lipan)

White devil!

The small girl points to a tent.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(Lipan; to child)

No. He's bad.

Crane nods with a faint smile at the young girl.

He approaches the tent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

An APACHE YOUNG MAN blocks his way into the tent.

YOUNG MAN
(broken English)
What you want?

CRANE
The chief.

YOUNG MAN
No chief. Only shaman.

CRANE
I want to stay here for the night.
I have no other place to go.

The young man ENTERS the tent.

A beat.

He RETURNS.

YOUNG MAN
Enter. Be silent.

INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

Crane ENTERS the tent.

Before him sits an old, APACHE INDIAN WOMAN. This is priestess BIG BEAR, 104.

The woman smokes on a pipe. She looks him over.

BIG BEAR
(Lipan)
Sit, Long Bird.

He sits.

The young man ENTERS the tent and stands behind Crane.

BIG BEAR (CONT'D)
I know you mean no harm, Long Bird.
I am Big Bear.

CRANE
(Lipan)
I am--

BIG BEAR
I know who you are, Long Bird.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She puts her pipe down.

BIG BEAR (CONT'D)
 You seek refuge. You may stay
 amongst us, Long Bird. But your
 visit must be brief. I sense great
 danger around you.

Crane grows quiet at her prediction.

Finally, he nods.

EXT. INDIAN CAMPGROUND - NIGHT

Crane sits beside priestess Big Bear as a roaring fire burns
 before them.

Those among them circle around the fire as they watch SEVERAL
 INDIANS perform a ceremonial dance.

BIG BEAR
 (Lipan)
 I dreamed of you.

Crane turns to her.

BIG BEAR (CONT'D)
 I saw you amongst my people. And I
 see many events unfolding upon you.
 Some good. Some bad.

CRANE
 (Lipan)
 I already foresee the bad. Give me
 the good.

BIG BEAR
 Birds appeared. Two of them. They
 are trapped, in a giant cage,
 shrouded by lilacs. They yearned to
 be free from their prison.

Crane smiles.

BIG BEAR (CONT'D)
 And a woman. A woman came to you.

CRANE
 (chuckles)
 Is she beautiful?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIG BEAR
(serious)
She is good, and pure in heart.

CRANE
Who is she?

BIG BEAR
She had no face and was shrouded in
darkness.

CRANE
When will she come?

BIG BEAR
Three times. Before the full moon.

She hands him a slip of paper: a crude, caveman-like drawing
off two birds in a cage.

He smiles affectionately at the drawing.

She passes her pipe.

Crane takes it gratefully and smokes from it. Crane hands the
pipe back.

Gradually, the drug takes its toll on him.

His vision blurs and his hearing deafens.

A numbness takes over him and darkness circles around him.

EXT. OZARK MOUNTAINS - DAWN

Crane awakes beneath a heap of bearskin covers. Alone.

It's freezing. He wraps the bearskin blanket around him.

There's no one in sight.

Nervously, he pulls the sock from his jeans.

It's empty.

His gun is also missing.

Crane stands, nearly tripping over something: A pretty piece
of Native American jewelry: a necklace made with turquoise
and Wampum stones.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He appears disappointed, but accepts the "trade", and puts the necklace in his pocket.

Wrapping the bearskin blanket around himself he looks off into the distance. The sun's coming up.

He watches for a moment then takes off on a long dirt road.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - BATHROOM - MORNING

Lark sits in an iron bathtub.

She gazes out the window. Her face unexpressive in deep thought.

A beat.

A BLUE JAY lands on the window sill.

A faint smile sweeps across her face, knocking her out of her trance.

MONTAGE

Lark dresses.

She cooks breakfast.

She and Thomas eat quietly together.

Lark washes the dishes.

Lark irons a pile of clothes.

Lark on her hands and knees scrubs the kitchen floor.

Lark darns Thomas' socks.

She sweeps the front porch.

Lark hangs laundry on the line out back.

She feeds the chickens near the chicken coop.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. STABLE - CONTINUOUS

Lark ENTERS the barn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She feeds carrot sticks to each horse as she makes her way down the modest stable.

One of the horses in his stall NEIGHS continually and kicks at the stall door.

Lark approaches.

She attempts to give the horse a carrot but backs away, scared, when the horse continues its resistance against its stall.

The lock on the stall shakes and rattles with every kick.

Lark reaches her hand out to the horse slowly, to pet the animal, but the horse kicks once more at the stall door.

The lock busts. And the horse runs, freely, out of the stable.

Lark chases after it.

EXT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - CONTINUOUS

Lark runs into the front yard to catch a WHITE MAN in rancher's shirt and jeans on top of the defiant horse. It's Crane.

The horse tries to gallop and throw Crane off but Crane gains control.

The horse gives up and becomes still.

Crane hops off and holds onto the reins. He leads the horse to the open gate of the wooden fence.

CRANE
He yours, miss?

She nods.

LARK
Thank you.

CRANE
Are you the lady of the house,
ma'am?

She eyes him suspiciously.

LARK
What you doing here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRANE

Excuse me, ma'am?

LARK

Not many white folks around these parts. You lost?

CRANE

Something like that. I'm looking for work.

LARK

Sorry to say I have none.

CRANE

Well, thank you much.

She nods. He turns to EXIT.

CRANE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry ma'am, but where exactly am I?

LARK

St. Louis.

CRANE

Thank you, kindly.

He turns to EXIT again.

LARK

Hold on now.

He stops.

LARK (CONT'D)

You stay put a minute. I'll get you something to eat.

CRANE

No, ma'am.

Lark is taken aback.

CRANE (CONT'D)

It simply don't sit right with me to take someone's home cooked meal without having worked for it.

Lark is slightly taken with his nobility.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LARK

I insist.

CRANE

That's all well and good, but I'd
have to decline.

She thinks for a moment.

LARK

Wait.

She looks around nervously.

CUT TO:

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - KITCHEN - LATER

Lark watches through the window as Crane tends to her garden.

EXT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Crane takes notice of Lark's garden-- lilacs.

His mind drifts a moment. Didn't Big Bear say something about
lilacs?

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - MID-AFTERNOON

Thomas returns home. He ENTERS the front door.

Lark immediately ENTERS the foyer.

LARK

Thomas.

He removes his hat.

THOMAS

Yes.

LARK

I want to tell you--

THOMAS

You start dinner?

LARK

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS
Good. I'm-a wash up.

LARK
But I have something--

Crane interrupts, trotting downstairs in only an undershirt.

CRANE
Misses Moorehouse I want to thank
you for--

Crane and Thomas freeze at each other's presence.

A beat.

LARK
This is Mr. Wilson. He ain't from
here. He looking for work. And,
um... I told him if he did a few
chores 'round here, I'd--

She stops, noticing Thomas' stern glare.

CRANE
She ain't mean no harm. Just wanted
to help a stranger out. She's a
kind woman, your wife.

A beat.

CRANE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, for barging in like
this...

THOMAS' POV - CRANE

Thomas seethes at Crane, the half-dressed stranger, in his house.

THOMAS
Will you excuse me and my wife,
please?

Thomas takes Lark's arm. They EXIT.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

THOMAS
Why must you take in every stray
that wanders near our porch?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARK

I do no such thing!

THOMAS

First, that mongrel that chewed up my only pair of Sunday shoes. Then that girl who ran away from home all the way in Atlanta, that sick cat that spit up all over everything, Benjamin, and now a mooching white man, roaming the colored part of town! Why do you always have your hand out to others?!

FRONT FOYER

Crane puts his shirt back on.

He listens carefully.

KITCHEN

LARK

Mr. Anderson kicked that dog for a laugh everyday, and in front of his grandbabies. That girl's daddy was the reason she had to leave the way she did. He was cruel, and mean. I liked that cat. And the only reason he got so sick is cause you dropped kerosine in his drinking water. And Benjamin was a good boy. He needed work and we needed help.

Thomas opens his mouth--

LARK (CONT'D)

There's no harm in reaching a hand out to others. It's the *Christian* thing to do.

She's got him there. He's quiet.

THOMAS

Fine. But this is the last time. There's churches and shelters for these kind of folks. Especially his kind! Taking people in is too dangerous.

She nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

They EXIT.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - FRONT FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Crane heads for the door.

Lark and Thomas ENTER.

CRANE

I apologize for coming in like I did. I have a nasty habit of stirring up trouble, and I mean none onto you good people.

THOMAS

It's alright. You can stay for dinner. My wife tells me you've earned it.

Crane mulls over it for a moment.

LARK

I insist, Mr. Wilson. You've worked hard for a place at our table, the least we could do is allow you eat amongst us.

Crane smiles. He likes her femininity and manners.

Crane nods.

Lark ENTERS the kitchen.

Crane attempts to follow her, but Thomas holds him back.

THOMAS

(low; tense)

My wife is not a smart woman. Now, I knew that when I married her, but I still cared for her. She lets what she feels rule over her. It isn't her fault. She was brought up that way. You understand?

CRANE

No. But I happen to think she's the smartest woman I know.

Crane ENTERS the kitchen.

Hesitantly, Thomas follows.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Crane, Lark, and Thomas sit at the table, their meal before them.

Lark and Thomas join hands in prayer.

Crane is taken aback.

He joins hands with them.

THOMAS

Dear Lord, we thank you for the food we are about to receive. We are grateful and in your debt for our home, our land, and our freedom.

Crane watches them with their heads bowed.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Lord, we ask that you bless this food: let it give us strength to go on another day.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Amen.

LARK

Amen.

CRANE

Amen.

THOMAS

Well, this sure does smell good.

CRANE

Yes it does. Thank you.

LARK

You're welcome.

They pass the food around and eat.

(5 beats)

Crane eyes Lark and Thomas back and forth. Their eyes never leave their plates and their mouths only open to put food inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lark takes notice of Crane's staring.

LARK (CONT'D)
Is there something wrong with your
dinner, Mr. Wilson?

CRANE
No, ma'am. Just... It's usually not
this quiet in Texas at night.

THOMAS
(cold)
Heard it was.

CRANE
Oh, well, some nights you can hear
your own heartbeat-- like now-- but
other nights, nothing but
screechers and coyotes.

Lark smiles. Thomas shoots a glare at her. Her smile fades.

They each turn back to their dinners silently.

EXT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - FRONT PORCH - SUNSET

CRANE
You're good, kind people. Thank
you.

Lark hands him two dollars.

CRANE (CONT'D)
Oh, no, ma'am!

LARK
Take it. You worked hard. Use it
wisely.

He holds her hand longer than needed.

Thomas takes notice and interrupts: he extends his hand.

They shake.

Crane EXITS toward the road.

Thomas ENTERS the house.

Lark watches Crane as he moseys down the long, dirt road
toward town.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

Lark?

She ENTERS the house.

EXT. INDIAN CAMPGROUND - CONTINUOUS

MOVE ALONG, Fred, and Jonas question tribesmen about Crane's whereabouts. They're rude, forceful, and disrespectful toward the Apache people.

IRWIN

He approaches Big Bear and the young man.

IRWIN

You see this man?

He shoves Crane's 'wanted' poster in her face.

IRWIN (CONT'D)

Have you seen this man?!

She glares at him.

He grabs her. She shutters and YELPS.

The young man attempts to intervene, but Irwin hits him on his head with the butt of his pistol. The young man falls to the ground. His forehead bleeds.

Irwin shakes Big Bear. A Colt .45 falls from her person. Crane's pistol.

