

**GET LOW**

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**1 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT 1**

From a distance and through the trees we see a raging hell fire engulfing a small two story house. It burns and burns. Out of nowhere a man bursts through a second story window, lands hard and rolls to smother his burning clothes. He crawls away and staggers up and for a moment looks as if he might run back into the flames. But the heat is unbearable. He runs toward us then past us through black shadows. We cannot see his face,

**1A EXT. WINDOW - EARLY MORNING (WINTER 1930S) 1A**

Glass in a weathered window glitters with early morning sun.

A rock shatters one of the remaining glass panes!

**2 EXT. YARD - EARLY MORNING/CONTINUOUS 2**

The rock thrower, TOM ( 10) is hightailing it away from an isolated Appalachian SHACK as the door bangs open, a shotgun barrel appears, and a chicken comes SQUAWKING out from under the porch!

Thinking he's sure to be shot, Tom runs into the old barn!

**3 INT. BUSH'S BARN - EARLY MORNING/CONTINUOUS 3**

Panting in terror, Tom is hunkered down in strips of light, trying to see through the cracks. There is a loud SNORT and the huge face of some kind of beast suddenly appears at his shoulder.

Tom jumps, panicked, just as a SHADOWY FIGURE creeps into the

barn and levels a glinting shotgun at him!

Tom freezes, bends over, and throws up!

When Tom looks up, a ray of light reveals the half face of a fierce gray bearded man, FELIX BUSH. He is holding out a handkerchief to the boy. Shaking hard, Tom hesitates then takes it and wipes his mouth.

Bush pushes open the door and gives Tom a sad look that the

boy will never forget before waving him away.

2.

**4 EXT. BUSH'S BARN - MORNING 4**

Looking back over his shoulder, Tom runs for the road. Two  
of his BUDDIES are already kicking up dust.  
with BUSH (72) steps into the sun and watches the boy run off  
a look of muted anger, sadness, and something much deeper.

**5 INT. BUSH'S BARN - DAY 5**

older Bush enters the barn to check on his companion. MULE is  
than Bush in mule years and just as gray. He wears an old  
mule blanket everywhere to keep out the cold. He fidgets  
nervously from all the excitement. Bush comforts him.

**BUS H**

Just a boy, that's all.

**6 SERIES: 6**

7 Bush rips down an old faded sign at the road and posts a 7  
fresh one: 'No Damn Trespassing/Beware of Mule'. Bush checks  
the road in both directions. All clear for now.  
8 Bush splits firewood with powerful cleaving strokes. Mule  
dozes in the shade. Bush sees a Model-T approach and turn  
into his road, right past his new sign. He glances at his  
shotgun leaning against the shack.  
The Model-T comes to a shaky stop. A MAN climbs out, sees  
Bush swinging the axe and approaches with trepidation.

**HORTON**

Mornin', sir.

**BUSH**

Hard life if you can't read..

**HORTON**

Pardon? I'm uh, Reverend Gus

Horton, sir, how you doing?  
Bush stops his swing and turns and stares coldly at Horton.

**BUSH**

Don't need saving, preacher.

**3.**

**HORTON**

Uh, well, Mr. Wiley Starke has passed on, sir. His funeral is tomorrow and I thought you might want to know since..

**BUSH**

**(SOFTLY)**

What got him?

**HORTON**

Just got old, sir.

**BUSH**

Yeah, well..

Bush returns to chopping wood.

Feeling awkward, Horton hesitates, starts for his car,  
stops.

**HORTON**

Mr. Starke told me that you and him ran away from home when you were 6 years old. Is that true?

**BUSH**

I talked him into it.

Bush doesn't turn, just keeps chopping.

**HORTON**

Well.. anyway.. I.. alright..

Horton shrugs, get in his car, and leaves.

Bush strikes the log hard and a cleaved piece goes flying.

**9 EXT. CEMETERY - EVENING 9**

The loneliness of the empty cemetery is broken by Wiley Starke's fresh grave. The mounded earth is covered with beautiful flowers and wreathes, a loving send off from his family and friends. As we pan past the flowers and cards.. we realize that the cemetery is not quite empty. Hunkered down nearby, Bush is as still as a gravestone, staring at the last resting place of his old friend. As Bush gets up to leave he stops abruptly and stands frozen, staring at a pot of YELLOW FLOWERS on a distant grave. Now he turns and walks quickly away in the opposite direction.

4.

**10 INT. BUSH'S SHACK - NIGHT 10**

Rain drums hard on the tin roof as Bush, soaked to the bone and shaking with chills, rummages through an old hat box by lamp light: Letters, news clippings and keepsakes. He finds what he's looking for: A PICTURE of a BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN. She smiles at us from happier days. Realizing that he is raging with a serious fever, he tries to stand up only to collapse back on the bed.

**11 OMIT 11/12/13 11**

**14 EXT. BUSH'S SHACK - NIGHT 14**

Wrapped in his quilt and carrying the oil lamp, Bush moves slowly toward the barn. But he is so wracked with fever he has to stop. It stuns him that he can't go on. He never thought anything could stop him. Stuck in the rain with the shaking lamp sizzling, he stares into the forever darkness, the muscles in his jaw rippling in the pale light.

**BUSH**

Well hell..

**15 INT. BUSH'S BARN - NIGHT 15**

Somehow he has made it. Sopping wet and shivering, Bush is in bad shape and knows it.

onto

Mule sees Bush and grunts anxiously as he rises.  
Bush blindly pours Mule some feed and the poor old thing  
snatches his first meal in days.  
Bush tries to think through the fever. He stumbles back to  
the door and swings it wide open so Mule can get out if Bush  
doesn't make it. Satisfied, he comes back and drops hard  
a pile of hay near Mule.

**BUSH**

Always thought you'd go first..  
White as cotton, Bush stares into the lamp that is running  
out of oil, the light fading fast to darkness. Thoughts  
tumble through his mind, troubling him, stirring the dark  
waters of memory.

5.

**16 EXT. BUSH'S BARN - MORNING 16**

PAN across the stillness of the foothills to the barn. The  
door is still swung wide open.  
Back from the brink of death, Bush emerges into the blinding  
sunlight. Mule is dozing in his favorite spot. He swings his  
big gray head over at Bush.

**BUSH**

Ahh, don't look so disappointed.

**17 OMITTED 17**

**18 EXT. BUSH'S BARN - MORNING 18**

Mule watches Bush heave a creaky old wagon out from behind  
the barn. Mule climbs up on all fours. Bush gets a set of  
reins and walks toward him. Mule starts to take a stroll,  
knowing what the reins mean.

**BUSH**

You better not.  
Mule looks back, sees an apple in Bush's hand, and stops.

**BUSH**

And coffee when we get there.

**19 EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY 19**

Old wheels creak and moan. Bush and Mule ease up Main street with the cart. PEOPLE try to catch a glimpse of the infamous recluse.

off

Mule comes to a wearied stop, breathing hard. Bush climbs the cart and walks Mule, ignoring the eyes upon him.

**20 INT. CHAPEL - DAY 20**

Reverend Horton, stoking the wood stove, hears FOOTSTEPS.

**HORTON**

Buddy?

**6.**

But as he turns he sees Bush silently looking around.

**HORTON**

Oh! Hello..

Horton comes to Bush but Bush ignores him and keeps critically looking around.

**HORTON**

What can I do for you, sir?

Suddenly BUDDY and KATHRYN ROBINSON (20's) enter from the vestibule with their new BABY. In their own world, and not realizing that there is anyone in the chapel, Kathryn picks some lint from Buddy's jacket. He catches her fingers and kisses them.

Bush is transfixed by the loving moment.

**BUSH**

I can wait.

nods

Buddy and Kathryn see Horton and double-take Bush. Buddy

to Horton and he and Kathryn step back into the vestibule to give Bush and Horton privacy.

**HORTON**

It's alright, have a seat.

pew

Bush sits down uneasily in a pew. Horton sits down in the  
in front of him and twists around to face him. The wintry  
light from the near window washes over them.

**HORTON**

What's on your mind, sir?

**BUSH**

Bout time for me to get low.

**HORTON**

Get what?

**BUSH**

Down to business  
Bush reaches into his overalls and puts a balled-up wad of  
MONEY on the pew. Horton's eyes bulge.

**BUSH**

Need a funeral.  
Horton looks up from the money.

7.

**HORTON**

For who?

**BUSH**

Me.  
Buddy peers around from the vestibule, listening, curious as  
hell, until Kathryn pulls him back.

**HORTON**

For you?  
(off Bush's impatient nod)  
You want to buy a funeral for you?

**BUSH**

Am I not talking right?

**HORTON**

No, yes, I'm sorry. Are you sick  
sir?

**BUSH**

Everybody dies.

**HORTON**

True, but..

**BUSH**

I don't take care of my bones it  
won't get done, will it?

**HORTON**

All right, I see. Well the church  
can help you get your affairs in  
order, arrange a service..  
Horton glances at the strange wad of money again.

**BUSH**

What would you say?

**HORTON**

About what?

**BUS H**

Me.

**HORTON**

A eulogy? I.. don't know. What do  
you want me to say?

8.

**BUSH**

Say what you'd say right now to my  
face.

**HORTON**

Well. I uh, I don't know much about  
you, Mr. Bush. I mean, I've heard  
stories but..

**BUSH**

What stories?  
Bush leans in and stares into Horton. It feels like

everything in the world stops dead.  
Buddy peeks in again, this time Kathryn peeks too.

**HORTON**

Just stories..  
(off Bush's intense look)  
.you know, people talking.

**BUSH**

What kind of stories? Say one.

**HORTON**

Sir.. my mother used to say that  
gossip is the devil's radio..

**(UNFORTUNATE ASIDE)**

.not that she didn't play that  
radio at full volume now and then,  
bless her heart, but..  
(back to business)  
.what matters when you come to the  
end of your life is that you're  
ready for the next one. Have you  
made peace with God, sir?

**BUS H**

I paid.  
Horton has no idea what Bush means. He looks at the money,  
back at Bush.

**HORTON**

Well.. you can't buy forgiveness,  
Mr. Bush. It's free. But you do  
have to ask for it.

**BUSH**

Nothing in this world is free,  
preacher.

**9.**

Bush abruptly grabs his money and starts out. His hand bangs  
into the pew and the money FALLS.  
Buddy stares wild-eyed at the big wad of money then drops  
back into the vestibule.

wind. Bush storms past Buddy, Kathryn and the baby like a hot

**20A EXT. CHURCH - DAY 20A**

and Bush heads off down the road on his wagon. Horton, Buddy, Kathryn appear at the door and watch him go.

**HORTON**

That was, uh, different.

**KATHRYN**

I heard such awful things about him when I was a kid.

**HORTON**

My mother probably told you some of them.

Kathryn goes back into the church with Horton who is cooing at the baby. Buddy lingers, staring at Bush, thinking..

**21 EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY 21**

Bush's wagon loaded with bags of feed and supplies, sits in front of the Diner.

Bush is holding a big tin cup of coffee for Mule who is drinking it and loving it.

Tom (the kid who threw the rock) comes from behind the diner with a full garbage can to empty into the big trash barrels on the back of an old pick-up truck. He sees Bush and freezes.

Bush looks up and stares at him.

The diner door snaps open and BONNIE (30's), Tom's mother, steps out. She sees Tom and Bush staring at each other.

**BONNIE**

What are you doing, son?

him. Now Tom is scared to death that Bush is going to tell on

Bonnie doesn't like this staring match at all.

**BONNIE**

Empty those cans in your daddy's truck and get back in here. Now. Finally Bush drops his gaze and lets Tom off the hook. Relieved, Tom heaves the can up into the truck. Bonnie hesitates then goes back into the diner just as... .CARL (30s), his sidekick, GARY, and two other MEN come across the street toward the diner. Gary sees Mule slurping coffee from the big tin cup.

**GARY**

Look at that. A mule drinking coffee!

**CARL**

Finally found somebody that likes Bonnie's coffee. As they move past, they see Bush standing there..

**WORKER**

Ya'll better hush, that's old Bush. Carl eyes him. Gary and the others throw curious glances as they head into the diner. Carl stops.

**CARL**

Hey..

**(NO RESPONSE)**

I'm talking to you.. Carl picks up a handful of gravel, tosses some over nonchalantly in Bush's direction. Bush ignores it.

**CARL**

We know about you. You stay out of this diner. There's women and children here and we don't want you around them. Bush stands to mount up, never turning around.

**CARL**

You better hear me. I see you here again, I'll.. Hey! Hey! Hearing the hollering, Tom looks up from the pick-up. Carl throws a stone, harder this time to get Bush's attention.

**11.**

But the rock misses Bush and hits Mule, startling him. Old instincts kick in and he has a VIOLENT FIT.

**CARL**

Shit..

Carl moves up to try and calm him..

.as Bush tries to ease Mule down the cart hitch grinds a GASH in Mule's hind-quarter. Mule whinnies painfully, slowly surrendering.

As Carl steps up, Bush yanks the BRAKE HANDLE off the cart and hits Carl in the chest. Air explodes from Carl as he gasps with pain. Before he can move, Bush hits him again in the same place. Carl wants to hit back but he has no air. Lightning quick, Bush steps back and hits Carl again in the exact same place.

Carl falls like a bag of bones. He looks up and sees Bush towering over him with a terrible bottled up darkness in

him.

It has all happened so fast it feels like an awful dream to Carl.

**TOM**

Daddy!

Wild with fear, Bonnie and Tom run toward Bush.

**BONNIE**

Stop it!! Get away!

Gary, the Worker burst from the diner but see the brake handle in Bush's hand and slow down.

Bush comes to himself, sees everyone staring, sees Carl in tears, and now Tom and Bonnie, trying to get him away..

Gary and the others slowly move toward Bush. More patrons step out from the diner.

Buddy races up, sees Mule bleeding, and eyes Bush as he

grabs

the reins and leads Mule down Main street, still holding the brake handle.

**CARL**

**(GASPING)**

I'll kill him!

Bonnie shushes him softly as Carl moans in pain.

Tom stares after Bush, mirroring his father's hatred.

12.

22 OMITTED 22

23 INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY 23

An EMPTY CASKET, awaits its passenger in a small but serviceable funeral hall. Through the office door, FRANK QUINN sits at his desk, his head completely buried behind a paper that he shakes hard every few seconds. His feet are up on the desk revealing a pair of lovely burgundy silk socks.

24 INT. FUNERAL HOME/OFFICE - SAME 24

Frank's hand slips the flask next to his coffee cup into a drawer when he HEARS the front door open. But his face remains hidden as Buddy enters. Buddy is troubled by the fight.

