

THE POWER OF THE DOG

1

EXT - BURBANK RANCH/STOCK YARDS/PADDocks - DAY

1

A Montana ranch scape with a curious hill feature, a sculptural outcrop that rises up into a plateau. A man is looking at it. PHIL BURBANK (40-50) tall, lean with a wry expression that softens into something speculative as he stares at the landform, seeing something that causes him to smile, some kind of private amusement. He walks on until he's standing beside a GROUP OF COWHANDS. Behind them a herd of Poly Angus steers mashed six deep against a pole fence. Phil wears a uniform of close fitting blue overalls and worn wool chaps bare in patches. On his head a hat so battered it's hard to know if it's a cowboy or a sun hat. He's quiet, his sharp see-all eyes watch. A big calf missed at spring is pushed out of the pack, Phil points to it.

PHIL

That's him.

JUAN, MOUNTED COWBOY behind Phil gives fast chase, a lariat hurled high in his right hand snaps hard on the calf's hindquarters and drops catching the animal's back foot. Phil walks towards the struggling beast, a big one with kick. THEO a BLACK COWHAND gallops forward dismounting at speed, dust billowing and helps throw the animal - a crushing thud. TWO MORE COWHANDS run forward, together they tie off the front and hind legs stretching the calf out between the two horses saddle horns. Phil still walking with an easy grace, unsheathes his knife and straddles the bull calf facing his tail. The Cowboys holding the calf look serious, their eyes on the dirt. Phil takes hold of the scrotum and slices off the cup tossing it aside. The calf struggles, next Phil forces down first one and then the other testicle, slits the rainbow membrane that encloses them and tears the testicles out, he unstraddles the calf and takes the dangling testicles to a small branding fire, tosses them over the coals where they explode in the heat like huge popcorn.

PHIL (CONT'D)

You boys fooling with girls would do well to eat them.

Phil looks over at the Cowhands amused - no takers. He flicks them out onto the dirt a dog carries one off to the end of the yard, the veins and nerves trailing.

STAN

One more lost boy boss.

The chase is on again. Phil once more straddles the bull calf cupping his testicles in his blood-stained, work toughened hands. As Phil drops the testes in the fire he sees George walking towards the coral fence.

GEORGE, Phil's younger brother by two years wears a suit - no tie, he's overweight and square shaped. He's holding a notebook and a pencil stub. Phil wipes off his knife and climbs through the fence to join him. The two brothers, a study in opposites, walk on to the nearby stockyards where the steers are held. The dust from their shifting hooves rises up into the air. Several Cowhands sit up on the rails while one Cowhand, LEE balances on top of a post.

PHIL

What you got?

George reads the figures off the small notebook he holds in his hand.

GEORGE

1,051. You?

PHIL

1,055.

The brothers hear, then see, a mail delivery vehicle.

GEORGE

The boys gear I hope.

PHIL

Ohh, look at them running.

The Cowhands make their way off the stock yards and out of the sleeping quarters to receive their parcels from the truck flat.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Can't wait to get in their Sear's Catalogue high heels and be a cowboy. Not the way we were taught brother. Remember that first camping trip up in the snow?

GEORGE

Bronco Henry shot us an elk.

PHIL

Saw a cougar too. What year was it?

George is heading away from Phil.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Our first year alone?

George does not look back as he takes the stairs to the grand BURBANK RANCH HOUSE, two storied, solid with generous proportions an elegant turret and a deep first floor balcony.

The Cowhands are collecting their parcels and beginning to open them. JOCK 22, holds up his parcel.

JOCK

Hey Phil, my boots with the inlay.

Phil turns. Just his attention in the Cowhands direction sends BOBBY 28, eagerly towards Phil holding out a guitar shaped parcel. Behind him another Cowhand is holding up a tasseled shirt grinning.

JOCK (CONT'D)

What do you think Boss?

PHIL

Waste of money.

Jock laughs he doesn't care, Phil joshing him is as good as it gets. Bobby shows Phil his parcel.

BOBBY

My guitar came Boss. Did you teach yourself banjo Phil?

PHIL

Yep. So let's have a look.

Bobby starts to open his parcel, frantic to be fast enough to keep Phil's attention. But Phil has moved towards the Cowhands bunk room. He leans on the door jamb and watches as Jock barelegged steps into his inlays. Behind him a Cowhand, ANGELO parading a new hat suddenly sees Phil.

ANGELO

Oh Phil, hi, hey pass that chair.
Is the Visalia saddle all it's
cracked up to be?

A stool, once a chair, is passed down the bunk room and placed politely beside Phil who ignores it. Bobby comes in holding out the unpacked guitar.

BOBBY

Here it is, made of Rosewood.

But Phil barely glances at it, he's on his way out.

PHIL

Up before dawn remember.

The tension and energy in the bunk room departs with Phil, the Cowhands relax and finish unpacking their goods.

Jock reads the description - "wood pegged, brass nailed, steel shanked arches" "comfort, class, colour." But eyes are on Phil as he marches back to the house.

2

INT - DOWNTSTAIRS BURBANK RANCH HOUSE - DAY

2

MRS LEWIS 55, generously proportioned complains as she moves about the back dining room setting out breakfast places for the ten Cowhands and two Brothers. She straightens as she hears Phil enter the front door and she moves through to the front dining room.

MRS LEWIS

Are you not eating?

PHIL

No.

Phil walks straight upstairs maintaining pace.

Mrs Lewis lumbers across to the long dining table covered in a snowy cloth, sharply creased from ironing. Two places are formally set at either end of the table grand enough to seat twenty four.

MRS LEWIS

Well I've set the whole table so
I'll just unset it.

The dining room is part of a cavernous connected 'L' shaped living room that includes a fire place, the hallway with it's large dusty carpet runner and a grand stair case. An odd assortment of antique baroque arm chairs and ranch themed furniture are scattered about with little apparent design.

Phil stands legs akimbo over a small chess table. He moves a piece and swaps to the opposite side of the table where he makes a counter move. The hall is hung with impressive hunting trophies, an ANTELOPE, BISON HEADS, MOOSE HEADS, WILD CATS and by the entrance a full rack of TWENTY WESTERN HATS.

3

INT/EXT - BURBANK RANCH/HALL/BEDROOM/BATHROOM/YARD - DAY 3

Phil climbs up the last few steps of the staircase and walks along the corridor to his and George's shared bedroom. Inside there are TWO MATCHING SINGLE BRASS BEDS dating back to their childhood. In front of each bed is a GREEN SHELVED, GLASS FRONTED DISPLAY CASE. Phil's display case has a museum standard display of INDIAN ARROWHEADS, fanned out and carefully labelled. On a lower shelf his collection of RARE MINERAL ROCKS. Phil takes his BANJO out of its case on the top of his display case and begins to play. He's fluent, gifted.

Phil walks towards the bathroom door and continues playing.

PHIL

Figured it out Fatso, what year we
took over from the Old Gent?

GEORGE

Why?

PHIL

Hell, think about it.

Inside the bathroom George sits placidly in his bath making small splashes. His skin is milky white except where his shirt was open and there his neck and his hands are red brown.

GEORGE

You ever try the house bath Phil?

PHIL

No I don't wanna smell like a piece of soap, like a flower. I like to smell like a man. What's happened to you brother? Don't forget the wilds or you'll end up a house cat, too fat to catch a mouse... Or are you a mouse?

Phil lies stiffly in the dark. George gets into his matching bed, the two brothers side by side.

4

EXT - ROAD TO BEECH - DAWN

4

Before the sun rises the herd is lined out over the length of a half mile in the dark, the Cowhands are silent and the Brothers are silent, listening to the step-step-step of the cattle and the squeak-squeak-squeak of saddle leather and the ringing of German silver bit chains.

When the sun looms higher the warmth nourishes the men into hope and gaiety. Phil and George ride together. Phil on his nervy Sorrel and George rides a horse as square and solid as George himself. The sun warms their backs the plains spreading towards the mountains. The cattle massing and threading, a black ink spill on the landscape

Phil has spotted something he doesn't like, he rides towards Cowhands Jock and Bobby, he's looking out to the right where some cattle have strayed.

PHIL

You two real or are you in a movie
picture?

Jock wears his catalogue new boots with the engraved side panel inlays, while Bobby has a tasseled cowboy shirt.

The Boys turn to Phil alertly and chuckle.

JOCK

We're real.

PHIL

That's good 'cause there's a calf
dead with anthrax off to the right,
keep our cattle away.

Jock stands up in his stirrups looking at the dead stiff
bloated calf in the distance.

BOBBY

What's anthrax?

JOCK

Black leg.

PHIL

Kills you so don't touch.

Bobby and Jock urge their horses out past the straying
steers, pleased to show speed and sand spraying stops.

Phil shakes his head amused. He threads back through the
beasts towards George. Phil is rolling a cigarette for
himself with one hand. George two handed finishes a cigarette
of his own, fat and funnel shaped.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Well I guess this is 'it'.

GEORGE

What's 'it' Phil?

PHIL

What's 'it'? Okay I'll tell you
what 'it' is fatso, today is 25
years since our first run. Nineteen
hundred and nothing. Nineteen
naught, naught.

George takes it in, nodding.

GEORGE

Fact is I forgot.

PHIL

Well sort of makes it special, our
silver anniversary, twenty five
years on our own.

Phil is leaning in towards George luring him into a shared
nostalgia, but George does not catch the mood.

GEORGE

That's a long time.

PHIL

Well not too damned long. You know what we should do?

GEORGE

What?

PHIL

Go camping again up in the mountains, shoot ourselves some fresh Elk liver, roast it straight on the coals like Bronco Henry showed us.

George takes a puff of his stubby cigarette.

PHIL (CONT'D)

You got a sore gut?

GEORGE

No.

PHIL

You act like it pains you to hitch one word to another.

Phil's attention is diverted, a car is trying to push through the cattle, but instead it rolls off into a ditch, perilously listing to its side. The DRIVER and his FEMALE PASSENGER stand up in the vehicle and the driver honks and cattle nearby spook. Phil rides fast towards the car ready to teach this idiot in plus fours a lesson.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Shut that down. You want your car and your girl to be flattened? So quit that horn.

DRIVER

Can you help us?

PHIL

No I'd like to see yours and every other car blowed up.

Phil rides on, behind him George and Stan stop to help the stranded driver. Phil stands in his stirrups and turns round steaming.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Damn it George, leave him!

The Boy carefully draws the pleating together with needle and cotton making a tiny frilly skirt. The Boy hums as he works rolling a page into a thin long tube which he fastens with glue and holds tight with thread. Sun catches the Boy's eyelashes and makes luminous his hazel eyes.

6 EXT - TOWN OF BEECH - DAY

6

The BARKEEP walks down the main dirt road of the four or five building town all false fronted, he looks behind him and sees a faint cloud of dust hovering in the landscape.

7 INT/EXT - THE RED MILL - DAY

7

The Barkeep walks into The Red Mill an Inn with a six tabled dining room and white washed board walls, a Pianola up against the back wall.

ROSE GORDON (36-40), in 'pant' and a shirt mops the floor

BARKEEP

So there'll be twelve for the night.

Rose looks up with her customary smile, unappreciated in these parts as ingenuine.

ROSE

Did they say what they prefer to eat?

BARKEEP

They like the fried chicken dinner.

Rose begins to push tables together to make the twelve places, the Barkeep backs away, everyone has a lot to do.

8 INT - THE RED MILL/STAIRS/HALL/BEDROOM - DAY

8

Rose walks up the wooden stairs and along the hallway to her son's bedroom. PETER 17 years old sits at a desk near the window. He covers up the exercise book where he was busy gluing magazine pictures. He is neat and extremely thin with a slightly enlarged forehead and wide deep set eyes, that appear to see both everything and nothing.

ROSE

We are going to need your room, all the rooms up here - what are you doing?

PETER

Nothing.

Rose moves over to his table with its black leather bound Medical Text Books in a neat row and magazines and clippings, scissors and glue.

ROSE
Is it an album?

PETER
Not really.

ROSE
What's in it?

She begins to turn the pages. There are magazine pictures of cruise ships and home designs, jewelry and automobiles all characterising luxury and affluence.

PETER
Nothing, just things I like.

Rose is looking at a picture of a woman like herself in a living room with a rock feature wall. In another picture a couple are in a luxury cruise liner dancing in moonlight. Beside the album Rose notices some handmade paper flowers, intricately folded and pleated with clipped and rolled frills for stamen. Rose examines one.

ROSE
Oh that's clever Peter.

PETER
Not really.

But he nonetheless shows her a decorated milk bottle with several paper flowers together. She turns it about.

ROSE
For the tables? They're lovely.

She puts it down.

ROSE (CONT'D)
I need three more chickens. Can you do them?

PETER
Yes Mother.

Rose starts pulling Peter's sheets off his bed.

ROSE
Can you put your things in the shed? I'll make a bed for you on the floor.

PETER
Where will you sleep?