He picks it up.

IRWIN (CONT'D)

Where'd you get this?

Again, she's silent.

IRWIN (CONT'D)

Where did you get this, old woman?!

BIG BEAR

(Lipan)

May death befall you with horrible screams.

He eyes her, confused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IRWIN

Forget it.

He shoves her to the ground. She scuttles to the young man.

The agents EXITS.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

BED

They make love.

Lark appears withdrawn and distracted. Thomas continues on top of her.

She buries her face in his shoulder to avoid looking at him.

Thomas finishes and rolls over to his side of the bed.

Lark rolls over to her side of the bed quietly. Tears fall from her eyes.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

A small, skinny black BOY runs quickly down the road.

He turns into the Moorehouse property.

He runs up to the front door and BANGS on it loudly.

The door opens.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lark, in her nightgown and shawl, sits before the exhausted boy.

BOY

(out-of-breath)

Misses...my mama...she real...

LARK

Calm down. It's alright. Take a breath.

He takes a breath.

BOY

My mama, Misses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARK

What? What's wrong with your mama?!

BOY

She taken ill. Fell into a spell.
Ben said to find you if ever we
need anything. Said you the only
one my mama trust.

LARK

She hurt herself?

BOY

No, ma'am. But laid up in bed,
won't get out and won't eat. Just
lay there, crying all day.

LARK

Alright.

BOY

My sister, Nettie, told me to send
for you to pray over my mama case
she take a passing.

LARK

Alright. You sit right here. I'll
be down in a minute.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lark ENTERS.

Thomas is asleep in the bed.

LARK

Thomas, I got to go to Miss Hicks
place. She taken a turn for worse.

Thomas SNORES loudly.

Lark EXITS.

EXT. TOWN - CONTINUOUS

Lark ENTERS town.

LARK'S POV - WHOREHOUSE

Miss Rose's whorehouse is abuzz with drunken men, loose
women, and all types of gallivanting folks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

One of whom she happens to notice is Crane.

Lark watches as he and a RED-HAIRED WOMAN kiss and fondle one another on the porch.

Lark rides by quickly, noticing the small boy's interest in the busy whorehouse as well.

INT. WHOREHOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

BED

Crane climbs out of bed. The red-haired whore beside him.

RED-HAIRED WHORE
Where you off to?

Crane grabs his clothes and dresses.

CRANE
Just thought I'd rest some place
else.

RED-HAIRED WHORE
And where's that?

CRANE
I don't know. A patch of grass
somewhere.

RED-HAIRED WHORE
(chuckles dryly)
You'd rather sleep under the moon
on a cold, dark night, then in a
warm bed...with me? Well, you
really are a cowboy aren't you?

She sits up and lights a skinny cigar.

CRANE
I don't mean to--

She waves him off.

RED-HAIRED WHORE
Forget it. Quite alright. Just
thought you'd like a woman's
company for a little longer. And
vice versa.

CRANE
I'm afraid I can't afford to.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RED-HAIRED WHORE

I wouldn't have charged you. Lord knows the slop that come through here wouldn't know a woman from a hole in the ground. Nice to be with a man with some sense of decency. Hell, far as I'm concerned, you're the first real gentleman I seen in a good while. You got a sweetheart in Texas?

He shakes his head.

RED-HAIRED WHORE (CONT'D)

Shame. You're a good-looking man. Polite. Men like you make a woman wish she were married on a farm somewhere. Children running around...

CRANE

Don't seem that precious to me. Marriage all looks the same.

RED-HAIRED WHORE

Well, that's come you ain't never seen me and my Gid. Gideon. Sweetest man there was. And not a nickel to his name. He was a school teacher. Taught colored children and Indians, too. Didn't matter a hill of beans to him, he loved little ones.

CRANE

You're right. He does sound like a good man.

RED-HAIRED WHORE

(tears forming)

He was. Which is why I'll never understand why the Lord seen fit in taking him.

A beat.

CRANE

God and me haven't been on the best of speaking terms for awhile neither.

RED-HAIRED WHORE

You lose someone?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CRANE

No. Problem is I ain't got nobody.
Never had nobody.

RED-HAIRED WHORE

Well, that there is a true crime.
Cowboys: you're all always so sad.

She notices something heavy weighing on him.

RED-HAIRED WOMAN

You want to share, sugar?

CRANE

Did... Did you and your husband...
Did you eat together?

RED-HAIRED WHORE

Of course we did. But I think we
did more talking then eating. Even
if we barely had anything to say.

CRANE

And he was a smart man? You
believed him to be a smart man?

RED-HAIRED WHORE

Smarter than I ever was. Am.

CRANE

And he treated you like you was a
smart woman?

Her mind drifts with fond remembrance.

RED-HAIRED WHORE

My husband made me feel like I
owned the world. And he was the one
that gave it to me.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Lark looks up at the full moon, distracted by how big and
bright it shines.

CRASH! The wheel to the wagon breaks. She nearly falls off.

The horse stops.

Lark climbs down.

She inspects the wheel for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, now. You got some trouble?

She turns quickly. TWO HILLBILLIES emerge from the dark woods. They're dirty, toothless, and menacing.

They approach.

HILLBILLY #1

Aw... She look scared, Cletus.

CLETUS

Is that right, girl? You scared of old Ed and Cletus?

They chuckle.

ED

You ain't got to be scared. We just wanna talk to you...play with you.

Lark looks around nervously.

CLETUS

Ain't nobody here, sweetheart.

She cries.

ED

Aw, don't cry. Here, let me wipe them tears away.

She tries to run, but they grab hold of her. They push her back against the wagon.

Ed holds her arms. Cletus lifts her dress up.

Lark sobs.

CLETUS

Come on, now. It ain't going to hurt that bad.

He slides his hand up her leg.

A GUN CLICKS.

Ed freezes.

Crane appears with a pistol pointed at the back of his head.

CRANE

Let her loose.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He obeys. Lark breaks away from them.

Cletus makes a quick move to take the weapon from Crane, but fails. Crane hits him across the face with the pistol.

Ed tries his luck and receives a kick to the groin. He falls to the ground and gets another to the face. He clutches his bloody face.

Cletus staggers from the ground and slices Crane across the arm with a hunting knife.

Crane shoots him in the shoulder! Lark SCREAMS!

Ed CRIES OUT in pain.

Crane drops the gun; his arm hurts from the deep cut.

Lark takes the shawl from around her shoulders and wraps it around his bleeding arm.

Crane releases the horse from the wagon.

He motions for Lark to climb atop the horse.

She does. He climbs atop the horse as well, sitting behind her. He CLICKS his teeth and tugs on the reins.

The horse gallops down the road.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Crane and Lark ENTER the barn.

Crane sits atop a barrel of hay.

LARK

Stay put.

She EXITS.

Crane watches as she runs toward the house.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thomas awakes gradually.

THOMAS

Where were you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARK

I went to Miss Hicks' house,
remember?

THOMAS

I think.

Lark grabs a bottle of Iodine.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

What's that for?

LARK

(hesitates)

I scraped my leg against a pricker
bush...when the wagon broke down.

THOMAS

THE WAGON BROKE DOWN?!

LARK

Don't worry, or shout! You can get
it in the morning.

THOMAS

Where you off to?

LARK

To-to, uh, help... There's a cat
stuck in a snarl down the road a-
piece.

THOMAS

It's too late for you to be out
that far. Come to bed.

LARK

It ain't but a minute away. I'll be
back in no time. I swear.

She kisses his forehead.

Lark EXITS.

Thomas appears suspicious, but lies back down in bed.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Lark RETURNS with a bowl of hot water, the Iodine, a needle
and thread, and a long strip of linen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She tries to tend to Crane's wound, but can't get to it through his shirt.

Crane removes his shirt and undershirt.

Lark cleans his cut with hot water and iodine. Crane bites his lip as to not holler at the sting.

LARK

Hold still.

By kerosene lamp, Lark sews Crane's cut with a needle and thread.

LARK (CONT'D)

Thank you.

She dresses his stitch with the linen.

LARK (CONT'D)

You can stay here, in the barn tonight. But make sure you're quiet, and leave in the morning.

Lark grabs her lamp and turns to EXIT.

CRANE

Mrs. Moorehouse...

She turns back.

Crane means to speak but hesitates.

CRANE (CONT'D)

I think things happen for a reason. There ain't no accidents. Or mistakes.

LARK

I believe that very thing myself. Goodnight, Mr. Wilson.

CRANE

Thank you.

She EXITS.

EXT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - FRONT PORCH - MORNING

Thomas ENTERS. Lark follows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARK
Where you off to?

THOMAS
St. Charles.

LARK
See that man you selling them pigs
to?

THOMAS
Um-hm. Haven't seen that cowboy
around. Must've left St. Louis.

LARK
I reckon so.

Awkward silence...

THOMAS
Well...

Thomas descends the porch steps.

Lark watches him climb atop his horse attached to a cart
carrying three large pigs inside. She waves to him.

He takes off toward town.

Lark waits for Thomas to reach far enough down the road.

She heads toward the barn.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Lark ENTERS.

Crane is gone.

She appears somewhat disappointed by his absence.

INT. HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Ed and Cletus lie in separate hospital beds stitched and
bandaged.

Irwin and Fred show them the wanted poster.

ED
Yeah, that's him! Bastard!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLETUS

Yeah. He attacked us for no damn reason.

ED

Yeah. With some negra woman.

IRWIN

What negra woman?

ED

I don't know. We was just trying to help her--

CLETUS

Then that cowboy come from nowhere and attack us. The *both* of them.

FRED

Where'd the colored woman come from?

ED

Don't know.

FRED

But weren't you all trying to help her? That's what you said.

CLETUS

Look, I don't remember but she did. *They* did!

IRWIN

So some colored woman just appeared from the damn shadows to help a wanted felon attack the both of you?

Cletus nods.

FRED

Which one of you was attacked by the woman...and lost?

Ed and Cletus point to one another.

IRWIN

(annoyed)

Jesus. Alright. What the colored woman look like?

INT. WHOREHOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The red-haired whore bursts into the room.

Crane lies in her bed asleep. She shakes him awake.

RED-HAIRED WHORE
Darling, you have to go! Now!

CRANE
What? Why?

RED-HAIRED WHORE
I heard some folks in town talking.
A man fitting your favor is being
sought after by a pair of suits.
Law men from Texas.

CRANE
What?

RED-HAIRED WHORE
Something about you killing some
rich man playing cards.

Crane jumps out of bed and dresses quickly.

CRANE
You know where they was headed?

RED-HAIRED WHORE
No. Just something about you and
some colored woman messing around
with Ed and Cletus.

CRANE
Mrs. Moorehouse...

He takes a revolver from the nightstand.

CRANE (CONT'D)
Thank you, darling.

He kisses her quick on her cheek.

Crane escapes out the window.

EXT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Lark takes her laundry off the line.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She removes a sheet and is startled to find Crane standing before her.

LARK
What you doing here?!

CRANE
I need your help.

LARK
I can't.

CRANE
Mrs. Moorehouse-- Lark-- please.

LARK
I can't. I promised my husband. And
if it's money you want--

CRANE
I don't want no money from you. I'm
in some trouble. There's some law
men looking for me.

LARK
(taken aback)
You wanted, ain't you?

CRANE
I ain't commit no crime.

LARK
Then why are there law men after
you?!

