

"...you can't understand America until you understand Appalachia"

-Jeff Biggers

FADE IN:

EXT. A MOUNTAINOUS LANDSCAPE - DAY - 1929

ROLLING HILLS: beautiful, peaceful.

A VALLEY where a crystal clear STREAM threads its way through PRISTINE PINES.

A DIRT ROAD, empty, UNTIL...

In the distance, a small CLOUD OF DUST appears from which a black, MODEL T FORD, emerges, shining in the sunlight...

INT. MODEL T - DAY

From the backseat we can see between the two MEN sitting in the front and on through the windshield.

The passenger, ANTHONY FICHERA, offers an ORANGE SLICE to the driver, WILLIAM STEIN.

ANTHONY
You want a slice?

WILLIAM
No thanks.

ANTHONY
It's good.

WILLIAM
Not hungry.

ANTHONY
How much further?

WILLIAM
We're here.

The car slows to a stop.

CLOSE UP: William's hand turns the KEYS, killing the engine, then grabs the HANDBRAKE, giving it a stiff pull.

EXT. MODEL T - CONTINUOUS

Both men are handsome, rugged, and, in their suits and ties, seem out of place. They each grab an AX from the backseat before getting out of the car...

WILLIAM

Loaded?

Anthony checks his GUN.

ANTHONY

It's full.

WILLIAM

Just in case.

William scans the steep hillside.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Let's go.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The forest is THICK with TREES and INSECTS. There is no talking, no sounds at all except for the HUM of CICADAS.

The men move deliberately, with a purpose UNTIL...

SOMETHING in the distance moves.

William stops, holds his hand, signaling Anthony to stop as well. Neither man moves except to pull their PISTOLS.

William is cool and focused. Anthony isn't. His heart races, breaks into a sweat. He's afraid.

ANTHONY

(sotto voce)

What?

William doesn't answer.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

What is it?

William's POV:

A TEN POINT BUCK slowly reveals himself from behind a tree. A regal beast, not afraid, eyes William. They share a moment and then the buck moves on...

WILLIAM

Nothing.

They continue over hill and dale as the sun beats down.

EXT. THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

They've now spread out to maximize the search.

Anthony rounds a tree, trips over an EXPOSED ROOT. He stumbles onto a small thatched thicket, stands to brush himself off when suddenly the thicket gives way.

He collapses into a hidden RAVINE.

WILLIAM

Anthony--

William comes running, slides down into the ravine...

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

What happened?

ANTHONY

I don't know... I just stepped...

Off William's look.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

What?

William's POV:

Hidden in the ravine is a working STILL. Copper tub, copper tubing, surrounded by neatly stacked empty MASON JARS.

The coiled copper tubing runs from the top of the tub, winds around and down, ending where clear SHINE drips into a jar.

WILLIAM

Son-of-a-bitch.

William approaches the still as Anthony stands nervously.

ANTHONY

What do you want to do?

William picks up the mason jar that the still slowly fills.

WILLIAM

Have a drink.

He sniffs the clear liquid and takes a sip. It's STRONG. He offers the jar to Anthony...

ANTHONY

Not thirsty.

William sets the jar down, takes off his jacket.

WILLIAM
Hand me that ax.

Anthony does. William takes the ax, approaches the copper pot and pulls back for a swing, WHEN:

BOOM, the deafening sound of a SHOTGUN BLAST.

William's head EXPLODES and his body collapses.

Anthony is frozen in shock, not quite understanding what's just happened. He slowly turns in the direction of the gunshot, eyes widen at what he sees.

He doesn't move or speak until he slowly pulls out a badge and holds it up.

ANTHONY
But, I'm a, I'm a federal agent...

ECU: the MUZZLE of a double barrel SHOTGUN as it discharges with another deafening BOOM. Flames shoot out the end of the barrel, leaving a thin stream of black smoke trickling into the air...

GO TO:

TITLE CREDIT IN BLACK

"APPALACHIA"

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SPEAKEASY, DETROIT - NIGHT

A small room, tight and crowded, filled with SMOKE and MUSIC. At the end of the room, a makeshift STAGE has been erected, on which three FLAPPERS work their way through the Lindy Hop.

Opposite the stage, running the length of the wall, is a standard bar, men in suits, shoulder to shoulder, are bellied up. SHOT GLASSES full of whiskey litter the bar top.

It's late, the party has been going on for a while... not just the people, but the room is DRUNK.

Tending the bar is XANDER MULVIHILL, early thirties, rugged and handsome. He tends to his patrons and clears empty glasses before approaching a particularly large man in a pin-striped gray suit, wide lapels. This is O'BRIEN.

O'BRIEN
(thick brogue)
I'll have another, boyo.

Xander grabs a *special bottle* of IRISH WHISKEY from under the bar and refills O'Brien's glass. O'Brien picks it up and downs it in one gulp.

O'BRIEN (CONT'D)
Mother's milk. Pour us another...

Xander refills his glass...

O'BRIEN (CONT'D)
I said us, boyo, *us*.

Xander looks at the bottle.

XANDER
(also a thick brogue)
I'm not such a drinkin' man Mr.
O'Brien.

O'BRIEN
(menacing)
Everyone drinks, especially if
they're aworkin' for me.

Xander re-fills O'Brien's glass again and now, one for himself.

They clink glasses and drink...

O'BRIEN (CONT'D)
"A bird with one wing can't fly..."

Xander pours again and down it goes for them both.

INT. MODEL T - NIGHT

A man, SLOAN, sits in the passenger seat, serious and sober, eyeing buildings as they pass. Eventually he sees the one he's looking for...

SLOAN
Hold it. This is it...

The car stops in front of THE SACRED HEART SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

EXT. DETROIT STREET - NIGHT

Sloan steps out of the car's passenger side, reconnoiters the street. We now see three other Model Ts have been following the first as they've all stopped, one behind the other.

The cars begin to discreetly spill men onto the street. They muster around Sloan.

SLOAN

Buckles, you take three men around back and make sure nobody comes out and I mean *nobody*. Shoot *me* if I come out... Roland, you, Hendrick and Butler stay out front. Shoot anybody...

ROLAND

"that comes out that door..."

SLOAN

Amen. The rest of you come with me.

They head toward the school...

INT. SPEAKEASY, DETROIT - NIGHT

Xander is now in a backroom, a storage area for the Canadian Whiskey. He peruses the stock, selecting a few bottles...

Task completed, he turns toward the door but is startled when blocking his path, is O'Brien and two THUGS.

A little drunk from the drinking with O'Brien earlier, he drops a bottle. It breaks on the floor.

XANDER

Dammit to hell... I'm sorry Mr. O'Brien. I'll get this cleaned up

O'BRIEN

You needn't worry about that Xander.

Xander puts down his bottles.

XANDER

It's not a problem sir.

O'BRIEN

No, that's not a problem. But, we may have another problem indeed.

Xander knows what's in store for him. Eyes the thugs--

XANDER

What is it?

He bends over, as if to clean up the mess but instead grabs a bottle and swings, landing the blow across the side of the first thug's head. He goes down, blood gushing.

Xander pushes the overweight O'Brien, as he moves for the second thug. But the second thug sees it coming and blocks Xander's right hook, returning with an uppercut to his chin, sending Xander backwards over a crate.

By the time Xander makes it to his feet, both thugs are loaded for bear. He runs headlong into the breach but the two men prove too much and he's soon restrained.

XANDER (CONT'D)

What's going on here?

O'Brien laughs.

O'BRIEN

Me mother, God bless her, used to say, "even the small thorn causes festerin'." And you, Xander have become that thorn.

XANDER

What? Ya got me all wrong Mr. O'Brien.

O'BRIEN

It's sweet ta drink but bitter ta pay for... No?

XANDER

I don't even drink... only with you. Other than that, I'm dry.

O'BRIEN

Confess ta me and the Blessed Virgin may see fit ta bring ya home in one piece.

XANDER

I don't know what it is ya want ta hear. Honestly, what do ya want me ta say?

O'Brien nods to one of the thugs and he slams his big Irish, ham handed fist into Xander's gut. He doubles over...

O'BRIEN
I don't believe I'm gettin' the
gospel here.

XANDER
(coughing)
But, you're wrong, ya are...

O'BRIEN
I know I'm not gettin' the truth
from ya... Now, what is it ya got
ta tell me?

XANDER
(measured)
I don't know what ya want ta
hear...

The thug punches him again, knocking the breath out of him.

XANDER (CONT'D)
(regaining his breath)
You're right, I do need ta confess
to ya... I owe ya an apology.
I...I...

O'BRIEN
Out with it boyo.