ROSE

I'll put a cot up in the kitchen.

9 EXT/INT - THE RED MILL/CHICKEN COOP/KITCHEN/DINING - DAY 9

In the chicken coop Peter quietly corners a suitable fryer. Rose in the kitchen closes the window and stops her ears as she walks through to the dining room and sits at the Pianola playing 'By the light of the stars' loudly and well to drown out the squawking.

10 EXT - THE RED MILL/CHICKEN COOP - DAY 10

Peter takes the bird suddenly by the neck, twists his wrist just so; the body twirls twice and falls headless to the ground where it hops and flops and the discarded head beside it gazes with bright astonished eye at its own jerking body. Only when the body falters and lays quiet does the lid come down over the eye.

11 INT/EXT - THE RED MILL/BEDROOM/GRAVEYARD - DAY 11

Rose walks upstairs with an armful of sun dried sheets. From the window in the hall she sees Peter with his strange mechanical gait climb up the bald hill to a small haphazard graveyard, bordered with a single strand of rusted barbwire.

12 EXT - TOWN OF BEECH/GRAVEYARD- DAY 12

Peter passes several untended graves before kneeling in front of one with a newer headstone. He wipes the dust off the engraved name. DOCTOR JOHN GORDON, BELOVED HUSBAND AND FATHER to Rose and Peter Gordon.

Peter sticks a posy of his paper flowers into the earth and places on top an upturned large pickle jar as protection.

Peter makes his way down the hill squinting in the afternoon sun as he sees the first line of the Burbank outfit reach the edge of the town, Beech.

13 EXT - TOWN OF BEECH/ENTRANCE - DAY 13

The lead steers spook at the sight of the first buildings, straightening their front legs and sniffing the ground until pushed on by Cowhands.

RESIDENTS watch admiring from their windows and Phil keeps his eyes peeled for any fool wandering out to spook the cattle.

14

EXT - BEECH STOCKYARDS - EVE/DAY

14

OTHER RESIDENTS look on as the last of the Burbank cattle are corralled within the Stockyards adjacent to the railway yards. Two Cowhands and George look on down the tracks over a flat endless plain. No train yet. The Cowhands lead their horses across to the horse yards where a lump of hay awaits them.

15

INT/EXT - THE SALOON/BEECH STREET - EVENING

15

The whole Burbank Outfit stands along the bar small spirit glasses in front of each man. Phil is holding everyone off, Jock is standing lookout on the street.

PHIL

He there?

JOCK

Nope.

Phil is put out. He beckons for Jock to come in.

PHIL

Well we can't wait forever the cattle are in the yards. So drink up.

JOCK

You going to say something?

PHIL

No. Not without my brother.

The boys lift their little glasses and drink. Phil is not a pretender he's miffed and not drinking. The Barkeep refills. George walks in and over to Phil.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Where were you? I couldn't hold the boys back forever.

GEORGE

That's fine. Checked the power it's held up, not coming till morning.

Phil passes George his shot glass expecting a brotherly toast.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

No thanks Phil. They're ready for us over at The Red Mill.

This brush off digs deep.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Dinner boys.

Nobody listens.

Phil's in a hell of a mood.

PHIL

Twenty-five years ago, where were you Georgie boy? I'll tell you, a chubby know nothing, too dumb to get through college. People helped you Fatso, one person in particular taught me and you ranching so we damn well succeeded.

George looks down and nods.

GEORGE

Yes, yes Bronco Henry.

PHIL

So to us brothers, Romulus and Remus and the wolf who raised us.

George picks up his glass, clinks with Phil.

GEORGE

To Bronco.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Il Lupo.

George drinks the spirits in two even sips while Phil downs his in one. Phil's eyes water with emotion. He turns to the bar and gives a piercing whistle. The Burbank Boys look over at Phil who is headed to the door. Glasses are put down the Burbank Boys follow.

16

EXT - BEECH MAIN STREET - EVENING

16

The Burbank Outfit, all twelve walk down the main street towards The Red Mill.

17

INT/EXT - BEECH MAIN STREET/THE RED MILL/DINING - EVENING 17

Rose in the kitchen an apron over a twenty's frock and low heels, her hair held back with pins stops her washing up as she sees the men approaching. Rose meets them in the dining room

ROSE

This is your table.

Rose leans over and lights the candles melted into the wine bottles. George sits down at one end, Phil remains standing. He looks at a table of six next to their table where JEANIE (30's) is drinking wine and telling a story loudly, she puffs on her cigarette something Phil finds repulsive in a female. Then Phil notices the paper flowers on his table.

PHIL
Well, well, ain't that purdy.

Phil bends to sniff. The Cowhands cowered by the prissiness of the roadhousey atmosphere and the napkins look at Phil admiring his poise and ease.

ROSE
Everything alright?

GEORGE
Yes fine.

As Rose goes back to the kitchen Jeanie calls after her loudly.

JEANIE
Play us something, please Rosie.

The others take up the chant "Play". Rose shakes her head. They are drunk and she's busy.

Phil finally sits as Peter comes out in his white waiters shirt and black pants, combed wet hair and a white cloth draped over his stiffly folded left arm. He walks past Phil to the table of six where he starts to clear their plates. Phil leans back on the legs of his chair eyeing Peter with rising distaste.

PHIL
Where's our service boy? Are we black or something?

Peter looks across anxiously but continues with his plate piling. Phil turns to his table and his eyes light again on Peter's paper flowers. He leans forward and with his gnarled dirty hands, still bloody from a small cut on his palm, he takes the flowers in his fist and regards them closely, poking a finger into the paper flower corolla.

PHIL (CONT'D)
My goodness I wonder what little lady made these?

Peter turns, his hands full of plates.

PETER
I did actually sir. My mother you see trained as a florist.

PHIL
Well do pardon me, they're as real as possible.

Phil puts them back in the jar pretending to arrange them.

Peter is paused, realising he's being ridiculed. A couple of Cowhands giggle. Phil hasn't finished.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Oh look here gentlemen, that's what
you do with the cloth.

Four or so of the Cowhands innocently mimic Peter's waiter affectation draping their napkins over their arm. Rose hearing the laughter, opens the door and sees Phil offering the jar of paper flowers to the Cowhands to take mock sniffs. Rose's heart sinks. Peter looks trapped and in hell as Cowhands CRICKET and SANDY masquerade with their napkins.

PETER

It's really only for wine drips.

PHIL (MIMICKING PETER'S LISP)

Got that boys, only for drips now
get us some food.

Peter looks down ashamed, his eyes smart, he continues into the kitchen. Phil and the Cowhands laugh. Phil looks at George who does not 'join' he wears his napkin on his lap and sits.

18

INT - THE RED MILL/KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

18

A flustered Rose serves delicious looking fried chicken and wilted lettuce on the twelve waiting plates, Peter now expressionless carries them out two at a time.

19

INT - THE RED MILL/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

19

BOBBY

Did Bronco ever eat here?

PHIL

He did not.

BOBBY

So where did you eat?

PHIL

Back then we had herrings at the Saloon and a lot of alcohol. Once Bronco Henry made a wager that he could take any horse and jump the tables and chairs of the Saloon piled out on the street. We chose him a nag all right it didn't bother him. He took off it's saddle, walked the horse up to the tables talking to him. Stroking it's big ugly head while it sniffed. Then he swung on, rode back and...

Phil has meanwhile rolled himself a cigarette, he takes a paper flower and flames it up on the candle then lights his tight slim smoke.

BOBBY

What?

Phil pulls a disaster face. The Cowhands wait.

PHIL

Flew over.

Peter enters with more plates stunned to see his flower burning. Phil slowly shakes it out.

JOCK

But to get a nag to jump...

Phil nods blowing smoke. Rose brings to the table two steaming platters of biscuits deftly removing Peter's paper flowers.

PHIL

Put it down to amour. What do you say George?

The Cowhands turn to George who is head down eating.

GEORGE

What?

Phil stares at George. The Cowhands slowly begin to laugh. George's inattention throws Phil. Suddenly he is aware of the loud revelling behind him on the Pianola. Phil turns sharply.

PHIL

Do you mind quietening, we're eating.

The MAN on the Pianola lifts his hands as the keys amusingly play on.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Shut that down, or I will.

Phil stands. The Man stops the Pianola and the party assemble to leave. Peter serves the last two plates, one to Phil. He blows out the candles on the departed table.

Peter takes the empty pie plates into the kitchen where he dumps them in the sink. Peter examines his napkin for dirt, seeing a spot he throws it in the washing pile with the others. He walks to the kitchen back door. Rose observes him concerned.

ROSE
Where are you going?

Peter stops, he pulls his comb out of his pocket and drags his thumb over the teeth, he looks past Rose. He is blinking and there is a redness that has crept up his face.

ROSE (CONT'D)
Are you all right Peter?

Peter shrugs, pulls the comb through his hair and leaves.

Rose looks at the piles of smeared plates and at Peter's flowers in their decorated jars. She is stung afresh by his humiliation and her part in it. Why had she encouraged her mysterious strange son with the paper flowers? Why hadn't she thought to protect him? Rose's eyes brim with tears of self reproach and fear for Peter.

21 INT - THE RED MILL/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

21

In the dining room the Burbank table are leaving, pushing their chairs back, picking up hats.

GEORGE
You go on over I'll settle up.

Phil twirls his chair on its back legs like a dance partner.

PHIL
Settle in the morning.

Phil dips his chair low then flips it up leaving it neatly on four legs.

GEORGE
I'll be along.

The room is quiet, George looks across to the kitchen door as he hears what sounds like sobs. He is disconcerted, then concerned. He rises and goes to the kitchen door. Softly he knocks. No answer. The sobs stop.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Shall I settle up now Mrs Gordon,
or -

George gently opens the door as Rose hears the door she moves quickly to the sink where a loud sob escapes her, she can't hold back the flood of tears. George surprises himself by moving to Rose his boots squeaking loudly, he then does something he has never done before, he gently pats her upper arm.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Please you can send the bill. I'll
post a cheque.

22

INT/EXT - THE SALOON BAR - NIGHT

22

The PROSTITUTES from upstairs sit around the bar smoking and cadging drinks. Phil watches the young fellows oblige. Phil takes a breath he feels strangely lonely. The Boys are "la-la-laing" to the music box. Their faces flushed with drink and good cheer and kisses. Phil watches singing the actual words in key and in time, but still that loneliness.

BOBBY

Do you guess anyone ever loved him?
Or maybe he ever loved anybody?

Bobby looks towards Phil singing

PHIL

... hot time, in the old town
tonight.

STAN

And what have you ever known, a
couple of whores?

Stan joins Phil at the bar and orders.

STAN (CONT'D)

These kids'll have big heads in the
morning.

PHIL

And pick up syph or the clap too -

Phil grows silent.

STAN

Turning in?

Phil stares painfully into another time.

23

EXT - BEECH MAIN STREET - NIGHT

23

Phil walks across from the Saloon towards the Inn. Two Cowhands are trying to catch a loose horse. They're very drunk, Phil pays them no heed.

24

INT - THE RED MILL/UPSTAIRS/BEDROOM - NIGHT

24

Phil walks into The Red Mill in the hallway he sees the registration exercise book and a sharpened pencil. He writes in beautiful cursive his name. He climbs the creaky steps.

Phil knocks on several doors.

PHIL

George?

He opens the third door, it's empty. A coil of thick rope by the window glinting. Under the window a sign IN CASE OF FIRE.

Phil lies on the bed. He sits up.

PHIL (CONT'D)

George?

Phil looks out the hallway. He looks out of the window at the graveyard - the headstones look like a handful of broken teeth.

Phil in the bed sits up. 'Had he dozed?'

George is standing in profile in the room unmoving. So strange a sight that Phil feels uneasy.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Where you been? The others bedded down yet?

GEORGE

What you said about her boy tonight Phil, made her cry.

PHIL

Her? She had her ear to the door?

George moves to the side of the bed he loosens his belt.

GEORGE

She was crying Phil.

PHIL

What the hell it's obvious her boy needs to snap out of it and get human.

George lies down on the pillow next to Phil.

PHIL (CONT'D)

I pointed it out, that's all, she should damn well know.

Phil's eyes gleam and dart defensively. George's eyes are soft and steady in the moonlight.

FADE TO BLACK

Phil walks along the edge of the Willow copse out of sight of the Ranch turning frequently to be sure he is unseen, quickly he slips between the trees crawling through a hidden passage, a tunnel of bent and dense branches.

26

EXT - SACRED SPOT/RIVER CROOK - DAY

26

Phil is naked and alone among the river Willows. He rubs dirt and river sand over himself, sensually smearing it across his thighs and genitals, his chest and arms. Then breaking through the thick wall of Willows and as birds fly up, Phil hurls himself off the bank into the river below. The dirt and sand rinses off his body until he stands up in the river sobered by the cold water. Phil has a pale strong muscled body streaked red from the Willow scratches. The water about him stills and Phil looks at his well muscled reflection, then at the clouds passing beyond his head.