CRANE
They think I killed a man--

LARK
YOU KILLED A MAN?!

CRANE
No, ma'am. Not like they say.

LARK
If the law after you, then you
must've done something.

CRANE
I think we both know that ain't
always the case.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LARK

Don't matter none. You can't be here.

CRANE

Lark--

LARK

No! You need to be on your way! I don't want no trouble!

Lark ENTERS the house.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Crane chases after her and bursts into the house.

CRANE

They want you, too!

LARK

You're a liar, Mr. Wilson.

CRANE

No, ma'am. They looking for you just as well.

LARK

I ain't do nothing to nobody.

CRANE

That ain't the story them hillbillies tell.

She's quiet with worry.

CRANE (CONT'D)

(sincere)

I think you ought to come with me.

LARK

I can't! I can't just up and go with you!

CRANE

I think it's best you do.

Lark's quiet a moment, taking note of the sincerity rather than danger in his tone.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Crane approaches her. He puts his hand over her mouth. He draws his pistol.

IRWIN (O.S.)
Misses Moorehouse! We'd like to
talk to you!

BANG, BANG, BANG!

CRANE
(whispers)
Keep quiet. We're leaving.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - FRONT FOYER - CONTINUOUS

BANG, BANG, BANG!!!

A beat.

Irwin, Fred, and Jonas bust open the door!

They ENTER carefully.

They look about the house.

No one.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Crane flees through the woods. He pulls Lark behind him.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - FRONT FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Fred ENTERS from the back.

FRED
Laundry still on the line and beans
on the stove. She just left.

Jonas ENTERS. He holds a picture frame. It's of Lark and Thomas in wedding attire.

JONAS
It's her.

IRWIN
We need to find them. Someone's
gotta stay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAS

I'll stay and wait for the husband.
They couldn't have got too far on
foot.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Crane continues to drag Lark behind him as they break through
the woods.

LARK

STOP! I don't want to go with you!!

He won't stop pulling her.

She digs her nails into his hand. He drops her wrist and
YELPS in pain.

She tries to run off, but he grabs her.

CRANE

You have to go, dammit!

LARK

No! I'll tell them the truth!

CRANE

They won't believe you! You know
that!

LARK

I--

IRWIN (O.S.)

CRANE WILSON!! MRS. MOOREHOUSE?!

They stand still.

He draws his pistol.

Crane takes Lark's hand and eases his way through the woods.

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

MAKE THIS EASY ON YOURSELF! COME
OUT, NOW!

He listens carefully for a moment.

A beat.

A GUNSHOT flies past Crane's head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Immediately, Crane pushes Lark to the ground.

Crane and the agents exchange gunfire.

Lark covers her ears for the noise and lies still in the fetal position.

Crane shoots back. He hits Fred in the shoulder.

Distracted, Irwin caters to him.

IRWIN (CONT'D)

You okay?

Crane grabs Lark. They flee.

FRED

Yeah, I'm fine. Get that bastard.

Irwin EXITS.

EXT. FARM - CONTINUOUS

Crane and Lark break from the woods.

CRANE

Where are we?

LARK

Mr. Pete's. He live next to us.

Crane spots Lark's NEIGHBOR saddling his horse.

CRANE

Get the horse.

LARK

How?

He grabs Lark. They approach the neighbor, an old, gray-haired black man, MR. PETE, 70.

Mr. Pete stops HUMMING and smiles wide at Lark, but turns curious to Crane's presence.

MR. PETE

Howdy do', Miss Lark?

The old man notices of the tight grip Crane has on her arm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARK
 (tears building)
 We need... We want your horse, Mr.
 Pete.

He eyes Crane suspiciously.

MR. PETE
 Is everything--

Crane doesn't have time for suspicious neighbors. He draws his pistol on the man.

CRANE
 Give us the horse. Now.

Mr. Pete hands the reigns to Lark and backs away slowly.

LARK
 I'm sorry.

Crane pushes Lark onto the horse. He climbs atop behind her. He pulls on the reigns and the horse gallops off rapidly.

Reaching a fence the horse jumps over and toward the woods.

EXT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Fred approaches. Jonas ENTERS.

JONAS
 What happened?!

FRED
 I'm alright. He went looking for
 them. They look like they were
 headed east, toward town.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

They near the station.

Crane hops off and pulls Lark down. He ties the horse to a post.

He holds tight to her as they make their way toward the platform.

PLATFORM

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Crane notices a 'wanted' poster of him posted near the ticket booth. He slyly rips it down.

LARK'S POV

Lark's eyes move around the platform. She notices black passengers boarding the train further down the rear.

She notices a black MAN with a guitar case. They lock eyes a moment.

He smiles flirtatiously at her.

CRANE'S POV - TICKET BOOTH

A WHITE MAN in an expensive suit places two tickets into the breast-pocket of his coat.

LARK'S POV - GUITAR PLAYER

She motions for him to come toward her. He attempts to approach her, but another BLACK MAN with a guitar case grabs his attention and they board the train.

Crane grips Lark's arm and together they bump into the man in the expensive suit.

CRANE

My apologies, sir. My servant girl,
here, is always so clumsy.

Unbeknownst to Lark, Crane has the man's train tickets and puts them in his back pocket.

The man looks disgusted at Lark.

MAN

Watch your step, girl!

He EXITS.

CONDUCTOR

ALL ABOARD!!

Crane grips Lark's wrist and pulls her behind himself as they board the train.

INT. TRAIN - WHITE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Appalled and curious white faces stare down Crane and Lark.

A SERVICE CAR OPERATOR approaches.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERVICE CAR OPERATOR
She can't be here. She has to go to
the colored car.

CRANE
Fine. We'll sit in the colored car.

SERVICE CAR OPERATOR
No. You have to separate, sir.

Lark takes a step and Crane tightens his grip on her wrist.
She steps back behind him.

CRANE
(whispers; to Service Car
Operator)
I'm a bounty hunter. This little
lady here is wanted in Texas for a
robbery against some decent folks
she worked for in Odessa.

SERVICE CAR OPERATOR
Is she dangerous?

Crane nods.

Again, a look of disgust is shot at Lark.

SERVICE CAR OPERATOR (CONT'D)
Fine. But she has to sit in the
colored car...secured in her seat.

INT. TRAIN - COLORED CAR - CONTINUOUS

Lark notices several folks whisper as they eye her. Her hands
are tied with rope. Crane sits beside her.

She fights back tears. Humiliated.

Crane takes notice.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

The train WHISTLES and parts from the station.

EXT. FARM - CONTINUOUS

IRWIN
Where'd they go?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. PETE
Toward town.

JONAS
Why'd you give them the horse?

MR. PETE
He pulled a pistol on me.

They 'humph' at him.

MR. PETE (CONT'D)
Don't think she went on her own,
though. Looked scared and cried.
Besides, she too sweet to me to be
mixed up in such a horrible thing.
She teach Sunday school to all the
little children, too. And she
married to a good man.

IRWIN
Don't matter none. She ain't the
one we want.

They EXIT.

INT. TRAIN - COLORED CAR - CONTINUOUS

A TICKET TAKER makes his way down the aisle, stamping
everyone's ticket.

TICKET TAKER
TICKETS!

Lark appears worried. Crane gazes out the window.

She kicks at his feet. He turns to her. She opens her mouth
the speak, but--

TICKET TAKER (CONT'D)
May I see your tickets?

Casually, Crane hands the man two tickets.

He stamps them and hands them back to Crane.

The man continues nonchalantly down the aisle.

TICKET TAKER (CONT'D)
TICKETS!

Crane turns back to the window.

INT. TRAIN - WHITE CAR - CONTINUOUS

The man in the expensive suit sits beside a well-dressed, well-to-do WOMAN.

TICKET TAKER
Tickets, sir?

The man searches himself.

He can't find them.

MAN
Seems I've misplaced my tickets or they've fallen from my person.

TICKET TAKER
Okay, sir. But you'll have to depart at the next stop or purchase two more tickets there.

MAN
I'm afraid I can't. Me and my lovely wife are reaching the last stop, Chicago, and I have no more money for tickets.

TICKET TAKER
Sorry, sir. Those are the rules.

The man huffs and puffs.

WOMAN
(flirtatious)
Surely, sir, you could let us slide on by? Just this once?

TICKET TAKER
No, ma'am. I could be sacked.

MAN
Well, this is simply preposterous!

WOMAN
Outrageous! We're not...stowaways!

The ticket taker takes the man's arm--

MAN
Wait! A rugged-looking man and colored woman bumped into to me... Yes, it was them! They stole our tickets!

INT. TRAIN - COLORED CAR - CONTINUOUS

The ticket taker, the man and his wife ENTER the colored car.
Crane and Lark are gone. All three look about curiously.

TICKET TAKER

Boy!

The man with the guitar case stops.

TICKET TAKER (CONT'D)

Where'd the colored woman and white
man that were here go?

Intense eyes glare at him for an answer.

The man with the guitar case shrugs. He EXITS.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Crane holds tight to Lark's arm.

Crane and Lark make their way briskly down the street,
weaving through people as they busy about.

Only a handful of passersby acknowledge their presence with
wide eyes.

Lark keeps her head low.

They near a sign reading: WELCOME TO POPLAR BLUFF, MISSOURI.

EXT. TOWN - CONTINUOUS

They come to a red-brick schoolhouse.

A horse and buggy sits unattended by the building.

Crane looks around. No one.

He grabs Lark. She shakes loose his grip.

LARK

I thought we was in the same hot
water...but you keep on pushing and
pulling me everywhere.

CRANE

Don't want you caught is all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARK

Or you caught. Where we headed?

CRANE

South.

LARK

I ain't in no real trouble am I?

CRANE

I think you are.

He reaches for her again. She shakes away.

LARK

You want me to come along without a
fuss, you quit yanking on me!

CRANE

Fine.

He takes a knife from his back pocket. Lark backs up.

He pulls her close and cuts the rope from her wrists.

He steps aside.

Lark gets in the buggy. He climbs inside.

LARK

Is there much of nothing you won't
take?

CRANE

Nothing I don't truly need.

He pulls the reins. They EXIT.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

Irwin and Jonas show a train conductor Crane's 'wanted'
poster.

CONDUCTOR

No. Never seen him. Or the colored
woman you described. My shift just
started actually. If they were
here, they're gone now.

IRWIN

Where?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONDUCTOR

First stop is a flag station in
Poplar Bluff. Last stop: Dallas.

IRWIN

Thanks.

The train conductor EXITS.

JONAS

That don't make any sense! Why
would he be headed back down south?
Mexico?

IRWIN

Could be. Or to finish off what he
started.

JONAS

What now?

IRWIN

We buy tickets.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

LARK (O.S.)

No! No! I need to get back to my
husband!

Crane emerges from the trees with Lark swung across his
shoulder.

He drops her.

CRANE

Have you lost your mind?! It's dark
out there. What if you get yourself
hurt?!

LARK

(voice breaking)

I just... I want to go home. I
ain't never been in no trouble
before.

She cries.

He kneels in front of her. He reaches his hand out to touch
her, but retracts. She's upset and confused, she doesn't need
his flirtation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He remembers something. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out the necklace.

Gently, he takes her hand and places the necklace in her palm.

She takes a look at the piece of jewelry in her hand.

LARK (CONT'D)
Where'd you get this?

CRANE
Someone told me it belongs to you.