XANDER
When I left your blessed mother's
bed this morning, I neglected ta
leave payment for services. Can ya
please forgive me?

Another punch, to the face, blood flies from his mouth...

O'BRIEN
You've been stealin' my whiskey
from me. I'm missin' bottles of me
Canadian best. Now I want ta know
if you're workin' alone.

No response.

O'Brien stares at Xander for a moment, almost with sympathy
in his eyes and then nods to the thug, who then picks up a
BASEBALL BAT and swings it against Xander's arm.

It lands with a dull THUD and Xander goes down.

XANDER
Son-of-a-bitch...

He begins to struggle as the thug takes another swing. He misses as Xander is able to move clear of the stroke...

O'BRIEN
(re the missed swing)
For Pete's sake, clear the way.

O'Brien pulls a PISTOL from his waistband, takes two steps toward Xander, aims it at his head.

Surprisingly, Xander presses his forehead against the end of the barrel. Intense...

XANDER
(taunting)
If ya have any balls at all, you'll
pull that trigger, ya paddy prick.

O'BRIEN
Ya should have fessed up when ya
had the chance boyo... Nobody
steals from Sean O'Brien.

CLICK.

VOICE (O.C.)
Does anybody arrest him?

WE PULL BACK to see:

Sloan and his men have entered the room and he's holding his own pistol to the back of O'Brien's head.

The thugs are rounded up and hustled out while Sloan keeps his gun trained on O'Brien...

SLOAN
Agent Patrick Sloan, Treasury
Department. Drop that heater.
"Boyo."

He does as Xander stands, regains his composure...

XANDER
(now, WITHOUT the brogue)
Not in much of a hurry tonight, are
you Sloan?

SLOAN
Better late than dead. Are you
okay?

Xander holds his arm.

XANDER
Glad I'm right handed.

He approaches O'Brien.

O'BRIEN
What happened to your accent?
What's goin' on here Mulvihill?
What is this?

He takes out his wallet, revealing a US Treasury Department
BADGE and holds it in front of O'Brien's face.

XANDER
It's Agent Mulvihill.

He then cold cocks O'Brien in the face...

XANDER (CONT'D)
You're under arrest, you fat-ass
Mick bastard.

O'Brien cries out in pain, blood running from his nose.

As Xander walks out...

O'BRIEN
Ya broke me goddamn nose.

EXT. SACRED HEART SCHOOL FOR GIRLS - NIGHT

BG: A flow of MEN and WOMEN are led out of the school by the
arresting officers, headed to the "PADDY WAGONS." These are
the illegal patrons, dancers, etc...

O'Brien, face bloodied, is handcuffed as he's brought out by
Sloan and passed off to another officer.

He sees Xander leaning against one of the cars, watching.

O'BRIEN
Mulvihill, I'd be watchin' me step
if I were you... You won't soon be
forgot by me or me friends... Ya
listenin' Mulvihill, ya listenin'
ta me?

Xander nods in O'Brien's direction, unfazed.

SLOAN
We hear ya. (To officer) Put him
with the girls.

Sloan approaches Xander.

SLOAN (CONT'D)
How's the arm?

XANDER
It'll be fine.

He stares in the direction of the paddy wagons.

SLOAN
What happened in there?

XANDER
He made me a thief. Thought I was
stealing his Canadian Whiskey.

SLOAN
(amused)
What? Ironical... Well, we got him,
didn't we? I do love my work...

As Sloan begins to walk away...

XANDER
Thank you.

SLOAN
For what?

XANDER
For coming through the door when
you did...

Sloan blows this off.

SLOAN
We're partners, that's what we do.

Xander nods.

XANDER
Yep, that's what we do...

Sloan studies him for a brief moment then walks to his car,
gets in and drives off.

Off Xander...

INT. TREASURY DEPARTMENT, DETROIT - MORNING

An old office, even for 1929, large wooden DESKS, wooden FILE
CABINETS. Heavy TYPEWRITERS sit on many of the desks which
are also littered with STACKS OF PAPER.

There are a few metal framed desk FANS, oscillating away in a futile attempt to move some air around the oppressively hot room. Men move about. It's busy.

INT. THE CHIEF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The Chief's office is immaculate. A place for everything and everything placed. He sits behind a simple oak desk, looking at Xander, now with his arm in a SLING, and Sloan.

They each hold a PHOTOGRAPH, they study them. After a moment, they trade and continue their stoic examination.

CHIEF

You know them?

SLOAN

I met one of them, once. We were in Cleveland together, Anthony Fichera. Didn't know him well, nervous type but good man.

Insert: CU on one the photos. It's William Stein from the teaser, the driver. The black and white photo is an official Office of the Treasury employee file photo. This is in Sloan's hand.

XANDER

Who are they?

Sloan places the photo on the desk, Xander places his on top of the first. This is a photo of the second agent from the teaser, Anthony Fichera.

CHIEF

William Stein and Anthony Fichera, they're treasury agents. And we don't know where they are.

XANDER

You lost two agents?

SLOAN

From where?

CHIEF

Cadiz (Kay-deez), Kentucky. Moonshiners, Appalachia is full of them.

XANDER

When did they last report in?

CHIEF

One week ago and then nothing.

A beat of silence. They know what's coming.

XANDER

Don't ask us to go down there.

CHIEF

I'm not *asking*...

SLOAN

Why us? There are agents in Kentucky.

CHIEF

Kentucky agents are sympathetic or on the take.

To Xander.

CHIEF (CONT'D)

Anyway, it's best you get out of town until the O'Brien case cools. There's already a price on your head. Besides, you're from Kentucky. Those are your people.

Xander doesn't respond.

SLOAN

Well, I'm not. I'm a Yankee.

CHIEF

Figure out how to use that.

Xander shifts in his chair...

XANDER

We go down there, find these guys and then come right back?

CHIEF

Simple.

SLOAN

It's never simple. Looks like we're going to the hills...

CHIEF

See Jimmy out there, he's got the details. And let me hear from you when you get there. In fact, check in regular.

SLOAN

You don't need to worry about us
Chief. We're the guys who took
down O'Brien...

Sloan and Xander head for the door...

CHIEF

(serious)
Fellas...

They stop.

CHIEF (CONT'D)

(smiles)
Send me a postcard.

They nod and exit.

EXT. MOUNTAINOUS LANDSCAPE - DIRT ROAD

Another MODEL T makes its way down a dirt road headed for
what looks to be a collection of small buildings. Run down,
a place time has forgotten.

Most buildings are made of wood, a few brick, none taller
than a few stories. The town appears deserted.

Welcome to CADIZ, KENTUCKY...

SINGING (PRE-LAP)

*"Go tell it on the mountain, Over
the hills and everywhere..."*

EXT. A CLAPBOARD CHURCH - DAY

MUSIC. Mountain gospel comes from inside the church. No
piano, no banjo, no instruments. Just a chorus of
CHURCHGOERS singing the old-time gospel. While not operatic,
it is mesmerizing in its commitment and tradition.

WORSHIPPERS

*"Go tell it on the mountain, That
Jesus Christ is born..."*

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

An older man, hard to tell how old, ANSE NEWTON, complete
with white beard, blue jean overalls and dingy white shirt,
buttoned to the top, stands before the congregation, leading
them in song.

WORSHIPPERS

*"Go tell it on the mountain, Over
the hills and everywhere, Go tell
it on the mountain, That Jesus
Christ is born."*

Anse makes his way to his seat. The congregation finishes the song and sits on the wooden benches, serving as pews.

It's the beginning of summer and it's hot; the sun is relentless. The only relief is from the makeshift FANS the congregation uses, as they sweat it out in their Sunday best.

These people are POOR and PROUD.

LITTLE LECHER MOORE, a small thirteen-year-old boy, black hair slicked down, BIBLE in hand, dressed in a black suit that may be a size too small, despite his small frame, approaches the provisional PULPIT.

He's a serious and old soul, in a young boy's body. He walks with a determination of spirit, rare for his youth.

Little Lecher stands before the congregation, takes them all in and establishes his presence before he speaks...

LITTLE LECHER

Good mornin'.

CONGREGATION

(in unison)

Good mornin', Brother Lecher.

LITTLE LECHER

Brother Lecher believes ever day
the good Lord lets us walk upon
this good Earth, it's a good day.

VARIOUS

Amen.

EXT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The shiny black Model T creeps down the road until it stops in front of the church.

XANDER

(re the town)

Holy hell...

SLOAN

Yes it is ...

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Little Lecher moves around the pulpit, waving his tightly clutched Bible.

He's entranced while delivering his sermon and the congregation is rapt by the lecture. There's an intense exchange between the boy and worshippers.