27

EXT - SACRED SPOT/CUBBY - DAY

27

Phil stands on the long soft grass in a dappled opening in the Willows his clothes strewn about him. Phil catches sight of an old CUBBY he and George made now overgrown with Willow shoots. Phil crawls into the tiny hut, his legs too long stick out. A few old nudie magazines from back-in-the-day are strewn on the ground. (Bronco Henry's name on one.)

28

EXT - BURBANK RANCH/FIELD AND RISE - DAY

28

Phil, wet haired, makes his way across a field and up a rise back towards the Ranch House and bunk house.

29

EXT - BURBANK RANCH/BUNKHOUSE/ROCKY OUTCROP - DAY

29

Cowhands are enjoying their day off; Cricket writing in cribbed hand to his Ma, "I tell you Ma it shur is grate been a cowboy", Theo doing washing, beating shirts with a pot nailed to a plank and heckling Lee the trick rider. Stan and Another Cowhand empty a tin bath of dirty soap water. Phil is seen in the background approaching the bunk house. The Cowhands are keen to see what he makes of the horse stunt. The beat of hooves on the hard ground as a horse is lunged at a canter by Juan while Lee barefoot and in jeans tries to stand on its rump. He's up and down trying to find balance before he wobbles and tumbles to the ground. Phil makes no comment. He has in his hands a miniature baroque armchair and is whittling the tiny legs.

JOCK

He was better. Is that how Bronco
Henry learned it?

Phil watches as the Cowhand, dusts himself off and limping climbs back on the moving horse with a back glance to see if Phil is watching.

PHIL

I never saw Bronco on a lunge,
that's a fact.

Phil's attention is drawn to the distant formation of rock and slope that comes to life just as the shadows lengthen across its face. Phil walks a few paces towards it. Bobby walks up beside Phil, looking from Phil to the hillside, Bobby squints back at the rocky outcrop.

BOBBY

What is that you see there Phil?

Phil's lips twist into a faint smile.

Bobby and now SEAN and Jock join them and all three peer at the hill, then back at Phil stymied.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Are there rats up there?

Another Cowhand, SVEN joins the group hugging himself in the cold.

SVEN (TO JOCK)

Ask him for a hint.

To Phil the huge mythic dog outlined across the hill face, it's hot snout lowered in pursuit of some frightened thing was so real he could smell the dog's breath.

JOCK

Has anyone else seen what you seen
Phil?

BOBBY

George... ?

Phil shakes his head smiling.

PHIL

Nope, not him.

BOBBY

Come on Phil what is it?

Phil turns away, George is coming from the Ranch House smartly dressed and heading towards the garage.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

There is something there right?

PHIL

Not if you can't see it.

Phil walks to join George, but before he can get to the garage the old Reo is backing out and George does not stop or wave but proceeds down the drive. Phil is stunned, he walks into the garage as if he had some other purpose and in the privacy of that dark space watches through the far door as the Reo drives up the hill and disappears.

30

EXT - BEECH - DAY

30

George's Reo drives sedately into the small town and parks outside The Red Mill, next to two other sporty "out of town" vehicles.

31

INT - THE RED MILL/KITCHEN/DINING - DAY

31

Rose looks up as she sees George Burbank making his way along her weedy back yard path, past the chook enclosure up to the back door.

He knocks.

ROSE

Hello Mr Burbank.

GEORGE

Hello Mrs Gordon.

ROSE

How can I help you?

GEORGE

I really just came to see you.

ROSE

Oh, I'm quite busy.

George doesn't move.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Would you like to come in? I'm mixing biscuit but you can sit if you like.

32

INT - THE RED MILL/KITCHEN - DAY

32

Rose has flour up her arms as she mixes. George reads a bottle label.

GEORGE

"This most wholesome sauce is excellent with meats, fish and cheese."

He traces his finger along the flower stems on the oilcloth. He glances at Rose's hands and likes how busy and soft they are.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

The river is low I notice.

ROSE

Yes it's been dry. (Pause) Peter is over at the school cleaning windows.

She turns to look at George concerned he might take mention of his absence to be provocative.

GEORGE

You must be proud of him from what I hear.

Rose is suddenly fiercely protective.

ROSE

Oh, so what did you hear?

GEORGE

Oh that he's a smart young fellow.

There is a loud thump on the Pianola from the dining room, shrieks and laughs and the sound of dancing.

ROSE

They have wine with them. I wish they wouldn't do that.

The noisy frolicking continues.

GEORGE

I'd say they have more in them than wine. Sounds like booze.

Rose puts the biscuit into the oven.

ROSE

They're early. I should never have put the Pianola in there.

Rose takes a tray of glasses to the table and George sees through the swinging doors that the group are trying to learn the steps to some wild dance. George recognises the DENTIST with his thin moustache and his dark haired dental assistant CONSUELA who leads the dance. The HERNDON UNDERTAKER MR WELTZ has his jacket off and his arms cling onto the shoulders of TWO YOUNG LADIES. He is so drunk he makes them all stagger. ONE OLDER MAN sits quietly pouring drinks at the table. Rose comes back to the kitchen.

GEORGE

I see the Herndon Dentist and the Undertaker Mr Weltz.

ROSE

Oh goodness I wish Peter was back, I need to fry the chicken and Peter should be serving salad. Sometimes if you get food on the table...

She pauses thinking.

ROSE (CONT'D)
Mr Burbank I'm going to run over
and get Peter.

Some loud 'whoops', then voices, "higher, higher."

George takes two plates from the counter and shoulders open the swing doors. Rose sees past George to the dark beauty Consuela kicking her leg indeed high. For a moment the noise continues, the voices louder. Then there is sudden and utter silence, a chord on the Pianola finishes unresolved. Rose opens the door, very curious.

GEORGE
Afternoon (laughs) looks like I'm
the new waiter. How do you do?

The group stare at George and at the salad. The Dentist stands nodding to George soberly. George returns to the kitchen for more salads. Rose is leaning against the sink her shoulder shuddering, head shaking. George goes straight to her concerned. Rose is weeping again, this time from laughter.

ROSE (WHISPERING)
You were so perfect... They were so
shocked. In their wildest dreams...

Rose doubles over with laughter again.

ROSE (CONT'D)
You were so, so perfect.

George smiles, then chuckles, enjoying every word of Rose's praise.

GEORGE
Be back.

He picks up two more salad plates and backs out through the swing doors, Rose puts her hand over her mouth muffling laughter.

At one end of the long dark gleaming table an unused plate is set for George, the meat resting before it on a serving platter. Down the other end of the long table sits Phil in fading light. His food finished, his face expressionless. The heads of the dead animals loom from the walls, their eyes glassy, dusty. Phil looks at the snow falling heavily now.

34

EXT - BURBANK RANCH/YARD/GARAGE - NIGHT

34

Phil in a jacket but gloveless, walks over to the garage. He lights a match and holds it up against the wall where George stores his tools all outlined and labelled in white paint.

PHIL (READING TO HIMSELF)

"Snow chains."

Here they are, George has forgotten them.

35

INT - BURBANK RANCH/BROTHERS BEDROOM - NIGHT

35

Phil lies on his bed in the dark plucking on his banjo. He hears a car and sits up. He goes to the window. It is not George but some drunk Cowhands being dropped off by pals after a night out. They laugh and wave stumbling back to the bunkhouse.

36

INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/ENTRANCE/LOUNGE - NIGHT

36

George lets himself in the house. He sits in his huge overcoat and smiles recalling his evening.

37

INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/BROTHERS BEDROOM - NIGHT

37

Phil stands near his bedroom door listening. Slowly he opens the door and looks out over the bannister. The clock strikes two a.m. He spots George sitting motionless in an armchair.

PHIL (PRETENDS TO YAWN)

Run into any snow down below?

GEORGE

None to speak of.

PHIL

Well I'll roll me a smoke since I'm
woke up. How far did you get
Georgie Boy?

GEORGE

Beech that's where I aimed for.

PHIL

What did you do down there? Maybe a
little 'Tom-Cattin'?

A silence. The wind blowing under the front door lifts the hall carpet.

GEORGE

I was speaking to Mrs Gordon.

PHIL

Oh yes she cried on your shoulder.

GEORGE

So she did.

PHIL

Give her a chance and she'll be
after some dollar for Miss Nancy's
College fees.

George pays no attention. Phil walks down the staircase to where George sits. He moves the chess pieces on a board near George playing both sides.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Remember how The Old Lady brought
those girls to the Ranch as soon as
we could get hard-ons? My God
remember the tomato soup queen?
Wasn't it her that wrote you "I
will never forget the western
moon". Well I guess you could have
taken her out without first putting
a sack on her head unlike some
others.

George gets up and leaves Phil.

GEORGE

Night Phil.

PHIL

If it's a piece of ass you're after
fatso, I'm damn sure you can get it
without a licence.

38

INT/EXT -BURBANK RANCH/KILLING SHED/YARD - DAY

38

Phil and another COWHAND are cutting away at a carcass in the round killing shed. The DEAD BEAST hanging from its back legs hoisted by chains high in the centre of the shed. They slice through the skin and the layer of fat beneath, peeling it back.

39

EXT - BURBANK RANCH/KILLING SHED/YARD - DAY

39

Phil and Sven hang the large black hide over the railing next to the shed. Beside it are TEN or so OTHER HIDES roughly lumped together. CROWS gather waiting to pick the fat off the skin. Beneath the rail a ring of blood drips, a couple of DOGS catch the drips on their pink tongues.

Phil wipes his bloody hands on the snow. He looks up as he hears George driving off in the Reo, slushing on through the melted snow.

SVEN

What do you do with these?

But Phil is stung watching George depart, yet again.

PHIL

Bloody hell!

SVEN

Do you cut them up or something?

Phil doesn't listen. Sven wipes the knives watching Phil awkwardly.

40

INT/EXT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/LOUNGE - DAY

40

Phil walks to the bureau in the large lounge area and takes out two pieces of writing paper, a pen and ink. He takes it across to the long empty dining table. He swings his leg over a chair and pushes back a portion of the long white skirt and sitting there dirty, blood spattered and unwashed he begins to write in his distinctly elegant hand.

*Dear Mother and Father,
I can no longer keep from you the
troubling situation where George is
seeing...*

Mrs Lewis comes in with a hot plate of meat - lunch. Then stops to see only Phil.

MRS LEWIS

He's gone again?

She puts down the meat from habit by George's place then clears George's cutlery and plate, her eyebrows raised, head shaking, in the extraordinary mystery and irritation of George's absence.

41

EXT/INT - SALT LAKE CITY HOTEL - DAY

41

A grand hotel set in Salt Lake City with commanding views of the mountains and the lake.

The wealthy of UTAH, RANCH RETIREES distinguished by their clean white western hats and western attire shuffle through the lounge assisted by white frocked NURSE AIDS. ELDERLY MEN gather in groups playing cards while the WOMEN collect at the picture windows planning small parties or playing Mahjong. The occasional visiting GRANDCHILDREN sit bored and glum their feet sticking straight out in the stuffed arm chairs.

At the Hotel desk the CONCIERGE is sorting the MAIL and Phil's neatly addressed letter is placed in THE OLD GENT'S white, soft manicured hand.

42

INT - SALT LAKE CITY HOTEL/A CORNER SUITE - DAY

42

The Old Gent and THE OLD LADY are deep in contemplation over the thorny problem of Phil's letter. The Old Lady is sitting at an elegant little writing table with thin carved legs and gold leaf trims attempting replies to Phil's letter. The Old Gent paces back and forth reading Phil's letter, he is dressed like an English Gentleman in a well cut suit and wears a western hat.

THE OLD GENT (READING AN EXTRACT)

'... he has got himself entangled
with a suicide-widow...'

Old Mr Burbank shakes his head at the crude term.

THE OLD GENT (CONT'D)

Suicide-widow?

Old Mrs Burbank nods her displeasure.

THE OLD GENT (CONT'D)

- and there's a boy, yes?

THE OLD LADY

Yes, that is complicated.

Old Mrs Burbank looks back at her latest attempt to reply. She shrugs her shoulders.

THE OLD LADY (CONT'D)

'... please think it over
carefully. ...?'

She looks across at Old Mr Burbank who listens and nods.

THE OLD LADY (CONTINUES READING)

(CONT'D)

'... it might look 'funny' if we're
not there...'

The Old Gent stops pacing.

THE OLD GENT

Would George mind if things look
'funny' for once? He's never done
anything that looked unusual
before.

The Old Lady fiddles with her pen.

THE OLD LADY

Phil cares.

The Old Gent turns towards his wife with her dignity and poise, her face now mirroring his own, their eyes meet as they lift the veil cautiously on Phil's complicated personality.

THE OLD GENT
Do you think... ?

THE OLD LADY
Do I think there might be something wrong with Phil caring?