**BUDDY**

Frank?  
(off Frank's grunt)  
There was a fight. It was..

**FRANK**

.let me guess. Hmm. Carl?

**BUDDY**

Well yeah but this time it was with that old man Bush.

**FRANK**

Old man?

**(DISTANTLY HOPEFUL)**

Is there a body?

**BUDDY**

No, the old man did the beating.  
Never seen anything like it.

**FRANK**

Social event of the year and I missed it.  
Frank lowers the paper so just his eyes appear. He has no southern accent and doesn't look small town.

13.

**FRANK**

Read the paper today?  
(off Buddy's no)  
Something strange is happening in  
the world right now.

**BUDDY**

What?

**FRANK**

People are dying in bunches.  
(off Buddy's look)  
Everywhere. But here.  
He puts the paper down and studies his socks.

**FRANK**

I wonder what the odds are of a  
funeral home going broke? I mean  
you have a business everybody on  
earth needs, you can't make that  
work, it's got to be you right? And  
yet.. I don't know.. what do you do  
when people won't die?

**BUDDY**

Well..

**FRANK**

Onethingabout Chicago, people  
knowhowto die; they drown, get  
runover, shot, whatever it takes.

**BUDDY**

We get it done down here, we're  
just not in a hurry about it.

**FRANK**

It's them or us.  
Frank sighs and stares forlornly out at a casket.

**BUDDY**

**(QUIETLY)**

I might know someone who is looking  
for a funeral.  
Frank's eyes crawl over to him.

**25 OMITTED 25**

**14.**

**30 EXT./INT. FRONTAGE ROAD/FRANK'S CAR - DAY 30**

The Quinn Funeral Home Packard Hearse makes it way down the  
road. Frank drives as Buddy searches ahead.

**FRANK**

How much did he have?

**BUDDY**

It was all wadded up.

**FRANK**

Ooo, hermit money. That's good.  
Buddy sees Bush's signs.

**BUDDY**

There it is..

**31 INT/EXT. FRANK'S CAR/FRONTAGE ROAD - DAY 31**

They stop at Bush's sign: 'No Damn Trespassing.' Frank  
squints up at the old shack and doesn't like what he sees at  
all. Buddy opens his door but Frank doesn't.

**BUDDY**

What are you doing?

**FRANK**

You've been wanting a shot at  
sales..

**BUDDY**

But..

**FRANK**

As of right now, you're on

commission.  
(off Buddy's look)  
Remember; foot in the door,  
establish trust, and drop the  
hammer.  
Buddy hesitates, crawls out, and eyes the shack.

**BUDDY**

I'd feel better if you'd go too.

**15.**

**FRANK**

No doubt but if you don't do this  
by yourself, you won't know if  
you're any good. And you'll never  
be any good if you don't know you  
are. Go get him!

**32 EXT. BUSH'S SHACK - DAY 32**

As Buddy uneasily approaches the shack, he feels the  
beautiful stillness and mystery of the place. He KNOCKS  
timidly on the door, pressing an ear to listen.

**BUDDY**

Hello?  
Nothing. He shoots a look back to the hearse - miles away,  
and knocks a little louder. Nothing. He inches to the window  
and peeks in one of the remaining glass panes then starts to  
slide away..

**CLICK.**

Buddy spins and discovers Bush standing on the ground behind  
him, his shotgun barrel pointed between Buddy's eyes.

**BUSH**

Want to see in my house, do you?  
BOOM! Bush blows away several windowpanes and re-aims at  
Buddy's head.

**BUSH**

How's it look?  
Buddy closes his eyes, his last words are for his wife..

**BUDDY**

Oh, Katie..  
It makes Bush peek out from behind the barrel.

**BUS H**

You was at the church with your  
wife and baby.  
Buddy opens his eyes and can't believe he is still alive.

**BUDDY**

Yes, sir.

16.

**BUSH**

What the hell you doing here?

**BUDDY**

I can't remember.

**BUSH**

What?  
They stand there while Buddy thinks..

**BUDDY**

Oh yeah, I heard.. you wanted a  
funeral.

**BUSH**

Funeral?

**BUSH**

Yes sir. I work at uh.. I work at..  
(tries to think of it)  
.Quinn Funeral Home. I thought I  
could help you.  
Bush glances at his blown out window: 'Damn'. He lowers his  
gun, walks up onto the porch.

**BUS H**

You like rabbit?

**BUDDY**

What?

Bush goes inside.

Buddy looks desperately back at the hearse but can't see Frank. He doesn't know whether to run for it or not.

**33 INT. BUSH'S SHACK - DAY 33**

HAND

The shack is spare as a monk's chamber but has wonderful  
MADE FURNITURE in it.

**BUSH**

Sit down.

off

There is only chair at the table so Buddy dumps the glass

eyes.

a small stool under the window and sits down low. The wonder  
of not being dead makes him look at everything with new

On a window sill he sees a beautiful little CARVED MULE  
emerging from a block of wood.

**17.**

Bush is at the stove tending to a iron skillet of rabbit  
pieces covered with bacon and white gravy.

**BUSH**

It's how you put things together,  
see? Some things go, some things  
never will. Indians said that  
everything spoke to them. That's  
how they made medicine and knew  
what to eat. Things talked to them  
clear as we talk. You believe that?

**BUDDY**

I.. I don't know, sir.

**BUSH**

If you don't listen you won't hear  
nothing.

Bush puts the big skillet on the table and sits down.  
Buddy is so low he can look under the table and sees how the  
table legs run right into the top without screws or nails.

**BUDDY**

Did you make this furniture, sir?  
Never seen any like it. Can't even  
tell what's holding it up.

**BUSH**

Magic.  
Buddy looks up. Bush is dead serious. The word lingers.  
Finally..

**BUDDY**

Alright. Well. Sir, if you do want  
to plan for a funeral service,  
which I hope will be a long long  
time away, we'd treat you with  
respect and offer a good..

**BUSH**

What'd everybody say about what  
happened in town?

**BUDDY**

I don't..

**BUSH**

That crazy old son of a bitch tried  
to beat a man to death for no  
reason? That it?

**18.**

Buddy is caught off guard by Bush's lucid candor and finds  
himself automatically responding differently to him.

**BUDDY**

There's two sides to every story.  
As Bush puts some rabbit on Buddy's old yellowed plate..

**BUSH**

People say that. But they don't  
mean it. They think what they think  
and they don't want to know  
anything else.

**BUDDY**

Yes, sir, but I think people are so scared of what they don't know that they make things up to feel better about it.

**BUSH**

Like life after dying. Heaven.

**BUDDY**

**(THINKS)**

I hope that part's true, don't you?

**(BEAT)**

But I don't think we know the actual truth about much of anything. I know I don't. I'm just guessing most of the time.

the Bush gives Buddy a closer look and motions for him to try

rabbit. Fearing the worst, Buddy bends into the steam, takes a cautious bites and mutters with shocked surprise..

**BUDDY**

Lord, that's good..

**BUS H**

You boys been coming out here to throw rocks through my window for 20-30 years.

**BUDDY**

I never..

**BUSH**

Ya'll know lots of stories about me?

19.

**BUDDY**

**(SQUIRMS)**

Yes, sir, I guess, but..

**BUSH**

Tell one.

**BUDDY**

I'd rather not.

Bush eases forward, his eyes slit. The old Bush is back.

**BUSH**

I rather you did.

**BUDDY**

(startled/leans back)

Well. When I was kid I heard you killed some men in a fist fight.

**BUSH**

Is that all?

Bush leans back stone-faced.

In the silence, Buddy looks over again at the wondrous carving of the mule on the window sill, at the big ears and long face that are being born from the rough block. It makes him smile. But when he glances back, Bush is staring a hole through him.

**BUS H**

What's your name again?

**BUDDY**

Buddy Robinson, sir.

**BUS H**

Well, if I need you -- I know where you are.

It sounds almost like a threat. It shorts Buddy out. He stops eating and realizes that Bush has taken another turn and that he's been dismissed.

**34 EXT. BUSH'S SHACK - DAY 34**

Buddy heads to the hearse, glancing back over his shoulder. As he recalls his encounter, he stops, looking back at the shack. The old legend has gotten deep under his skin.

20.

**35 OMITTED 35**

**35A EXT. BUSH'S LAND/FIELD 35A**

The morning sun breaks over the mountains.

**36 EXT. BUSH'S SHACK - MORNING 36**

bark  
Bush is on the porch, straining boiled herbs, grass, and  
into a jar. There is something not right with him and he  
knows it. While the medicine cools he looks out across the  
mountain and draws a deep breath.

**37 EXT. FUNERAL HOME - MORNING 37**

A well crafted live-in home doubling as a funeral parlor. A  
sign, 'QUINN FUNERAL HOME', hangs from the porch.

**FRANK (O.S.)**

Oh yes Ma'am, I do respect your  
wishes but you see..

**38 INT. FUNERAL HOME/FRANK'S OFFICE - SAME 38**

Frank is looking a little hung over. Buddy walks in. Frank  
points at the phone and rolls his blood shot eyes.

**FRANK**

.state law requires.. No ma'am, we  
can't bury him under the house..  
There is a loud KNOCK at the door. Buddy goes to get it.

**39 EXT. FUNERAL HOME/FRONT DOOR - DAY 39**

Buddy swings the door open. Bush is standing there. Buddy  
leans back unconsciously, not knowing what to expect.

**FRANK (O.S.)**

Well just for argument's sake,  
Ma'am, how would we get the casket  
under the house? No casket?

**BUDDY**

**(TO BUSH)**

Would you like to come in, sir?

21.

Bush stares suspiciously into the room then back at Buddy.

**FRANK (O.S.)**

But you have to have a container of  
some kind, Ma'am for decency and  
uh, sanitation.

Bush enters the Funeral Home. As Buddy starts to close the  
door, Bush catches it.

**BUSH**

Leave it.

**40 INT. FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS 40**

Frank is still on the phone and pouring himself a drink from  
the flask into his coffee cup in the drawer.

**FRANK**

Yes, Ma'am, but there's lots of  
natural things that aren't decent.  
(listens, eyes widen)

He did what?! Good God. No, Ma'am,  
I didn't know that about your  
husband. Well, yeah now I  
understand why you want him under  
the house but still..

The phone goes dead. FRANK sighs as Bush walks in.

**BUDDY**

Frank Quinn, Mr. Bush.

Frank takes a quick swallow from his cup to fortify himself,  
then jumps up, smiling, and goes to Bush with his hand out.

**FRANK**

Come in, come in, pleasure. Coffee?

As Bush shakes Frank's hand, he stares into him, taking  
everything in, his bloodshot eyes, the wrinkled shirt

beneath

his suit, his breath. Frank feels downright naked.

**BUSH**

You from anywhere?

**FRANK**

A little bit of everywhere, I  
guess. Get him a chair, Buddy!  
Buddy stands behind the waiting chair.

**22.**

Bush scrapes up a different chair. Frank goes behind the  
desk. Buddy pulls up a chair.  
Bush reaches into his coat and pulls out the wad of hermit  
money and lays it on the desk. Frank does something  
phenomenal. He ignores the money.

**FRANK**

How can we help you, sir?  
Bush gives Buddy a look, then looks back at Frank who  
steadfastly refuses to look at the ball of money.

**BUSH**

I'm after a funeral.

**FRANK**

Boy, are you in luck.

**(GETTING UP)**

Follow me.

**41 INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY 41**

Frank and Buddy stand with Bush in a room dedicated to  
sales.  
Three caskets are lined up for display. All tanks.  
his  
Bush steps up to a cheap cloth covered box, bangs it with  
knuckles, and scowls. Frank points to a wooden casket.

**FRANK**

Solid pecan, steel handles..  
Bush eyes it, repulsed.

**BUDDY**

Mr. Bush is an amazing carpenter.

**BUSH**

Forget the box. What else?

**FRANK**

Whatever you want, flowers..

**BUSH**

No.

**FRANK**

Burial plot..

**BUSH**

Got it.

**23.**

**FRANK**

A service?

**BUSH**

Party.

**FRANK**

A what?

**BUSH**

A party.

**BUDDY**

What kind of party?

**BUSH**

Funeral party.

Stumped for once in his life, Frank looks at Buddy. Then years of honed instincts surge back to life.

**FRANK**

We can do that.

**42 INT. FUNERAL HOME/OFFICE - DAY 42**

As they come back into the office..

**BUSH**

And I want to be there.

Frank goes behind his desk. Buddy and Bush start to sit..

**FRANK**

You will be, I guarantee it.

**BUSH**

I want to be there now.

**BUDDY**

You want to be at your funeral..  
party.. alive?

(off Bush's nod)

But.. it's not a funeral if you're  
not, you know, deceased..

**FRANK**

Hold on now, it's a detail, we can  
look at it.

**BUDDY**

Pretty big detail.

**24.**

Frank cuts Buddy a look then smiles at Bush.

**FRANK**

So you'd like to have a funeral  
party while you're alive so you can  
go?

**BUSH**

Yes or no?

**FRANK**

Yes.  
Buddy is lost.

**FRANK**

Buddy, get some paper. We need to  
make of list of who Mr. Bush wants  
to invite..  
As Buddy starts to get up.

**BUSH**

Sit down.  
Buddy sits right down.

**BUSH**

I want everybody to come who's got  
a story to tell about me.

**FRANK**

Say again.

**BUDDY**

That probably covers 4 counties..  
Bush shoots him a look. Frank shoots him a look. Buddy  
about how great an outdoor life would be.

thinks

**BUSH**

Then I want 4 counties worth of  
people at the party.

**FRANK**

Well, sir, the thing is, how would  
you get people to come and tell  
stories about you that I'm guessing  
might get them, you know.. shot?  
Bush scoops up the ball of money and heads out. Now all  
can see is the money, leaving.

Frank

25.

**FRANK**

You know what, you go ahead, don't  
worry about it, we'll think of  
something. A couple of ideas just  
came to me.

**BUDDY**

Like what?

**43 EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY 43**

As Bush starts out the open door, he nearly bumps into  
Buddy's wife, Kathryn, and MATTIE DARROW. Mattie is carrying

Kathryn and Buddy's baby boy.  
Frank sees Mattie and flicks his hair back nervously and quickly brushes his teeth with his finger as..  
.Bush gives Mattie a glance and tries to be invisible.

**MATTIE**

Felix?!  
Feigning deafness, Bush walks on. Sensing something, Kathryn takes the baby so Mattie can go after him.