LITTLE LECHER

And a hole was dug, my friends. The brothers dug a hole in the ground, for they wanted to cast their brother into it. They wanted to get shed of him. Not a one of 'em said to the others, "We can't do this... Brothers we can't leave our own kin out here alone, cold and with nothin' to eat." Not a one come out to protect'im. Instead they tore at his coat, strippin'im down and throwed him in the hole. How could they do this to their brother?

VARIOUS

We don't know Brother...How could they do it?

LITTLE LECHER

Sin. Sin took hold of 'em. They was a'covetin somethin' he had and they was wantin' it...

The DOORS at the rear of the nave open. Xander, arm still slung, and Sloan enter as Brother Lecher stops mid-sentence. The whole congregation turns to see them enter.

Awkward.

Xander and Sloan, feeling the unease, remove their hats, nod their heads and walk into the church. They find a spot, leaning against the back wall.

There's an uncomfortable moment of silence before Little Lecher continues...

LITTLE LECHER (CONT'D)

These brothers wanted what they ain't got and if they couldn't have it, they wanted to get shed of it.

He eyes Xander and Sloan...

LITTLE LECHER (CONT'D)
The good Lord don't like it when
people set to tearin' down what
others work hard to build up.

Off Xander and Sloan...

EXT. THE CHURCH - LATER

Service is over and Little Lecher stands on the steps of the church, shaking hands with the congregation as they leave.

Xander and Sloan stand nearby watching. Some ignore them, some make eye contact, their curiosity having gotten the better of them. A few share a polite yet perfunctory acknowledging head nod, Xander and Sloan are happy to return.

A young PREGNANT GIRL, of about eighteen years, sheepishly exits the church, passing Little Lecher and stopping at the foot of the steps.

She sees Xander and Sloan, stares at them...

XANDER
(taking off his hat)
Good afternoon.

PREGNANT GIRL
...afternoon.

XANDER
Quite a service... I'm Xander
Mulvihill.

She doesn't respond...

XANDER (CONT'D)
What's your name?

Still no answer...

XANDER (CONT'D)
You have a name don't you? People
have to call you something...

PREGNANT GIRL
(with trepidation)
Addie. My name's Addie Newton.

XANDER
Nice to meet you Addie Newton.

He reaches out his hand when Anse, who we saw leading the congregation in song, comes up behind her, placing his hand on the nape of her neck.

ANSE

You needin' somethin' Mister?

Anse's face is expressionless.

XANDER

No sir. Just introducing myself.
My name is Xander and this is my
partner, Sloan.

SLOAN

"How are y'all a doin'?"

Sloan extends his hand but it's ignored.

OLD MAN

We do fine, sir, just fine. C'mon
now, Addie.

He guides her by the neck, pushing her ahead of him as they walk away...

SLOAN

Friendly.

XANDER

With you mocking them, what do you
expect?

SLOAN

That's exactly what I expect.

Xander approaches Little Lecher, who stands with his mother, RUTH, late twenties, petite and very attractive. He's shaking his last few hands when Xander steps up...

XANDER

That was quite a sermon young man.

Little Lecher shakes his hand and doesn't speak.

XANDER (CONT'D)

Are you the preacher here?

Little Lecher doesn't answer. Xander feels awkward and not sure of what to do or say WHEN:

RUTH

Little Lecher don't talk less'n
he's preachin'. I'm his mama.

XANDER
I see. Well, my partner and I are
looking for the boarding house. Do
you know where we can find it?

She raises her hand and points down the street.

RUTH
Head down that a way and it's just
round the corner. Mrs. Flener's.

XANDER
(tipping his hat)
Flener, thank you ma'am.

She takes Lecher's hand and turns to go. Sloan steps up, as
they watch the rest of the congregation disperse...

SLOAN
Well, they know we're here...

XANDER
And don't seem too happy about it.

INT. A HILLSIDE CABIN - DAY

A large two room cabin, sparsely furnished and truly rustic.
Anse sits at his dining table, in silence.

Addie stands behind him tending to the POTATO SOUP she cooks
on the WOOD STOVE. She ladels out two bowl fulls and slices
two pieces of BREAD, brings them to Anse and joins him.

He digs out a spoonful, blows on it and takes a bite.

SOFT MOANING (OC)

ADDIE
(gingerly)
Good?

OLD MAN
Real good.

He continues to slurp the soup. Addie doesn't eat.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
You best get to eatin'.

She takes a small bite.

ADDIE
You mad?

OLD MAN
Fetch me the butter.

She does.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
What'd you say?

ADDIE
I's askin' if you's mad.

He wipes his bread across the butter, dips it in the soup and eats it, mouth already full.

OLD MAN
I seen you talkin' to'em. What'd you say?

ADDIE
They's just sayin' hi was all.

He stares at her.

OLD MAN
Don't you set to lyin' now.

ADDIE
I ain't said nothin'. I said hi and then you come walkin' up.

More soft MOANING (OC)

OLD MAN
Get me some'a that buttermilk.

She gets up and heads for the cupboard. As she passes Anse, he reaches out and puts his hand on her pregnant belly...

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Then I want you to set down and finish your eats.

He caresses her belly deliberately. She shifts, uncomfortable...

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
You got a little'en comin'. You gotta eat.

He holds her belly for a few seconds looking into her eyes. Then, as if he'd never touched her, goes back to his soup.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

A large white-washed clapboard TWO-STORY HOME, sitting at the end of a dirt road on the edge of the "town."

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The men follow MRS. FLENER, an aged lady yet spry, full of piss and vinegar, up the stairs and into the hallway.

MRS. FLENER

How long y'all plan on stayin'?

They look at each other...

XANDER

Not long. We're down from Detroit,
we work for...

MRS. FLENER

I know who y'all "prohis" are. You
ain't the first to come round.

SLOAN

I see. Then you might know
something about our two friends
that came down here.

MRS. FLENER

I reckon you mean them two boys
that came down lookin' for the
shine.

SLOAN

I "reckon" you're right.

Xander shoots Sloan a look for the mocking.

MRS. FLENER

(stopping at the top of
the stairs)

They left out one mornin' and ain't
been back. Left their stuff and
everything up here in their rooms.
They paid me in advance so it's
none a'my concern. Y'all can have
them same rooms and their stuff...
It ain't mine to keep. Last two at
the end of the hall.

She starts down the steps then stops and turns to the men.

MRS. FLENER (CONT'D)

Y'all best pay me now too.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Xander and Sloan pause, each in front of a door at the end of the dark hall. It's been a long drive down from Detroit and the trip has taken its toll on both of them. They are tired.

SLOAN

I guess I got this one. Let's get some rest and start fresh in the morning.

XANDER

Fair enough. Let's get this over as quickly as possible and get back home.

SLOAN

You'll have no argument from me.

They each disappear into their rooms.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - ROOM - DAY

Xander enters, places his HAT and SUITCASE on the bed and surveys the room. He opens the closet to find one of the previous agents' clothes hanging there. He goes through the pockets of the suit jackets, finds nothing but a PEN, CIGARETTES and a LIGHTER. He strikes a FLAME.

In the bottom of the closet, he finds a small GRIP. He opens it, nothing but more clothes, a box of bullets, no gun, and a few pictures of a SMILING FAMILY.

INSERT PHOTO: Fichera and a woman with a spit-shined young boy and girl.

He replaces the photo and returns the suitcase to the rear of the closet.

He puts the lighter in his pocket and approaches a DESK in the corner of the room. He rummages through the drawers, finding a small black notebook and pages through it.

Interesting...

On the inside cover "Anthony Fichera" is written. As he pages through, he notices one page has been torn out. He places the book on the desk and looks around the room, rubs his injured arm, not knowing what to do with himself. Tired but restless.

He walks to the window, pulls back the tattered curtain and looks out over the landscape.

It's beautiful, virginal and undisturbed.

A few small buildings are scattered around the edge of the town. In the distance, the rolling hills unfold into the horizon. A steady breeze makes the leaves in the trees dance, occasionally reflecting sparks of gold from the low sun. It's peaceful.

As Xander finds his calm, he holds his good hand up before him. He stares at it as we notice that it's actually trembling. He pumps a fist, trying to steady the quiver, and then holds it before him again to see the tremble is actually getting worse the more he tries to hold it still.

As a diversion, he grabs Fichera's notebook and begins to examine it under the lamp light.

EXT. CADIZ - DAWN

The sun peaks between the hill tops as we hear a very loud WHISTLE blow. It's early morning and the town is waking.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - ROOM - MORNING

Sloan is up and dressed. He checks his gun, loaded, holsters it and he's out the door. We follow him into the hall and over to Xander's door. He KNOCKS and there is no answer. He KNOCKS again. Still no answer.