The Old Gent frowns, his head held high, none the less it is a relief to get the thing out in the open.

THE OLD GENT
If there is, it's not your fault.

THE OLD LADY
Nor is it yours.

43 INT/EXT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/BACK DINING ROOM - DAY 43

Outside the back dining room Phil allots the day's tasks as the Cowhands group about him.

Inside, George watching Phil enters and takes a seat at his and Phil's traditional places in the back dining room; down one end of the three long tables and opposite each other. LOLA 'the girl' (18) brings George coffee and pancakes. Phil joins George at the table, leg over chair, he's uncommonly chirpy, perhaps proud of the little chair he has finished whittling and has left in front of George as a gift along with a recognizable carved replica of George's desk set off in a corner in the dining room. Phil pushes the little chair up to the desk.

PHIL
Here you are old fella' a little desk to go with your big desk.

George does not look pleased or grateful.

GEORGE
Phil.

PHIL (BRISKLY TRYING FOR HUMOUR)
Yep got you old timer.

GEORGE
Did you write to The Old Lady?

PHIL (SWINGING A LEG ONTO THE TABLE)
Yep, I shot them both a line.

GEORGE
You said something about Rose?

PHIL

Rose, yes well you know as well as I do what The Old Lady would feel if you got mixed up with her. She'd likely have a hemorrhage.

GEORGE

The Old Lady would feel what one Mrs Burbank would feel for another Mrs Burbank.

PHIL

Come again.

Phil sits up.

GEORGE

We were married Sunday. She's got rid of her property at Beech.

44

INT - BURBANK RANCH/BARN - DAY

44

Phil is shocked, rageful. He is pacing uneasily in the barn. Phil's Sorrel begins to act up shying around in the stall.

PHIL

Stop!

But the horse continues its jitters. Phil engulfed in rage takes the horse out, ties it up close and then slaps it over the head again and again with the saddle blanket.

PHIL (CONT'D)

You God-damned fool, you hear me, you dirty flat-faced bitch etc.

Two Cowhands come towards Phil then melt back.

45

INT/EXT - MRS MUELLER'S BOARDING HOUSE/PETER'S ROOM - DAY 45

Rose and Peter are newly arrived at Peter's room in MRS MUELLER'S boarding house in HERNDON where he will board and go to school. Rose is wearing her 'going away outfit', a dove blue coat and dress with matching shoes and hat. Peter is in school uniform.

MRS MUELLER

So dinner is at 6.30 p.m. No need to help with the dishes if he has school work. Oh, there are no shoes inside.

ROSE

Oh, sorry.

MRS MUELLER

Not for you Mrs Burbank just the
boarders.

Peter is sitting down on the big double brass bed pushing off
one shoe then the other. After Mrs Mueller leaves Rose puts
her wedding bouquet on Peter's adult sized desk.

PETER

May I keep a few of those rose
petals?

Peter pads over in his socks to examine the bouquet closely.

Rose watches as Peter plucks five or six cream petals with a
crimson stain on the edge. Rose wishes he were not so
interested in flowers and frowns a little.

ROSE

I'll try and come to you every
weekend. And maybe sometimes you
might like to come to the Ranch,
won't that be fun?

Peter doesn't think so. He slips the petals into his album
and is beginning to stack his Father's black medical text
books on to the empty book shelf. He places his Father's
medical skull on his desk.

PETER

This is a pleasant room.

ROSE

Peter, sometimes I think you don't
listen to me. I can never tell what
you're thinking.

PETER

I'll pay more attention.

Peter puts a limp arm around his Mother's shoulders.

George is carrying the last of Peter's belongings from the
Reo up to Peter's room. It's a struggle up the narrow
staircase.

GEORGE

Hey ho.

He puts the suitcase by the door and looks at them smiling.
Rose is unpacking a wax paper package of wedding cake. She
holds it out to Peter. He takes a slice and examines the
icing.

ROSE

Here, take the rest for later.

Peter bites into the cake chewing, he likes it here.

46

EXT/INT - A ROAD ON ROLLING SNOW COVERED HILLS/REO - DAY 46

The old Reo winds its way slowly up the snow topped hills out towards the Burbank Ranch. It's late in the afternoon and there is still some warmth in the sun. Rose is tucked in with blankets and George wears his big bear coat.

GEORGE

I've been thinking we should have some sort of dinner party to introduce you to my parents.

Rose listens and smiles her ready amiable smile.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

And perhaps we could invite the Governor and his Wife too. I saw them in Herndon today and - I kind of already mentioned it to them.

ROSE

I can cook for us all.

GEORGE

No, please, I want you to enjoy yourself. Mrs Lewis will cook and Lola can serve but maybe you would be kind enough to play something on our old piano.

ROSE

But George I'm not very good. I only played for the moving pictures, not proper pieces, tunes, things I made up.

GEORGE

Oh you are plenty fine enough for us. The Old Lady can't play a note. The Old Gent ordered a very good piano and it's never really been used. It's stored in the barn.

ROSE

If that's what you want.

Rose is looking about the landscape, she spots a sunny place at the top of the hill.

ROSE (CONT'D)

This looks like a good place. Pull over here please.

GEORGE

Good place for what?

Rose smiles at George.

The car pulls over and Rose gets out and takes a wicker picnic case from the back seat which she balances on the bonnet of the Reo. She unpacks a thermos of hot coffee and cups, another paper parcel of wedding cake and sandwiches. She pours George a cup of coffee.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Well, well, what a surprise and
it's not even noon. I've never
eaten a thing except at the proper
time. You are marvellous.

George is grinning biting into a sandwich. Standing together at the top of the snowy hill George and Rose are the little couple on top of the wedding cake. Rose puts down her cup and takes George's from him too.

ROSE

Stand beside me George.

GEORGE

What's happening?

ROSE

Follow me. One, two, three forward,
right back left to the side, yes,
again.

GEORGE

Ohh sorry, I really can't.

ROSE (LAUGHING)

You are dancing George! (She
giggles) Don't think, I told you
I'd teach you.

Rose "da, da da's" a waltz and goes through the steps once more. George follows along, then he stops. Rose keeps demonstrating the steps until she notices.

ROSE (CONT'D)

What is it George?

George seems overcome, or sad, or both, he takes her hand and walks a moment.

GEORGE

I just wanted to say how nice it is
not to be alone.

The old Reo approaches the darkened, lifeless Ranch House its headlights shining cheerily against the snow.

48

EXT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/STEPS - EVENING

48

Rose waits at the steps of the large dark log house her luggage spread about her in suitcases and two shopping parcels. George hustles back from the garage.

GEORGE

Go on up and get out of the cold.

But Rose doesn't go anywhere, she smiles at George and waits.

49

INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/LOUNGE - EVENING

49

George opens the door and Rose steps in. There is only one small electric reading lamp on and Phil standing unyielding in the middle of the icy room.

GEORGE

Hello Phil. You remember Rose?

PHIL

Hello.

GEORGE

Something wrong with the furnace?

PHIL

Search me.

Rose stands feet together smiling and shivering, her bouquet clasped in her two hands.

GEORGE

I'll go down and shake it up.

ROSE

We had such a nice trip.

Phil frowns ignoring Rose.

PHIL

I've been waiting round for you all day. The Old Gent wants some deed sent to him.

GEORGE

Well I figure that can go till morning. Rose come over here and get warm, while I start the furnace.

ROSE

I'm perfectly all right, perfectly warm George.

She is shaking from cold, but more terrified of being left alone.

GEORGE
I'll just be a minute.

Rose hears a door open and close, and steps descending. She cannot control her trembling. She hears the excruciating scraping of shovel on concrete that makes her flesh crawl. Phil is playing chess alone, walking around the board to play the opposing piece.

ROSE
Well brother Phil, it's good to have arrived.

Phil waits till he's played his piece then smiles directly at Rose.

PHIL
I'm not your brother and you're not my sister, you're a schemer. It worked on George but it won't work on me.

The kitchen door opens and Mrs Lewis lumbers in humming something mournful to set the table for three.

50 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/PHIL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 50

Phil sits up on his bed, George's 'old' bed beside him empty. He plucks at his banjo and speaks to himself imitating Rose uncannily.

PHIL
"We had such a nice trip."

Then he sees the light under the bathroom door come on and hears the quiet turn of the lock, followed by the careful try of the handle.

51 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/DOUBLE ACCESS BATHROOM - NIGHT 51

George in pyjamas gestures to Rose to enter.

Rose in a satin nightgown and matching dressing gown steps cautiously into the joint bathroom holding her padded toilet bag.

52 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/PHIL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 52

Phil glances sideways as the light under the bathroom door goes off and he can hear murmurs of George and Rose speaking softly. He turns off the light.

53 EXT - BURBANK RANCH - NIGHT 53
 Moonlight, clouds, a whistling buffeting wind.

54 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/GEORGE AND ROSE'S ROOM - NIGHT 54
 A murky bulk in the large double bed. Rose lies beneath George, he moves urgently on top of Rose who is still and silent. As George reaches climax he tenses and grimaces, primitive groans escape him. Rose turns slowly to George pleased to be the cause of George's pleasure. They look at each other with gratitude.

55 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/PHIL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 55
 Phil lying alone in his bedroom sucks on his cigarette. The tip of his cigarette lighting his fixed expression of rage. Phil gets up as the whispering and murmuring from Rose and George starts up.

56 EXT - BURBANK RANCH/YARD - NIGHT 56
 Alone in the yard Phil smokes and paces. His body stiff with a burning fury. His eyes gleam wet as he kicks at the wooden stalls.

57 INT - BURBANK RANCH/BARN - NIGHT 57
 Phil turns on the new electric light in the barn. He pulls off the blanket protecting Bronco Henry's saddle hanging high on a wall, under it a commemorative plaque. The sight of it softens him.

IN MEMORY OF BRONCO HENRY - FRIEND
 1854 - 1902

He takes down the saddle and wipes it clean with his calloused, scratched hand. He places it over a stall door and fetching a tin of saddle oil begins to work it into the leather. The saddle is already gleaming but the tactile work both calms and stirs Phil's charged emotions. Twice he throws his head back to stop himself being overwhelmed with tears.

58 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/THE OLD LADY'S DINING ROOM - DAY 58
 A ROSE WALLPAPERED 'Ladies' sitting room decorated against the masculine dominance of cattle ranch life. Rose walks into the room with a sense of uneasy fate, she turns to George.

GEORGE

The Old Lady decorated it.
You just make yourself comfortable.
I'm going to bring you a surprise.

ROSE

What George?

GEORGE

Well then it won't be a surprise.

George kisses Rose on the forehead. He leaves Rose sitting in the middle of the floral sofa smiling hard. As the door closes, she shivers, the room is freezing. She stands and looks about, the rose wallpaper, flower carpeted rooms, a terrible deadening malaise overwhelms her.

Rose makes her way across the large lounge/dining room tensing terribly as she hears a door rattle then sees a gust of wind lifting the hall carpet, rippling down its full length.

59

INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

59

Rose enters the kitchen where Mrs Lewis and Lola are clearing up from breakfast and preparing lunch.

MRS LEWIS (TO LOLA)

When the rains come in the cellar
gets flooded and the rats drown and
float to the surface so the lads
have to scoop them...

Mrs Lewis and Lola turn to Rose. Rose picks up a tea towel.

ROSE

Please keep talking don't mind me I
like to be busy.

She walks to the dish rack where she begins to dry a plate. But Mrs Lewis and Lola are unable to continue. They work on silently until Lola distracted by the Cowhands struggling with a large object outside breaks the quiet.

LOLA

Oh goodness!

Rose and Mrs Lewis follow Lola outside to see Cowhands and George struggle towards the front steps of the Ranch House with what seems to be a piano.

ROSE

Is that, is that a grand?

George breaks away towards Rose.

GEORGE

It's a Mason and Hamlin baby grand.

ROSE

Oh no, it's too good for me. I, I only really play tunes. I'm just very average.

GEORGE

That's what I want, tunes, the Governor too. We don't want a concert. We want to hear you play Rose.

George and the Cowhands move carefully up the steps, speaking to each other. "One, two, step."

MRS LEWIS

I should like to look on the Governor as he drives up and gets out of his vehicle.

ROSE

But we'll introduce you Mrs Lewis.

MRS LEWIS

Oh no I don't want that. Just to look on him from the window.

Rose's anxiety starts to rise.

60

INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/LOUNGE/DINING - EVE

60

The long white pressed table cloth with a neatly suited George down one end and Phil, unwashed, unchanged, dirty hands, down the other and Rose on the long side close to George, is dressed for dinner, her hair groomed.

George dabs his mouth with his napkin. Phil whistles and stands swinging his leg over his chair. Rose watches from the corner of her eye as Phil takes an easy chair by the fire and leaning back picks up a magazine.

ROSE

I hope nobody minds but I'm going to practice. It's going to sound awful, sorry. The piano tuner can't come till next week - and that will be too late for me.