**MATTIE**

Felix! Say hello to me!  
Frank, eyes wide with surprise, mouths, "Felix?".  
Bush's shoulder hunch then fall as he turns. He looks into her, taking everything in. When he speaks his eyes and voice are soft.

**BUSH**

Hey Mattie.  
Buddy comes out, surprised to see Mattie and Bush together.  
Frank walks up behind him and scowls. Kathryn steers them back inside to give Mattie privacy.

**BUSH**

Heard you moved off.

**MATTIE**

I've been back a while.

**BUSH**

**(LOOKING AWAY)**

Well.

26.

**MATTIE**

How are you?

**BUSH**

You look like you always did.  
He abruptly rips himself away and is gone.

**44 INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY 44**

Buddy and Frank are peeking out the window. They see Mattie standing alone as Bush walks away.

**FRANK**

How would she know him?

**KATHRYN (O.S.)**

It's none of our business.

**FRANK**

So? We got to know.

Kathryn shakes her head and goes back outside. FRANK has another look at Mattie then lets the curtain fall back.

**FRANK**

See the size of that thing?

**BUDDY**

What?

**FRANK**

What do you mean, what? Goddamn ball of money! He wants a party with pink balloons on his ears, we're gonna give it to him.

**BUDDY**

But..

**FRANK**

I sold 26 of the ugliest cars ever made one December, in Chicago, with wind blowing so hard up my ass I was farting snow flakes in July so don't tell me we can't do this.

**BUDDY**

But..

27.

**FRANK**

That's the last "but" I want to

hear out of you. You're a salesman now, sell!

**FRANK**

(looking out again)  
She called him Felix.

**45 EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY 45**

Kathryn rocks the baby in a carriage. Mattie is beside her.

**MATTIE**

A thousand years ago he was the most interesting man I'd ever met.

**KATHRYN**

Get out of here.

**MATTIE**

He was. And I don't mean just the way he looked.

**KATHRYN**

I hope not.

**MATTIE**

Oh no, listen, he was beautiful.

**KATHRYN**

Are you serious?

**MATTIE**

**(SIGHS/THINKS)**

Most people are just laid out nice and simple, you know? You always know what they're thinking and where you are with them. But he was this.. big old cave that went deeper and deeper. You'd never get to the end of him.

**KATHRYN**

Good Lord, you had a crush on him!

**MATTIE**

All the girls did. I know he's something wild that crawls out of the hills once in a while and gets into trouble now but there's still nobody like him.

28.

**46 EXT. BUSH'S BARN - MORNING 46**

Bush comes out of the barn. Frank and Buddy are there.

**FRANK**

We have a plan. All we need is a little bit of your time.

**BUSH**

What for?

**BUDDY**

Seeing it is better than hearing about it.

Bush looks at the hearse, back at Buddy and Frank.

**BUSH**

How much is it gonna cost?

**FRANK**

**(TO BUDDY)**

Did you say anything about money?  
(touches his own chest)  
I didn't say anything about money.

**(TO BUSH)**

If we can't get you what you want you don't owe us anything.

**47 INT. HEARSE - DAY 47**

Frank, Buddy, and Bush ride in the front seat of the hearse. They are together but in very different worlds. They don't even look at each other when they talk.

Buddy is lost in serious thought.

Frank is preoccupied about the deal and driving too fast. Bush is scrunched up to the door. He is going much faster than he is used to going. He kinda likes it and kinda doesn't.

**BUSH**

It moves, don't it?

**FRANK**

**(DISTRACTED)**

This is nothing.

**29.**

**BUSH**

Fancy car for the dead.

**FRANK**

Didn't buy it for them.

**BUDDY**

(out of nowhere)

We say that funerals are "For the Living" but we forget what that means sometimes, I guess.

(to Bush but almost to

**HIMSELF)**

I was thinking about your funeral party before I went to sleep last night and I think I understand it a little now. When I was a kid, my folks were killed in a bad car wreck and the people at the funeral home... they did the impossible as far as I was concerned. I don't know what I would've done without them. And I remember wishing that my mother and daddy were there to see how beautiful they made everything.

Frank is hearing this for the first time and is shocked.

Bush

glances softly at Buddy then looks out the side window at

the

world rushing by too fast. All at once he gives in to it.

**48 EXT. TOWN STREET - DAY 48**

The hearse pulls up on main street. Frank, Buddy, and Bush get out and head toward Feldman's Clothing Store.

**48A INT. FELDMAN'S CLOTHING STORE- DAY 48A**

Frank and Buddy enter the store and find MR. FELDMAN and a PHOTOGRAPHER setting up a large camera and backdrop. As they turn to show Bush what is happening they see him go by the window outside.

**FRANK**

Where's he going?

**49 OMIT 49**

**30.**

**50 INT. TOLLERUDE'S BARBER SHOP - DAY 50**

A barber's drape falls over BUSH who is seated in a chair. Frank and Buddy rush in. The barber, an anxious Mr. Tollerude, pumps Bush's chair upward.

**FRANK**

**(TO BUSH)**

I wish you wouldn't do that yet.  
Bush gives him the hairy eyeball then speaks to Mr. Tollerude, a clear threat.

**BUSH**

Don't leave me naked.

**FRANK**

Mr. Bush, you can get all the hairs  
cut you want after we take your  
picture, I'll pay for it.  
Mr. Tollerude doesn't know whether to cut or not.

**BUSH**

Why you want my picture made?

**BUDDY**

That's what we're trying to tell

you. We're gonna run an ad in some papers about your party and put up posters of you.

**BUSH**

And you want me to look like this?

**FRANK**

Yes.

**BUSH**

Why?

**FRANK**

Why?

**BUDDY**

It's how people recognize you, sir.

**FRANK**

And you want as many people to come as possible so..

**31.**

**BUSH**

So a crazy old nutter draws more.

**FRANK**

Basically. Don't you think?

**BUSH**

Do you ever say what you mean?

Bush rips the bib off as Tollerude whooshes him to the floor.

**51 INT. FELDMAN'S CLOTHING STORE 51**

Bush is seated in front of a backdrop painted with a bridge, a swan, and a pond. The Photographer is trying to tidy up Bush without offending him. As he walks back to camera, Bush roughs himself up and looks truly wild.

Buddy snickers. When the Photographer gets back to the camera, he cocks his head, what?!

**FRANK**

Take it.  
(leans in to Buddy)  
I'd go see that.

**52 INT. TOLLERUDE'S BARBERSHOP - DAY 52**

Mr. Tollerude, nervous as hell, brings Bush up from his reclining position and turns the chair to the mirror. Bush studies his well trimmed hair and beard for a moment. It's impossible to tell what his thoughts are as he looks into his own eyes.  
Buddy and Frank are in the mirror too, staring at him.

**BUDDY**

**(GENUINELY SURPRISED)**

Damn. You look pretty good..  
Bush suddenly gets up and nods at Frank.

**BUSH**

He's paying.  
As Bush blows out the door, Mr. Tollerude leans against the chair with relief.

32.

**53 INT. FELDMAN'S CLOTHING STORE - DAY 53**

Bush stands in front of a full length mirror. He has on a decent black suit, pinned to be hemmed, and a plain white shirt, open at the collar. It is a startling change. But we still can't tell what he is thinking.  
Buddy is staring at him with honest disbelief.  
Frank is quietly trying to get Mr. Feldman to lower the

price

for the suit. He looks over and double-takes Bush.

**FRANK**

Son of a bitch, it's almost worth it.

**BUSH**

**(TO BUDDY)**

What do you think?

**BUDDY**

I wouldn't know you, sir.

**BUSH**

Maybe the Devil won't either. Might work out.

**(TO FRANK)**

Where's the shoes?

**FRANK**

Well, normally people don't wear shoes in a casket so..

(off Bush's scowl)

.what are you, about a 10D?

**54 INT. FELDMAN'S CLOTHING STORE - MOMENTS LATER 54**

Buddy stands beside Frank who is still trying to get a deal on the clothes. Bush walks up with two pairs of pants and

two

new shirts, puts them on the counter, gives Frank a hard look, and walks away. Frank looks down at the clothes, over at Buddy.

**FRANK**

Pretty optimistic taking a change of clothes to the grave.

(calls over his shoulder)

How you set for underwear?

**BUSH (O.S.)**

Don't wear none.

**33.**

**FRANK**

One question too many.

**55 OMIT 55**

**56 INT. HEARSE - DAY 56**

Everyone is back in the hearse. Something is eating at Frank.

**FRANK**

I don't mean to be nosey but uh..  
how do you know Mattie?

**BUSH**

She's a peach.  
Frank and Buddy cut Bush a look. He looks ahead.

**BUSH**

We had a go.  
Frank nearly drives off the road.

**57 INT. FUNERAL HOME/ FRANK'S ROOM - NIGHT 57**

Late night Poker. Cigarette smoke drifts into the air. Frank, Carl, Rev. Horton, Mattie, and RAY, a banker, are at the table. Ray has the untouchable presence of someone privileged which appears to be driving Frank up a tree tonight. Horton gathers up his winnings.

**HORTON**

"The Lord loves a cheerful giver.."

**MATTIE**

Oh please.. you think the Lord's  
taking sides in a poker game in a  
funeral home?  
Horton shrugs and points to the divine evidence.

**FRANK**

If He is, the Divine's cheating.

**RAY**

Exactly.

**FRANK**

Don't agree with me Ray, it makes  
me doubt myself.

34.

Ray sighs and studies his perfectly cut nails.

**RAY**

I would have turned down your loan  
if you were my own dear mother,  
Frank.

**FRANK**

You made my point and don't even  
know it.

**MATTIE**

Jesus, would you two stop it!  
You're worse than two old women..

Ray shrugs, sweetly blase. Frank tries to rein in his  
temper  
who  
for her. The loss of the hand is especially hard on Carl  
has only a couple of dollars left.

**CARL**

**(TO FRANK)**

What were you doing with that old  
bastard in town today, anyway?

**RAY**

Oh yes. Buying him clothes, getting  
him a haircut..on credit.  
Frank shoots him a look.

**HORTON**

Took out ads in a bunch of papers  
too, something about a party?

**FRANK**

God, I love small towns.

**MATTIE**

Who are you talking about?

**RAY**

That hermit, what's his name..

**FRANK**

(a knowing look at Mattie)  
"Felix" Bush.

**MATTIE**

You're giving him a party?

**FRANK**

A funeral party.

35.

**MATTIE**

Whatever you're drinking is not being good to you at all.

**CARL**

What the hell is a funeral party?

**FRANK**

Hey, the man wants to be at his own funeral. What can I say? I'd like to be at my funeral so I could tell my ex-wife to kiss my..

**MATTIE**

What makes you think she'd show up for you?

**FRANK**

Because, Dear, vultures are constitutionally unable to ignore the dead.  
Mattie grins which delights Frank, no end.  
Horton stops counting his money and stares at Frank.

**HORTON**

It's that big wad of money of his you're after.  
There is a crack in Ray's disinterest that he tries to hide.

**RAY**

What money is that?

**MATTIE**

Felix has money?  
Everyone is looking at Frank but he shuffles the cards.

**HORTON**

He came to see me, wanting a

funeral, had a big old greasy ball of money. Talked like he thought he could buy his way to heaven with it.

**RAY**

**(SERIOUSLY)**

How much has he got? Maybe he can. Hearing that Bush wants or needs a real funeral Mattie is suddenly truly concerned.

36.

**MATTIE**

Is he sick, Gus?  
Horton shrugs. Frank notes the concern and doesn't like it. Carl coughs and his ribs make him break out into a sweat.

**CARL**

I'll tell you one damn thing, ain't nobody gonna go to a funeral for that son of a bitch.  
Mattie gives Carl a look

**HORTON**

Language..

**FRANK**

They might. He's inviting everyone who has a story about him to come. You could tell about him kicking your ass, Carl.  
Carl looks at Frank as if he wants to cold cock him.

**RAY**

Old man is going to ride the Weird Train right into the ground, isn't he?

**FRANK**

Wouldn't you like to know what everybody says about you behind your back, Ray?

(off his look)  
Yeah, probably not.

**HORTON**

I already know way more about  
people than I need to.

**MATTIE**

Or want to.

**HORTON**

Amen.

**FRANK**

Let's play some cards.

**37.**

**RAY**

Oh for God's sake, face it Frank,  
you're broke.

This is not about cards. It's a declaration meant to  
embarrass Frank in front of everyone. Frank feels their eyes  
on him as he starts to pull off his watch. Ray waves it off.

**RAY**

Please. I've won that 4 times  
already.

**FRANK**

It's who has it last that counts.

**CARL**

Say what you want but if there  
hadn't been anybody there the other  
day he would've killed me. And I  
guarantee you it wouldn't have been  
his first time.

It sounds true and everyone is quiet except Mattie.

**MATTIE**

Everybody knows you started it.  
(off his glare)  
Don't look at me like that. I

remember when you were born. You were the sweetest little boy. What is wrong with you? Momentarily shamed, Carl's face softens and we can see a better man there. He struggles to hold on to it but..

**CARL**

I made a mistake. But there's a line.. and he crossed it.. and everybody knows that too. Ya'll go on and have a party with the devil for his money but I'll dance on his grave someday.  
Carl snatches his few dollars up and heads out.

**HORTON**

You kind of hate to admit it when it comes to Carl but he's got a point. You don't know what Bush is doing. What if he just wants to get everybody in one place so he can turn his shotgun on them?

38.

**MATTIE**

He wouldn't..

**HORTON**

I looked in his eyes. The truth is nobody knows what he's capable of. Maybe even he doesn't know.  
She looks into him. Frank starts to deal the cards.

**RAY**

Go ahead and lay your watch down, Frank. But I am going to keep it this time, alright, on principle.

**FRANK**

I got an idea. Let's try something different.

**(TO RAY)**

The cards in your sock? Leave'em there.  
Everyone freezes. Ray shakes his head.

**RAY**

What are you trying to pull now?

**FRANK**

You really think you're that good that nobody sees?

**RAY**

Sees what?

**FRANK**

You cheat at everything you do. Even at the bank, you loan people just enough to get'em deeper in so you can foreclose on them.

**RAY**

You are a pathetic man. And a goddamn..

**FRANK**

Am I? Then stand up and roll down your socks.

(a deep dark look)

Stand up or I'll stand you up.

Ray looks around the table and suddenly realizes that he is irreversibly exposed and alone. The sound of Frank's chair scraping the floor makes him jerk up.