SLOAN

Xander... you okay?

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - XANDER'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Xander lies in bed, still fully dressed and stares at the ceiling with Fichera's notebook on his chest.

XANDER

Yeah, yeah, I'll be right down.

SLOAN (O.S.)

Okay...

Xander stands and crosses to the wash basin on the dresser, pours water into the bowl and splashes his face. When he's distracted by MUFFLED VOICES coming from outside his window.

He walks to the window and sees a long line of MEN and BOYS making their way down the street. They're wearing helmets, carrying pick axes and shovels. Miners.

The men and boys, some bare footed, all wear the same drawn, vacant expression.

A few have RED KERCHIEFS tied around their necks. One of the BOYS, no older than eleven, small, looks up, catching Xander's gaze.

They maintain eye contact for a few moments. Then the boy looks away, nonplussed, and continues down the road.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - MORNING

Xander comes down the steps and approaches the fireplace. He grabs the poker and moves the ashes around until he finds what he's looking for. He reaches through the hearth and pulls out a small burnt piece of wood and pockets it.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Sloan sits at the table sipping coffee as Mrs. Flener cooks breakfast on her wood stove. Xander enters--

XANDER
Good morning.

MRS. FLENER
You want some coffee?

XANDER
Yes, ma'am. That would be nice.

She grabs a black kettle and pours Xander a full mug.

XANDER (CONT'D)
Thank you. So this is your place?

MRS. FLENER
Yessir, I'm wida'ed and this is my place. Don't get a lot business 'cept for you revnuers and the minin' company folks.

SLOAN
Speaking of us revenueurs, what do you think happened to our friends?

MRS. FLENER
I can't say, but I can figger.

SLOAN
You can "figger?"

She plates the breakfast and puts it in front of them.

MRS. FLENER
I don't believe they were willin' to let sleepin' dogs lie.

She spits in a brass spittoon on the floor. Sloan and Xander share a look and then at the food on their plates. Maybe not so hungry...

SLOAN

I see... You don't believe the U.S. Government has a right to its fair share?

MRS. FLENER

Fair is fair and what ain't, ain't.

SLOAN

Well, I think the good Book says "render unto Caesar..."

MRS. FLENER

Also says "an eye for an eye."

Touche'

XANDER

(changing the subject)

Mrs. Flener, when was the last time you saw them?

She spits again--

MRS. FLENER

It's been a week or so, I reckon.

XANDER

Why didn't you notify anyone?

MRS. FLENER

Who?

SLOAN

The sheriff... Justice of the Peace... Whoever...

MRS. FLENER

Ain't none'a my concern.

XANDER

Do you know where they were going?

MRS. FLENER

They didn't say nothin' to me about their business. They didn't talk and I wasn't askin'em.

She sets some biscuits on the table, heads for the door--

MRS. FLENER (CONT'D)
Catheads. Y'all just leave your
plates... I'll tend to'em.

She leaves. Sloan takes a bite out of one of the Cathead biscuits which he's covered in honey.

SLOAN
This is a hell of a biscuit.

Xander takes a sip of his coffee--

INT. MODEL T - MORNING

Xander and Sloan cruise the roads of Cadiz. The citizens curiously eye them as they pass. Xander ignores the attention but Sloan returns their stares--

SLOAN
Why are they staring at us?

XANDER
We're strangers.

Xander opens Fichera's notebook, takes the burnt piece of wood out of his pocket and focuses on the missing page--

SLOAN
They've seen strangers before,
we're not the first people to come
through here.

XANDER
(preoccupied)
We're prohibitionists, "prohis."

SLOAN
You think they all know that?

XANDER
I have no doubt they know that.

SLOAN
They don't like us here. That's
fine with me.

XANDER
I don't like *being* here. I want to
find Fichera and Stein and leave.
We don't belong.

Xander rubs his injured arm.

SLOAN
How's the arm?

XANDER
Sore.

INT. JUSTICE OF THE PEACE OFFICE - MORNING

A small brick building serves as the courthouse, post office and, with one small barred cell, the local jail.

Sloan and Xander enter to find a tall wiry man sitting behind a desk with his feet propped up, this is SHERIFF BROWNLOW.

SLOAN
Sheriff?

Brownlow blankly stares at the men and nods--

SLOAN (CONT'D)
I'm asking if you are the Sheriff.

Brownlow nods again, his expression unchanged.

BROWNLOW
I was wonderin' when y'all'd be by.

He opens his jacket and taps on a small silver badge pinned to his breast.

BROWNLOW (CONT'D)
What do you boys need?

Xander takes the pictures of Stein and Fichera out of his travel case and places them in front of Brownlow.

BROWNLOW (CONT'D)
I seen'em, revnuers.

SLOAN
Then maybe you can help us find them--

XANDER
We're also from the Treasury Department.

BROWNLOW
(serious)
Then lemme see y'all's badges.

XANDER
What?

BROWNLOW
(now menacing)
Lemme see them badges.

Xander and Sloan pull out their badges and hold them up for Brownlow to see.

SLOAN
These two men worked with us and
now they've disappeared.

Brownlow begins to study the pictures--

BROWNLOW
Where from?

SLOAN
Right here in Cadiz.

BROWNLOW
Is that so..?

SLOAN
I'm afraid that *is* so.

XANDER
Sheriff, we were sent down from
Detroit to find these men. Any
help would be appreciated.

Brownlow takes them both in, a man of few words, then looks at the photos again, fingering the one of Stein--

BROWNLOW
I talked to'em. A few times. I
believe this'n was the Jew.

XANDER
What did they talk to you about?

BROWNLOW
I reckon the same stuff y'all'd
wanna talk about. Bustin' up
stills and stoppin' moonshinin' or
at least gettin' y'all's part. We
got us a awful problem with that.

SLOAN
Did they find any to bust up?

BROWNLOW
Not that I know, but they was
lookin'.

(MORE)

BROWNLOW (CONT'D)
I didn't get in their way, if
that's what y'all are thinkin'.

XANDER
Do you know where they were looking
for the stills? Anybody they were
talking to, visiting?

Brownlow thinks this over--

BROWNLOW
They tried talkin' to a few folks
but didn't git nowheres.

SLOAN
Where did they go?

BROWNLOW
I don't know. They didn't tell me
nothtin' and nobody's reported'em
missin'.

Brownlow takes a knotted twist of tobacco out of his pocket
and a knife out of his other pocket and casually cuts off a
piece and puts it in his mouth. He begins to chew.

Xander calmly steps forward--

XANDER
Sheriff, do you know where
Millcreek Bend is?

Brownlow is surprised, so is Sloan.

BROWNLOW
You sure y'all want to go pokin'
around them woods?

XANDER
Alive or dead, we have to find
these men and take them home. They
have families.

BROWNLOW
Y'all was friends with them boys?

SLOAN
Co-workers.

Brownlow doesn't much seem to like Sloan.

BROWNLOW
I ain't goin' up there, but I'll
tell y'all how to get there.

EXT. JUSTICE OF THE PEACE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Xander and Sloan walk out of the small office.

SLOAN
Millcreek Bend?

Sloan holds up Fichera's notebook. Now we see what he was doing in the car. He used the burnt piece of wood to "rub" the next page after the missing one. It's revealed Fichera's notes...

SLOAN (CONT'D)
You are a smart son-of-a-bitch
aren't you?

XANDER
(joking)
I have some college.

EXT. HILLSIDE DIRT ROAD - AFTERNOON

Sloan and Xander have parked their car in the middle of the road. The creek below them dog legs to the east. Out of the car, Xander stares down into the valley as Sloan surveys the hillside above them. It's hot and humid.

SLOAN
Which way you want to go?

Xander joins Sloan, looking up at the hillside--

XANDER
Straight up, I guess.

SLOAN
Fine by me.

They head up the hill--

SLOAN (CONT'D)
What exactly do you think we should
be looking for?

XANDER
Tracks, stills, bodies... Anything
out of the ordinary.

SLOAN
This whole place is out of the
ordinary. You know what to do when
you have to eat an elephant?

XANDER
Grab an ear and start chewing.

They laugh, a catharsis for the building tension. There is something haunting about being in these woods alone. They are out of their element and are very aware of that fact.

EXT. THE WOODS - A LITTLE LATER

Both men are sweating as they make their way--

SLOAN
Time for a break...

Sloan sits down and begins to wipe himself off as Xander doubles back for him. Xander takes his hat off and wipes his forehead--

SLOAN (CONT'D)
Don't do that.

XANDER
What?

SLOAN
Keep your hat on. These woods are full of ticks. You don't want those on you.

Xander puts his hat back on and sees the small trickle of a stream running down a steep rock face.