Rose has risen, she selects sheet music from the top of the piano, opens the lid and sets the music on the stand above the keys.

ROSE (CONT'D)

All right, here I go...

Rose begins 'Just Like A Gypsy' with an unexpected vigour. The sound is jarring between Rose's dropped notes and the piano's off keys yet Rose's rhythm is upbeat and jaunty, just as Rose gains confidence and adds a flourish Phil throws his magazine on the ground and stands. He heads upstairs to his bedroom. Rose pauses, she's mortified at having sent Phil off.

GEORGE

Keep going, you're very good.

A frowning Rose works her way stop/start through the tune. Lola comes in from the kitchen to clear the plates. Upstairs Phil's banjo can be heard. Lola stands and listens a moment. Rose continues her practice but the musicality of Phil's banjo stops her and she listens too. Phil's musicianship is accomplished but more than that his playing has surety and spirit, even heart, something that impresses Rose. George has been pouring himself a whisky, he takes one across to Rose, they both listen. Phil has a musician's skill, Rose is awed and despairing of her own efforts.

61 INT/EXT - BURBANK RANCH/ROSE & GEORGE'S ROOM/YARDS - DAY 61

Rose is dressed in a neat skirt and sweater, she is looking through the binoculars out into the yards around The Ranch, first she follows George but soon she slides off George to locate Phil. Phil is walking with Two Cowhands towards the stockyard.

Lola behind Rose is tidying the room, making the bed.

LOLA

Is it true that Hollywood stars
have milk baths?

Lola's voice is so small and high it's difficult to hear.

ROSE

I suppose they might once in a
while.

LOLA

Mrs Lewis is going to fix my hair
with curling tongs for the
Governor's dinner.

Rose watches Phil as he and Two Other Cowhands mend a railing with a splint. Rose puts down the binoculars and picks up her sheet music.

ROSE

While the house is empty I have to
practice.

LOLA

I can tell you if...

ROSE

If what?

LOLA

If, ah, he comes in.

ROSE

No. I'd rather practice alone, but after all it's Phil's house and he can come and go whenever he pleases. And now the piano's tuned it's not so awful.

Lola nods but neither she or Rose are convinced.

62 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/STAIRCASE - DAY 62

Rose keeping her Dutch courage walks downstairs, her hair has a charming bounce and her makeup is bright.

63 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/LOUNGE - DAY 63

Rose puts the music on the stand, then once again checks on Phil from the window. Only the Two Cowhands are working on the rail, Phil is nowhere to be seen. Rose looks about at the several doors (5) to the lounge area and closes the open ones.

64 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/LOUNGE - DAY 64

Rose is happily absorbed practicing back and forth over a Strauss Waltz (Blue Danube). She starts to work a challenging section, she is enjoying the focus on her progress. Lola hustles in anxiously from the kitchen but Rose is too immersed to take Lola's warning as Phil now enters from the opposite door and walks unseen by Rose up the stairs.

Again Rose goes over the troubling passage, she stretches her hands, did she hear a banjo? She starts afresh this time listening for the banjo, she feels confident she must have imagined it, but as she stops and marks her score with a pencil she clearly hears the banjo stop two notes later. Rose is puzzled, she looks around and now notices one of the doors is open. Fear runs down her spine.

Now as she plays she is listening hard. 'Yes' she can hear the banjo and as she deliberately pauses on the piano she can hear Phil pause too, or did she imagine it? Rose frowns, she summons her courage and anyway puts herself to the task of mastering the passage no matter what.

65 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/PHIL'S BEDROOM - DAY 65

Phil moves from his bed to the door, which he opens dexterously with his foot.

66 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/LOUNGE - DAY 66

Rose can hear the door open and Phil's banjo playing becomes more distinct. Rose tries again to concentrate but this time as she breaks off, Phil does not stop but plays the exact same passage perfectly to the end. The aping of her playing and his musical superiority humiliates and scares Rose.

67 EXT - BURBANK RANCH/SURROUNDS - DAY 67

An unsteady and disturbed Rose walks away from The Ranch buttoning up her new fur coat. Outside it's cold and bright, there are puddles and drifts of snow, head bowed she walks towards the Rocky Outcrop. She is surprised by the number of old bones that are scattered about the winter field.

Cowhands out in the corral watch her curiously.

68 INT/EXT - BURBANK RANCH/BARN/GARAGE - DAY 68

Phil is laying long cords of prepared rawhide from one end of the barn to the other. Sandy and Jock are helping Phil to keep the cords straight as Phil walks up the alley separating and sorting the lines before the final twisting begins.

George is backing the Reo out of the garage, he parks it near the barn where two cow skins are stretched on wooden frames awaiting drying and cleaning. George strolls over to the open doors of the barn dressed formally in a suit. Phil smiles at George sure he is already regretting his hasty marriage and all the uneasy accommodations they both endure. The Cowhands look at George and Phil unsure whether to stay or go.

PHIL

You boys find something needs doing.

Phil unpoocks his tobacco and easefully rolls himself a cigarette one handed.

GEORGE

I came over to speak about something.

But then he pauses. Phil looks over at him.

PHIL

Come on pardner open your talker.
What is it?

George saunters awkwardly to the saw horse and sits silently for a moment.

GEORGE

His nibs will be here for dinner
and The Old Gent and The Old Lady.

PHIL

Well sir aren't we going into
sassietty - out with the finger
bowls.

Phil continues to untangle his cords.

PHIL (CONT'D)

She on the panano again? Setting
your teeth on edge?

GEORGE

No (laughs) I like to hear Rose
play.

PHIL

Well old timer what's in the
noodle?

GEORGE

Well Phil...

PHIL

Go ahead, spit it out.

GEORGE

Well it's about his nibs the
Governor.

PHIL

All right.

GEORGE

Well not so much about his Nibs but
his Nibs wife.

Phil stops and faces George, his mouth tensing a little into a smile and he begins to chew.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I was thinking his Nibs wouldn't
mind so much, but his wife might.

PHIL

What for dear Christ sake?

GEORGE

Well it's sort of a hard thing to
say. (George breathes) She might
mind if you come to the table
without a wash-up.

Phil looks at George for a long uncomfortable time.

69 EXT - MONTANA LANDSCAPE/TRAIN - DAY 69

The austerely beautiful and bare winter country between Salt Lake City and Herndon. A train, tiny in the vast winter landscape steams through.

70 INT - TRAIN CARRIAGE - DAY 70

The Old Lady and The Old Gent are seated in an elegant first class carriage playing cards and sipping tea from good railway china. They are arguing about Tutankamun's curse in relation to the death by mosquito bite of Lord Carnarvon. The Old Lady is shocked and strangely sobered to realise Tutankamun was a boy of only eighteen years.

71 EXT - HERNDON STATION - DAY 71

George in his buffalo coat waits amongst COWBOYS in wide hats and TOWNSPEOPLE. As the PASSENGERS disembark he walks towards The Old Gent and Old Lady leaning to kiss his mother.

GEORGE

Hello Mother, Father, the car's
around the side.

George shakes The Old Gent's hand formally.

THE OLD LADY

Is anyone with you?

GEORGE

My wife.

The Old Lady looks anxiously around. George turns to Rose who is standing off a few yards by the picket fence. Rose walks forward to shake hands warmly.

72 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/STAIRWAY/DOUBLE BEDROOM - DAY 72

Rose leads The Old Lady up to her old bedroom. Rose is carrying her bag for her. The Old Lady takes a step back.

THE OLD LADY

Oh but this is your room now, we
can't...

ROSE

Yes, please you can, I've prepared
it for you as best as I could not
knowing exactly how you like
things.

The Old Lady walks into the room and shivers. She smiles and turns to Rose.

THE OLD LADY
One forgets how cold it is. I'm
surprised you can stand it.

Rose laughs.

ROSE
I'm glad you have come. Somehow
knowing George, I knew I could
count on your kindness.

The Old Gent steps into the room and Rose smiling steps out.
The Old Lady opens her suitcase.

THE OLD LADY
Well, what do you think of her?

THE OLD GENT
You hear that? The windows still
rattle.

THE OLD LADY
Didn't you hear me? I said what do
you think of her?

THE OLD GENT
Think of her? I think it's mighty
considerate of her to turn her room
over to us.

The Old Lady lays clothes out on the bed.

THE OLD LADY
She sees George's kindness and that
pleases me.

THE OLD GENT
Will you give her a little of the
jewelry or such things?

The Old Lady has picked up a pot from the sill with a dead
Geranium drooping from the stork.

THE OLD LADY
Oh I see Miss Jones is dead. I
think we had better wait and see.
Too bad there's a child.

THE OLD GENT
It was dying before we left. It's
not the child you know that.

The Old Gent turned sharply walked across the room, turned
sharply and walked straight back.

THE OLD GENT (CONT'D)
 I can tell you one thing. I feel
 sorry for her.

The Old Lady fits a dress on a hanger and carries it to the wardrobe.

THE OLD LADY
 God knows why George has the
 Governor coming for dinner.

THE OLD GENT
 Phil can talk remember that, he'll
 entertain them.

THE OLD LADY
 But will he... ?

THE OLD GENT
 Suit up?

The Old Gent cannot contemplate a problem this size. He hangs his own dress suit on the wardrobe door.

73

INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/LOUNGE/DINING ROOM - DAY

73

Lola and Mrs Lewis are setting the table on a highly starched white linen table cloth. Mrs Lewis demonstrates how each setting should look including silver finger bowls. Lola's hair is in a scarf to keep her curls tidy and Mrs Lewis's hair has been freshly primped.

MRS LEWIS
 The soup, the starter, the main and
 the dessert. The napkin is fanned.

Behind them Cowhands carry wood to stack beside the fire. They look on in wonder at the table.

MRS LEWIS (CONT'D)
 Light the fire, we may as well try
 and warm this place.

74

INT - BURBANK RANCH/ROSE & GEORGE'S TEMP BEDROOM - DAY

74

Rose in satin underwear is trimming her nails in preparation for their work later in the evening. She notices that even now her fingers are trembling. She turns to George looking smart in his dinner suit.

He puts a comforting hand on Rose's shoulder.

GEORGE
 The Governor's just rung. They are
 coming. I had hoped the weather
 would put them off.

Rose's last hope is dashed.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
It will be fun, you'll see Phil is
a great story spinner.

ROSE
Oh that's good. Maybe I won't have
to play.

They both laugh a little.

GEORGE
Don't be surprised when his wife
smokes.

Rose puts on a black satin turban, a long dark feather is
attached to the front with a broach. It curls up high.

ROSE
I thought I should dress up because
she might. You know she's from a
city.

George looks on smiling but worried - what will Phil say?

75 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

75

A Cowhand pours more chips of ice into the sink where Mrs
Lewis beats her mousse. She stands back a moment then
straightens.

MRS LEWIS
That's the car.

Through the kitchen window she sees the Governor's smart
black car on The Ranch road distantly approaching the
homestead.

76 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/LOUNGE - DAY

76

Mrs Lewis hobbles through the lounge to the window by the
dining table where she will view the Governor arriving and
walking up the front steps. Mrs Lewis is careful to stand a
good step back so as not to be caught staring.

George and Rose in the lounge look at each other and together
walk to the front door, while the elderly Burbank's slowly
make their way down the stairs.

77 EXT - BURBANK RANCH/FRONT YARD - DAY

77

The Cowhands amble over in force wearing their mail order
purchases, chaps, hats, shirts, spurs.

George walks cheerfully down the steps into the puddled and muddy yard and opens the door for the GOVERNOR'S WIFE, GEORGINA. The Governor's Wife is puffing the last of her cigarette. She is hard eyeing her husband as he confirms the visit will be brief.

Rose also walks down the steps to welcome and shake the important Guest's hands.

The GOVERNOR, EDWARD, raises his hat to the Cowhands who raise their cowboy hats back to him. They are shivering in their fancy shirts but they're happy, some of them even shake his hand.

78 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/LOUNGE - DAY

78

Mrs Lewis backs away from the window as the Governor and his Wife followed by George and Rose turn towards the house.

79 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/LOUNGE - EVENING

79

The Governor offers to take his wife's fur coat, but she holds on to it. Her eyes alight on George coming towards her holding two cocktails.

GEORGINA

I might keep that a moment
longer... oh sweet, it has it's own
umbrella!

EDWARD

It's an island of civilisation
here, thank you, very unexpected,
my God it's cold on The Pass.

GEORGE

You enjoyed Europe?

EDWARD

Mmmmm... there I was in Paris
discovering this one speaks French
fluently.

GEORGINA

Non, ne vrais pas.

EDWARD

Yes you do, and German....

Georgina shakes her head laughing at her husband. George and Rose listen dazzled and a little afraid.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I was telling Georgie about your
brother, what was it Phi Beta Kappa
at Yale?

GEORGE

Yes in classics.

EDWARD

So he swears at the cattle in Greek
or Latin?

GEORGE

Heh, heh. Rose plays the piano.