**39**

He walks out, trying to find his old confident rhythm and failing. Everyone sits in uneasy silence.

**58 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT 58**

Horton waves and walks out, leaving the door open. Frank walks Mattie to the door, helping with her coat, trying to work up his nerve to say..

**FRANK**

I'll walk you home.

**MATTIE**

No. Thank you.

**FRANK**

**(HURT)**

You sure?

(off her firm nod)

You're not going to play anymore,  
are you?

**MATTIE**

Oh, I don't know. Thank you for  
inviting me though.

**FRANK**

I'm sorry about the..we don't  
always fight, okay, we do, but he's  
had that coming for..

**MATTIE**

It's not that. I just..(trails off)

**FRANK**

You came because you don't know  
what to do with yourself.

(off her look)

I slept on the same side of the bed  
my whole life, right? But after my  
wife left me, I switched sides,  
just like that, and never been able  
to go back.

**MATTIE**

When someone you love is gone, you  
can pour everything, even a  
lifetime of things into the place  
where they were but it's still  
always empty.

**40.**

He sees that her thoughts are not with him at all but a

million miles away. She hardly glances up when she says..

**MATTIE**

'Night.

He stares after her, wishing that she could see him the way he sees her.

**59 OMIT 59**

**60 INT.BUSH'S SHACK - NIGHT 60**

Dim lamp light glows. We see Bush sitting on the edge of the bed wiping the sweat from his face with a sheet. He looks up at the picture of the beautiful woman.

**61 INT.BUDDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT 61**

Buddy sits in the dark, rocking his son who is asleep. A small lamp casts a shadow across them. Kathryn comes in.

**KATHRYN**

I didn't hear him wake up.

**BUDDY**

He didn't.

**KATHRYN**

**(KNEELING DOWN)**

Everything's all right, hon.

**BUDDY**

I'm glad you don't know how quick it can change.

She gently kisses his arm and the baby's head. Buddy looks at her, haunted by the very possibility of their absence.

**62 EXT. STREET - DAY 62**

Mattie is standing on the sidewalk at Feldman's store with her coat collar pulled up against the cold, giving someone

we can't see a bemused affectionate scolding..

**MATTIE**

Good Lord. Have you completely lost your mind?

**(MORE)**

**40A.**

MATTIE (cont`d)

Straighten up for heaven's sake  
before somebody throws a net over  
you!

But she smiles in spite of herself, glances around to see if  
anyone was watching and moves discretely on. As she does we  
see that she was talking to a striking WANTED POSTER of a  
wild man sitting in front of a pond, a swan, and a bridge.  
The text reads:

**41.**

**MYSTERIOUS HERMIT OF CALEB COUNTY THROWS A FUNERAL PARTY!**

**EVERYONE IS INVITED. MUSIC! FOOD! STORIES! DANCING!**

**63 INT. WCGM RADIO STATION - NIGHT 63**

A tiny PLACE, cramped with radio gear.

Buddy and Frank peer through a glass window into a small  
control booth. (We will cut back and forth between the glass)  
Buddy is having misgivings about being here. But Frank gives  
the thumbs up to the young WCGM ANNOUNCER in the booth, a  
hopeful kid with a smooth voice and dreams of the big-time.  
The Announcer hands Bush a set of headphones. Bush is

wearing

his new clothes and truly looks like a different man.  
Bush is puzzled by the headset. The kid takes it and clamps  
it onto Bush's head. He starts to yank them off then hears a  
song playing inside his head and loves it. But now the  
announcer cuts the record off and Bush scowls.

**ANNOUNCER**

Friends, we have a treat for you

today on WCGM. Our special guest is going to tell us about an event that everyone is talking about. And here he is, Mr. Felix Bush, the mysterious hermit of Caleb County! How are you today, sir?

**BUSH**

I am.  
Bush is surprised by the sound of his own voice.

**ANNOUNCER**

So tell us, sir, exactly how did you come up with the idea of having a funeral party before you die?

**BUSH**

I dreamed it.

42.

**ANNOUNCER**

Really?

**BUSH**

Why would I make that up?  
Two seconds of dead air as the announcer finds his feet.

**ANNOUNCER**

Okay. Now I have to say that you don't look quite like you do on the posters.

**BUSH**

I got pruned.

**ANNOUNCER**

Well, you're a bit of a local legend, sir. I was a little nervous about our interview. I've heard some pretty wild stories..

**BUSH**

Like what?

**ANNOUNCER**

Well uh, just.. from what I understand, you want everyone who has a story about you to come and tell it. Is that right?

**BUSH**

You come and tell yours.

**ANNOUNCER**

Thank you. Now how long have you been living out there by yourself?

**64 INT. MATTIE DARROW HOUSE - NIGHT/CONTINUOUS 64**

and  
Mattie is cutting the stems of some lovely yellow flowers  
arranging them in a vase.

**BUSH (O.S.)**

40 some years.

**ANNOUNCER (O.S.)**

40 years with nobody to talk to?

**BUSH (O.S.)**

First 38 are the hardest.

**43.**

Mattie grins.

**65 INT. WCGM - CONTINUOUS 65**

**ANNOUNCER**

But why would you do that, Mr. Bush, shut yourself off like that? Frank isn't happy with this but Buddy wants to hear.

**BUSH**

Come to the funeral and maybe you'll find out.

**ANNOUNCER**

You heard it here on WCGM, folks,  
find out the answer to the mystery  
February 16..

**BUSH**

One more thing, boy.  
FRANK and Buddy tense. What's this?

**66 INT. DARROW HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 6 6**

Mattie tenses at the sound in Bush's voice.

**BUSH (O.S.)**

Gonna be a drawing.

**ANNOUNCER (O.S.)**

What kind of drawing, sir?

**BUSH**

You buy a ticket for \$5.00 The day  
of the funeral we draw names. Then  
when I die, the winner gets my  
place, 300 acres of timber that  
hasn't been touched in 40 years.  
Mattie accidentally cuts a bloom off of a flower.

**67 INT. WCGM - SAME 67**

Dead air. The kid, Frank, and Buddy are all staring at  
Bush.

**ANNOUNCER**

For 5 dollars?

**44 .**

**BUSH**

Send it to the Quinn Funeral Home.  
Frank's eyes light up like fiery pinwheels and he almost  
yelps! Buddy looks oddly perplexed and sad.

**ANNOUNCER**

You heard him! If you want a chance

to win 300 acres of virgin timber worth thousands and thousands of dollars, send 5 dollars along with your name and address to..

(off Frank waving and pointing to himself)

Frank Quinn at Quinn Funeral Home.

As the Announcer begins a song, Bush moves his head in time with the music. Frank and Buddy rush into the control booth.

**FRANK**

**(TO BUSH)**

I could almost kiss you on the mouth!

**ANNOUNCER**

I'll take a ticket.

**BUDDY**

You're betting on a man dying..

**ANNOUNCER**

I didn't mean it like..

**FRANK**

Hey, it's his idea!

They look at Bush who has taken off the headset and looking at it like he wants to take it home.

**FRANK**

It's what you want, right?

**BUSH**

**(TO BUDDY)**

Buy a ticket, son.

**68 INT. DARROW HOUSE - SAME 6 8**

Mattie puts the vase of flowers on table with a group of family photographs. The picture beside the vase is the SAME PHOTOGRAPH of the beautiful woman that Bush has. Is it Mattie? It looks a little like her.

**45.**

INSERT PHOTO: The BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN stares at us as we PULL BACK TO REVEAL that we are now looking at the identical photo tacked to Bush's wall.

**69 OMIT 69**

**70 EXT. BUSH'S BARN - LATE DAY 70**

Bush starts out of the barn, draws back, and peeks through the wall boards: A FIGURE approaches. He jerks..  
REVEAL Mattie walking

**BUSH**

Mattie?

**MATTIE**

Felix?  
Mattie enters, straining to see into the barn. Her eyes adjust to find him standing near Mule. She is startled and pleased by his new do.

**MATTIE**

Look at you. I wondered if you were still under that beard.

**BUSH**

Wasn't nowhere else to go.

**MATTIE**

I heard you on the radio.

**BUSH**

Well.

**MATTIE**

You've gotten downright chatty.

**BUSH**

I reckon so.

**MATTIE**

**(GLANCING AROUND)**

This is nice. I drove by a few times after I got back but..

**BUSH**

You want to see it?

46.

**MATTIE**

Do you want me to?

**71 EXT. BUSH'S LAND - DAY 71**

The first stop on the tour is a small fenced grave site near the shack. Three grave markers with names carved into them:

**KEEPER, CHARLIE, MAUDE.**

Bush is squatting down staring at the markers. Mattie stands close beside him. Since his attention is elsewhere she looks at him in an unguarded way. Her mind is full of questions, old and new.

**BUSH**

You always know where you stand with a dog. Want to lay here with them someday if they'll have me.

**72 EXT. BUSH'S LAND - DAY/LATER 72**

Mattie and Bush walks side by side through the last of the glimmering light and shadows beneath the trees. It is a chilly and Mattie's cheeks are flushed. She is enchanted by the place. Bush tries to hide how winded he is..

**MATTIE**

It really is beautiful. Probably looked like this everywhere a hundred years ago.

**BUSH**

You leave things alone, they know what to do.

**MATTIE**

Like you?

**BUSH**

No, Ma'am. I don't know what to do about anything much.

**MATTIE**

You've been alone a long time.

**BUSH**

Some people are more suited to it  
than others, I reckon.

**46A.**

**MATTIE**

That's funny cause I never thought  
that it'd suit you. I knew you  
wouldn't be like anybody else but..  
no one to talk to, no one to.. be  
with.. never.  
He looks into her then looks away at something.

**BUSH**

How you sleeping these days, girl?

**MATTIE**

How am I what?

**47.**

**BUSH**

You sleep good?

**MATTIE**

No, not lately. How'd you know?

He veers off the path and pulls up a plant and brings it  
to her.

back

**BUSH**

Chamomile, it's good when the nights get long. Helps you nod off. She takes it and smiles up at him.

**BUSH**

Want to go on a ways?

**MATTIE**

Yes.

**BUSH**

Would you stay for supper?

**MATTIE**

I don't want to be any trouble.

**BUSH**

A supper guest every 30-40 years is not much trouble, Girl.

**MATTIE**

Alright then.  
He holds out his arm.

**BUSH**

Better stay close, some big old wild cats been eating my chickens.. She looks around and takes his arm.

**BUSH**

.or maybe it was me..  
She snorts and slaps his arm but doesn't let go..

**73 OMITTED 73**

**48.**

**74 INT. BUSH'S SHACK - NIGHT 74**

They enter the dark room together. Bush lights a lantern, gets a chair from a corner and holds it out for her. She

sits

and watches him check a cast iron pot on the warm stove and put a log on the fire. She notices the beautiful table.

**MATTIE**

You always were good with your hands.

He puts a glass of tea in front of her and sits down.

**BUSH**

You still play the piano?

**MATTIE**

I teach a few girls.

**BUSH**

I got a good feeling when you played. Remember that time you was playing and the lamp burned out?

And you went right on in the dark?

I hear that song sometimes at night.

She shrugs shyly and sips the tea. Seconds tick by.

**MATTIE**

Sure is quiet out here.

**BUSH**

(cocks his head)

What?

**MATTIE**

I said it's..

(stops/gets the joke)

I tried to write you at times but I didn't know what to say.

**BUSH**

Well. I heard you married.

**MATTIE**

He was a Doctor; a real good man.

We lived in St. Louis for awhile.

He died unexpectedly about a year ago. I came back here because.. I

have no idea why.

(sips tea/thinks)

**(MORE)**

**MATTIE (CONT'D)**

The list of people who are gone is getting longer and longer and sometimes I feel like all I'm doing is waiting for my name to come up.

**BUSH**

You have a tender heart, always did.  
She gives him a curious look.

**BUSH**

You can't wait for anything, Mattie. Close your eyes, hold your breath.. stay in one spot your whole life, but you're still moving, like the world's moving under you. There's no waiting.

**MATTIE**

And there's no getting over some things either, is there?

**BUSH**

Reckon not, Little Bit.

**MATTIE**

Little Bit?! Oh my God, nobody's called me that in..  
But suddenly she is lifted from the chair as if by strong ropes. She stares at the wall as she walks toward Bush's

bed.

Bush is stricken and white. He would stop her if he could

but

it is too late.

She walks right up to the picture at the edge of the lamp light and stares into it as if it is a mirage that will disappear if she blinks.

Finally she whirls and looks at him, her face a tortured mask. A strangled sob escapes her.

He gets up and stands there staring at the floor.

Suddenly she is moving toward him and then past him and out the door. Her shadow merges with the darkness. Bush stands with his head down, staring into oblivion.

50.

76 OMITTED 76

78 INT. FUNERAL HOME/OFFICE - DAY 78

Buddy comes in frowning and lugging a heavy mail sack. What the hell? He looks up and sees more sacks dumped on the desk.

Frank is grinning and ripping open envelopes from the sacks and each one has 5 dollars in it! Buddy looks down and sees even more mail sacks on the floor!

**FRANK**

Jesus, kid!

**BUDDY**

Yeah! But, but it's not our money.

**FRANK**

Well yeah, no, but some of it's gonna be! We're putting this thing on!  
Frank rips open two more envelopes and dollar bills rain down to the floor. He's beside himself. Buddy eyes him warily.

**BUDDY**

He should be here. I'm gonna go get him.  
They lock eyes. Frank finally tosses him the hearse keys.

79 OMITTED 79

80 INT. FUNERAL HOME/OFFICE - DAY 80

Buddy, Frank, and Bush are staring reverently at the money stacked across the desk and the full paper sacks all around the desk. Bush eyes Buddy who is still quiet.

51.

**FRANK**

I don't know exactly how much your land's worth but looks to me like you could get maybe 10 times that or more. I don't know what to do with it. I mean it's yours to do with what you want but I'm getting a little nervous about it. Never thought I'd see enough money to make me nervous. We should probably talk about the price for everything, the clothes, the ads, the food and drink for the party, the music.. our fee for everything, we'll be fair about that, I'm not worried about it.  
Bush is looking at Buddy who is looking across the room.

**BUSH**

What do you think, boy?  
Buddy jerks, looks at Frank, at Bush.

**BUDDY**

Money makes people do funny things.  
Frank scowls.

**BUDDY**

I think you should probably put it in the bank, sir.

**FRANK**

No! Ray is not..  
(off Bush's look)  
I mean, if it was my money I'd put it in a bank out of town so everyone didn't know my business. This bank here, you can't trust, that's all I'm saying.