XANDER
Look at this... water.

He approaches the trickle, cups his good hand and drinks eagerly--

SLOAN (O.C.)
Xander...

Xander splashes water on his face--

SLOAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Xander...

He turns toward Sloan--

XANDER
What?

Standing a few yards from them is a MAN, dirty with a long white beard and wearing overalls. He has a shotgun trained on Sloan. The man does not speak.

Xander moves toward Sloan--

XANDER (CONT'D)
Afternoon...

He stares blankly at them--

FIRST MAN
Y'all ain't s'posed ta be here.

XANDER
We're with the Treasury Department.

Xander reaches for his badge. As he does, the Man cocks his shotgun in response--

FIRST MAN
I don't give a good Goddamn who
y'all are with...

XANDER
We're not here to cause you any
trouble.

Some twigs crack behind them as two other MEN approach, similarly dressed and also armed with shotguns. Xander and Sloan clock the men--

FIRST MAN
Y'all ain't got no right.

SLOAN
We work for the government and
we're investigating the
disappearance of two men.

FIRST MAN
We ain't seen no men and y'all
ain't s'posed to be on my land.

XANDER
We didn't know it was your land.

SECOND MAN
I like them clothes...

The SECOND MAN approaches Xander. He examines him from head to toe then takes his hat and puts it on his own head.

THIRD MAN
Git that other'en fer me.

He takes Sloan's hat and pitches it to the Third Man.

SECOND MAN
(to Xander)
Take off yer coat.

XANDER
What?

FIRST MAN
He said fer you to take that coat
off. Now git it off.

SLOAN
(sotto voce)
You better do it.

Xander, struggling with his sling, takes off his coat and holds it out for the Second Man--

SECOND MAN
(to Sloan)
I want yer'n too.

Sloan hesitantly obliges. The Second Man takes the coats and also pitches them to the Third Man.

FIRST MAN
Them shoes better come off too, I reckon.

XANDER
We are federal agents sir. We have a right to be here. We're not interested in whatever you're doing up here. We're just here for our friends.

FIRST MAN
Ain't nobody's business what I'm a'do'in up here. Lemme see that warrant says y'all can come on my land?

SLOAN
We didn't know we were on your land.

FIRST MAN
Then y'all are trespassers...

Second and Third Man start to laugh--

SECOND MAN
They talk real good.

SLOAN

We're sorry. We'll be on our way.

The Second Man pushes Sloan backward--

FIRST MAN

You ain't goin' nowheres, as long
as them shoes is on your feet.

Sloan and Xander slip off their shoes--

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Mrs. Flener sits in her rocker in the sitting room, humming
to herself and sewing on a quilt. She hears the front door
open and then close.

MRS. FLENER

That you prohis?

XANDER (O.S.)

It's us.

They enter the sitting room. Most of their clothes are
missing, they're only left with socks, pants and their white
shirts. They are filthy.

She looks at their partial wardrobe but doesn't comment.

MRS. FLENER

Brownlow come by for ya. Left ya a
message.

She holds out a piece of paper. Sloan takes it, reads it and
hands it to Xander. He reads it--

XANDER

How long ago?

MRS. FLENER

'Bout an hour or two. Y'all bring
extra shoes?

XANDER

No ma'am.

Mrs. Flener gets out of her rocker--

MRS. FLENER

Foller me. Sometimes things is
left here.

They follow her down the hall--

INT. MODEL T FORD - EVENING

Xander and Sloan drive to the sheriff's office--

XANDER

What are we going to do, arrest them for taking our clothes, when we were trespassing to begin with?

SLOAN

We didn't know we were even trespassing. How were we to know?

XANDER

You want to claim ignorance of the law?

Sloan gives him a look, he knows Xander is right.

XANDER (CONT'D)

It was stupid on our part... We know better than to go off half-cocked like that. These people are smarter than you think, they know the rules. We can't underestimate them.

SLOAN

I'm not underestimating these hillbillies. "I reckon they're real smart but don't take too kindly to us meddling in their affairs..."

XANDER

That's a mistake.

SLOAN

What is?

XANDER

We're not going to get anywhere if we don't show some respect and I want to get this over with and go home.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sheriff Brownlow sits behind his desk with a group of towns folk, including Anse Newton, that have congregated around the room. Xander and Sloan enter and take in the men. They make eye contact with Anse, who stands quietly.

BROWNLOW
O'lady Flener give you boys my
message?

SLOAN
We're here aren't we?

BROWNLOW
Yep. I reckon you are.

Brownlow looks the boys up and down, noting their dirty clothes and the beaten brown leather shoes now on their feet.

As he takes them in, Anse, followed by the rest of the men make their way out, without a word. Xander and Sloan watch them all leave. Once they're gone--

BROWNLOW (CONT'D)
Y'all better come with me.

Brownlow gets up and heads out the back door. Sloan and Xander follow--

INT. DARK CELLAR - CONTINUOUS

A dark room becomes lighted by the cellar door slowly opening, finally illuminating the cool cellar chamber.

The three men descend the make shift staircase, lead by Brownlow, who strikes a match and lights a kerosene lantern.

The lantern combined with the waning dusk light, surprisingly fills the room. The shadows cast are somewhat ominous--

BROWNLOW
Watch yer step...

Brownlow approaches a table draped with a lumpy sheet.

BROWNLOW (CONT'D)
The boys upstairs was out fishin'
and they come upon yer'all's
friends. At least what God left
of'em.

Brownlow pulls back the sheet to reveal the two swollen and grotesque bodies of Agents Stein and Fichera. Both agents' bodies are still dressed in the clothes we first saw them in.

Most of Stein's head is missing, his skull raggedly juts out from the remaining flesh. Fichera's face is pocked with small holes and there is a huge hole in the front of his suit. Their clothes and hair are still wet and flies are beginning to settle on the bodies. They smell, terribly.

Brownlow is unaffected as Xander and Sloan stand in silence staring at the bodies. Sloan puts his hand over his mouth and nose. Xander runs up the steps and we can hear him COUGHING and GAGGING outside.

BROWNLOW (CONT'D)
Yer friend ain't got much of a
stomach, does he?

SLOAN
He's fine, been sick since we got
here. When did they find them?

BROWNLOW
Not long after y'all left out this
mornin'.

SLOAN
How long do think they've been
dead?

BROWNLOW
Can't be real sure since they's in
water... But probly since they
went missin'.

Xander returns--

SLOAN
You all right?

XANDER
I'm fine. It's the smell.

BROWNLOW
They don't smell real good...

Xander begins to rifle through the dead men's clothes with his good hand--

BROWNLOW (CONT'D)
What're you lookin' for?

XANDER
Anything...

He pulls out their wallets, finds their badges, hands them to Sloan.

SLOAN
We're taking these.

BROWNLOW
Fine by me...

XANDER
Can we use your phone?

BROWNLOW
Ain't got one.

XANDER
Where can we find one?

BROWNLOW
There's one over in the general
store in Owenton...

SLOAN
How far is that?

BROWNLOW
Bout fifteen miles. Y'all want me
to get the undertaker to start
workin' on'em?

Sloan and Xander stare at the bodies--

INT. MODEL T - LATER

The two men drive in silence. Xander sits in the passenger
seat, Sloan drives.

SLOAN
What's wrong with you, why'd you
vomit?

Xander ignores the question--

SLOAN (CONT'D)
You've seen dead bodies worse than
that before.

XANDER
It's not the bodies...

SLOAN
You're sick Xander.

XANDER
I'll be fine.

SLOAN
It's this place. You were right,
we shouldn't have taken this
assignment.

XANDER
(Changing the subject)
What do you think happened?

SLOAN
Two shotgun blasts, boom, one to
the head of Stein, from behind.
Fichera turns to see the shooter,
boom, another one to the chest.

Xander begins to look through the dead mens' wallets--

XANDER
For what?

Sloan laughs--

SLOAN
For what? Good question, looking
at them crossed eyed? Who knows.

XANDER
They have their own rules... Makes
no sense.

Xander pulls out a wad of bills from Fichera's wallet--

XANDER (CONT'D)
Whoah, look at this?

Xander holds up the bills--

SLOAN
Where did that come from?

XANDER
Fichera's wallet...

Xander eyes the bills--

INT. GENERAL STORE - EARLY EVENING

Xander stands at the hand-crank wooden boxed phone attached
to the wall. He speaks into a black funnel shaped mouthpiece
while holding the receiver to his ear.