The Governor swings around to look at Rose.

EDWARD

Do you? That's a nice surprise.

ROSE

I can't speak other languages....

GEORGE

I'll just have a look-see out the
back for Phil.

GEORGINA

Good I want to meet this brother.

The Governor puts an arm around Rose, looking oddly at the
feather on her turban.

EDWARD

All right, we'll tell you our
secret. Georgina is French.

GEORGINA

You exaggerate. I was at boarding
school in Lyon.

The older Burbank's are making their way down the stairs,
very dressed up.

EDWARD

Ah here's two people we can't fool.

THE OLD LADY

No you cannot, we know everything,
we're encyclopedias, at least I am.
I have nothing to do but read,
hello Edward, Georgina.

THE OLD GENT

She's been reading The Curse of
Tutankhamun in the digest.

The Old Gent passes The Old Lady an orange blossom.

EDWARD

So you believe in the curse?

THE OLD LADY

No, no I'm not drinking George's contraption. Yes I do, but did you know that Tutankhamun was just a boy?

The Governor squints very interested.

THE OLD LADY (CONT'D)

Only eighteen.

THE OLD GENT

I don't believe they can be so precise.

Rose fades smiling into the background, sipping heavily on her cocktail.

THE OLD LADY

Well they can. He was eighteen.

80

EXT - BURBANK RANCH/YARD - EVE

80

The suited frame of George is dark against the gloomy and patchy snow of the yard. He walks over to the horse paddock where he sees Phil's horse among several others, heads down their rumps turned to the wind, one back foot resting.

George heads into the barn. It's dark. George is about to leave when he notices Bronco Henry's saddle is missing from above his commemoration plaque. The plaque is gleaming against the dark empty wall.

GEORGE

Phil? Phil are you here?

A match flares, Phil draws on the cigarette the glow briefly flooding his face.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I was looking for you.

PHIL

Well you've found me.

GEORGE

Everyone's here. We're about to eat.

PHIL

So?

GEORGE

Well they are asking after you.

PHIL

Really?

GEORGE

Yes. We're counting on your conversation.

PHIL

Well you can count again.

GEORGE

I shouldn't have said what I said to you about...

PHIL

You two can keep your apologies to yourself. I'm not coming.

GEORGE

What will I say? The Old Lady wants to see you too, she's come a long way.

PHIL

Tell them the truth, that I stink and I like it!

George looks stunned.

Beside Phil are the parts of Bronco's saddle and bridle; all the metal pieces, the bit, the buckles, the spurs are lined up as Phil polishes with Silvo and a soft dark stained cloth. With his wool chaps on Phil looks like a satyr.

81

INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/LOUNGE/DINING ROOMS - EVE

81

Rose rises as Lola comes in with a tray of coffee. She begins anxiously to pour the coffees. She is relieved that her hand only trembles a little as she serves. At the end of the table is Phil's still set and untouched place, and part eaten mousses sit on everyone's dessert plates.

GEORGINA

- One night I opened my closet and there on a blanket was a rat's nest full of its treasure, six silver spoons with the Governor's coat of arms. The rat was up on its hind legs showing its teeth to me.

And the Governor's Wife does a toothy imitation. The group laugh but Rose can't manage more than a weak smile as she passes coffee to the Governor with two hands to manage the trembling.

EDWARD

It's a shame your brother missed the dinner.

THE OLD LADY
Nothing could have happened to Phil
could it?

Rose looks at George disturbed.

GEORGE
No he'll be fine, something just
must have come up.

Rose sits back at the table, she bows her head and sips her wine. A pause descends. Finally the Governor's eyes glide over to his wife then across to the piano.

GEORGINA
So Rose are you going to play for
us?

THE OLD LADY
Yes, George told me you play very
well.

ROSE
Ohh no, I'm terribly out of
practice.

GEORGE
Come now, you've been playing a lot
you know you have.

Rose's head is whirling and a terrible pressure is squeezing her brain.

The Governor glimpses his pocket watch then crosses his legs to the side of the table.

Rose's palms are wet, her throat closed so her voice shoots up when she speaks.

ROSE
I don't know what to play.

GEORGE
Play the one I like.

ROSE
What one?

George is surprised, Rose knows exactly which one he likes.

GEORGE
Why the one about the Gypsy.

ROSE
I'm not sure I can remember that
one.

GEORGE
Play anything.

Rose moves over to the piano. She looks at Phil's untouched place setting, chilled. She rubs her hands and places them on the piano. Nothing, absolutely nothing. The Governor and his Wife exchange looks. Rose can't seem to move, she is frozen. Finally she brings her hands down beside her and folds them.

George's beam turns to concern and confusion. He looks at the Governor who is raising his eyebrows and glancing at his Wife, there is no rescuing this little moment....

ROSE
I'm so sorry. I can't seem to play.
I used to play in a cinema pit -
for hours.

Rose shakes her head and sees George's look of surprise and disappointment, her heart stops and her smile fails her. The Governor stands and everyone else stands and moves towards the door leaving Rose at the piano.

EDWARD
Well she got you halter trained,
right George, that's the main
thing.

ROSE
I'm sorry.

George smiles puzzled.

EDWARD
No, it was a lovely, lovely
evening.

The group are near the front door, coats have been fetched and in the confusion Phil has entered quietly. He looks at the crestfallen Rose who looks back at him, for once too numb to be afraid, yet she reads his victory and knows it's true the evening has been a failure. Sharp-eyed Phil has noticed her turban and it's now drooping feather he cocks his head on the angle of the feather. Rose watches him, face burning knowing now it can be worse, he could do much more than win, he could crush her.

The Governor's Wife returns from the coat room to see Phil.

GEORGINA
Oh you're Phil. So you weren't
eaten by a cougar.

PHIL
Not yet...

GEORGINA

I am sorry to have missed your conversation, I've heard that you're brilliant.

The Governor turns towards Phil to shake his hand.

PHIL

You're going to want to keep your distance, I'm straight off the horse. Anyhows you don't need conversation you been listening to the panano and dancing I guess. You danced?

Nobody speaks. Rose shuts the piano.

PHIL (CONT'D)

You didn't play? You sure practised a terrible lot.

Phil whistles the Gypsy song as he walks past Rose to the table, he takes a piece of bread from a silver bowl and coolly loads butter on it.

PHIL (CONT'D)

What a shame, see you wouldn't think there would be much difference between a cinema pit and a dinner party.

Rose is listening to Phil painfully, hopelessly. The Old Lady stands abruptly looking at Phil sternly.

THE OLD LADY

Where have you been Phil? I could hardly eat worrying about you.

PHIL

I didn't get washed up so I didn't come.

Phil takes meat left on the table and goes to the fire where he warms his back and eats.

THE OLD LADY

You didn't wash?

EDWARD

He's a ranch man, isn't that right, that's honest dirt.

Phil gives the Governor his eye then placidly regards Rose bent low on the piano stool. Rose reaches out and takes a last slug of her wine.

82 EXT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT 82

George walks down to the Governor's car with the Governor and his Wife. Offering the Wife an extra blanket to take away. Doors open and close. George is left taking the steps up to House as the car drives away.

83 INT - BURBANK RANCH/THE SENIOR BURBANK BEDROOM - NIGHT 83

The Old Lady seats herself on the side of the bed. The Old Gent is taking off his jacket.

THE OLD LADY
I don't think it's going to...

The Old Gent turns.

THE OLD GENT
Why say it, it doesn't need to be said.

THE OLD LADY
Yes you're right.

THE OLD GENT
I think the cocktails affected her badly.

The Old Lady nods pulling back the bed covers carefully.

THE OLD LADY
And the feather? What was that? Did you see it trembling?

THE OLD GENT
Yes.

The Old Gent shakes his head as he continues to undress.

THE OLD GENT (CONT'D)
Poor woman.

FADE TO BLACK

84 EXT - TREES/RIVER - DAY 84

The buds of leaves on the River trees shoot tender and delicate, waving above the snow melt rivers. A lone blossom quivers.

85 EXT - HERNDON/REO CAR - DAY 85

Rose and Peter drive through Herndon, garden sprinklers play on lawns, the mist catching rainbows.

Rose glances anxiously at her strange son. She blinks with fear to imagine him soon on the Ranch.

In the back seat of the Reo are Peter's father's medical encyclopedia, huge heavy musty old black books about bones and flesh.

ROSE

I wondered if you didn't think about leaving the medical books here for the summer.

Peter is carefully combing his hair into place.

PETER

I thought about it - but you understand they were Dad's. Don't you understand?

ROSE

Yes I do.

86

INT - HERNDON/MENSWEAR SHOP - DAY

86

Rose is examining the fit of a pair of blue jeans on Peter.

ROSE

How will they stay up? Turn around... you've got no hips at all... are you eating?

PETER

I've made a friend. He calls me doctor and I call him professor, because that's what we want to be.

The SHOP ASSISTANT an older pink faced man with neatly pressed pants has brought over a selection of cowboy boots for Peter to try.

ROSE

Why not invite your friend to stay at the Ranch?

Peter examines one of the boots.

PETER

No Rose.

ROSE

Why not?

Peter puts the boot down. Rose passes him another, he puts it aside too.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Try it.

PETER

I don't want him to meet a certain person.

ROSE

You mean Phil? Does he scare you?

Peter shrugs, he's seen tennis shoes hanging on a rack and he's looking for his size.

PETER

I'm not afraid, I have my ways.

ROSE

What ways?

PETER

Well, I don't think about him.

Peter is trying on a tennis shoe.

ROSE

What do you think about?

PETER

My plans for the future.

87

EXT - BURBANK RANCH/CORRAL - DAY

87

The heat and exertion of catching, branding and castrating the bull calves has the Cowboys sweating and dirt stained. The calves are separated from their mothers and roped then held tight. There are three separate fires heating branding irons and Six Cowboys on horses wielding lariats. Phil does all the castrating gloveless.

ANGELO

Bull calf boss...

Angelo looks about for Phil who walks smartly across to the immobilised calf winding his bandana around a cut on his thumb. Phil hands the Cowboy his knife.

PHIL

Take your gloves off. You can't feel anything through a big hunk of hide. If you fray the knife through the cord it stops bad bleeding...

In the distance on The Ranch road Rose and Peter approach in the Reo and pull up between the corral and the steps. Phil walks over to George who is wearing a work suit, no tie. Phil pressures the bloodied thumb with his bandana.

PHIL (CONT'D)
 What a bitch! Castrate fifteen
 hundred head, then nick your thumb
 on the last.

George is writing in his Tally Book. Phil kicks dust into a fire nearby.

PHIL (CONT'D)
 Well fatso I guess we're finished.

Phil frowns as he sees Peter get out of the Reo clutching his shopping including a white cowboy hat. He sees with further displeasure his Mama has got herself a matching hat which she plops humorously on her head. George turns as the car door slams, the sound of calves bawling in the corral is so loud it's hard to think. Phil watches as George greets Rose and insists he'll garage the Reo. Peter watches the last of the branding from afar until he sees the cold eye of Phil turned on him, he puts his large white hat on his head and starts ferrying his books to the house.

JOCK
 Who's that?

PHIL
 Miss Nancy.

JOCK
 Oh, our waiter? He was the waiter
 right?

Phil looks hard at Peter, he hates everything about this Little Lord Fauntleroy. The way he stares, the way he walks, the books he's brought with him.

PHIL
 Yeah look out. He'll be creeping
 all over the place from now on big
 eyes goggling.

Peter stiffens, he's been through this before. Other Cowhands have joined and peer after Peter. "The Waiter".

PHIL (CONT'D)
 Little Lord Fauntleroy.

BOBBY (MIMICKING PETER'S LISP TO JOCK)
 "One day all this could be mine."

Phil overhears.

PHIL
 There's no way that'll happen, no
 way.

Behind them the remaining fires are being kicked out, the irons collected and the bellowing calves and cows herded into the home paddock.

88

INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/HALLWAY/BEDROOMS - DAY

88

George and Peter are maneuvering George's empty glass-fronted bookcase out of Phil's room down the hallway to Peter's room. Phil comes up the stairs.

PHIL

Where the hell's that going?

GEORGE

To Peter's room, he's got a lot of his father's books.

PHIL

I was all set to fit it out for my armory collection.

GEORGE

It's been empty a long while.

Peter slinks away from the brothers down the hallway to his bedroom. Inside Rose is folding Peter's clothes into drawers. Peter listens to the brothers by the door, Rose watches concerned.

GEORGE (V.O.)

What about when you have time to fit it out, I'll get it back.

Rose goes to the door and looks down the hallway to where the brothers are standing on each side of the bookcase.

PHIL

So what Miss Nancy wants, she gets?

GEORGE

Quieten Phil he's just in....

PHIL

I know where the hell he is, big ears flapping.

Phil's eyes flash and he pushes past George to his own room slamming the door. Phil turns and gazes at the bright rectangle of wood where the bookcase has rested these past thirty years. He bends down and picks up two marbles left behind in a nest of fluff. They rest in his hoary blood stained hands.