She looks at it again. She doesn't know what to say, she's confused by the gesture.

LARK
Who told you--

Crane's distracted by something behind the fire.

It moves closer to them.

Yellow eyes. A low GROWL. A WOLF! It SNARLS at them.

Crane stands. Lark rushes behind him. She grips his arm.

The wolf circles around the fire, approaching them. It SNARLS again.

Crane reaches slowly behind him for his pistol.

The wolf gets closer, growling. Crane draws. No bullets!

The wolf jumps for them. Crane grabs a pointed stick and stabs the menacing animal.

The wolf lay beside them, wounded and whimpering. Crane watches sadly as the animal suffers.

Lark hesitantly picks up a rock built around the fire.

She kneels before the wolf.

She raises the rock above her head. The wolf WHIMPERS.

She closes her eyes and turns her head, then slams the rock down on the wolf's head repeatedly. Blood sprays across her chest, neck, and face.

Crane turns his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Lark stops when she no longer hears the dog's CRIES. She wipes her face with the sleeves of her dress. Crane turns back.

Crane takes the rock from her. He kneels beside her and uses the rock as a shovel to dig a hole.

Lark watches, solemnly, as the wolf's eyes gloss over.

It's life is gone.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Thomas ENTERS.

Fred shakes awake from the sofa.

He stands.

THOMAS

Who are you? Where's my wife?
Where's Lark?

FRED

I'm agent Lewis with the United
States Bureau of Investigation.
Have a seat, sir.

THOMAS

What are you doing here in my
house?!

FRED

Calm down!

THOMAS

This is my home! Where's my wife?!

FRED

I was hoping you would know.

THOMAS

What?

He shows Thomas Crane's 'wanted' poster.

FRED

She left the city with this man.
Have you seen him before?

Thomas glares at the poster.

INT. BOX CAR - CONTINUOUS

Crane, with Lark's hand in his, runs hurriedly along a moving train. He moves her toward an open box car.

Lark reaches the handle and pulls herself into the car.

Crane continues running alongside the train.

He finally grabs onto the handle and pulls himself into the car.

They catch their breath.

They turn inward of the car: a cluster of HOBOES-- men and women-- staring blankly at them.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - CONTINUOUS

MOVE ALONG, A FEMALE HOBO walks Crane and Lark around the "jungle". This is MISS BIBI, 44, a soft-spoken, but defiant woman.

Lark stumbles over a rock, but Crane catches her before she falls.

They share a short moment. Miss Bibi takes notice.

Lark breaks their moment and continues walking behind Miss Bibi.

MISS BIBI

We keep what we find. Share if we
have enough, which is usually very
little...but we each make do.

Lark is taken aback by the poverty and racial mix of all those dwelling there together, somewhat harmoniously.

MISS BIBI (CONT'D)

But you folks are more than
welcomed to stay with us.

The stop at a campfire.

She hands Crane and Lark tin bowls with barely cooked beans inside.

LARK

Oh, no.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRANE

No, thank you, ma'am.

MISS BIBI

Please don't be embarrassed. It's an offering.

CRANE

Only if we're allowed to earn it.

Lark nods.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thomas paces the floor. Fred sits on the loveseat.

THOMAS

My wife wouldn't just run off with a strange man?

FRED

And how would you know that?

THOMAS

Because she's my wife!!

FRED

What about them two boys she attacked?

THOMAS

The Vickers Brothers?! They try to take advantage of any and every woman in St. Louis! Not a one, or her husband, hasn't left a beaten on either of them. Ask any doctor in that white hospital!

FRED

So, what you're saying is--

THOMAS

He took my wife!

FRED

And just why would a white man want to kidnap a colored woman?

Thomas stops pacing.

THOMAS

Isn't that for you figure out?

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS

Lark and Miss Bibi sew clothing.

MISS BIBI

I've seen couples like you. Up north. Ain't much better than the south. Only time it seem to work is with scavengers like myself.

(pointing to those around them)

Like us. Don't nobody give a damn who you love when you poor.

LARK

We ain't in love.

MISS BIBI

You sure about that?

LARK

Yes, ma'am.

Miss Bibi shakes her head.

MISS BIBI

Maybe just you. He seem to care an awful lot about where you are.

LARK

That ain't love.

MISS BIBI

It is the way he look at you.

LARK'S POV - CRANE

He shows a hobo MAN how to build a tent. He looks up at her, then turns, embarrassed, catching her eye.

MISS BIBI

A small, black boy in a ragged newsboy cap, runs up hurriedly. This is WINSTON FLOYD, 8, an endearing little boy with a sweet smile.

He WHISPERS in Miss Bibi's ear.

The hobo woman eyes Lark, surprised.

MISS BIBI (CONT'D)

Well, maybe it is something other than love.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARK

What?

MISS BIBI

You and the cowboy. You got to go.

LARK

What? Why?

MISS BIBI

The law. They looking for you.

CRANE'S POV - LARK

He notices the look of worry on Lark's face.

He walks over.

MISS BIBI (CONT'D)

Seems you all are quite famous,
friend.

CRANE

There's some people looking for us.

He grabs Lark's hand, pulling her up.

CRANE (CONT'D)

We have to leave.

MISS BIBI

I suggest you do that.

CRANE

Thank you.

Lark shakes his grip loose.

She wants to say something to Miss Bibi, but Crane is too near.

Instead, she hugs her and slips a folded piece of paper into Miss Bibi's hand. Written on one of the folds reads: **THOMAS.**

LARK

Thank you...for your kindness.

They EXIT.

INT. FAYETTEVILLE SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Irwin and Jonas stand before the local SHERIFF, a lazy and rotund man.

They show him Crane's 'wanted' poster.

IRWIN

You seen this man? Would've been wandering around with a colored woman possibly.

SHERIFF

Nope. I would've notice a lawbreaker and a colored woman wandering the streets. This here is a peaceful town. *My* town. And I don't take too kindly to outlaws, or uppity colored folk.

Irwin and Jonas sigh with frustration.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Except maybe the jungle...

They're confused.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Resting place for a bunch of poor white trash and niggers with no money. All of them living together in filth!

IRWIN

Where?

SHERIFF

Train tracks.

JONAS

(mumbles)

Christ.

Irwin and Jonas step aside.

IRWIN

(whispers)

What?

JONAS

(whispers back)

I'm tired as hell is 'what'.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IRWIN

You don't want to do your job today.

JONAS

Not all damn day. I would like to eat, and have a shot of whiskey before I go to bed. If I ever get the chance.

IRWIN

Look, the sooner we find this bastard, the sooner--

GIGGLING interrupts him.

WINDOW

TWO WHORES loiter by the window to the sheriff's office. They smile and wave flirtatiously at the agents.

Jonas raises an eyebrow.

IRWIN (CONT'D)

(normal; to sheriff)

Where's the nearest motel?

INT. POST OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

WINDOW

Lark loiters outside.

DESK

Crane ENTERS. He approaches the CLERK.

He puts a coin on the desk.

CRANE

I need to make a phone call.

INT. FARMHOUSE - SITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SCENE INTERCUTS BETWEEN CRANE AND MR. HENRY

The phone RINGS.

Mr. Henry ENTERS. He approaches the phone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. HENRY

Hello.

CRANE

You turned the law on me.

Mr. Henry is quiet.

CRANE (CONT'D)

That ain't a question. I already know the answer.

MR. HENRY

I'm an old man. I can't go to jail. Who'll look after Sammy?

CRANE

I doubt it's jail where they want to put me. More like a graveyard. I'm gunning for you, you son-of-a-bitch!

Crane hangs up.

EXT. POST OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Crane EXITS the post office.

He looks around. Where's Lark?

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Lark runs quickly through the trees.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Crane stumbles around the forest nervously.

He climbs over a huge, fallen tree. He spots something moving a good couple of feet ahead of him. It's Lark.

CRANE

LARK!

She stops. She turns behind herself. It's Crane. She bolts.

He chases after her.

She breaks from the woods with Crane on her heels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He grabs hold of her.

LARK

NO!

He trips.

They tumble and land in the edge of a lake.

She struggles against him.

LARK (CONT'D)

LET ME GO!

He pulls her from the lake. He pins her back against the ground and holds her arms down.

She keeps struggling.

CRANE

STOP IT!

He straddles her.

LARK

I need to get back to my husband!

CRANE

(panting)

You ain't going nowhere!

LARK

HELP! HELP ME!

CRANE

(shakes her)

QUIET OR I'LL DROWN YOU!

She quiets, noticing the seriousness in his voice.

He stands. She cries softly.

He takes her wrist and yanks her off the ground.

CRANE (CONT'D)

You running off like this ain't making it difficult for me. It's making it easier for the law to get to you.

He grabs her arm violently, bringing her close to his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CRANE (CONT'D)
The *both* of us!

LARK
I didn't do nothing. I just want to go home!

CRANE
WELL, I WON'T LET YOU!

They stare each other down for a moment.

LARK
I'm starting to think my husband was right about you.

CRANE
And you'd be just as wrong as he is.

He yanks her behind him as they walk toward the woods.

EXT. FARM - NIGHT

Thomas stands with Mr. Pete.

MR. PETE
I knew something was wrong. She just as sweet as candy. No way she run off with another man! Not no white man anyhow! But I wasn't about to argue with no one holding a gun at me. No sir! Especially after what they did to that Hicks boy.

THOMAS
You know where they went?

Mr. Pete shakes his head.

Thomas nods a 'thank you' and EXITS.

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thomas stares at he and Lark's wedding photo.

EXT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - CONTINUOUS

Thomas takes off toward town on horseback.

INT. BOX CAR - SUNRISE

Crane watches intently as the sun rises over the hillside. He seems captivated by the whole ordeal.

Lark sits beside him, dozing off.

She nods, resting her head on Crane's shoulder.

He looks at her.

He gently runs two fingers down a loose strand of her hair.

She shakes awake. He smiles faintly at her, but she cowers away from him.

He takes notice, and turns his attention back to the sunset.

Lark eyes him curiously as he focuses on the pinkish sky.

She turns attention outward as well. She too becomes entranced.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - JUNGLE - DAY

Irwin and Jonas hassle the hobos. Their mouths are covered with handkerchiefs, like train robbers, afraid of catching something.

Irwin finds Miss Bibi. He snatches her up.

IRWIN

You see a cowboy come through here?

She eyes him with disgust.

IRWIN (CONT'D)

Maybe a colored woman was with him?
You see her?

The hobo woman spits in his face.

He slaps her.

She scratches his face.

IRWIN (CONT'D)

You--

He grabs hold of her.

She swats at him. He blocks her hits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He takes hold of her arms, turns her around, and puts a pair of handcuffs on her.

INT. FAYETTEVILLE SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

WINDOW

Jonas stands outside smoking and flirting with an attractive blonde WOMAN.

IRWIN...

brings Miss Bibi in.

SHERIFF

Oh, no, no, no, no, no!! No bums!
No hobos!

IRWIN

Where the hell else am I supposed
to bring her?

SHERIFF

They carry lice and TB and God
knows what else! She'll spread her
diseases all over the place!

IRWIN

Well, I can't let her go. I think
she knows something about the
cowboy.

SHERIFF

And how you figure?

IRWIN

She put up a hell of a fight when I
asked her a simple question. And
hasn't said nearly anything at all.

SHERIFF

Maybe she's deaf and dumb.

IRWIN

(looking at Miss Bibi)
No. She hear me. Real good.