In the BG, the OWNER of the General Store, stands behind a
counter impatiently eying Xander--

XANDER
We don't know anything except they
were shot. Their bodies were found
in a lake by some locals.
(MORE)

XANDER (CONT'D)
We're going to check it out but I think we should escort the bodies back... But we've found them and that was what we agreed... I respect that but this is bigger than the two of us... How much longer..? I understand, I'll let him know.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - SAME

The General Store isn't much more than an old wooden house with a storefront attached.

Sloan leans against the Model T, smoking a cigarette. A beaten and rusted out pick-up makes its way past. As it does, the driver slows almost to a stop as he and the passenger clock Sloan, then speeds off--

SLOAN
(to himself)
Hicks.

Xander exits the store, two boxes under his good arm, and moves toward the passenger door of the car--

XANDER
Let's go.

Sloan throws down his cigarette and takes the driver's seat--

INT. MODEL T - CONTINUOUS

Sloan eyes the boxes--

SLOAN
What did he say?

Xander shakes his head--

XANDER
Make ourselves comfortable.

SLOAN
(hits the steering wheel)
Damn it... I knew it.

XANDER
(holding out a box)
What size?

SLOAN
What?

XANDER
Shoe size.

SLOAN
Eight and a half.

Xander hands one of the boxes to him--

XANDER
They only had nines.

Sloan pulls out a shoe and examines it, not his type but...

SLOAN
Thanks...

Sloan starts the car--

SLOAN (CONT'D)
Did you tell him about the money?

XANDER
I want to figure it out before we
drag that into this mess.

SLOAN
We have to start talking to people.

XANDER
First thing tomorrow. Not tonight.

SLOAN
Tomorrow.

They drive off.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - XANDER'S ROOM - MORNING

The sun has begun to slip in through the worn curtains.
Xander lies on the bed, eyes wide open, he hasn't slept...

The coal mine whistle BLOWS.

He rolls out of bed, still dressed, and makes his way to the window. He looks out as the same parade of men and boys makes its way toward the coal mine. The white men walk in a group, the black men, follow along behind them.

This time more men are wearing the RED KERCHIEFS around their necks and one of the miners moves through the "parade" urging more men to put them on.

MINER

Put'em on. Negros too, put on the
red. We need more rednecks...

Xander watches until he notices the same dirty faced boy
looking at him. He raises his hand in acknowledgement but
the boy's expression does not change. We can see Xander's
hand shaking again but he ignores it.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Sheriff Brownlow sits at his desk cleaning his gun when
Xander and Sloan enter.

BROWNLOW

Afternoon.

SLOAN

Good afternoon Sheriff.

Sloan looks around the empty room--

BROWNLOW

You need'n somehtin'?

SLOAN

We need to know who found the
bodies and where. "If'n you ain't
too busy cleanin' that there pea
shooter."

Brownlow stops cleaning his gun--

BROWNLOW

You got a smart mouth on you boy.
That can git you into hot water...
I don't care who ya work for or
where yer from...

Xander stands against the wall, staying out of it--

SLOAN

Where I'm from, the law protects
the innocent, not the killers.
We've been assigned to this case
and we'll see it to the end.

BROWNLOW

Ain't you got what you came for?

SLOAN

What are you talking about?

BROWNLOW

Y'all come here lookin' for your friends. You found'em now why don't y'all go on back north...

XANDER

Convenient how the bodies were found when we showed up...

SLOAN

Do you think we're going back without bringing these killers to justice? What do you think we're doing here?

Brownlow leans back in his chair--

BROWNLOW

Mister, I don't reckon I know why exactly y'all are here or why them other boys was either. There's a lot thinks you ain't got no business here. We don't cause no trouble lessen somebody comes a lookin' for it. Then, believe me, they'll find it. I don't know who killed them boys. I'm the law here and I'm gonna try and find who did and if I do, they'll pay. But truth be told, ain't nobody gonna tell me or you who did what to'em. I'ma tellin' you what I told them, git back in your tin Lizzie and go home. Are people shinin'? Well, I declare so... What else they gonna do? Half these people ain't got shoes. They grow their own, make a little shine and sell it where they can. It's that, or die in a mineshaft. Then y'all come 'round tellin us what we can do and what we can't... That don't savvy round here, never will. If y'all are lookin' for a fight, in these hills, you're sure to find one.

SLOAN

(now a man on a mission)

I want to know who killed those two government agents and I'm going to find out, if I have to tear this God forsaken shithole of a town apart and burn it to the ground. Believe me, I *will* find out.

Brownlow shakes his head, they now understand each other.

BROWNLOW

Anse Newton and some other boys.
You can try'n talk to'im but it
ain't gonna change nothin'.

EXT. CABIN - MORNING

Addie scrubs clothes on a wash board that is half submerged in a tub of dirty water. Hard work, especially for a young pregnant woman.

Despite being unkempt, her beauty is evident.

She stops her wash and watches the Model T slowly pull off the road, toward the cabin. It stops and Xander and Sloan get out and approach the apprehensive Addie--

SLOAN

Good Morning.

XANDER

It's Addie isn't it?

She nods--

XANDER (CONT'D)

Nice morning.

ADDIE

I reckon it is.

XANDER

How are you doing today?

ADDIE

'Bout like common.

SLOAN

That's good. Good to hear. (re the wash) I hope you're not working too hard. I mean in your condition, you have to be careful.

ADDIE

Works gotta git done...

XANDER

Is this your farm?

ADDIE

Used to be...

SLOAN
This your first?

ADDIE
Pardon?

SLOAN
Is this your first baby?

ADDIE
Yessir.

SLOAN
I have two myself back at home. A
little boy and a little girl.

She looks toward the ground--

XANDER
Is your father home?

She is nervous.

ADDIE
No sir. Daddy's at the mine.

SLOAN
You're here by yourself?

ADDIE
Momma's inside.

SLOAN
Can we speak to her?

She looks toward the cabin, more nervous--

ADDIE
She don't really talk.

Xander and Sloan share a look--

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Addie and the men enter. Xander and Sloan, wipe their feet as the cabin is immaculate. The windows are open and plenty of sunlight fills the two-room home.

In the middle of the first room is a square table with four ladder-back chairs. In the corner is a feather bed made up with a hand made quilt.

To their surprise, in the opposite corner sits an OLDER WOMAN, with a ball of yarn on her lap and a croche' needle in her left hand, which she works between her fingers.

She's shrivelled to her left and half of her face hangs slack, open mouthed. Her eyes are empty and distant and she's drooling. Clearly, she suffers some physical malady.

Addie wipes her mouth as the men follow her into the room.

They stand back as she tends to her mother--

ADDIE

This is my ma, Sophie.

The guys don't know what to say, fumble for words--

XANDER

Is...maybe this isn't a good time... I'm sorry we've intruded.

SLOAN

Can she hear us?

ADDIE

She can see and hear... But she's lost the power of speech.

SLOAN

What happened?

Before Addie can respond the Old Woman begins to MOAN and work the needle in her hand faster.

Xander tugs on Sloan's sleeve--

XANDER

We'll be going now but, we need to talk to your father.

SLOAN

It's important, so be sure and let him know we came by. We need to talk to him.

They exit the cabin as the Old Woman MOANS louder--

INT. MODEL T - LATER

Sloan and Xander ride in silence through the country side. Xander is beginning to not look well... Finally:

SLOAN

When Joan was that big she was
right at seven months or so.

XANDER

And she's working like a field
slave.

SLOAN

Wonder where the father is?

XANDER

I wanted to ask but... Who knows.

SLOAN

Pathetic, pregnant, working and
taking care of her mother. That's
no life. At least they didn't put
a pillow over her face. I guess
that says something.

XANDER

Do you miss your family?

SLOAN

Every minute I'm away. Are you
missing yours?

Beat.

XANDER

You're the only family I have now.

This registers with Sloan, a rare candid moment from Xander.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - AFTERNOON

A few beaten flatbeds are parked at the edge of the road, a
stone's throw from the boarding house. The trucks are loaded
with boxes and tarpaulins. Men are unloading the cargo and
walking it into the empty field.

Little Lecher and Ruth stand to the side watching the men
work. Lecher is still dressed in his Sunday best. His
attention doesn't waiver from the men, aside from
occasionally adjusting the Bible under his arm.

As Xander and Sloan pass, they slow to take in the activity.
This catches the attention of Lecher and Ruth. Lecher gives
a gentle wave. Sloan and Xander politely nod back at him.

INT. MODEL T - CONTINUOUS

Xander and Sloan pass the trucks--

SLOAN

What do you suppose they're doing?

Xander rubs his temples and pops some pills into his mouth--

SLOAN (CONT'D)

Xander...

He's sweating and disoriented, doesn't answer--

SLOAN (CONT'D)

Xander, what's wrong with you?

XANDER

What? No, I'm fine...

SLOAN

You need to lay down?