In the darkness of her cupboard Rose unscrews the top of her stashed flask and quickly takes two large swigs. She can hear footsteps outside, quickly she puts the bottle down.

GEORGE

Rose?

Rose straightens up from the cupboard holding a pair of shoes. She turns brightly to George.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Does he like his room?

Rose changes her shoes.

ROSE

I think so.

Rose puts the old shoes back in the cupboard and screws the top back on the flask. She pops a peppermint in her mouth offering one to George. George takes it.

GEORGE

I want him to be happy. (Thank you)
He's certainly the neatest boy I
ever saw.

Rose has laid out a new purchase to wear for dinner, George watches.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

That's pretty Rose.

ROSE

I have it on appro so...

GEORGE

You should keep it.

ROSE

George I'm afraid Phil doesn't like us, doesn't want Peter and me here!

GEORGE

Oh no, don't mind him, he's just Phil. Old Phil he doesn't have too much.

ROSE

Do you suppose we might ever have our own house, just for us?

GEORGE

How do you mean, build something new?

Rose nods nervously.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Oh Rose, this house has got sixteen rooms, what would Phil do living here by himself?

Rose smiles thinly, tears filling her eyes. George puts an arm around her.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It's going to take a little time but we're all family and we'll get used to each other. If I have to stay in town you can always come with me.

ROSE

That's not so easy with Peter here.

GEORGE

Well he can come to but you know a ranch is a great place for a boy and you'll have each other over summer. Phil doesn't have anyone.

Rose puts her dress on. George blinks with appreciation.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Look at you, you should be in Europe. One year we'll go to France and you can shop, we'll take Peter if he can stand us. You all right?

Rose really wants to be.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Phil will adjust, he will.

90

EXT/INT - BURBANK RANCH/YARD/BACK DINING ROOM - DAY

90

The Cowhands, the horses, the dogs are all out in the yard excited and preparing for the drive of the cattle up to the high hills.

Mrs Lewis is handing out food parcels and Stan packs the packhorse with further supplies. Cowboys joke and feed their dogs stolen pancakes. Inside the dining room Peter watches a plate of half eaten pancakes in front of him. Lola is clearing up the Cowhands plates only Bobby is left.

LOLA (TO PETER)

You like these pancakes or the last serve?

PETER

Yes.

LOLA

These ones you mean? Because I made
these ones.

Bobby winks at Peter. Peter looks down at his plate.

BOBBY

I like you Lola, does that count?

LOLA

No it doesn't count. (To Peter)
He's crazy, he said he'd make me a
radio from pieces.

Bobby gets up and takes his plate to the bench.

BOBBY

I will I just need a couple more
parts. I'm going to make a fortune
fixing radios in San Francisco.

Lola looks at Bobby boldly, her eyebrows raised.

91

EXT - BURBANK RANCH/YARD - DAY

91

Peter loiters near the Ranch steps stealing glances at the Cowhands. He likes their easeful masculinity and the intriguing details of their costumes; their leather forearm bands, their sheepie chaps, their high-heeled boots and silver spurs. One of the many dogs an eager black and white Collie comes over to Peter and licks his hand. Meanwhile Phil has gathered the Cowhands together giving instructions. He too is in a jovial mood.

PHIL

... those of you staying with the
cows watch your fires, summer is
coming which also means any
Indian's camping are to be moved
off the property, no exceptions we
have animals they want to eat. Got
it? We don't sell hides, we don't
sell anything here.

Peter listens for a little but is soon playing chasing with his new friend, running back and forth, the dog running behind him. Phil turns as he hears the dog yelp playfully and the Cowhands turn too. Phil gives a sharp whistle. The dog instantly stops and runs towards Phil and the Cowhands who laugh at Peter left exposed in the midst of the yard. Suddenly the Cowhands are mounted and their horses are moving past Peter, in front and behind, he feels scared. They wink and laugh at each other as they watch Peter run panicked to the safety of the Ranch steps.

92

EXT - PLAINS - DAY

92

The cows and their calves flood out onto the pastures, the Cowboys and dogs pushing them on, a trail of cows and calves stretched out as far as the eye can see.

93

EXT - HIGH COUNTRY - DAY

93

Up through the Aspens and wild flowers the men escort the cattle and calves to the high lush pastures. The cattle are spread even further and the Cowboys are light-hearted and at ease. There are signs of a camp being established and Phil and Several Others, Bobby included are making their way back down.

Phil pauses by the camp makers.

PHIL

Keep your ears and eyes open.

Bobby gives a big wolf howl. A couple of Cowhands howl back. The party continue down the trail.

PHIL (CONT'D)

This was an Indian Summer camp-
found five or six arrowheads two in
good condition near here, some
bones too.

BOBBY

You listen to the radio boss?

PHIL

No I do not.

BOBBY

I reckon you could be on the radio
speaking about things.

PHIL (LIGHTHEARTEDLY)

Crap like all the others?

94

INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/ROSE'S BEDROOM - DAY

94

Rose lies in her bed in the darkened room. She's wearing eyeshades, a nightgown and matching dressing gown. Out from the covers she eases a bottle of Bourbon and takes a good mouthful.

There is a soft knock on the door and the handle turns. Peter quietly comes into the room holding his sack and walks softly to the bed until he stands over Rose. He's sweaty and adrenalised.

PETER

Rose.

ROSE

Hmm, that you Peter? I've got a headache.

Peter spies the bottle of Bourbon half empty under the covers. Rose pulls her eyeshades down and looks at Peter.

ROSE (CONT'D)

I'm not eating tonight it's George's day in town so it's just Phil. Have a seat.

Rose tries to sit up while concealing the bottle. She reaches out to touch Peter's hair, he leans away.

PETER

I made a trap.

Peter puts his hand in the sack and feels about for the rabbit.

ROSE

It's not a snake is it?

Peter pulls out the rabbit.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Oh a bunny.

Rose strokes the shivering rabbit. She's drunk so her hand moves clumsily, the rabbit jumps off shivering in a corner of the room.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Oh it's scared.

Peter looks at his Mother and is troubled by her eyes, by their blank haze. Rose smiles at Peter not able to understand him.

Downstairs the front door opens and they freeze as they listen to Phil on the wooden floor below.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Don't worry about Him, you can eat in your room.

Mrs Lewis walks into the dining room and deposits the large roast of beef in front of George's seat who is out. Phil walks to George's end of the table and carves himself thick slice of meat, he walks back to his place and starts to eat in solitary ease.

96

INT - BURBANK RANCH/KITCHEN - DAY

96

Sunshine through the kitchen window. Lola scrubs carrots and potatoes in the sink. Behind her Mrs Lewis is polishing silver cutlery while Rose smokes and sips a cup of tea, Mrs Lewis continues with her story.

MRS LEWIS

- - so when they removed the graveyard because of the highway cutting through they had to dig up all the coffins, one of the tractor drivers was careless and he broke up one of the coffins and inside you could see it was just stuffed with the loveliest golden hair, except for a few feet from end where it was grey.

Towards the end of the story Lola turns from the sink holding out a single carrot for Rose to see.

LOLA

Can I take it up?

ROSE

What?

Lola pretends to be a rabbit scratching her nose with her paw.

ROSE (SLURRED) (CONT'D)

Oh, yes go and have a look it's sweet.

97

INT - BURBANK RANCH/CORRIDOR - DAY

97

Lola walks up the dark staircase and along the upstairs corridor carrying a carrot.

98

INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/PETER'S BEDROOM - DAY

98

Peter is bending over his desk drawing when Lola knocks on his door.

PETER

Yes?

Lola slips into the room. Peter frowns.

PETER (CONT'D)

Hello.

LOLA

Where is your rabbit?

Lola is looking about the room as she comes up behind Peter.

The rabbit, it's dear black eye glazed is on it's back, it's paws neatly together. It's been dissected, it's organs pulled out and pinned. It's these organs Peter is sketching. Lola steps back shocked.

LOLA (CONT'D)

Oh bugger me!

99

INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/LOUNGE/HALL - DAY

99

Peter is finishing threading white laces into his new tennis shoes. Rose passes a tennis racquet to Peter and takes two others and a ball out of a large games cupboard in the lounge. Peter plucks the racquet like he does his comb.

ROSE

Even if you are happy to be in your room all day, it's good for me.

100

EXT - BURBANK RANCH/YARD/DISUSED TENNIS COURT - DAY

100

Rose and Peter wander over to a long disused court passing old bones and pieces of malfunctioning equipment, pots with holes and other scattered debris.

ROSE

I thought you liked rabbits.

PETER

Yes I do, but you know if I want to be a surgeon I have to practice.

Rose walks to one side of the court. There is a net but it's tattered and sagging. She tries to bounce the ball but it's pretty flat.

ROSE

Well you're not to kill them in the house. No, Peter I'm putting my foot down.

PETER

Where would a man be if he always did what his Mother told him?

Rose hits the ball to Peter, he swings wildly. Rose and Peter search through the scraggly, weedy grass for the ball. Lola comes and joins the search as do Bobby and another Cowhand.

ROSE

Lola please take over I have a migraine.

Rose wanders back to the house and Peter follows, the Cowhands and Lola whoop as they hit the ball about. "You're crazy." "Get the ball." "No."

PETER
You all right Mother?

Rose massages her temples.

ROSE
I feel like my eyes are going to pop out.

Peter puts a stiff arm around Rose's waist. Ahead they see Phil walking in big strides up the Ranch steps. She stops. The thought of Phil upsets Rose. The sight of him makes her stomach heave.

PETER
It's Phil isn't it? He's cold.

ROSE
He's just a man Peter, only another man. You go ahead.

Rose walks briskly to the back of the house where she bends over and dry retches. Back here she is in sight of the Ranch rubbish pit, a deep trench where all kinds of Ranch refuse; cans, bones, machinery and bottles are disposed of. Rose makes her way to the edge glancing about. She lies on the edge of the pit reaching out towards a Gin bottle - empty - she lets it drop back into the pit.

101 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/STAIRS/PHIL'S BEDROOM - DAY 101

Phil finishes climbing the stairs carrying a newly found fossil. In his bedroom he places the fossil inside his display case. Sharp eared Phil hears the drop of the bottle and opens his dormer window peering below. He sees Rose stretched out beside the pit now using a stick to roll a bottle of Whisky towards her, a good inch of the golden liquid at the bottom. As she reaches down to grasp it's neck Phil whistles a short phrase from Rose's Strauss Waltz. Rose pauses and Phil stops whistling. She pulls the Whisky bottle out of the pit and the whistling starts again, Phil above her watches amused. Rose looks all about including back up at the house. She doesn't know if the whistling is real or she's imagining it. She steps back against the shadows of the wall and swigs the dregs of the bottle.

102

INT - BURBANK RANCH/LOUNGE - DAY

102

Rose enters the lounge a lost smile on her face. No Phil. She goes to the book shelf and chooses a book, opens it then closes it on her finger as she hears Phil's door upstairs open and close then his boots walking along the hallway to the stairs. Before he has got half way down she moves across to the staircase with a friendly calm smile.

ROSE

Phil.

He slows.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Why can't we be friends?

Phil does not answer, he continues down the stairs to the hat shelf.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Please tell me Phil.

Phil puts his hat on his head.

PHIL

Because you disgust me with your
lipstick teeth, and your dirty
boozing.

Rose's smile is frozen, she looks down at her book, she can barely stand. There is a floating feeling as if all this is unreal. The slow step of Phil's boots continues down the hall to the steps.

103

INT - BURBANK RANCH/PETER'S BEDROOM/HALL - DAY

103

Peter is half in the hallway, half in his bedroom listening, slowly he withdraws to his bedroom tight lipped and disturbed. He soothes himself by looking at gruesome illustrations of diseases in his father's big black medical encyclopedia.

104

EXT - FIELD/THE WILLOWS/RIVER - DAY

104

It's late afternoon on a day off. The summer sun is lowering and the Cowhands lead or double bank their horses down to the Willows and the wide river with it's large open beach of sand. It's hot and most are bare chested, some carrying a small towel or shirt, and One or Two have a comic book sticking out their back pocket.

105 EXT - RIVER/THE WILLOWS - DAY

105

At the River wet horses are rolling in the sand. More horses stand in the waist high water while Cowhands sit or dive off them. Some are naked their jeans abandoned on the beach. There is an erotic charge amidst the group which breaks into wrestling attacks and laughter.

In the distant Willows Phil arrives saddled up shirt sleeves buttoned down. He is moved by the young men's bodies, by the memories it stirs. Soon a couple of Cowhands spot him, he nods and moves on down through the Willows to his own sacred place.