She shoots him a evil stare.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF

Fine. But keep her in that damn cell. I don't want creepy-crawlers scattering up my thigh.

IRWIN

Why don't you hose her down since it's such a problem?!

SHERIFF

Well, there's a pump out back...

Irwin shakes his head at the sheriff, oblivious to his sarcasm.

He motions for the sheriff to open the small cell.

The sheriff approaches. He fumbles with the keys a bit before finally finding the right one.

He opens the door. Irwin shoves her in. The sheriff quickly looks the door and practically jumps back as though she were about to attack.

IRWIN

Now, you'll stay in here until you want to cooperate. I got all night.

She rushes the cell bars at them. They jump back, scared.

She smiles slyly at them.

EXT. TOWN - CONTINUOUS

The sun is bright, and warm.

Crane and Lark stroll quietly down what appears to be an endless road. Huge fields of white daises surround them on both sides.

LARK

Where are we?

CRANE

Near Little Rock. My sister lives here. She can give us some money and something to eat. And a bed.

LARK

Do we have to earn it first? Can't we just take it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He ignores her.

A beat.

CRANE

Why don't you have children?

Lark stops, taken aback by the question.

Crane waits for an answer.

LARK

My marriage don't concern you none.

She continues walking.

Crane strolls along with her.

A beat.

CRANE

Are you barren?

Lark stops abruptly.

LARK

I don't like your question...and
no, I ain't barren!

CRANE

Do you not want children? I thought
all women wanted a child--

LARK

(frustrated)

I DO! It's my husband that don't!

Awkward silence...

LARK (CONT'D)

"Children ruin the natural and
comfortable order of things."

CRANE

I'm sorry. I ain't mean nothing by
it.

LARK

Don't matter none. Don't look like
I'm getting back to him any time
soon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CRANE

Do you really want to?

LARK

What's that mean--

JINGLE, JINGLE, JINGLE!

They turn to an approaching wagon carting half a dozen BLACK PEOPLE. A family. A BELL is attached to the horse.

The wagon stops beside them. In the driver's seat sits a middle-aged black MAN with a graying beard.

MAN

(to Lark)

Where you off to?

CRANE

Down yonder. Near Honeysuckle Road.

He eyes Crane indifferently. His question was meant for Lark.

MAN

(to Lark)

Is that right?

Lark nods timidly.

MAN (CONT'D)

Shouldn't be around these parts.
Not right for a woman, such as
yourself. Night'll fall soon.
Trouble. You want a lift?

She eyes Crane for an answer.

MAN (CONT'D)

He with you?

She nods.

MAN (CONT'D)

(coldly)

Then maybe he should come, too.

INT. JUKE JOINT - CONTINUOUS

Thomas ENTERS.

Slow BLUES MUSIC sounds softly through the shabby joint as the band plays easily on the supposed stage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Only a handful of patrons sit about the place: a COUPLE slow dancing to the music, a DRUNKARD at the bar, a hefty, mean-looking WOMAN tending bar, and FOUR MEN LAUGH while they play Pinochle.

Thomas looks about the room. It's obvious he's never been inside a jukejoint before.

He approaches the bar.

THOMAS

Excuse me. You know anything about a cowboy taken off with a colored woman he kidnapped.

She nods, rolling a toothpick around her mouth.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You want to enlighten me just a bit?

WOMAN

I know a cowboy taken off with a colored woman he kidnapped... supposedly.

THOMAS

You know any more than that?

WOMAN

Why?

She eyes him suspiciously.

THOMAS

So, your woman done ran off with that ranger. Mmm-mmm.

DRUNKARD

My woman left me, too, man. But for an Indian. Don't let it get you down.

(grumbles)

Bitch.

He drops his wobbling head back down.

THOMAS

My wife did not leave me. Not for no murderer, no Indian, or any cowboy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WOMAN

White folks say she did, so she must've.

THOMAS

Just tell me if you know anyone else who knows anything.

She motions toward the band, the GUITAR PLAYER mainly. The same guitar player from the train station.

INT. JUKEJOINT - LATER

GUITAR PLAYER

I knew something was up. Saw her at the train station. I tried to talk to her, but my bass player called to me. Then I saw her on the train. She was sitting with him, but her hands were tied. He kept real close to her. Wouldn't let her go.

Thomas' face turns up.

GUITAR PLAYER (CONT'D)

White folks say she ran off with him. Guess he really did up and take her.

Thomas nods.

GUITAR PLAYER (CONT'D)

Oh! There was this big to-do in the white car! They came looking for her and the ranger. Told them I didn't know where they went. Figured no matter what trouble she was in, be better for anyone to find her than the law. No telling what they might do.

THOMAS

Where'd they get off?

GUITAR PLAYER

Here, in Poplar Bluff. Hopped off the train and headed for the woods.

THOMAS

You know where the next stop was, or nearest town?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUITAR PLAYER
Fayetteville. Then Little Rock,
Texarkana, and last stop is Dallas.

Thomas shakes his hand.

THOMAS
Thanks. You're a good man.

He EXITS.

INT. WAGON - SUNSET

Crane feels uncomfortable as all FOUR CHILDREN stare at him expressionlessly.

Lark fiddles with the necklace as she stares blankly at her feet.

CHILD #1
Y'all hitched or something?

Crane glances at Lark. She didn't hear the question. She's still staring at her feet.

CHILD #2
Don't be simple. Of course they
ain't! That ain't right.

CHILD #1
Maybe that's why they look like
they running.

MAN
You two hush now. Stay out of grown
folks' business.

Lark breaks from her trance.

Something grabs her eye. Her eyes widen and fear takes over her face.

Crane takes notice and turns behind himself to look at the object in her sights: a black MAN hanging by his neck on a rope from an apple tree.

Crane lowers his eyes. He notices the MATRIARCH praying softly to herself.

Lark cries softly. Child #1 attempts to comfort her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They each quietly stare at the corpse dangling in the wind under the tree.

EXT. TOWN - CONTINUOUS

Thomas arrives, on horseback, at the center of town.

Winston approaches him eagerly.

WINSTON

Clean your boots for a nickel.

Thomas gives the boy a wryly smile.

THOMAS

Tell you what? I'll give you a quarter if you point me where the colored part of town is. I need a room.

WINSTON

Make it a dollar and I'll take you there.

Thomas chuckles.

THOMAS

Okay. Sure.

WINSTON

Well, come on, mister.

Thomas follows the little boy, leading his horse.

EXT. HONEYSUCKLE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

MAN

You'll have to walk the rest of the way. I can't go no further.

Crane hops out.

Lark lingers.

MAN (CONT'D)

(to Lark)

You getting out, child?

Crane takes notice to her hesitation. He tenses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOMAN

What's wrong, honey?

Crane eyes her, warningly.

A beat.

LARK

Nothing.

She steps down.

LARK (CONT'D)

Thank you.

CRANE

Yes. Thank you, sir.

Crane extends his hand to the man.

The man stares distastefully at Crane's hand and rather gives him a solid nod.

Lark watches solemnly as the wagon trots westward down the road.

Crane reaches for her arm. She shakes away his grip.

LARK

I ain't going nowhere until you
tell me where we're going!

CRANE

Come on. It's damn-near dark. I'm
hungry. And tired.

He reaches for her. She backs up.

LARK

Where are we going?!

CRANE

I told you.

LARK

I don't believe you have a sister.

CRANE

Well, I do! Now, quit fussing with
me and come on!

He reaches for her again. She swats at him. He grabs her arms and pulls her close to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

They share a moment.

He leans down to kiss her.

She pulls away in shock.

He let's go of her.

(3 beats)

Crane walks ahead.

Lark follows.

EXT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

A mean DOG, chained to a tree, BARKS feverishly at Crane and Lark as they stand at the door.

Crane BANGS on the door again.

After a moment the door swings open to a black WOMAN-- in her robe and nightgown with paper rollers in her hair-- pointing a shotgun at them.

Lark SCREAMS! Crane stumbles backward and knocks them both to the ground. The dog continues to BARK.

WOMAN

Who the hell is that in the middle
of the goddamn night?!

An attractive blonde WOMAN appears at the door in her night clothes as well. This is RUTH-ANN "RUTHIE" COLDWATER, 30, a bubbly and chatty rich widow.

RUTHIE

Crane? CRANE!

She bypasses the black woman, GLADYS, 50, her maid.

She helps him up off the ground. She hugs him.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Gladys put that away! This is my
brother, Crane!

(to Crane)

What on Earth are you doing here in
Little Rock?!

Gladys lowers her gun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRANE

I need a place to stay. Me and...my
friend, Lark.

Finally acknowledging Lark, her eyes go wide with alarm.

RUTHIE

Never one for the dull and always
up for trouble.

He winks at her.

She smiles.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Of course you can stay. You and
your friend. Lord have mercy, I
missed you!

She takes Crane by the hand and leads him into the house. He
nods a 'hello' to Gladys.

Gladys SIGHS and rolls her eyes. She motions for Lark to
ENTER the house.

Lark follows her inside.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - JUNGLE - MORNING

Thomas stands before a MALE HOBO. Winston stands beside him.

MALE HOBO

Yeah. They were here. They stayed
for a few hours then took off.
Something about the law being after
them. But then, them agents came
and started hassling everyone, but
Bibi wasn't having it.

He laughs.

MALE HOBO (CONT'D)

(chuckles)

She hauled off and shot a mouth
full of spit right in his eye!
Thought I'd just about fall out.

Thomas let's a smile sneak onto his face.

MALE HOBO (CONT'D)

But then, they took her, too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

Where?

MALE HOBO

The big house.

EXT. FAYETTEVILLE SHERIFF'S OFFICE - BACK - CONTINUOUS

Thomas hoist Winston over the fence.

Winston runs to the small, barred window.

A handful of crates sit under the high window. Winston stacks two crates and stands on top of them to peek in the window.

FENCE

Thomas watches through a small hole through the wooden fence.

WINDOW

WINSTON

Psssst...

INT. FAYETTEVILLE SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CELL - CONTINUOUS

Miss Bibi sits up from her cot.

WINSTON

Psssst...

She looks up at the window. Winston smiles at her.

SHERIFF

She glances at the sheriff: he's out cold at his desk. His hat dipped over his sleeping eyes.

She stands atop the cot.

WINSTON (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Miss Bibi. That colored woman with the cowboy, she got a husband. And mad as the dickens! He want to know where she is. Now.

MISS BIBI

What's his name?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WINSTON

Mr. Thomas.

Miss Bibi reaches under her pillow for the letter.

She hands it to Winston through the bars.

MISS BIBI

Here. Now, tell him--

SHERIFF (O.S.)

HEY!

Miss Bibi turns to the sheriff sanding at her cell.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

What you doing?

MISS BIBI

(to Winston)

Run! Quick!

She sits back down. He unlocks the cell, leaving the key within the lock.

He ENTERS. He pushes her aside and stands on the cot.

WINSTON

Winston ducks below the window.

SHERIFF

He looks out the window.

No one.

SLAM!

The sheriff turns.

Miss Bibi locks the cell door with the sheriff inside and she on the out.

SHERIFF

HEY, GODDAMNIT! OPEN THIS DOOR! I'M
WARNING YOU, GIRL! YOU OPEN THIS
DAMN DOOR RIGHT NOW OR THERE'S HELL
TO PAY!