**BUSH**

Can I trust you?

**FRANK**

Every name, every dollar, is right there!

**BUSH**

Not what I asked.

52.

**FRANK**

I've done a hell of a job for you.  
I don't see why..

**BUDDY**

Mr. Bush, I didn't mean to imply..

**BUSH**

Hush.

**FRANK**

I've sold horses, cars, houses,  
hell, pocket watches pinned to the  
inside of my coat. I'm not ashamed  
of it. I don't rob banks, don't  
cheat at cards, and I sleep all  
right the nights I sleep. What was  
the question..?

**BUSH**

They goddamn..  
He nods at the money and suddenly becomes the "other" Bush.

**BUSH**

Take out for the expenses you've  
already had and give me the  
receipts. As the bills come in for  
things, give them to me and I'll  
pay them. Put this money in a box  
and the boy and I'll take it  
someplace in the morning. Whatever  
new comes in, keep it in the bottom  
of one of them ugly caskets in  
there 'till I come get it. After  
the party, name a fair price for  
what you've done and we'll settle  
up.

**(WALKING OUT)**

I'll be at the car.  
After he's gone, Frank and Buddy stare at each other.

**FRANK**

Is it just me or is he extremely  
fucking articulate when he wants to  
be?

**BUDDY**

I don't know who's selling who what  
anymore.

53.

**FRANK**

It's not clear, is it?

**BUDDY**

Not only that but something feels  
really wrong.

**FRANK**

Hold on. I told you that you were  
working on commission..

**BUDDY**

Yeah, but..

**FRANK**

So whatever our end of this is, you  
get a piece.

**BUDDY**

A piece?

**FRANK**

Half. It could help set you up,  
Buddy. So whatever feels wrong is  
gonna feel right pretty damn  
quick, okay? We just have to close  
it out. From here on, watch me, do  
what I do, and we'll be fine.

**BUDDY**

But..

**FRANK**

He wants you to go with him to take this money somewhere which means that it's you he trusts. And that's fine because I trust you too. Just don't trust him, okay?

**BUDDY**

I'm lost again.

**FRANK**

Look, that funny feeling you have.. I have it too. And it's not funny. So go along, be friendly, but that's it.

**(BEAT)**

There's a euphoria that comes with closing a deal, Buddy, and the bigger the deal, the higher you get. It's better than anything.

**(MORE)**

54

**FRANK (CONT'D)**

But the critical time is just before it closes. It's like a witching hour and everything tries to come apart. We're not going to let that happen.

**BUDDY**

All right.

**FRANK**

Now go.  
(as Buddy starts out)  
You know.. I always wondered why you wanted to work here. I thought you could do a lot better.

(off Buddy's look back)  
I didn't know about your folks, I'm  
really sorry.

**BUDDY**

Thank you.  
He goes on.  
Frank turns and flips through a large stack of bills,  
hungrily entranced.

**81 INT. BUDDY'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT 8 1**

Buddy's son is crying his heart out. Kathryn comes in  
unbuttoning her blouse, picks him up, sits down, slips her  
blouse off her shoulder, brings the boy to her breast and  
voila, his sorrow miraculously vanishes.  
Buddy appears in the doorway, his eyes soft with love.

**BUDDY**

I might have a crying fit coming on  
too.

**KATHRYN**

Is that right?

**BUDDY**

Feeling a little weepy.

**KATHRYN**

You boys..

**BUDDY**

(leans against door frame)  
I can maybe do something really  
good for us, Katy.

**55.**

**KATHRYN**

You already have.

**BUDDY**

I mean, money wise.

**KATHRYN**

About Mr. Bush?

**BUDDY**

Yeah. I'm getting half of whatever we make off of him.

**KATHRYN**

So why aren't you happy about it?

**BUDDY**

Didn't know I wasn't.

(off her look)

I was happy for a minute. And then the whole thing of making a carnival out of a person's death, I don't know if it's right.

**KATHRYN**

Is it what he wants?

**BUDDY**

He says it is.

**KATHRYN**

You are not responsible for what other people do, Buddy, just you.

**BUDDY**

You're right. You're always right.

**KATHRYN**

At least I am when I'm half naked.

**BUDDY**

Right.

**82 INT. MATTIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT 82**

A very determined little GIRL is working her way through a song on the piano that is unrecognizable in this form, even to her.

Mattie sits just behind the girl with tears in her eyes, not really listening. On the table beside the piano is a stack

of

picture albums and old yellowed newspaper articles.

56.

**83 EXT/INT BUSH'S SHACK/HEARSE - MORNING 83**

shotgun  
Sitting in the hearse outside of Bush's shack, Buddy watches Bush get in the car with his shotgun. There is a big wooden box of money on the seat between them. Bush props his  
against it.

**BUDDY**

Where to, sir?

**BUSH**

North.

**BUDDY**

(starting the hearse)  
How far?

**BUSH**

Till I say, son.  
Buddy gives him an uneasy look and pulls off down the tree-lined path.

**84 EXT. ROAD - DAY 84**

The hearse slips around the narrow road that cuts through miles of farm land lying fallow in the winter.

**85 INT. HEARSE - DAY 85**

Buddy looks out at the highway. He is driving slow. Bush is leaning against the money, thinking.

**BUDDY**

How much further now?  
Bush waves him on. Buddy scowls then decides to get serious about this. He presses on the accelerator and the hearse takes off down the highway.

**86 INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY 86**

Frank is hopelessly lost in a sea of envelopes. The phone is ringing off the hook, there are full sacks around him, and some Reporter is trying to take a picture through the front window. Frank scowls and lowers the blinds.

57.

**87 EXT. MATTIE'S HOUSE - DAY 87**

Frank is at Mattie's door entranced by the troubled but beautiful piano music coming from inside. It stops abruptly when he knocks. In seconds, Mattie appears.

**FRANK**

Hey Mattie.  
He looks almost boyish and bashful as he drinks her in.

**FRANK**

Was that you? It was really..

**MATTIE**

This is a surprise.

**FRANK**

Yeah, sorry.  
He stands, loving the view, forgetting why he is here.  
She waits it out as long as she can, not sure how she feels about this adoring look.

**MATTIE**

Was there something you..?

**FRANK**

Uh, yeah.. Help!

**MATTIE**

What?

**FRANK**

I'm up to my ears with this funeral and I thought, you know, we haven't had time to talk much lately so maybe you'd like to come over and rip open envelopes with me and

**MATTIE**

I'm sorry, I have lessons all afternoon. I have to get back in.

**FRANK**

Oh, okay, I just..

**MATTIE**

Sorry.  
She slips back inside. Frank stares at the door.

58.

**88 INT. MATTIE`S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 88**

is Mattie leans against the door with her eyes closed. There  
no student at the piano.

**89 OMITTED 89/90 89**

**91 EXT. CHURCH/SOUTHERN ILLINOIS - AFTERNOON 91**

The hearse is parked in front of a beautiful white board church.

**91A INT. HEARSE - AFTERNOON 91A**

Close on Bush and Buddy.

**BUSH**

Don't say nothing.

**BUDDY**

To who?

**BUSH**

You can say "hi".  
Bush gets out. Buddy sighs, mimes "Hi" and gets out.

**92 INT. ILLINOIS CHURCH ENTRY - AFTERNOON 92**

Buddy quietly creeps in through the front door, looks back over his shoulder, scowls, and enters the church.

93 He stops and looks around, awed by the beautifully serene  
sanctuary.

Now he sees a tall BLACK MAN (70) come out of an office door behind the pulpit, walk up the aisle, glancing out the  
window

at the driveway, and then at Buddy.

**BUDDY**

Hi.

**CHARLIE**

Hello.

Buddy is out of words that he is allowed to say. He glances at the door but Bush is not coming in.

59.

**BUDDY**

Hi.

Charlie holds out his hand, Buddy shakes it.

**CHARLIE**

Are you sure you're in the right place? Not expecting a funeral. Suddenly Bush steps into the church. Charlie squints over then stares at Bush with utter disbelief.

**CHARLIE**

Felix?!

**BUSH**

Hey, Charlie.

They shake hands, then hug. Buddy is blown away that Bush would hug anyone. Bush looks up at the church rafters.

**BUSH**

Still standing.

**CHARLIE**

Yes.

Charlie give Bush a look then holds out his hand to Buddy again.

**CHARLIE**

Reverend Charlie Jackson.

**BUDDY**

Hi!

**BUSH**

That's Buddy Robinson, he don't talk much.

**CHARLIE**

Someone better talk. A ghost pulls up in the driveway in a hearse, you expect a little bit of a story.

**94 INT. CHURCH - LATER 94**

Bush, Buddy and Charlie, sit in pews near a lovely altar.

60.

**CHARLIE**

My hearing is not what it was. It sounded like you said you want me to preach at your funeral party with you sitting there?

**BUSH**

Yes, sir.

**CHARLIE**

(shaking his head)  
You know I've talked to God a lot about you over the years and he said he broke the mould when he made you. Said you were sure entertaining to watch but way too much trouble.  
Buddy grins.

**BUSH**

Well.

**CHARLIE**

What would you want me to say at this funeral?

**BUSH**

Whatever you want to, Charlie.

**CHARLIE**

**(TO BUDDY)**

Could you give us a minute?  
Buddy starts to get up.

**BUSH**

Sit still.  
Buddy plops back down.

**CHARLIE**

What's the matter? You scared to be  
alone with me?

**BUSH**

He can hear what's said.  
Buddy is surprised again. So is Charlie.

**CHARLIE**

All right. After you left here..  
did you do the right thing?

**61.**

Felix looks up at the beautifully crafted pulpit.

**BUSH**

I did.. what I thought was right.

**CHARLIE**

You confessed? Asked forgiveness?  
Bush looks off and the muscles jump in his jaw.

**CHARLIE**

Did you tell her, Felix?  
Charlie sighs, leans on his knees, and drops his head.

**CHARLIE**

You came a long way for nothing  
then.  
Bush's eyes jerk back to Charlie and they are hot.  
Buddy tenses.

**BUSH**

You self-righteous..

**CHARLIE**

Don't you dare..

**BUSH**

I built my own jail and put myself in it! And I stayed in it for 40 goddamn years! No wife, no kids, no friends! That's not enough?

**CHARLIE**

You know it isn't.

**BUSH**

(tears welling up)  
Well. Why don't you come and say that then, Charlie? Hell, say it all! I don't care.

**CHARLIE**

Not on your life.  
The air is so heavy you can't breathe it. Bush suddenly gets up and leaves. Buddy starts to follow. Charlie puts his hand on him to stay. They sit in silence a moment.

**CHARLIE**

How much do you know about him?

62.

**BUDDY**

Almost nothing, sir. I just work at the funeral home.

**CHARLIE**

Do you know he built this church?

**BUDDY**

No?!

**(LOOKING AROUND)**

How's a man like him make something like this? I mean, I know he's a good carpenter but this is..

**CHARLIE**

Magic?  
(off Buddy's look)  
Maybe it's the best of him, maybe  
he put his soul into it, I don't  
know.

**BUDDY**

What ya'll were talking about..  
what did he do? Who was he supposed  
to tell?

**CHARLIE**

**(THINKS)**

For him and God to know I guess. I  
wish I'd never been put between  
them, that's for sure.

**(BEAT)**

I will tell you that he showed up  
here half dead. I had just started  
preaching. Over the next 4 years we  
built this.

**BUDDY**

Are you coming to the funeral?  
Charlie sighs and looks around.  
94A Omitted 94A

**95 INT. HEARSE/MOVING/PMP - NIGHT 95**

Buddy and Bush are both lost in thought. Finally..

**BUDDY**

Can I ask you something?

63.

**BUSH**

Do you have to?

**BUDDY**

Yes. What are we doing? Since the day you came into the funeral home, I don't think anything has happened that you didn't want to happen. I just don't know where it's going.

**BUSH**

There's a whole lot of things that you don't know. Like what a dog dreams. You can make up a story about him chasing rabbits but you don't know if there's rabbits in there or not. And he can't tell you, can he?

**BUDDY**

Not unless he's a very special dog. They snort together.

**BUSH**

People don't say what they mean either so you don't really know any more about them than you do about that dog's dream.

**BUDDY**

But what..?

**BUSH**

**(LOOKING AWAY)**

That time you left my house I saw you stop and look back. You wanted to know what could make somebody like me.

(off Buddy's uneasy look)

Well here you are, son, here you are.

**96 INT. FUNERAL HOME - EVENING 9 6**

Frank is putting money into a casket. He checks his watch.

**FRANK**

**(MUTTERS)**

Where are you..?

Lighting flashes and the lights suddenly go out.

64.

97 EXT.OUTSIDE OF TOWN - NIGHT 97

The hearse creeps down the road

98 INT.HEARSE - NIGHT 9 8

Buddy looks tired. Bush is sitting up ramrod straight, thinking hard about something.

**BUDDY**

I better stop and tell Frank we're back. He's probably had 2 or 3 hissy fits by now.

(looks out at the rain)

Why don't you stay the night at the house and I'll take you home in the morning?

The simple kindness seems to short Bush out. Buddy doesn't notice, he's still looking ahead.

**BUSH**

Well, I... I ain't stayed with nobody in a.. in a long while.

**BUDDY**

It's fine if you want to.

Bush looks as if he might say yes but he NOTICES where the car is passing through and..

**BUSH**

Let me out.

**BUDDY**

What?

**BUSH**

Stop the car.

Bush starts to open the door. Buddy stops abruptly.

**BUDDY**

You can't walk. It's too far..

Bush climbs out with his shotgun.

**BUSH**

Put the money in a casket.

65.

**BUDDY**

You might as well get back in, I'll follow you all the way.

**BUSH**

(snaps the gun closed)  
Get the hell out of here, boy!  
Buddy's eyes are defiant. Bush slams the door and walks  
away,  
crossing over a fence and out into a dark field.

**BUDDY**

Not responsible. Not responsible.  
Shit.  
He slams the steering wheel.

**99 OMITTED 99**

**100 OMITTED 100**

**101 INT. FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT 101**

Buddy is putting the money into the foot of a casket. A lit candelabra sits nearby. There is NOISE, like the muted sound of something breaking. Buddy jerks and listens.

**BUDDY**

Frank? Hello? Mr. Bush?  
He stuffs the money into the casket, grabs the candelabra, comes back, seals the lid, and starts into the office.