XANDER

We need to go to the lake, take a look at where Anse found Fichera and Stein.

SLOAN

I don't know if you should...

Suddenly, Xander motions for Sloan to pullover--

XANDER

Pullover...pullover...

Sloan does so and Xander jumps out of the car and violently vomits. He stands, takes a deep breath as the world begins to spin. He passes out, falling to the ground.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Xander is in a deep sleep on his bed when there's a KNOCK at the door. He doesn't stir until the knock turns into a POUND. He finally wakes, disoriented--

XANDER

What?

MRS. FLENER (O.S.)

You got company here to see ya.

XANDER

(confused)

I have company?

MRS. FLENER (O.S.)
You receivin' or you want me ta
send'em away? I told'em you was
sick.

XANDER
No, no... I'll be right down.

MRS. FLENER (O.S.)
They're awaitin' in the parlor.

XANDER
Thank you... Tell them I'll be
there in a minute.

Xander rubs his face and checks his watch.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

In the sitting room, sits Little Lecher and Ruth, waiting
politely, as decorum would dictate.

As Xander enters, they both stand--

XANDER
(distracted)
Mrs. Butler and Lecher, correct?

RUTH
It's Ms. Butler but you can just
call me Ruth and yes, this here is
Little Lecher.

XANDER
(nodding)
Mr. Lecher.

Lecher nods back at him--

RUTH
I know you wasn't expectin' us...
I hope we ain't disturbin' you, we
saw you fall out. You on the mend?

XANDER
I'm fine, thanks. What can I do
for you?

RUTH
Lecher here wanted to invite you to
the revival tonight.

XANDER
Revival? I appreciate the
invitation but I don't know...

She and Lecher share a brief look--

RUTH
Well, you're a missin' out Mr...

XANDER
Xander, Xander is fine.

RUTH
Xander, if you ain't never been to
a revival then you gotta come...
Do you believe in the good Book?

Xander takes a second to think how he should respond--

XANDER
Um, I was raised in the church.

RUTH
Then I believe you'd take to a
revival. We have preachers come
from all around to worship and
pray. There's baptizin' and layin'
of hands, singin' and prayin'.
Many a soul's been saved and
wickedness run right out of bodies.

Xander doesn't know what to say--

XANDER
Is that what they're doing at the
edge of town?

RUTH
Yessir, and you should come...

He looks at Lecher--

XANDER
You want me to come and hear you
preach?

Lecher doesn't answer, instead he looks to his mother--

RUTH
He wants you and your partner to
come. He wants us to pray for the
souls of your friends.

XANDER

Did he meet our friends?

She doesn't answer, they look at Lecher--

XANDER (CONT'D)

Lecher, did you meet the other two men that came down here?

Lecher slowly nods as Ruth jumps in--

RUTH

Well, everbody knowed they was here. Don't no strangers come to town without everbody knowin'.

XANDER

Doesn't seem like strangers are very welcome here.

RUTH

Depends on why they come...

XANDER

Do you know why *they* were here?

RUTH

Cause of the shine? If you ain't loggin' or minin' you comin for the shine. To stop it or buy it.

XANDER

(to Lecher)

If I come to the revival, will you tell me what you know about those other men, our friends?

Lecher looks at him blankly, doesn't answer then stands and takes his mother's hand--

RUTH

We'd best be goin' now. We hope you can join us at the revival. It can save your soul Mr. Xander.

This registers with Xander as he stands--

XANDER

Well, my partner and I will try and visit the occasion.

RUTH

We can show ourselves out...

Xander nods.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Xander knocks on Sloan's door but gets no response. He knocks again--

XANDER

Sloan... Sloan, what happened?

No answer, he cracks the door and sees the bed is empty.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - KITCHEN

Mrs. Flener rolls dough on the counter when Xander enters.

XANDER

Do you know where Sloan is?

MRS. FLENER

He left. Brought you in, carried you upstairs and left. Said to let you sleep, you was feelin' puny.

XANDER

Do you know where he went?

MRS. FLENER

I didn't ask and he didn't say.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - ROOM

Xander adjusts his arm in the sling and washes his face in the wash bowl, reviving himself. He grabs his shoulder holster, straps it on. Holsters his gun, grabs his jacket and starts for the door--

EXT. THE LAKESHORE - EVENING

Sloan pulls up in the car, aiming the headlights on the lake's surface. It shimmers in the moonlight.

He gets out, flashlight in hand, and approaches the water. Sloan stands shining his light around until he discovers a path running along the shoreline.

INT. THE REVIVAL TENT - EVENING

The crowd is on their feet, hands in the air, praising Jesus. A gospel quartet, comprised of a banjo, Jew's harp, fiddle and a washboard bass plays hi octane mountain gospel.

Men and women clog to the music as the spirit moves them, a few fall to the ground, writhing about as they babble and "talk in tongues..." The mood is electric.

When the music stops, the hysteria eases and Little Lecher walks onto an impromptu stage, Bible in hand. The tent falls silent and Lecher holds the moment--

LITTLE LECHER
Praise Jesus...

The congregation responds in kind--

CONGREGATION
Praise Jesus... Praise him...

Lecher waits for silence--

LITTLE LECHER
We're all sinners... We drove the
nails in the hands and feet of
Jesus and put him up on that cross
with our betrayals... who with us
tonight has sin in their heart?

Xander enters the tent, as he does Lecher stops preaching and looks to him. The rest of the congregation comes to a hush--

EXT. THE LAKESHORE - NIGHT

Sloan makes his way along the shoreline of the lake, perusing the ground and bushes as he does, looking for any evidence.

CRACK

He freezes, ears perked, puts his hand on his gun. He pans the flashlight through the trees. Nothing.

After a beat, Sloan continues along the water's edge--

INT. THE REVIVAL - TENT - CONTINUOUS

Xander stands at the entrance of the tent, holding his own as the congregation eyes him. Little Lecher stares at Xander and then continues the sermon--

LITTLE LECHER
Welcome sinner. Let the righteous
spirit of the Lord warsh over you
and clean your soul... Come sit
with us brother.

Xander is still unsteady and appears to be getting sicker but still makes his way down the aisle between the worshippers, examining the crowd. Any of them could be the killers.

We recognize a few of the faces. A couple of the men from the woods. Xander glances at their feet.

CU: SHOES

The men are wearing his and Sloan's shoes. He makes eye contact with them as he walks to the front row and sits.

Lecher continues--

LITTLE LECHER (CONT'D)

Ever man has sin in his heart but we fight that evil. Ol' Eve bit into that red apple and let loose sin in all of us, we all got it but we got to get shed of it. It ain't enough to say it friends, ya got to know it in your heart. Ya got to have faith to fight y'all's way back into the blessed light. Do y'all have faith?

CONGREGATION

Yes Brother Lecher. We got faith.

LITTLE LECHER

I'm hearin' the words but we ain't got no proof of it.

EXT. THE LAKESHORE - CONTINUOUS

Sloan explores the water's edge when he happens upon a wooden makeshift dock where a rowboat is tied. He investigates further shining his light into the boat where a tarpaulin covers its cargo.

He reaches into the boat and pulls back the tarp--

INT. THE REVIVAL - TENT

Lecher paces, eying the congregation. He picks up a wooden box and brings it center stage--

LITTLE LECHER

Who believes in the power of faith?

CONGREGATION

We believe. I do...

A WOMAN appears in the aisle, flailing her arms. She shouts gibberish, speaks in tongues. Suddenly, she collapses, continues to convulse and then passes out.

Two MEN from the congregation pick her up and carry her away.

Lecher doesn't miss a beat--

LITTLE LECHER

I believe.

He opens the wooden box and removes a rattlesnake, no hesitation. His confidence is overwhelming.

The snake RATTLES--

LITTLE LECHER (CONT'D)

The serpent tests he who's got the faith...

Xander jumps up and starts toward Lecher--

XANDER

Lecher, put him down. Put him back in the box...

Two MEN grab Xander, stopping him when Anse comes forward--

ANSE

I got the faith Little Lecher. The Lord is in me...

LITTLE LECHER

Anse, come up here and show the Lord you love'im.

ANSE takes the snake from Lecher and begins to dance around the stage, passing the snake from hand to hand.

The congregation works itself into a frenzy, testifying--

CONGREGATION

Praise the Lord. Ol' Anse has the faith.

All the while, Addie, Anse's pregnant daughter, is the only one not joining in. She sits silently watching--

EXT. THE LAKESHORE - CONTINUOUS

Sloan makes his way back to his car. He hurries back along the trail when he again hears a CRACK.

He gives pause, listens. Nothing. He takes his gun out of his holster and continues when he trips over a stump. His gun flies out of his hand while trying to catch himself--

SLOAN

Goddamn it.