MISS BIBI

Just so you know: I slept *real* hard
and *real* good on that there mat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He eyes the cot with disgust.

She smiles.

Miss Bibi EXITS the sheriff's station through the front.

The sheriff grabs a tin cup from the floor and rattles it wildly across the bars.

SHERIFF
HELP! HELP! GET BACK HERE YOU RAIL-
RIDING WENCH! HELP ME!

EXT. FAYETTEVILLE SHERIFF'S OFFICE - BACK - CONTINUOUS

Winston cackles to himself as he approaches the fence. The letter clutched in his hand.

Thomas reaches down and snatches him up, across the fence.

INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Irwin and Jonas sit at a table dining.

A WAITER approaches the table. He whispers in Irwin's ear.

Irwin tosses his napkin onto his plate.

IRWIN
I'll be back.

MOVE ALONG, he walks through the restaurant lead by the waiter.

He ENTERS the kitchen. They walk through and approach the back door.

They open the door.

Thomas stands behind it.

EXT. RESTAURANT - BACK DOOR - LATER

Irwin and Jonas look over the letter.

THOMAS
I told that other agent that my
wife wouldn't leave me.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS (CONT'D)

She wouldn't run off like that, especially with no stranger. And she ain't no criminal.

IRWIN

I need you to be completely honest with me, Mr. Moorehouse.

Thomas appears confused, but nods.

IRWIN (CONT'D)

Did you write this letter?

THOMAS

No, sir, I did not.

JONAS

How'd you come upon the letter?

THOMAS

I... I stumbled onto someone. They told me where they'd seen my wife and that she left something for me to find.

Irwin pockets the letter.

IRWIN

Mr. Moorehouse this is a federal investigation. We-- my colleague and I-- are federal workers. Agents. This is our case. We can not do our job if you keep butting in.

THOMAS

I just want my wife found...and left unharmed. Now, it says there in the letter--

IRWIN

We have your letter. And we will use it to find that murdering delinquent.

THOMAS

What about my wife?

JONAS

She's of little concern to us, giving the evidence that she's innocent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THOMAS

Will you bring her home?

IRWIN

Not right away. She needs to answer some questions.

THOMAS

I thought you said she wasn't of your concern.

IRWIN

Judicially, yes. After which she's free to go if she pleases.

THOMAS

What do you mean "if she pleases?"

JONAS

You ever think that it may not be such a radical idea, Mr. Moorehouse, that your wife wanted to go?

IRWIN

Because we quite frankly sir, we highly doubt that... Well, we just see no point to it, is all. But stranger things have happened.

THOMAS

(clenched teeth)

My wife did not leave me.

IRWIN

Maybe. But we won't know until we catch him, will we?

Irwin and Jonas EXIT, entering the restaurant.

INT. RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

JONAS

What you think?

IRWIN

I think he's moving along the rail.

JONAS

The letter said: "south".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IRWIN

What was the next stop after
Fayetteville?

JONAS

Little Rock. He got a sister out
there.

They EXIT into the dinning hall.

EXT. RUTHIE'S HOUSE - MAID'S QUARTERS - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gladys stands at the door to the bathroom in her robe.

Crane approaches.

GLADYS

(annoyed)
She ain't done yet.

CRANE

How long she been in there?

GLADYS

Couldn't tell you. But I can say I
been out here for nearly twenty
minutes.

Crane opens the door. Lark steps out of the tub, naked.

They meet eyes...sort of.

She GASPS. Crane SLAMS the door shut, embarrassed.

CRANE

She still ain't done yet.

He EXITS.

INT. RUTHIE'S HOUSE - STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Crane smokes a cigarette as he goes through the gun closet in
Ruthie's study.

He opens the drawer-- hand guns.

He spots a steel .357 Magnum with ivory handle.

Ruthie stands in the doorway watching him as he "plays" with
it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUTHIE
(with a smile)
I remember that was daddy's
favorite.

CRANE
I think I reckon why.

RUTHIE
It is a beautiful pistol.

CRANE
How'd you get it?

RUTHIE
Gave it to me after you left. Told
me if I ever see you again to let
you have it.

He smiles to himself.

He approaches her. He kisses her forehead.

CRANE
Only woman that can tell a lie and
make sound just as sweet as sugar.

RUTHIE
What kind of trouble you in?

CRANE
None that you need to worry
yourself about.

RUTHIE
All you do is cause worry.

He mulls over telling her for a moment.

CRANE
They think I killed a man.

She takes a breath.

RUTHIE
Don't mean nothing. Seen you in
worse scraps.

A beat.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
You do it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CRANE

No. But I got my sights on who did.

RUTHIE

That were you going?

He nods.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Law men after you?

He nods again.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

I'd reckon so. What about the colored woman? What she got to do with it?

CRANE

Now that there's the part leaving me spun.

He sits.

CRANE (CONT'D)

I took her.

RUTHIE

Why?

Crane hesitates.

CRANE

Insurance... and 'cause I think she belong to me.

RUTHIE

How do you figure?

He chuckles wryly to himself.

CRANE

An old Indian woman told me.

RUTHIE

She can't stay with you. She can't go where you going.

CRANE

Says who?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RUTHIE

Says the wedding band on her
finger. There's someone out there
looking for her.

CRANE

No, there ain't. He don't love her.

RUTHIE

Just 'cause you will it so, don't
make it true.

CRANE

This ain't will. This here gospel.

She knows there's no use.

RUTHIE

You just make sure all this trouble
you got piling up don't leave you
no room to breathe.

Her words hang heavy on him.

She turns to EXIT.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

If you want that pistol, take the
bullets, too. Just collecting dust
in there. And like I said: daddy
wanted you to have it.

She EXITS.

Crane approaches the gun closet.

He sticks the gun in his back and takes the box of bullets.

He opens the box. Covering the bullets is a folded piece of
paper.

He opens the paper: *NEVER SHOOT IN THE DARK --PAPA.*

Crane is stunned for a moment.

He takes the piece of paper and stuffs it in his pocket.

He EXITS.

INT. RUTHIE'S HOUSE - MAID'S QUARTERS - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ruthie BURSTS into the room holding a dress.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lark immediately yanks on her towel, covering herself.

RUTHIE

We need to do this quick. Gladys is just about to pitch a fit!

She holds the dress up to Lark.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Yeah. That should fit nice. We about the same size.

She hands the simple frock to Lark.

Lark eyes it suspiciously.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Well, come on now. Take it.

LARK

How will I get it back to you, Miss?

RUTHIE

Well, you don't. It's yours to have. I'm giving it to you.

Lark still won't take the dress.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Ain't you ever been given a gift before?

LARK

Yes, ma'am, but...

RUTHIE

But what?

Ruthie doesn't need her to finish. She knows what she means.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Well, I think you can see that me and my adventurous brother would do you no harm. We weren't brought up like these...heathens that go on midnight search parties, looking for innocent folks!

LARK

Why is that?

She smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUTHIE

I can see why my brother has taken
a liken to you. Neither of you
trust just about anyone.

Ruthie dangles the dress in front of Lark.

Lark finally takes the dress.

LARK

Thank you.

She dresses. Ruthie sits in a small armchair in the corner.

RUTHIE

France.

LARK

Excuse me, Miss?

RUTHIE

France. That's where my mama and
daddy were from. They brought us up
here, but they were French. They
taught us that all men were men,
and should be treated as such.

She watches Lark dress. Even putting her clothes on there's
daintiness and femininity involved in her mannerisms.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Which is why it ain't so difficult
for him to fall for you.

Lark freezes.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Do you love him?

LARK

I'm married.

RUTHIE

To a good man?

LARK

Yes.

RUTHIE

Then you got nothing to worry
about...

She stands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Do you?

Lark finishes dressing.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Well, there! I knew that was your color.

LARK

Thank you.

Ruthie gives Lark a half-smile and EXITS.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS

Thomas saddles up his horse.

MISS BIBI

What you fixing to do?

THOMAS

Find her. They don't care what happens to her. They just want the cowboy.

He climbs atop the horse.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I just want her home.

Miss Bibi extends her hand to him. He takes it. They shake hands.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Thank you.

She nods.

Thomas rides off.

EXT. RUTHIE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Crane, Lark, and Ruthie stand on her back porch.

Ruthie hands Crane a sack.

CRANE

What's this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUTHIE

Some food, a clean shirt, pair of
old denims I found, some Long
Johns...

She takes his hand. She puts a few dollars in it.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Write me when you get the chance.

He squeezes Ruthie's shoulder. They hug.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

(to Lark)

Watch him. He can be a real mess at
times.

Lark doesn't know what to say.

Crane gently takes her arm. They EXIT.

EXT. COVERED BRIDGE - SUNSET

A beat.

Crane and Lark emerge from the covered bridge.

They walk in silence.

Crane stops. Something catches his eye: bees buzzing around a
tree hole.

Lark stops, noticing he's no longer beside her.

CRANE

I tell you I'm a bee charmer?

She eyes him curiously.

He drops his sack. He approaches the tree.

LARK

What you doing?

Crane moves carefully toward the tree. He walks slow and
still.

LARK (CONT'D)

You shou--You should come away from
there! You-You could get stung real
bad!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Crane continues to the tree. He slowly extends his arm toward the hole in the center. Bees circle around him. He stays still.

Lark watches, fearful.

Bees swarm, and attach themselves to Crane. He continues, sliding his hand inside the tree hole.

Lark's fear dissipates into fascination.

He reaches in his back pocket. He pulls out a bandana. He carefully opens the bandana into his palm.

She watches silently, mesmerized.

He slowly pulls out a small brick of honeycombs. He places the brick onto the bandana.

He backs away from the tree, slow and still.

The bees break from his arms and shoulders.

He moves a little faster, the closer he comes to Lark.

He reaches her. The bees are gone.

He holds the brick of honeycomb out to her.

CRANE

It's yours.

LARK

Who taught you that?

CRANE

My papa.

She takes the honey.

Crane walks ahead a few steps.

He stops. She's not walking.

She smells the honey, then taste it. She's appears pleased, almost smitten by the gift.

Crane smiles, having placed a smile on her face.

Lark takes notice and her smile vanishes, embarrassed for him having seen her taken by his act of affection for her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She walks ahead of him, avoiding the pleased smile he poorly tries to hide.

EXT. TOWN, RED LIGHT DISTRICT - NIGHT (SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA)

Bars, hotels, brothels, casinos, and juke joints align the busy and thriving street.

Crane continues walking ahead of Lark.

LARK'S POV - TOWNFOLK

She looks around curiously at the busybodies in the street: prostitutes, drunks, men fighting, and a HARMONICA PLAYER sits idly in front of a casino playing contentedly.

CRANE (O.S.)

Lark!

Lark turns to Crane standing in the doorway to a hotel.

INT. HOTEL - FRONT DESK - CONTINUOUS

Crane and Lark stand before the desk.

A skinny, flamboyant MAN with a thin mustache stands behind the desk, the CONCIERGE.

CONCIERGE

Yes?

CRANE

I need a room.

Lark's head turns.

CRANE (CONT'D)

Two.

CONCIERGE

Lover's spat?

The man leans in close to them.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)

Here, in Shreveport, at least this part of town, is very private. What happens here is no one's business but your own. We don't like to judge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRANE

Well, that's well and good, but we
would still like two rooms.

The man rolls his eyes and SIGHS.

CONCIERGE

If you insists.

Crane tosses a couple dollars on the counter.