**102 EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT 102**

Under the trees crooked rows of cold ghostly headstones glisten in the darkness. An old pocket lighter flares to reveal Bush staring at a pot of yellow flowers. He holds the lighter to a tombstone and brushes away the debris. It

reads:

MARY LEE STROUP B. 1874 D. 1894. THUNDER rolls.  
Close on Bush's face as rain begins to fall..

**BUSH**

They keep talking about  
forgiveness.. ask Jesus for  
forgiveness.. I never did nothing  
to Him..

66.

103 OMIT 103/104/105 103

106 INT. FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT 106

Frank enters with a flashlight. He sees that his desk and  
files have been ransacked. He rushes into the casket room.  
Several caskets have been thrown to the floor. He goes to

the

one where the money is, finds that it is sealed tight, and  
sighs with relief. Hearing something he whips the light  
around and sees Buddy on the floor.

107 INT. FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT/LATER 107

Frank examines a cut and bump on top of Buddy's head by  
flashlight and dabs it gently with a cloth.

**FRANK**

The cut's not bad but how's the  
head?  
He moves his finger across Buddy's eyes.

**FRANK**

Follow it.  
He looks him over carefully. He's had experience.

**FRANK**

Dizzy? Double vision? Nauseous?  
(off Buddy's no)  
You'll be okay. Did you see who it  
was?

**BUDDY**

No. I was putting the money in..  
heard glass breaking.. locked up  
the casket quick and.. boom..

**FRANK**

You did good.

**BUDDY**

Doesn't feel good.

**108 INT. DARROW HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - LATER 108**

Mattie sits beside a fire, knitting a baby blanket by an oil lamp. All at once the lights sputter on, the radio lights up,  
warms, and begins to PLAY, as a KNOCK at the door..

**67.**

**109 INT./EXT. FRONT DOOR/DARROW HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 109**

Mattie pulls the door open. Bush is standing there soaking wet, breathing hard, holding his shotgun. She draws back reflexively. He looks into her.

**BUSH**

Please, Ma'am.

**110 INT. DARROW HOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT 110**

Bush stands with a towel around him, shivering. Mattie opens a dresser drawer. Inside the drawer, is the carefully arranged tableau of a watch, a ring, a stethoscope,  
and some clothes. She hates to disturb the drawer but pulls out a pair of black pants and a white shirt, lays them on the  
bed, and walks out.

**111 INT. DARROW HOME/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 111**

Mattie steps from the kitchen with a steaming mug as Bush comes down the stairs in clothes that are too loose. Still shivering, Bush steps uneasily in front of the fire. Mattie hands him the hot mug. He looks uneasily at the  
yellow  
flowers on the table nearby.

**BUSH**

Thank you.

**MATTIE**

What are you doing here?

and

Burned through, a log falls in the fire. Bush jerks oddly  
moves away.

**BUSH**

Can I sit a minute?

She stares at him then nods at a chair. She keeps standing  
behind the other chair.

He bends over the mug and seems to lock up inside.

**BUSH**

You want to know why I have your  
sister's picture on my wall?

68.

**MATTIE**

I'm not stupid, Felix. No, I take  
that back. How long was it going  
on? She was already married when I  
met you. Were you just making up to  
me to get to her?

Bush is so still he looks like a gargoyle.

**MATTIE**

If you're not going to talk, leave.

**BUSH**

Can you help who you love?

Mattie's face tells us that she has asked herself that  
question many times.

**BUSH**

I've had 40 years to think about it  
and I still don't know.

**MATTIE**

I don't know either, so..

Slowly the gargoyle unfolds. His eyes drill into her.

**BUSH**

I want to tell you how it was. If  
you don't want me to, I'll go.  
Mattie sighs from down deep in her shoes then comes around  
and sits down.

**MATTIE**

Don't lie to me. When did you take  
up with her?

**BUSH**

I came to see you and she was  
there, hanging clothes on the line  
with your mama.  
Bush stares out the window so hard, Mattie turns to see what  
he is looking at..

**BUSH**

She turned around..  
(as Mattie turns back)  
.and.. I promise you that I did  
not know that I had a heart till  
right then.

**69.**

Tears well up in Mattie's eyes.

**BUSH**

You were a fine fine girl. I didn't  
know why you wanted anything to do  
with me but I was gonna keep coming  
to see you 'till my luck ran out.

**(BEAT)**

And then I saw her.

**MATTIE**

She was married! And she wasn't  
just my sister, she was my best  
friend. We told each other  
everything. I can't.. how long did  
it go on?!

Bush's face is so white it looks like a death mask.

**MATTIE**

How long?

**BUSH**

It's still going on, Little Bit.  
Mattie tries to absorb that. The truth and tragedy of it touches her in way that she is not prepared for. They sit there in silence. She suddenly wipes her face and scowls.

**MATTIE**

Did you have anything to do with her death?  
The mug trembles. She sees it.

**MATTIE**

Tell me.  
Like a fish jerked from the water, he mouth opens and closes,  
but nothing comes out.

**MATTIE (CONT'D)**

Felix!  
(off his haunted silence)  
Get out of my house! NOW!  
Bush stands up quickly and starts for the door.

**MATTIE**

And go to hell!

**BUSH**

Been there.

**70.**

He staggers, tries to catch himself but slides down against the wall.  
Despite her anger, Mattie starts toward him.

**112 INT. DARROW HOME/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT/MOMENTS LATER 112**

Bush sits on the floor, pale as moonlight. Mattie is beside him with a stethoscope in her lap.

**MATTIE**

You need to see a doctor..  
He raises his eyes to her but says nothing. They look into each other for a long moment.

**MATTIE**

Just tell me, Felix. Did you hurt Mary or not?  
Bush stares into her then suddenly gets up, picks up his shotgun and goes out the door without a word.

**113 INT. FUNERAL HOME/FRONT DOOR - NIGHT 113**

Frank is putting the files back in the drawers when he hears a NOISE. He reaches into the drawer and turns with a pistol in his hand.  
Bush is standing in the doorway with his shotgun.

**FRANK**

What the hell?!  
Bush glances at the pistol, at the open drawers of the cabinet and desk.

**BUSH**

They get it?

**FRANK**

No. Buddy sealed it up in a casket.  
Took a crack on the head, but..

**BUSH**

(cold dark look)  
Is he all right?

**FRANK**

Yeah.

71.

**BUSH**

You sure?

**FRANK**

I was an army medic. He'll be fine.

But Bush is still dark.

**FRANK**

But you ought to take those clothes back and get something in your size.

**BUSH**

They get the whiskey?

**114 INT. FUNERAL HOME/OFFICE - NIGHT/LATER 114**

Frank sits with his feet on the desk. Bush sits across from him. They each have a cup of whiskey.

**FRANK**

Brought the money back, huh?  
(off Bush's absent nod)  
Listen, I've been thinking.. What if we had the party at your place? People are going to want to see the land they're getting so..

**BUSH**

Don't know.

**FRANK**

Well, think about it, we could..

**BUSH**

Don't know that I'm doing it.

**FRANK**

What?!

**BUSH**

Thinking to call it off.

**FRANK**

You can't!

**BUSH**

Damn well can if I want to.

**FRANK**

No no no, it's in motion!

72.

**BUSH**

If I say no, it's no. Send the money back.

**FRANK**

You're killing me! I bought things, hired people.. promised money, everybody in town is hoping to..

**BUSH**

I care about this town as much as they care about me.

**FRANK**

It's what you said you wanted and I've busted my ass for you. So why don't you want it anymore? You owe me that.

**BUSH**

**(LONG BEAT)**

It was the end of the line, tell it all, get out of jail party. But I guess I ain't got the goddamn guts to open my own mouth and I can't get nobody to talk for me so the hell with it. And to hell with me.

Bush grabs his shotgun and goes. Frank sits, stunned.

**115 INT. BUDDY'S HOUSE-EARLY MORNING 115**

Buddy sits at the breakfast table, holding his son. He opens and closes his eyes, checking out his vision. Kathryn, at

the

stove, sees him out of the corner of her eye.

**KATHRYN**

Are you having trouble seeing?

**BUDDY**

I see you're mad.

**KATHRYN**

I'm not mad. I'm concerned  
She shoves the skillet off the burner and comes to him.

**BUDDY**

**(SQUINTS UP)**

No, you're mad.  
She tenderly touches his head.

73.

**KATHRYN**

If I could get my hands on whoever  
did this, you'd see mad.

**FRANK (O.S.)**

Buddy! You up?!  
Frank rushes in, lifts a phantom hat to Kathryn, scrapes up  
a chair, pulls on the baby's toe, and looks at Buddy.

**FRANK**

Trouble.

**BUDDY**

What's the matter?

**FRANK**

Bush is pulling out.

**BUDDY**

What?

**FRANK**

What happened yesterday?

**BUDDY**

I told you, we went up to Illinois  
and met a preacher.

**FRANK**

But what happened?

**BUDDY**

He asked the preacher to come to  
the funeral. He said no.

**FRANK**

Son of a bitch, that's got to be..

**(TO KATHRYN)**

Sorry.

(to the baby)

Sorry. Where's the preacher?

**BUDDY**

It won't do you any good.

**FRANK**

Why not?

**BUDDY**

He knows something about Bush,  
something bad, I think.

74.

**FRANK**

What is it?

**BUDDY**

Wouldn't say but..

**FRANK**

Well if Bush wants him, by God,  
Bush is gonna get him.

**KATHRYN**

(slams the skillet down)

You want eggs, Frank, or will the  
skillet do?

**FRANK**

What? What's wrong?

**KATHRYN**

What's wrong? My husband has his  
head bashed in and all you care  
about is this party!

**FRANK**

It's not like that, Katie, this is for all of us. You're like.. family to me.. I..

**KATHRYN**

This is not how family acts!

**FRANK**

Well, I'm sorry. I've never had any practice.

(gets up/to Buddy)

You okay?

Buddy nods. Frank leaves. Buddy mutters to the baby..

**BUDDY**

Stay out of her way today, partner.

**116 EXT. MATTIE'S HOUSE - MORNING 11 6**

cold

Mattie is on her knees trying to plant bulbs in the hard ground. Her trowel barely gouges the earth. She stabs it again and again into the ground.

**MATTIE**

Fool, it's too late for bulbs..

**75.**

Suddenly she hurls the trowel as far as she can, then a handful of bulbs.. then her hat.

**MATTIE**

.too goddamn late..

**117 INT. FUNERAL HOME/OFFICE - DAY 117**

There

Buddy is surrounded by bags. He is copying down names onto raffle tickets and putting them in bin for the drawing.

is a MAN standing guard by the front door with a rifle.

**118 INT. BUSH'S BARN - DAY 118**

old Mule stands with his ears back, upset. Bush, back in his clothes, is angrily planing a board. The box of his casket minus the lid is on sawhorses behind him.

**119 OMITTED 119**

**120 INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE/SOUTHERN ILLINOIS- LATE DAY 120**

gets A blurred image becomes clear as a magnifying glass lowers to a page of a stamp collection book. Fingers fill an empty space with a prized addition. A LOUD KNOCKING startles him and the stamp is placed slightly crooked..  
Reveal Charlie Jackson scowling at the crooked stamp. He up, does a double-take out the window. MORE LOUD KNOCKING.

**121 INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - LATE DAY 121**

hearse Charlie opens the door, sees Frank standing there. The is parked outside.

**FRANK**

Reverend Jackson?  
(Charlie looks at hearse)  
Frank Quinn, Quinn funeral home.

**CHARLIE**

in. How'd you find me?  
Frank just smiles, takes off his hat, and offers his hand. Charlie gives him a long look and reluctantly motions him

**76.**

Frank enters, noting the clean simple home of man with an orderly mind. Charlie motions for Frank to sit down.

**CHARLIE**

I was going to play some dominos this afternoon. But something told me to stay home. I should have played dominos. Is he out there?

**FRANK**

Bush? No, sir.

**CHARLIE**

You sure?

**FRANK**

Pretty sure.

**CHARLIE**

Did you check the back?

Frank snorts, liking Charlie immediately.

**FRANK**

You told Bush that you wouldn't  
come to the funeral?

**CHARLIE**

If he got that, why are you here?

**FRANK**

To help you rethink it.

**CHARLIE**

I don't need any help.

**FRANK**

Have you rethought it?  
(off Charlie's look)  
So there is a need.

**(BEAT)**

First off, Bush doesn't know I'm  
here.

77.

**CHARLIE**

I wouldn't be so sure about that.  
(off Frank's look)  
He's got a way of making people do  
what he wants them to.  
Frank squirms, knows it true.

**CHARLIE**

Is he really a hermit?  
Frank whistles and takes Bush's poster out of his coat.  
Charlie jerks at the picture of the wild man.

**FRANK**

He came to see me after he'd been  
here, wants to call the party off.

**CHARLIE**

I don't care.

**FRANK**

Said he'd meant it to be a.. end of  
the line, tell it all, get out of  
jail funeral but that he didn't  
have the guts to open his mouth and  
he couldn't get anybody to talk for  
him. You know anything about that  
part?

(off Charlie's sigh)

At first he said he wanted  
everybody to come who had a story  
about him. But he didn't want to  
hear their bullshit stories, did  
he? Pardon my language. He wants to  
tell one, doesn't he?

78.

**CHARLIE**

About time.

**FRANKFRANK**

Whatever he did, it's been locked  
up in him for 40 years and he can't  
get it out.

(off Charlie's look)

I think he told you. You may be the  
only person he told. And now he  
wants you to tell it for him.

**CHARLIE**

Because he won't.

**FRANK**

Or can't.

**CHARLIE**

Or won't.

**FRANK**

Or can't.

**(BEAT)**

At least he wants the truth to come out, give him that.

**CHARLIE**

**(LONG STARE)**

I'll think about it.

**FRANK**

Is there a boarding house around here?

**CHARLIE**

I said I'd think.

**FRANK**

Yeah but if you're not coming, I'm not going back. I made promises I can't keep to people I care about. This falls apart they won't blame Bush. Bank will take my business.. If I'm gonna have to start over again, might as well be from here. Charlie scowls at him.

79.

**122 INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY 122**

Using a tool, Buddy unseals the casket to put the new money in it and discovers that the rest of the money is gone? He can't believe it. He yanks back the casket bed lining..

123 OMITTED 123

**126 INT. BUSH'S BARN - DAY 126**

Bush is sanding the beautiful lid of his casket. It is leaning against the wall and sawdust is drifting down all over him. He suddenly stops, rubs the wood tenderly, muscles up the heavy top to put it on the box and staggers back.

It's

not the weight, something is wrong. Sweat pops out on his forehead. He forces himself to the casket and drops the top down hard, staggers back against the loft ladder, slides

down

to the ground, and stares at the casket. Is this it?