He laughs at himself and reaches for his gun when a foot kicks it beyond his reach. Startled, Sloan looks up--

VOICE

Git up.

Off Sloan's face--

INT. THE REVIVAL - TENT

The congregation is fully manic. They shake their hands, stomp the ground and shout out in worship as Anse holds the snake above his head passing it from hand to hand.

Xander, stares at the fundamentalist display of faith, unable to believe what he sees--

LITTLE LECHER

"And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands..."

ANSE

The Lord is with me, I shall not want... He hath anointed me and knows I got the one true faith...

But before Anse can continue, the snake recoils and strikes, biting him on his face. Anse releases the snake but it has bitten into his cheek and does not let go.

The congregation abruptly settles into silence and motionlessness, watching Anse, dazed.

Suddenly, Anse grabs the snake, ripping it off his face. Once free, the snake recoils and again strikes, this time catching Anse on the forearm. Anse shakes his arm, watching the snake twist and coil. Finally, the snake lets go and drops to the ground. Anse stumbles and collapses.

Little Lecher goes for the snake but before he can grab it there is a BANG. A gunshot and the snake's head explodes.

Everyone turns to see Xander standing with his pistol drawn--

XANDER
Somebody get a doctor.

ANSE
(weakly)
I don't need no doctor...

A few men hurry to Anse and carry him out of the tent.

FEMALE WORSHIPPER
He ain't got the faith.

LITTLE LECHER
God, heal this man with your grace.
Show us that Ol' Anse is clean with
faith in the Lord. If he ain't,
strike Lucifer out of'im and
bring'im home...

Addie gets up and slowly follows her father and the men out
of the tent. Xander also follows--

INT. BACKSEAT OF MODEL T - NIGHT

Sloan, hands tied, sits in the back of his Model T with a
burlap sack over his head. He is being driven--

SLOAN
Where are you taking me?

No answer.

SLOAN (CONT'D)
I have a wife and kids...

Still no answer.

SLOAN (CONT'D)
I'm just here doing my job.

VOICE (O.S.)
We know why ya come... We know why
ya all come.

SLOAN
(frustrated)
Its not going to stop. You hear
me? No matter what you do to me,
they'll keep coming. It's just a
matter of time until things change.
You can't stop it and people will
get hurt.

Beat.

VOICE (O.S.)
 I reckon you ain't got nothin' to
 worry about...

EXT. THE REVIVAL - TENT - NIGHT

The crowd from inside the tent follows Anse as he's carried off and placed in the back of one of the flatbeds and driven off.

Addie gets in a car with a few of the men, they take off, following the truck. Xander stands before the crowd watching the makeshift caravan leave--

XANDER
 (to the congregation)
 Isn't someone going to do
 something?

MAN
 Ain't nothin' to be done...

XANDER
 He's been bitten by a rattlesnake,
 twice. People die from that...

MAN
 He's bit before. If he dies, its
 God's will. Ain't that right
 Little Lecher?

Little Lecher stands silently.

Xander is bewildered by the indifference of the people and their unflappable faith. It's an inconceivable fact that he can no longer avoid confronting, despite, or maybe because of the compromised state of his health--

XANDER
 What's wrong with you people? This
 man has been fatally wounded, he
 needs help... You think praying is
 going to save him? You're
 listening to a kid read stories out
 of a book... He's just a kid.

MAN
 Lil Lecher's been touched.

XANDER
 Touched by what? He's just a
 kid... Don't you see this man
 needs help..?
 (MORE)

XANDER (CONT'D)

You're dancing around with snakes
and killing government agents...
You don't understand... This isn't
how things are supposed to be...
We have to get help because this is
crazy.

The crowd stands, unmoved by Xander's pleas until the MAN
steps forward and punches him in the mouth. Xander falls and
a melle' begins. Several MEN begin to wail on him.

BANG

A shotgun blast goes off and the men abruptly cease the
beating. They look in the direction of the gunshot to find
Mrs. Flener, shotgun in hand and pointed at the sky--

MRS. FLENER

I reckon that's enough worship for
tonight. Let'im up and the rest of
ya can scat.

Xander fumbles back onto his feet, shaken and bleeding, and
walks toward Mrs. Flener. They turn and head back toward the
boarding house--

EXT. THE BOARDING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As Mrs. Flener and Xander approach the house they find
Brownlow parked out front--

MRS. FLENER

Law's here.

He sees Brownlow--

XANDER

What for?

MRS. FLENER

No idy.

BROWNLOW

How you doin' Mrs. Flener?

MRS. FLENER

Tobble, you?

BROWNLOW

'Bout like common. You been
huntin' with that scatter gun?

MRS. FLENER

More like scatterin' hunters. You
here fer me?

BROWNLOW

No Ma'am. I come for this feller.

Xander stares at Brownlow--

INT. BROWNLOW'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

They ride in silence, neither willing to betray themselves--

EXT. A SMALL FIELD - NIGHT

Brownlow's car drives up and parks. They get out and
Brownlow turns on his flashlight, shines it into the woods--

BROWNLOW

This way.

As they approach the woods, Brownlow stops and raises the
light, shining it into the tree. Xander follows the light
with his eyes, not believing what he sees as we slowly pull
back to reveal:

A PAIR OF FEET GENTLY SWINGING BACK AND FORTH, WEARING A PAIR
OF THE SHOES THAT XANDER BOUGHT FROM THE GENERAL STORE.

XANDER

(resigned, steeled)
Cut him down.

BROWNLOW

I didn't want to touch nothing till
you got a chance to reconnoiter...

XANDER

Cut...him...down. Now.

Brownlow walks over to the tree where the rope is anchored
and slices it through. Xander breaks Sloan's body's fall
best he can and gently lays him on the ground and checks his
pulse--

BROWNLOW

I knowed he's gone. His necks
broke, you could tell by the way it
was fallin'. I woulda cut him
loose if I thought he might still
be a livin'.

Xander finds a note pinned to Sloan's chest.

XANDER
Give me that light.

Brownlow hands him the light which he shines on the note.

INSERT CU ON NOTE: "GO HOME REVNEWRS"

BROWNLOW
I was doin' my reglar route home
and saw y'all's car. I went to
check on ya and found'im I believe
somebody wanted me to.

INT. BROWNLOW'S CAR - NIGHT

They again ride in silence through the night back to the
boarding house. Xander stares out the window--

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Anse has been laid in his bed. His face and arm are
bandaged, he's in pain but conscious. Addie sits next to him
patting his head with a damp cloth. She wrings out the cloth
in a wash bowl and carries it to the table. She wraps a
quilt around herself and sits.

ANSE
(strained)
What're you doin' girl?

ADDIE
I'm lettin' you rest Daddy.

ANSE
You ain't got to. I'm feelin'
okay... Come over here to me...

She doesn't move.

ANSE (CONT'D)
C'mon now...

Resigned, she walks back to the bed and sits on its edge--

ANSE (CONT'D)
Lay down here, next to me...

Soft MOANS begin to come from across the room as Addie
reluctantly lays down next to her father. Anse takes his
good hand and puts on her pregnant belly. He then takes her
hand in his--

ANSE (CONT'D)
Good girl...

He slides her hand down onto his stomach. She lies there uncomfortable as the MOANING from across the room grows louder and louder--

INT. THE BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT

Unsteady, Xander approaches Mrs. Flener in the sitting room as she sits knitting. He takes the wad of cash, that was found on Fichera, out of his pocket and hands it to her--

MRS. FLENER
What's this fer?

XANDER
I'll be staying a while.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Ruth and Little Lecher are in the same bed. Ruth is sound asleep but Lecher's eyes are wide open, staring at the wall--

LITTLE LECHER
Yessir, I will. I understand.

He nods his head--

LITTLE LECHER (CONT'D)
I believe so... Yessir, I'm here
to do your biddin'...

He nods his head again--

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Xander sits on the edge of the bed, holding his head. He rises, looks at the sling on his arm. He takes it off, wads it up and tosses it across the room. He stretches his arms and holds his hands out in front of him. They both are shaking, now worse than ever.

He looks at his suitcase, he walks to it and takes out a large folded and worn piece of paper, thinning along the folds. He spreads it out on the bed. It's a grave stone rubbing which reads, "Cathleen Mulvihill, loving wife and mother, 1899-1924." He stares at it.

After a moment he reaches back into his suitcase and pulls out an unopened bottle of Mullins' stolen Canadian Whiskey. He opens it and takes one very long and *needed* pull, emptying half the bottle. He again holds his hands out in front of him, studying them. STEADY, the Rock of Gibraltar--

FADE TO BLACK