The man lays two keys down.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)

Room 205, second floor.

Lark takes her key.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)

207.

LARK

Thank you.

He winks at her.

Crane and Lark EXITS.

INT. CRANE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BED

Crane lies in bed, restless.

He sits up and rolls a cigarettes.

The street isn't so busy now. Almost quiet.

He can hear the Harmonica Player outside. He listens, fondly.

INT. LARK'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BED

Lark is awake as well. And she too listens to the sad, blues
song the Harmonica Player plays.

INT. RUTHIE'S HOUSE - PARLOR - MORNING

Ruthie sits on her couch across from Irwin and Jonas.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She serves them tea with a wide smile.

IRWIN

Ma'am, from what we understand, Mr. Crane Wilson is kin to you. Your brother.

RUTHIE

Why yes he is. And what wild thing has my brother gotten into now?

JONAS

I'm afraid he killed a man, Misses...

RUTHIE

Coldwater. The *late*, Misses Coldwater.

She smiles slyly at him. He blushes.

IRWIN

A widow, ma'am?

RUTHIE

Yes! My husband, Dash, passed on a few years back. Natural causes.

IRWIN

About your brother--

RUTHIE

Oh, yes that's right! Crane. What about him?

IRWIN

He killed a man, Misses.

RUTHIE

Tsk. Tsk. Tsk. Always into something.

IRWIN

We believed he stopped by to see you, ma'am.

RUTHIE

Why no! I haven't seen my brother in ages!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

IRWIN

Misses Coldwater, your neighbor,
Misses Keller claims to have seen a
rugged-looking man and colored
woman enter into your home just the
other night--

RUTHIE

Oh, that nosy old woman! What is
she even doing up at such an hour?!
I keep telling her that a good
night's sleep will take care of
those hideous crow's feet, but she
won't listen--

IRWIN

Misses Coldwater! Enough!

Ruthie appears taken aback. Jonas eyes Irwin harshly.

RUTHIE

Well, how dare you speak to me in
that tone!

IRWIN

I apologize, ma'am, but--

RUTHIE

You can be utterly certain that I
will speak to your superior about
your rude behavior!

JONAS

Misses Coldwater, we apologize
sincerely. We did not mean to
offend you in your lovely home. We
would just like to find your
brother...to ask him a couple of
questions. To clarify some things.

RUTHIE

Well, I'm afraid I can do nothing
for you. I haven't the slightest
idea of where he might be.

INT. RUTHIE'S HOUSE - BACK DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Gladys stands in the doorway, Thomas before her.

GLADYS

(whispers)

He call here this morning-- early.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Said he was in Shreveport.
Louisiana. On his way to Dallas.

THOMAS
(whispers back)
When?

GLADYS
Don't know. Didn't say.

He nods a 'thank you' to her.

He EXITS.

EXT. TOWN - CONTINUOUS

Irwin and Jonas walk along the sidewalk.

JONAS
I thought she was a very nice
woman.

IRWIN
She was a lying banshee with money!

JONAS
She didn't know--

IRWIN
Like hell she did!

They stop and continue to argue for a moment.

Something catches Irwin's eye: THOMAS, as he saddles his
horse.

IRWIN (CONT'D)
What the hell...?

JONAS
What?

He nods toward Thomas.

They approach.

IRWIN
Thought we told you to go home and
stay away from our investigation,
Mr. Moorehouse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

I'm trying to find my wife. You're trying to find a cowboy. The way I see it, we looking for two different people, so I ain't apart of no investigation.

JONAS

Look here--

Thomas saddles up and rides off.

JONAS (CONT'D)

You see that?! Just took right off in me asking him a question!

IRWIN

We're going to follow him.

JONAS

What?

Irwin EXITS.

INT. CRANE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Crane-- shirtless-- attempts to shave his face, but the mirror before him is cracked, proving difficult.

He nicks himself.

CRANE

(winces)

Fuck.

A soft KNOCK on the door.

CRANE (CONT'D)

Come in.

Lark ENTERS, but EXITS noticing he's shirtless.

CRANE (CONT'D)

I thought you left.

LARK (O.S.)

What?

DOOR

He opens the door. She stands on the other side.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRANE
I thought you left.

LARK
I don't know where I am. Where
would I go? Besides I'm a felon.
Ain't I?

A beat.

LARK (CONT'D)
You're bleeding.

CRANE
It's nothing. I was just--

LARK
You trying to slit your throat?

CRANE
(chuckles)
No.

LARK
You will trying to shave in that
mirror.

She ENTERS. Crane closes the door.

She places a chair in the center of the room. She motions for
him sit.

Hesitantly, he makes his way to the chair.

She folds a towel and places it across his shoulder.

She stands behind him and lathers his face. She tilts his
head back.

She places the razor under his neck.

He's nervous. She takes notice.

LARK (CONT'D)
Close your eyes.

He closes them.

She brings the razor up along his throat to his chin, then
wipes the soap and hair on the towel.

Crane takes a relieved breath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LARK (CONT'D)
I can't finish with you shaking
like a leaf.

He relaxes.

Lark continues shaving the rest of Crane's face.

She hums "*His Eye is On the Sparrow*". He opens his eyes.

He gradually joins in, humming along as well.

He stops. Lark continues humming. Her hair falls in front of her face.

He moves it.

She stops humming.

He pecks her. She backs away. He stands.

A beat.

He knocks the chair over and grabs her. He forces a kiss on her.

She pushes him away, then slaps him.

He takes her hit silently, but appears hurt. Disappointed by her reaction.

CRANE
I don't... I don't know what I have
to...

A beat.

CRANE (CONT'D)
We're going to Dallas.

LARK
Dallas? Ain't that where you killed
that man?

CRANE
I told you I didn't shoot nobody.

LARK
But that's where we going?

He doesn't answer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LARK (CONT'D)

I have a husband and a home! I live in Missouri! Whatever trouble you got stirred up in Texas ain't no fault of mine!

CRANE

I can't let you go.

LARK

You tell me the truth. Was I ever in any trouble?

He lowers his eyes.

CRANE

No.

She slaps him again. He grabs hold of her.

CRANE (CONT'D)

That's the second-- and last-- time you hit me!

LARK

You claim to do no harm, but you drag me cross the Earth to kill a man! You even sorry?!

CRANE

I'm sorry I lied to you!

LARK

You ain't sorry one bit!

CRANE

No, I ain't sorry for his life! He didn't know the value of nothing! He's the liar and the cheat and the murderer! Not me!

LARK

Every life is worth something. I thought your daddy taught you that!

CRANE

What about them hillbillies? Or that man on the train and his wife?

LARK

People like that don't have the good sense God gave them!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

LARK (CONT'D)

All you can do for people like that
is pray...for them and yourself!

Crane scoffs.

CRANE

Prayer is simply folks talking to
themselves, hoping to come up with
an answer to make them feel better
about the wrong they did, or done
to them. Don't nobody answer
prayers.

LARK

You're damned and I knew it! Ever
since I saw you on the steps of
that whorehouse! I thought you a
righteous man at first... You
deserve what's coming to you. You
go wherever you want, but I ain't
coming.

He grabs her.

CRANE

You go where I tell you to.

She struggles against him.

LARK

NO! I HAVE A HUSBAND!

EXT. HOTEL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Thomas walks along the hall.

MUFFLED SHOUTING...

He stops in front of Crane's room. He puts his ear to the
door.

INT. CRANE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CRANE

For all you know he's found another
wife!

The door burst open! It's Thomas!

He draws on Crane. Crane freezes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Crane turns to Lark.

LARK
(softly; tears building)
I'm sorry.

She betrayed him. Shock gradually washes through him turning into anger. A scowl inhabiting his face.

THOMAS
I think it best you stay away from
my wife.

They stare each other down in silence for a moment.

Crane steps aside.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
I should shoot you dead.

CRANE
You'd be doing me a great favor as
of now.

THOMAS
I think it best the law handle you.
No need in two hangings.

His gun still trained on Crane, he reaches his other hand out for Lark.

She takes it.

She breaks from his grip. She turns the chair upright, and places the necklace on the seat.

LARK
(regretful)
I'm sorry. I got no loyalty to you.

Crane appears disappointed, if not heartbroken at her words. He fights back tears.

Lark and Thomas EXIT quickly.

INT. HOTEL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Lark and Thomas ENTER.

FRONT DESK

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Irwin and Jonas speak with the Concierge. Jonas turns his attention elsewhere, taking notice of Lark and Thomas. He taps Irwin.

They run over.

IRWIN
Where is he?

Thomas turns to Lark.

LARK
205.

Irwin and Jonas hurry upstairs, guns ablazin'.

INT. CRANE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Irwin and Jonas burst in.

It's quiet. And empty.

A breeze blows through the open window.

IRWIN
Shit!

EXT. HOTEL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

LARK
Should we go?

THOMAS
I don't know.

The concierge approaches Lark and Thomas, towels in hand.

CONCIERGE
I wouldn't if I were you. And here
I thought the rancher was your
husband.

The concierge GIGGLES to himself as he EXITS up the stairs.

INT. HOTEL - LOBBY - LATER

LARK
He seemed like a nice man. We gave
him a good meal and some money for
the work he did for us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THOMAS

She's a good Christian woman.

IRWIN

So, you didn't go willingly?

LARK

He said I was in trouble. That them hillbillies said I hurt them, and if I didn't come with him... I believed him. For a while.

JONAS

Do you know where he is now? Where he's headed?

She hesitates for a moment.

Finally, she shakes her head.

IRWIN

Alright. Thank you, ma'am.

LARK

Is that all?

IRWIN

You committed no crime. And as far as those two boys back in St. Louis... We asked around. They're troublemakers. Nothing wrong with defending yourself.

They turn to EXIT.

LARK

When you find him, what'll happen to him?

IRWIN

Most likely a trial. But he stirred up too much. There's a good chance he might be hung.

They EXIT.

Thomas takes her hand.

THOMAS

You alright?

She nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Lark.

LARK

Yes?

THOMAS

Did he... Did he hurt you at all?

LARK

No. He just... He was just lonely,
I guess. Tired of wandering by
himself.

Thomas grows quiet.

LARK (CONT'D)

What?

THOMAS

Did... He seemed attached to you is
all.

LARK

I told you. He was lonesome.

THOMAS

He take advantage of you?

LARK

No.

THOMAS

I should have shot him when I had
the chance.

LARK

He... He wasn't a monster. He said
he didn't kill that man in Texas.

THOMAS

I doubt he told you the truth. I
told you about taking people in.
Now, do you believe me? You can't
be so set on things like that. It
ain't smart of you.

LARK

I didn't know he'd run off, taking
me with him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

THOMAS

I know. It ain't your fault. He got
the best of you.

Lark is taken aback by Thomas' not-so-comforting words. He
sounds more like a father, than a husband.

A beat.

LARK

I-I... I need some water. Please.

THOMAS

Sure.

He EXITS.

INT. HOTEL - LOBBY - LATER

Thomas RETURNS with a cup of water.

She's gone.

CONCIERGE

Said she had something to do and
she was sorry. Promised to be back
by morning.

Thomas throws the cup of water across the room.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)

Don't shoot the messenger.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - NIGHT

Lark BREAKS from the woods, out-of-breath.

She looks from side to side.

To her left she sees a MALE FIGURE standing beside the tracks
a few feet from her.

TRAIN WHISTLE in the distance.