**127 EXT. CROSS ROADS - DAY 127**

The hearse sits on the side of the road. Road signs give the mileage to different destinations.

**127A INT. HEARSE - DAY 127A**

Frank is lying in the back of the hearse, his head propped on an old suitcase. He sips from his flask and stares out window, thinking.

up

the

**128 INT. BUSH'S BARN - LATE DAY 128**

Bush is still on the ground propped against the ladder. His eyes are closed and the fading light steals across his face that is as still as it can be. The sawdust makes him look almost wooden. A shadow crosses then comes closer. Buddy is sure he is dead but Bush's eyes open.

**BUDDY**

What are you doing, sir?

**BUSH**

Getting a suntan.  
Bush starts to get up then falls back against the ladder.

**BUDDY**

Are you stuck?

**BUSH**

You have no goddamn idea how right  
you are, son.

Buddy moves to help him up but Bush waves him off.

**BUSH**

I'll sit here a minute.

Bush looks at the butterfly bandage on Buddy's head.

**BUSH**

We're a pair, ain't we?

**BUDDY**

Are you sick?

**BUSH**

Just going through the motions.

**BUDDY**

What does that mean?

**BUSH**

There's Alive and there's Dead.  
And there's a worst place in  
between them that I hope you never  
know nothing about.

**(DARKENING)**

Do you know who hurt you?

**BUDDY**

No, sir.

**BUSH**

Sonsabitches.

**BUDDY**

It doesn't matter. Listen. Frank  
went somewhere and the raffle money  
is gone.

**BUSH**

You figure he took off with it?

**BUDDY**

I don't know. I don't want to think  
that. But the money's not here and  
I don't know where it is. He said

he'd call and he never did.

**81.**

on

Buddy glances into the shadows and sees the casket looming  
the sawhorses. He stares at it..

**BUSH**

Well.. what do you want to do?  
Buddy looks back at Bush.

**BUDDY**

I don't..  
(realizing just then)  
I want to make this funeral for you  
if you want it.

**BUSH**

(a long look)  
Hell. Do it if you can.

**(BEAT)**

I guess for everyone like me,  
there's one like you, son. I about  
forgot that.  
Buddy holds out his hand to help Bush up but Bush forces  
himself up on his own and walks out.

**129 OMITTED 129**

**130 INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE/SOUTHERN ILLINOIS - EVENING 130**

Charlie sits at his desk, staring blankly at his crooked  
stamp. Suddenly Fate in the form of Frank Quinn looms at the  
window. Charlie knows he is there but he won't look at him.

**131 INT. BUDDY'S HOUSE/BEDROOM- DAWN 131**

a

Buddy, Kathryn, and the baby are sleeping soundly. There is  
SCRATCHING NOISE. Buddy sits up, grabs a baseball bat and  
falls back asleep. The scratching starts again. He opens his  
eyes, surprised to see the bat in his hand. He hears the

scratching. He looks around, sees something at the window.  
He  
slides to the floor, crawls on his knees, and looks out.  
Frank is standing there, scratching on the screen. Behind  
him  
is Charlie, looking very unhappy about standing in the near  
dark in a small southern town, scratching on a screen.  
Buddy realizes what he is seeing and starts to smile.

82.

**132 EXT. BUDDY'S HOUSE - DAWN 132**

Frank, Buddy, and Charlie are on the porch, watching the  
world come to life. Charlie looks as if he is hoping for  
some  
kind of sign from above.

**BUDDY**

I'm glad you decided to come, sir.

**CHARLIE**

Free will is not all that it's  
cracked up to be.

**BUDDY**

**(AT FRANK)**

Did you take the money out of the  
casket?

**FRANK**

Yeah.

**BUDDY**

Why didn't you tell me?!

**FRANK**

I forgot.

**BUDDY**

You forgot?! Where is it?

**FRANK**

In the hearse, under the  
floorboards.

Charlie remembers that Frank said he wasn't coming back and  
gives him a look. Buddy is giving Frank the same look.

**FRANK**

What? Nobody steals a hearse. Now  
all we got to do is take the  
Reverend here to Bush and..

**BUDDY**

I forgot to tell you, Mr. Bush  
already said he would do it.

**FRANK**

You're shittin' me?!  
Charlie gets up and starts walking away..

83.

**CHARLIE**

Where can I catch a train?

**FRANK**

You can't leave you just got here.

**CHARLIE**

Watch and learn.

**FRANK**

Hold on..

**CHARLIE**

Where's the station?

**133 EXT - BUSH'S LAND/ROAD - MORNING 133**

A tractor pulling a trailer with a big old honking generator  
on it, a truck loaded with equipment and workers for the big  
event rumbles down a dirt road. The Quinn Funeral home

hearse

completes the unlikely parade.

**134 INT. BUSH'S SHACK - MORNING 134**

striking Bush, dressed in his new suit, shirt, and shoes is a figure. The old hermit is gone. He looks into the mirror.

**135 EXT. MATTIE'S HOUSE - MORNING 135**

Horton hold the car door open for Kathryn who is holding the baby and looking back puzzled at Mattie's house. Finally she sighs and gets into the car.

**135A INT. MATTIE'S HOUSE - MORNING 135A**

Mattie stands staring out the window. She is not going.

**136 EXT. BUSH'S LAND/FIELD - MORNING 136**

the At the top of a wide clearing, a truck with a Circus Ad on the door is being set up to become a stage. The tractor and truck pull into the clearing and drive to circus truck.  
The hearse pulls in and parks. Frank, Buddy, and Charlie climb out of the hearse, look around, and stand frozen.

**84.**

Trucks and cars are parked everywhere around the big clearing! Many PEOPLE have been here all night with fires, tents and lean-tos. Many MORE PEOPLE are arriving now.

**CHARLIE**

Expecting a crowd?  
Frank and Buddy give each other a look.

**FRANK**

Honestly? We don't have a clue about what's going to happen here.

**SET-UP SEQUENCE:**

are The big old honking generator is unloaded. Holes are dug. 10 foot poles are slid from the truck and huge speaker horns attached. Speaker poles are pulled up and set into holes. Frank directs a gang of 6 KIDS who are selling raffle tickets

making sure they know that he has his eyes on them.  
A BAND arrives on the back of pick-up truck.  
The Generator kicks on belching smoke everywhere. Frank is  
yelling Whoa Whoa! Disaster in the making.

**136A OMITTED 136A**

**137 OMITTED 137**

**138 OMITTED 138**

**138A OMITTED 138A**

**85.**

**139 OMIT 139**

**140 INT. BUSH'S SHACK - DAY 140**

Bush stands staring out the checkerboard window. He sees  
Charlie approaching and opens the door for him. Charlie  
climbs the steps, appraises the shack, and stares at Bush.

**CHARLIE**

Pretty nice jail.  
Charlie enters and looks around the little room.

**BUSH**

Why did you change your mind?  
Charlie just looks at him, the unspoken words louder than  
any reason he could give.

**BUSH**

Thank you.

**CHARLIE**

How do you want to do this?

**BUSH**

I don't.  
He gets a haunted look that catches Charlie off guard.

**BUSH**

I'm gonna try and tell it, Charlie,  
I really am. But if I can't get it  
done, would you do it? I want it  
said. Please, sir.

Charlie sighs from down in his shoes and starts for the  
door.

**BUSH**

Tell'em the box is in the barn.

**141 OMIT 141**

**142 EXT. BUSH'S LAND/BACK ROAD - DAY 142**

Carl's truck is half hidden off the road. Carl, Gary and  
THEMAN get out of the truck.

**86.**

Carl tucks an old 45 in the back of his pants. Gary and  
Theman grab three gas cans off the truck, give one to Carl,  
and clamber down a deep gully and start up the other side.  
Tom peeks out from behind the big garbage barrels.

**143 EXT. BUSH'S LAND/FIELD - DAY 143**

The generator is working! And standing on the flat bed  
truck,

which is now a stage, an ANNOUNCER introduces a hot blue  
grass group The crowd is huge now and listens as the group  
kicks off a song.

Behind the stage Frank is collecting money from the boys who  
are selling the raffle tickets, making them turn their  
pockets inside out. The generator makes a strange noise,  
Frank eyeballs it, and it labors on.

Buddy walks up, nudges Frank, and nods out at the huge  
crowd.

Can you believe this?! Charlie walks up and says something  
that we cannot hear.

**144 INT. BUSH'S SHACK - DAY 144**

Pacing the cage, Bush peeks out the window.

**BUSH**

You asked for it you old ornery  
sonofabitch, now what are you gonna  
do?

**145 INT. BUSH'S BARN - DAY 145**

hitched Frank, Buddy, and Charlie enter the barn and see Mule  
to the wagon. On the back of the wagon is a simple and  
rustically elegant casket with the initials FB carved into  
the center board. It sobers them all.

**146 EXT. BUSH'S LAND/GULLY - DAY 146**

Carl, Gary, and Theman hide and watch Frank, Buddy and  
Charlie walk Mule and the wagon away from the barn and down  
the road. Carl eyes Bush's shack and starts for it.

**GARY**

Hey, hey, where you going? He said  
the woods..

**CARL**

Closer.

**87.**

And he takes off.

**THEMAN**

He's crazy!

**147 OMITTED 147**

**148 OMIT 148**

**149 EXT. BUSH'S LAND/FIELD - DAY 149**

end The bluegrass fiddle player nods to the others to quickly  
the song. Now we see why. Frank, Buddy, and Charlie have  
brought the wagon with the coffin into the field. Everyone  
quiets, remembering why they are here. They park the wagon  
behind the hearse.  
Frank and Charlie walk toward the stage. Buddy peels away.

Frank calls after him to come with them to the stage but Buddy waves them away. He wants no part of that. He sees Kathryn and Horton threading their way through the crowd and moves toward them instead.

Frank and Charlie climb the makeshift stairs up to the stage.

Charlie sits down on a folding chair while Frank goes to the big microphone and stares with satisfaction at the huge Depression-era Woodstock crowd.

**FRANK**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. I'm Frank Quinn of Quinn Funeral Home. Welcome to the live funeral party of Mr. Felix Bush! People don't know whether to clap or not. Some do and the rest of them pick it up. Buddy gets to Kathryn and hugs her and the baby.

**BUDDY**

Where's Mattie?

**KATHRYN**

She wouldn't come. I don't..

**FRANK**

I've done some things in my life, but never this. Bet you haven't either, bet no one has.

**(MORE)**

**88.**

**FRANK (CONT'D)**

(winks back at Charlie)  
We try to make things predictable and safe but if we don't risk everything to get what we want, we don't want it enough.

**150 OMIT 150**

**151 EXT. BUSH'S LAND/FIELD - CONTINUOUS 151**

Frank finds Buddy in the crowd.

**FRANK**

The person who made all of this happen for us doesn't like the spotlight but Buddy Robinson is the heart of Quinn Funeral Home and I'm proud to know him.

Buddy is embarrassed and moved. Kathryn's eyes soften.

**152 EXT. BUSH'S SHACK - DAY 152**

and

Carl is sloshing gasoline onto the back porch while Gary

Theman keep nervous watch at the farendof porch. Suddenly Carl feels a shotgun's cold metal on his neck and the 45 being ripped from his belt and thrown to the ground.

**BUSH**

Sonsabitches.

Carl drops his can. The other men drop their cans but Gary starts to pull a pistol from his back pocket.

**BUSH**

Go on, I'll paint the porch with his head.

**CARL**

Don't do it!

Gary drops the pistol.

**BUSH**

Now pick up them cans and keep pouring.

**CARL**

What?

89.

**BUSH**

You heard me.

The men cautiously pick up the cans..

**BUSH**

Pour it on your head. All of it.  
The men look at each other. Bush cocks the other barrel of his shotgun.

**THEMAN**

I won't!

**BUSH**

Pour it or die, I don't care which.  
The men hoist the cans and start to pour the gasoline over them. Burning and spitting they empty the cans. Suddenly Theman bolts, moaning and running blind with gas in his eyes.

**BUSH**

I got two barrels, anybody else wants to rabbit, now's the time.

**153 EXT. BUSH'S LAND/FIELD - DAY 153**

**FRANK**

I know many of you have heard stories about Mr. Bush. But today I've been told that we're going to hear another kind of story, his.  
A murmuring moves in a wave across the crowd as they see..  
.Bush enters the field with his shotgun pointed at Carl and Gary's backs. They are drenched with gas and it is burning them through their clothes.  
Buddy, Kathryn, and Horton see Bush.  
Quinn and Charlie follow the crowd's eyes to Bush.

**QUINN**

Holy Mother of..  
SHERIFF DEPUTIES beside the stage see Bush.  
But everyone remains frozen, not knowing what has happened or what to do now. Is this the crazy Bush of the legends?

**89A.**

Buddy starts toward Bush. Kathryn tries to stop him but he

pulls free and walks slowly toward Bush.  
A shot rings out!

**90.**

Carl and Gary hit the ground like dead men.  
The crowd hunkers and scatters.  
Horton steps in front of Kathryn and the baby. Buddy  
freezes.  
Charlie rushes up beside Frank at the microphone.  
Carl rolls up and turns to Bush and sees blood seeping out  
onto his shirt beneath his coat.  
Bush whirls and sees..  
.Carl's old 45 still smoking.  
The gun is in Tom's small shaking hands..

**CARL**

Don't hurt him! It's my fault.

**PLEASE, PLEASE..**

Bush cracks his shotgun, walks slowly to the boy, gently  
takes the 45, empties the shells, and hands the gun back.

**BUSH**

A second chance is a precious  
thing, son. Don't waste it.  
The boy plops down, overwhelmed.  
And suddenly everyone is in motion.  
The Deputies run toward Bush. Frank and Charlie rush from  
the  
stage. Kathryn and Horton are going.  
Buddy arrives at Bush first and sees the blood weeping onto  
his shirt.

**BUDDY**

Are you alright, sir?!  
Without turning Bush glances at the Deputies.

**BUSH**

Tried to burn me out. Let the boy  
be, he didn't mean nothing.  
As the Deputies get a hold of Carl and Gary, Frank, Charlie,  
Kathryn and Horton arrive. Carl looks at Horton with  
pleading  
eyes and nods to Tom.

**CARL**

Help him, Gus, please..

**91.**

Horton goes to the trembling boy and picks him up.  
Bush suddenly walks into the trees without looking back.

**153A INT. WCGM RADIO STATION - DAY 153A**

The Announcer hangs up the phone on the wall, rushes to the turntable and lifts the tone arm from the record that is playing.