Lark runs along the tracks.

LARK

CRANE! CRANE!

The figure turns to her. She gets closer. It is Crane!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She stops close to him. He eyes her curiously.

She tries to catch her breath.

LARK (CONT'D)
You can't go.

CRANE
Why not?

LARK
They'll kill you if they find you.

CRANE
Why do you care?

LARK
I... I just do.

CRANE
What you supposed I do then?

LARK
Turn yourself in. Tell them what happened. Don't go looking for more trouble.

CRANE
No. Besides they've already got their minds made. Why you think they looking for me?

LARK
This about pride--

CRANE
No, it ain't. He need to account for his sins. I can't take on mine and his, too.

She shakes her head in disbelief.

CRANE (CONT'D)
I can't do that. I can't... I won't live like that.

LARK
Like what?

CRANE
Cooped up. Trapped. I'd rather have to run my whole damn life than live like that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LARK

I reckon a jail cell's better than
a noose!

CRANE

One in the same to me.

TRAIN WHISTLE grows closer.

CRANE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

LARK

For?

CRANE

What I done. Wasn't right.

LARK

Why'd you really make me come with
you?

He smiles faintly to himself.

CRANE

'Cause and old Indian woman told me
to.

LARK

How's that?

CRANE

She told me I'd meet a woman along
the way. And that she'd be the only
good to come out of the whole mess.
She said we were two birds in a
cage.

Train nears.

CRANE (CONT'D)

You leave your husband?

She nods.

CRANE (CONT'D)

For good?

LARK

I don't know.

Train gets closer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LARK (CONT'D)

Where would you go? You don't know nobody. You ain't got no place to stay.

CRANE

Never stopped me before.

LARK

I can't... I can't let you leave like this.

CRANE

Change my mind then.

She doesn't know what to say.

Train whizzes by them.

Crane grabs Lark. He kisses her.

She gives in.

Train continues on by.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Crane dumps more wood on the burning campfire.

He pokes at it with a stick.

He sits on a log. Lark beside him.

LARK

I was only sixteen when I met Thomas. He was nice. And dead-set on everything. Any plan he had was set in stone. And he was dead-set on marrying me. I liked that. Asked my daddy and everything. I just wanted to go. To leave.

Caren listens intently.

LARK (CONT'D)

My mama, washed clothes for rich, white folks for two cents a basket. My grandmama was a slave... I didn't want that. I didn't want to be like them. So, I married him. He had a house and his own land... I didn't know many men like that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A beat.

CRANE

My daddy was a doctor in Richmond, Virginia. We lived right in the city. I hated it. It was too closed in. I couldn't breathe. So, I left. I was only a boy, just about fifteen. Ruthie was real broken up about it. Came to see her once. At first, she wouldn't even talk to me.

LARK

I think that's over and done with now.

CRANE

(smiles)

Yeah.

They lock eyes for a moment.

CRANE (CONT'D)

I ain't never been in love before.

She smiles bashfully.

CRANE (CONT'D)

Just, uh... Just let me know if I ain't so good at it.

He pokes at the fire.

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

Train travels by.

Crane jumps out of a car. Lark follows.

He takes her hand. They head in the opposite direction of the moving train.

EXT. CHURCH - MORNING

They come to a small, simple white building. A church.

CRANE

Stay here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARK

Don't.

Her face pleads.

He hesitates.

CRANE

I'll be back.

EXT. CATTLE RANCH - CONTINUOUS

BARN

Richard notices a man approaching the farmhouse. Crane!

He runs over.

Richard grabs Crane.

They wait for the other to speak.

RICHARD

Don't let Sammy see it.

Crane nods.

Crane pulls his pistol.

FARMHOUSE

CRANE

HENRY! COME ON OUT HERE!

A beat.

Mr. Henry EXITS onto the front porch, pistol in hand.

MR. HENRY

Took you long enough.

CRANE

Where's Samuel?

MR. HENRY

His room. I locked him inside. Last thing he need to see is this. He don't need to be the type of men we are.

Crane pulls the hammer on his revolver back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CRANE
No. He don't.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Lark opens the front doors.
She pokes her head inside.

LARK
Hello? Hello?!

No one answers.

She steps inside. She looks around. No one.

She walks slowly down the aisle, staring at the stained glass windows.

EXT. CATTLE RANCH - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

CRANE
You sorry for what you did? Any of
it? You killed your friend.

MR. HENRY
He wasn't no friend of mine!
Friends don't take from you the
very thing that makes you!

Crane scoffs.

CRANE
Why'd I even think to believe you
were at least a penitent man?

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

She takes a seat in the second row of the pew.

She stares at the near life-like Christ on a cross hanging
over the altar.

Her mind drifts a moment.

She bows her head and prays quietly.

LARK
(softly)
Amen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She lifts her head.

A beat.

The doors opens. Lark turns.

Thomas ENTERS.

EXT. CATTLE RANCH - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MR. HENRY

'Cause you're young. You ain't
hardly lived enough to pick your
regrets.

CRANE

I got some.

MR. HENRY

This one of them?

CRANE

No, sir.

Mr. Henry smiles devilishly.

EXT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Lark runs. Thomas chases after her.

He catches her.

THOMAS

Where are you going?!

LARK

I have to find him! They'll kill
him!

THOMAS

That's what they do to murderers!

LARK

He's not a murderer!

THOMAS

Why do you want to go there? Why
save him?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARK
 (tears building)
 I can't let him die. It'll be my
 fault.

THOMAS
 He loves you. Don't he?

EXT. CATTLE RANCH - FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

RICHARD'S POV - HOUSE

He takes notice of a FIGURE moving on the side of the house,
 near a shrub-- it's Jonas.

He carefully reaches for his gun.

CRANE'S POV - RICHARD

Richard nods to where Jonas is.

PORCH

Mr. Henry turns curious. His attention darts between Crane
 and Richard.

A beat.

Richard shoots at Jonas. He misses.

Crane and Mr. Henry draw on one another. Crane shoots first--
 he hits Mr. Henry. He tumbles, nearly taken down the steps.

Crane and Richard take cover behind trees.

TREE

IRWIN (O.S.)
 YOU'D DO WELL AND COME ON OUT
 PEACEFULLY!

CRANE
 NO, SIR! I AIN'T KILL ANYBODY!

IRWIN (O.S.)
 I THINK YOU JUST DID!

Crane moves again, behind a tree a few feet from Richard.

Crane sees Jonas scamper to a log pile. He takes a shot.
 Miss!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERIES OF SHOTS

Jonas fires back with a shotgun. Miss!

Irwin moves behind a broke down wagon. Irwin shoots at Crane. Miss!

Richard shoots at Irwin. Nearly hits him!

They return fire.

Richard fires at Jonas! It grazes his eye!

JONAS
Son-of-a-bitch!

He returns forceful fire at Crane! Crane's stuck! They won't stop firing at him! He waits.

Irwin and Jonas need to reload.

Richard moves position behind a large Forsythia bush.

Crane takes his chance. He fires back twice on both of them!

They take cover!

IRWIN
Jesus!

Crane needs to reload.

They fire!

He stays low.

They exchange fire back and forth.

Crane stops firing to reload again.

Richard looks over at Crane. He sees Irwin with a clear shot on him.

RICHARD
CRANE!

Richard stands to take aim at Irwin-- BANG! Richard is shot by Jonas!

CRANE
NOOOOO!

Lark SCREAMS! Thomas holds her back from the gunfire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Richard falls to the ground.

Crane breaks cover. He moves toward Richard. He shoots wildly at both men.

Crane reaches his friend. Richard chokes on his own blood. He's shaking. Crane takes his friend's hand. Richard stops shaking. He's dead.

Crane fights back tears.

A beat.

Crane shoots at both men. They shoot back.

He hits Jonas in the neck. He's down.

Irwin takes notice and fires at Crane.

He hits Crane in the shoulder.

LARK

CRANE!

Crane sees her.

CRANE

LARK! STAY THERE!

Crane opens the cylinder of his gun. Three bullets left. He closes it back.

He concentrates hard on Irwin and his position.

Irwin's leg is exposed. Crane shoots!

IRWIN

GODDAMIT!

END SERIES OF SHOTS

Crane concentrates again. But something distracts him.

CRANE'S POV - LARK

He sees Lark and Thomas arguing near the ranch entrance. He pulls on her to follow him. She pulls away, not wanting to go. She's yelling at him. He grabs her. She breaks from his grip. She yells again. He shakes her violently.

REVERSE POV

A SHOT!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Crane's down.

Lark runs to him. He squirms and winces at his hand. It's covered in blood with a hole through his palm.

CRANE
Goddamnit! My goddamn hand's on
fire!

She wraps the bandana he gave her around his hand.

CRANE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

LARK
It's alright. We're leaving.

CRANE
(dry chuckle)
I doubt that, darling. I got two
bullets left.

Lark knows there's no way he's leaving alive unless Irwin's dead.

LARK
Then use them.

LOG PILE

It's quiet. Too quiet. Irwin's nervous.

He tries to peek his head out a little into the yard. He can't see anything.

A beat.

He reaches out a little further-- BAM! A shot hits his temple. He's dead.

FORSYTHIA BUSH

LARK (CONT'D)
Come on.

She helps him up. He takes her hand.

CRANE
I never know what's the right thing
to say to you.

LARK
Walk with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

They walk a few feet.

CRANE

I got to give you something.

Crane reaches in his pocket. He pulls out a folded piece of paper. He moves to hand it to her-- BAM!

Crane falls to his knees.

Crane grips his chest. His hand is bloody.

She kneels in front of him. Crane's breathing quickens.

She looks around.

PORCH

A smoking gun in Mr. Henry's shaky hand. And a bloody wound on his chest.

He weakly attempts to aim at Lark.

He gets his hand up enough. He pulls back on the hammer.

He musters enough strength to hold aim.

BAM! Mr. Henry takes a bullet through the eye! He's dead.

YARD

Thomas stands with his pistol smoking in hand, aimed at Mr. Henry.

LARK

She cries. Crane coughs, spitting up blood. His breathing slows. His eyes roll back. He falls forward into her arms.

He touches her face gently.

He's quiet... He's gone. Lark sobs, holding him.

She takes the paper from his hand: Big Bear's drawing of two birds in a cage.

She cries softly.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - FRONT DOOR - DAY (10 MONTHS LATER)

A very pregnant Lark answers the door.

An elderly Indian woman stands on the other side-- Big Bear.

LARK
(curious)
Yes?

ENTRANCE GATE

EIGHT other INDIANS near stand quietly.

FRONT DOOR

Big Bear hands Lark something wrapped in brown paper.

LARK (CONT'D)
What's this?

The old woman carefully takes the porch stairs in silence.

LARK'S POV - ENTRANCE GATE

Big Bear joins her tribe. They continue down the road.

FRONT DOOR

Lark unwraps the brown paper-- it's the necklace Crane gave her. She stares at it, tears forming.

TWEEK! Lark turns inward into the house.

LARK'S POV - STAIRS

Two yellow-bellied larks in a wooden cage CHIRP near the stairs.

Thomas ENTERS.

THOMAS
You alright?

She puts the necklace in the pocket to her apron.

She nods.

He approaches. He puts a hand on her belly. She puts her hand atop his.

They smile at one another.

EXT. MOOREHOUSE HOME - PORCH - CONTINUOUS

The front door closes.

FADE OUT.

THE END