**ANNOUNCER**

Folks, I've just received word of a tragic turn of events at the Bush Funeral Party. It seems that Mr. Bush has been shot. I repeat, Mr. Felix Bush has been shot. There is no word of condition..

**153B INT. MATTIE'S HOUSE - DAY 153B**

The radio is playing but we don't know where Mattie is.

**ANNOUNCER (O.S.)**

When I know more I will let you know. I'm sure he would appreciate your prayers..

**154 INT. BUSH'S SHACK - DAY 154**

Bush stands at the mirror, his shirt unbuttoned and pulled back. The bullet caught the muscle just above his clavicle. Buddy, Frank and Charlie rush in.

**BUSH**

Close the door.  
Charlie slams the door. Frank examines the wound. Buddy stares in shock at the old roping burns scars on Bush's chest.

**FRANK**

Missed the bone. Got any alcohol  
and clean rags?  
Bush nods at the cabinet. Charlie finds an amazing  
assortment  
of herbs and roots, alcohol and old sheets ripped into rags.

**BUDDY**

Why don't you sit down, sir?

**92.**

**BUSH**

Boil some water and I'll tell you  
how to make me a poultice.  
Frank takes the rags and alcohol from Charlie

**FRANK**

This is gonna hurt.

**BUSH**

Don't sugar coat it.

**155 EXT. BUSH'S LAND/FIELD - DAY 155**

Everyone is standing around in shock.

**156 EXT. BUSH'S SHACK - DAY 156**

Kathryn waits anxiously near the porch with the baby.

**157 EXT. BUSH'S LAND/FIELD - DAY 157**

Horton steps up to the microphone. The shocked crowd turns  
to  
him. He closes his eyes and bows his head.

**REVEREND HORTON**

Lord, you say you move in  
mysterious ways and we believe you  
because we don't understand much of  
anything. And so we come to you  
today not seeking answers to what's  
happened here but asking you to  
help us open our hearts a little

more to each other and find some forgiveness and understanding.

**158 INT. BUSH'S SHACK - DAY 158**

Frank has cleaned the wound. Buddy has made a poultice that Bush is pressing onto the wound as he hears the last of Horton's prayer over the loudspeakers.

**BUS H**

Pretty good prayer. Mighta been wrong about that preacher.

**CHARLIE**

Why don't you lay down, Felix?

**93.**

Bush thinks about it, sees a way out. For a second he looks like he might take it. Then he shakes his head, puts a rag over the poultice and pulls his shirt up.

**BUSH**

Let's go 'fore I lose my nerve.

**BUDDY**

Are you sure?

Bush scowls at the huge blood stain on his shirt. He looks

at

Frank's white shirt. Frank just stares at him. Bush keeps looking. Finally Frank sighs and starts loosening his tie.

**159 EXT. BUSH'S LAND/FIELD - DAY 159**

The bluegrass band sings a good hymn. The crowd is still stunned and talking, not knowing what to do.

**160 INT. BUSH'S SHACK - DAY 160**

Buddy gently helps Bush into his jacket, which has a bullet tear in it along the shoulder but Bush seems okay with it,

to

Frank's relief.

Frank is putting on an old faded shirt of Bush's. As Bush starts for the door, he comes up beside Charlie.

**BUSH**

You ain't nervous? All them white folks out there?

**CHARLIE**

There's white folks here?!

**BUSH**

Stick with me, you'll be all right.

**CHARLIE**

You're the one they're shooting at. As Charlie opens the door, Bush stops, all his misgivings flooding in with the light. He looks at Buddy.

**BUSH**

Pretty interesting day so far, huh boy?  
Bush straightens himself up and goes out the door.

**94.**

**161 EXT. BUSH'S LAND/FIELD - DAY 161**

toward  
looking  
Charlie, Bush walk through the murmuring parting crowd the stage. Frank and Buddy are close behind. Buddy is for Kathryn. She spots him and moves toward the stage.

**162 EXT. BUSH'S LAND/FIELD - DAY 162**

Bush and Charlie go up the steps to the stage. At the last second, Bush stares at the big microphone and stops, unable to go on. Charlie gives him a look then goes on up to the microphone and looks out a the sea of white folks.

**CHARLIE**

I'm Reverend Charlie Jackson. Felix wants to continue with his funeral. And he's asked me to say a few words.

the

Just below the stage, Buddy and Frank are joined by Kathryn. Charlie glances back at Bush, turns inward, searching for words. Finally he holds his hands out, wide apart.

**CHARLIE**

We like to imagine that good and bad, right and wrong, are miles apart. But the truth is, very often they're..

(brings his hand together and laces his fingers

**TIGHTLY)**

.all tangled up with each other. Bush raises his head and looks at Charlie's back.

**CHARLIE**

Some 40 years ago Felix Bush dropped into my life and then dropped out. In between he built the most beautiful sanctuary that I've ever seen. A lot of wonderful things happened in that church. Suddenly Bush breaks away, moves up beside Charlie, and puts his hand on his shoulder.

95.

**BUSH**

Thank you, Charlie. Thank you. Charlie gives him a long look then steps away from the microphone and moves back to where Bush was standing. Bush stares at the microphone, takes a breath, and walks up to it, and looks out over the huge crowd.

**BUSH**

Had to go clear to Illinois to find somebody that had anything good to say about me. Hell of a thing. His voice booms out over the crowd, startling him. He looks down, sees Buddy, Kathryn, Frank and Horton. He looks closer for someone most important but she is not there. The crowd murmurs. Finally..

**BUSH**

I'm not a smart man or a wise one.  
I don't know what kind of man I am.  
I was always restless, thought I'd  
see the world. But I didn't hardly  
go nowhere.. on purpose..

**(BEAT)**

Because.. because I did something  
that I was ashamed of. Something I  
couldn't ever fix.

**(GLANCES AROUND)**

Ya'll probably think you know what  
you'd do or what you wouldn't. And  
I wish you good luck with that. I  
really do.

**(BEAT)**

When I told Charlie what I'd done,  
he told me to confess to God and  
the law and to.. to someone else..  
so I could get forgiveness. But I  
didn't want forgiveness.

**(BEAT)**

I needed to hold on to what I did..  
to be sick from it every day of my  
life. So I never told nobody else.  
He stops, not knowing how to go on. The crowd has quieted  
completely.  
As as his eyes sweep over the sea of expectant faces, he  
suddenly SEES HER coming through the crowd.

**96.**

face Mattie's here. Seeing that Felix appears to alright, her  
changes from conflicted concern to open unbridled hatred.  
The look takes Bush's breath away. But he suddenly seems to  
accept it as his due and when he talks, it is only to her.

**BUSH**

I fell in love with a married lady.



97.

**BUSH (CONT'D)**

And as I was slamming his head into the wall, trying to get shed of him, I could see clear as anything that it was all my fault. If I'd just never spoke to her..

**(BEAT)**

And as I was thinking about that, I saw that the lamp he threw had set the room we were in on fire too. Bush forces himself to keep looking into Mattie.

**BUSH**

And then I realized that I was on fire. I tried to put myself out but I couldn't, everything was..

**(BEAT)**

I dropped him, turned around and saw her lying on the floor and called her name. She looked up at me..

**(BEAT)**

.and the next thing I knew, I was flying..  
A loud roar of fire and crushing timbers..

**163 EXT. BURNING HOUSE - NIGHT 163**

A man on fire bursts through the second story window of a burning house. He lands hard and rolls across the yard to smother the flames.

With his clothes still smoking, he unbelievably tries to run back into the hell. But the fire is too hot and he cannot.

He

screams like a mad man and runs into the trees..

**164 EXT. BUSH'S LAND/FIELD - DAY 164**

The crowd is motionless. Nothing is moving. It is as if the whole world has stopped. Frank, Buddy, and Kathryn are frozen.

Bush and Mattie are looking into each other, one anguished soul to another.

**BUSH**

I don't know how I got out the window.

**(BEAT)**

**(MORE)**

**98.**

**BUSH (CONT'D)**

No matter how many times I play it in my mind, I can't remember jumping. I thought I killed him, but maybe he pushed me, I don't know...

(lost as ever..)

I swear to you, if I left her in there.. everything I know about myself is a lie. But that don't matter.

**(BEAT)**

I didn't get her out, Little Bit, I didn't. I'm sorry.

**165 INT. BUSH'S SHACK - DAY 165**

Bush sits on the edge his bed. His face is drawn and haunted.

The door open and closes. He doesn't look up. Mattie sits down beside him. Tears are streaming down her face. She lays her head gently on his shoulder.

**MATTIE**

Oh, Felix..

He sniffs her hair and tenderly touches it.

**BUSH**

Wonder if her hair would be white?

**166 EXT. BUSH'S LAND/FIELD - END OF DAY/MONTAGE 166**

A MAN chooses a winning raffle ticket from a wire cage.  
A poor YOUNG COUPLE with SEVERAL CHILDREN win the raffle!

The

promise of a new and better life begins for them.  
The big funeral party breaks up people wind their way home.  
The big old honking generator coughs off.  
Mule is lead back to the barn.  
The equipment is disassembled and loaded back on the truck.  
The microphone stands alone on the stage. He got it said.

**167 EXT. BUSH'S SHACK - DAY 167**

Buddy, Frank, Horton, Charlie, and Kathryn and the baby wait outside, giving Bush and Mattie time. Buddy takes the baby and holds it close.

**99.**

Finally Mattie and Bush come out of the shack and walk down to the others. No one knows what to say. Finally..

**BUDDY**

How you doing, sir?

**BUSH**

Just fair, son.

**HORTON**

Carl said Ray paid them to set the fire. Paid them to break into the funeral home too.

**FRANK**

Can't stop pulling Aces out of his ass, can he?

**HORTON**

Spend his money on lawyers now. You know how thrifty they are.  
Frank motions to Buddy and they go to Bush. Buddy is still holding the baby, Bush looks tenderly at Buddy and the baby.

**BUSH**

What's his name?

**BUDDY**

Larry, Lawrence, after my dad, sir.

**BUSH**

He ain't gonna throw rocks at me,  
is he?

**BUDDY**

Not if knows what's good for him.

**BUSH**

You boys did good. Real good.  
Let's settle up.

**BUDDY**

We don't have to do that now. You  
get some rest.

**FRANK**

(a look/ then)  
Yeah. We'll come out tomorrow.

**BUSH**

Bring my shirt back, I just got it  
broke in.

**100.**

Bush pulls Buddy aside. Frank stares over at them but can't  
hear what they are saying. He moves over beside Mattie.

**FRANK**

Are you alright, Mattie?  
She looks up at Frank for a long moment, her face softening.

**MATTIE**

Oh, I don't know. I'm still moving,  
I guess..  
He doesn't know what that means but she has finally really  
looked at him and that's something he'll hold onto.  
Kathryn comes and hugs Mattie as.. Bush and Buddy come back.  
Bush goes to Charlie.

Bush Frank is staring at Buddy, looking for a clue as to what  
said. Buddy gives him nothing,

**BUSH**

Thanks again for coming, Charlie.

**CHARLIE**

I'm proud of you.

**(MEANING IT)**

Thank you for my church.

**BUSH**

Did you ever get my bill?

**HORTON**

Can we get a ride our car's about 2  
miles down the road.

they Everyone piles into the hearse. There is no back seat so

all have to crawl in the back door and sit along the sides.  
It makes everyone smile. Mattie gives Bush one last fleeting  
embrace then climbs in. Bush looks in on them all for a long  
moment all then closes the door.

out As the hearse moves out, he waves to Buddy who is looking

the back window. Buddy waves back.

**BUSH**

**(TO HIMSELF)**

Look at that. My funeral and  
everybody's in there but me.

The hearse pulls onto the road and drives away.

**101.**

The place is suddenly quiet and beautiful. He looks down the  
road through the fading dust and sees a WOMAN walking slowly  
toward him. He squints, recognizes her, and his face fills  
with a timeless love.

**168 EXT. BUSH'S LAND - DAY - TWO MONTHS LATER 168**

stands

It's a cold day beneath the spreading pecan tree. Mule hitched to the wagon. The three dog grave markers are frosted.

A fourth grave marker just like the others leans against the tree. It is freshly carved with: Felix Elijah Bush. A pot of fresh yellow flowers sit beside the marker.

Bush's beautiful handmade casket is inside his grave. Frank, Mattie, Charlie, Buddy, Kathryn, and Horton stand beside the grave. Several MEN with shovels wait near the tree. Charlie's eulogy is more of a one-sided conversation which Bush would probably love.

**CHARLIE**

Well, Felix, this one's for real, I guess. I didn't actually see them put you in the box so..

Charlie glances over and notices "Charlie" on one of the dog's grave markers. He snorts and shakes his head.

**CHARLIE**

Wherever you are, you're probably giving someone a hard time or something wonderful and priceless just to confuse them. Not everything can be figured out, nor everybody. I wish you peace from the burdens of your mind and heart. I wish it for us all.

picture

Mattie moves toward the edge of the grave. Frank puts a hand out to catch her should she should stumble. She stares down at the FB on the coffin, opens her hand, and lets the of her sister drift down onto the coffin.

**169 EXT. HILLSIDE - LATER 169**

Everyone moves away as the men fill in the grave. Buddy and Kathryn move up beside Frank and Mattie and Charlie. Buddy tosses the ball of hermit money to Frank.

102.

**BUDDY**

A 50 on the outside, all ones  
inside. Less than \$100.

**FRANK**

What?!

**CHARLIE**

I told you. Nobody listens to the  
preacher.  
Buddy pulls some papers from his coat.

**BUDDY**

The day of the party he told me  
about the will he had in the secret  
drawer of his table. He left the  
raffle money to all of us.  
Everyone is shocked, touched.

**BUDDY**

**(TO FRANK)**

But you have to pay for Mule's  
upkeep for the rest of his life.  
Charlie grins and Buddy flaps the papers at him.

**BUDDY**

And he set up a fund for the  
upkeep of your church.

**CHARLIE**

What's the catch?

**BUDDY**

No catch, sir.

**CHARLIE**

Still don't get it, do you? With  
Felix, there's always a catch.

**BUDDY**

Maybe he just knew you'd go crazy  
wondering what it was.  
They all laugh and move down the hillside. As the laughter  
fades we see in their faces the impact that Felix Bush has  
had upon them. Buddy feels the comfort of this odd but  
growing family and stops and looks back at the grave and the  
pot of yellow flowers. His curiosity about the fearsome old  
man has not abated. Nor will it ever.

**THE END**