106 EXT - THE WILLOWS - DAY

106

Phil takes his Sorrel into the river then up the bank between the trees into his sacred place. He takes the saddle off his horse. He removes his boots and overalls. Phil looks up at the trees, he finds the trunk and high up in a hollow he pulls out a faded silk red bandana with the initials B H embroidered on one edge. He smooths the bandana around his face, his eyes, he holds it to his nose. Wind through the trees disturbs the leaves of the Cottonwoods setting them shimmering, touching, kissing, lifting the hair on Phil's head. The horse moves through the trees towards Phil nuzzling his hand. Phil strokes it's velvet nose, it's delicate nostrils, the loose hairy bottom lip. Phil walks in his long johns to the river. It's a little Eden, the grass is long and soft, dapples of afternoon light warm his back. The light on the water is alive - dancing; the bandana is loose around his neck.

107 EXT - GRASS PADDOCKS - DAY

107

A RABBIT stops still in the long stalks of some golden grass. It's ears twitch. Peter watches from a distance with George's field glasses. The rabbit moves closer towards a booby trapped apple core swinging very gently on a string. It hops closer.

PETER

Come on....

But something, maybe the swaying apple, makes the rabbit's ears flick back and it careers off.

108 EXT - THE WILLOWS/SACRED SPOT - DAY

108

Peter resets his trap before trudging on along the line of the Willows dragging his sack. He pauses and walks back three paces. Bending he peers into a long tunnel of tightly woven Willows, on all fours he burrows through. Inside Phil's Willow cubby hut Peter turns a page of a tattered girly magazine with Bronco Henry written on the front.

A girl with makeup and bare breasts gives him a steamy look. A sound not far off alerts Peter. He backs out carefully. Down past the Willows he can just make out the figure of a bathing man his body hairless and so white it shimmers in the light.

Phil is standing thigh deep in the clear water. His keen ear hears a rustling that is not a magpie or the wind and he turns and staggers to the river bank to cover his nakedness with a shirt. Just then he sees 'Miss Nancy' poised as delicately as a deer and his eyes are huge. Phil moves towards the boy who runs as a deer might, leaping back into the sheltering bush. Phil rages through the tight Willows after Peter shock turning to anger.

He catches and grasps Peter's ankle hauling him out of the tight woven Willows. Peter is upside down his leg held high in the air. Peter does not dare look up at the naked Phil.

PHIL

What the hell are you doing here,
you little son of a bitch? This is
private you little bitch.

Phil drops Peter and kicks him as Peter desperately crawls away.

Phil breaks off a stick and points it after the retreating Peter, whacking branches to scare him.

PHIL (VOICE CRACKING) (CONT'D)

If Bronco Henry found you here he'd
damn well skin you, he'd kill you
God damn it!

Peter leaps over branches and squeezes through the trunks of the Willows to the tunnel he had entered through. Holding his sack under his arm he crabs his way back out through the branches and out into the paddock. Phil stops chasing, he's defended his territory, his special place. Through the branches Phil sees Peter, tiny, running frightened through the endless hay paddock.

FADE TO BLACK

109

EXT - BURBANK RANCH/BARN/PADDOCK - DAY

109

The Cowhands finish pulling the last of the twelve large canvas tents out of the barn and spread them on the golden grass. FIVE are mending rips in the canvases from last year. ANOTHER, his boots off kneeling on the canvas is strumming his guitar.

110

EXT - BURBANK RANCH/SIDE OF BARN - DAY

110

Phil is walking to the side of the barn where a line of SEASONAL WORKERS (50) wait in the shade to be signed on. Phil is carrying a cardboard suitcase to show the man BILL at the front of the queue. He opens the suitcase to show a beautifully woven rope.

PHIL

Joe made it.

BILL

How long?

PHIL

Thirty feet. He refused fifty dollars for it - And look at these... made from horsehair.

Phil opens a cigar box inside the suitcase, inside are the most delicate and intricately plaited watch straps. Behind them is the coming and going of carts, horses and trucks.

Bill nods appreciatively.

BILL

I've not seen him.

Phil closes the suitcase.

PHIL

He'll be dead or in jail. I'm storing it for him. Anyway Bill good to see you back.

Phil shakes his hand and the hand of the next WORKER a MEXICAN, and so they pass one after another with Stan recording name and date of arrival.

111

EXT - HAYMAKING CAMP - DAY

111

The haymaking camp is a tree-lined park area, a stream on one side, a cook wagon halfway along and the twelve canvas tents erected in a loose circle. It's the end of the day, horse teams are being washed down by the stream. Beyond them the last horse team finishes it's cut in the long grass. A few Workers rake the hay into sheaths. Workers sit by the trees, or the riverside and in front of their tents eating their meals. Men who have finished straddle the sickle bars like bicycles sharpening the steel cutting edge on a whirling grindstone.

Phil sits cross legged in front of the tent he shares with three of the Old Timers. Beside him, in a tin washbasin, he has a big handful of rawhide strips soaking in water resembling stout worms.

Phil's Sorrel haltered to the hitching rack raises its head and snorts. Phil looks to the entrance to the broad park and sees George, Rose beside him dressed in some fashion idea of an emancipated lady, a scarf, pants and long lacing boots and at the back of the spring wagon swinging his legs, sissy-boy, Peter, his feet in new tennis shoes just clearing the stubble.

The Men watch closely as Rose looks straight ahead. George stops the team before the cookshack. The COOK a tall skinny man with a towel around his middle, comes towards the supply wagon smoking a cigar. When he sees 'the woman' he throws it away. George greets the Cook. Rose starts to clamber down but Peter comes around quickly to give her a hand.

Now Rose rearranges her scarf. Peter is wearing his new clothes, a stiff pair of Levi jeans and his white tennis shoes. Stan looks at Peter then winks at Phil.

STAN

No one tell him to soak those jeans?

Phil raises his eyebrows in agreement. Peter stands awkwardly beside his Mother his weight on one leg the other resting behind. Phil watches Peter as he looks across the opening towards a Willow where a family of magpies have built a nest and are presently chattering. Then, all eyes on him, Peter suddenly begins to walk across the space before the open tents towards the Willow.

Smudges of green hay set off hazy smoke to ward off the mosquitos. Phil continues with his braiding of the rawhide strips holding each one up to let it drain. The skill of his fingers free his eyes to watch the boy traverse the opening; at each step the stiff denim of jeans goes zip-zip-zip as leg passes leg. Stiff as a stick-man the boy moves with the slightest feminine twitch of his hips, the new tennis shoes vulnerable and white.

Rose watches Peter's progress and Phil sees her stiffen when the first sharp wolf whistle flies like an arrow as the boy passes the second tent. George breaks off jawing with the Cook to look at Peter and hears another whistle tear through. Peter does not pause, nor falter in running the strange gauntlet before the open tents. He seems not to even hear, but once past the watching, grinning men he looks into the Willow with the tawdry nest and the chattering young magpies.

Peter returns the same way right past the open tents again, this time there are no whistles. Phil watches, ideas budding as he admires the boys gumption and his Mama's frantic alarm.

Rose takes tentative steps towards Peter smiling encouragingly her balance is so unstable she retreats to the wagon edge. Phil sees the opportunity to topple her right before him and it amuses him that the means will be her sissy son.

PHIL (SOFTLY)

Peter...

Peter continues his stiff walk back towards the cookshack and his Mother.

PHIL (SHARPER) (CONT'D)

Peter?

Phil thinks for a moment he might ignore the summons but then the boy tacks suddenly like a sailboat and walks towards him, pauses, shoves his hands into the pockets of his stiff new Levis.

PETER

You want me Mr Burbank?

Rose looks over anxiously as Phil twists his head from side to side as if he's looking for someone.

PHIL

I don't know any Mr Burbank. I'm Phil.

PETER

Yes. Mr Burbank.

PHIL

I guess it's hard to get used to calling an old fellow like me just plain Phil - at first.

Phil lifts the rope.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Look at this Pete.

PETER

That's fine work, sir.

PHIL

You ever do any plaiting or braiding yourself Pete?

PETER

No, sir I never did.

Phil shifts a little so he can clock Rose over Peter's shoulder. He notes her holding onto the cart to steady herself, frantically watching her poor little boy talking to her enemy, him. Phil smiles warming to his new strategy seeing how a little befriending so upsets her. Behind Rose George and the Cook continue to unload the cans and side of cooked meat.

PHIL

Pete, we sort of got off on the wrong foot.

PETER

Did we sir?

PHIL

No forget the Sir stuff. That can happen to people, you know, people who get to be good friends.

Peter nods.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Well know what?

PETER

What - what, Phil?

PHIL

Now you see you did it, you called me Phil. I'm going to finish up this rope and give it to you and then I'll show you how to use it. Now you're on the Ranch, you might as well learn to rope and ride a little. Sort of lonesome place out here Pete unless you get in the swing of things.

PETER

Thank you - Phil. How long do you expect it would take to finish that rope?

PHIL

Oh, I imagine working off and on I could finish it before you go back to school.

Peter peers at the rawhide strips closely.

PETER

It won't be very long then Phil.

Peter smiles at Phil and turns and walks back to the wagon, his stiff new Levis going zip-zip-zip like scissors. Peter turns back to look at Phil who gives Peter a smile in return.

Rose is holding on to the wagon to steady herself, she watches anxiously as Peter walks back but he doesn't come to her he ignores Rose and easefully hoist himself on the back of the wagon.

Rose turns and stares at Phil, suddenly she knows she hates him. A chill follows, a sharp pervasive fear, hate to hate she is out matched.

112 EXT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/GARDEN - DAY

112

Rose is kneeling attempting to make a garden by the Ranch steps.

113 EXT - BURBANK RANCH/KILLING SHED - DAY

113

Peter in a white shirt, jeans and tennis shoes digs the soil directly under the hanging hides which is a dark rich colour on account of the blood drips. He spades the dirt into a wheel barrow.

Peter pushes the wheel barrow around to where Rose is preparing the bed when Phil strides out of the barn and signals to Peter. Peter drops his wheel barrow and eagerly follows Phil into the barn. Phil smiles to himself as Rose struggles with the abandoned wheel barrow.

114 EXT/INT - BURBANK RANCH/BARN - DAY

114

Phil swings Bronco Henry's saddle onto a tall saw horse. He places it half in the light half in the shadow beside the bucket where he soaks the rawhide worms.

PHIL

On you get. You can sit on it Pete,
get yourself used to it.

Peter enjoys swinging his leg over and resting in the polished leather.

PHIL (CONT'D)

You got any boots?

Peter looks down at his tennis shoes.

PETER

Yes.

PHIL

You should wear them. Don't let
your Maw make a sissy of you.

Phil shows Peter the length the rope has grown to. Peter turns and sits side saddle fully concentrating on Phil's braiding skills.

PETER

That looks great Phil.

PHIL

Just sitting there you're soaking
up all the riding know how you'll
ever need, then some. That saddle
belonged to Bronco Henry, the
greatest horseman I ever knew.

Peter puts his leg back over and looks at it carefully, Phil looks at Peter's face how it is caught in the sun that slants through the doors of the barn.

PETER
I was thinking...

PHIL (AMUSED BY PETERS EARNESTNESS)
Yeah what?

PETER
About the old days.

PHIL
There were real men in those days.

Peter nods gravely.

PHIL (CONT'D)
Why there are the markings of Lewis and Clark on a cliff out back of the Ranch and I found trails near piles of rock that seemed to lead somewhere. What say just you and me go out for a couple of days look for the trails, follow them to the end. Wouldn't surprise me if there was gold or minerals among those rocks.

Peter's eyes light up, Phil smiles imagining Peter's thoughts of getting rich.

PETER
Do many of the calves die from wolves?

PHIL
There's always some that get torn up and who are hamstrung or catch anthrax and die of black leg. You talk like a Victrola Record do you know that?

PETER
No, I didn't know.

PHIL
Well you do.

PETER
Did Bronco Henry teach you to ride Phil?

PHIL
Yep along with how to use my eyes in a way other people can't.

Peter gets off the saddle and looks at Phil puzzled. Phil strolls out of the barn.

PHIL (CONT'D)
Take that hill over there.

Phil points with his head at the rocky outcrop and keeps walking towards it.

PHIL (CONT'D)
Most people just see a hill right?
But Bronco when he looked, what do
you suppose he saw?

Peter comes up beside him.

PETER
A running dog.

PHIL
The hell you see it just now?

PETER
No, when I first came here. It
looks like it's pouncing, the two
paws out the front.

Phil is shocked that Peter sees "the dog", he frowns and looks for awhile at the hill.

PHIL
Well Bronco Henry saw it first.

He turns to Peter, rain begins to fall on them.

PHIL (CONT'D)
You just saw it huh?

Peter pulls his comb through his hair and nods.

115 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/ROSE'S BEDROOM/LOUNGE - EVENING 115

As Peter comes in, Rose opens the door to her downstairs lounge. She holds onto the doorjamb.

ROSE
Peter can't you come in and talk
for a little?

Rose moves back into the room. Peter unwillingly ambles in. He looks away from her out into the rain that's falling hard now.

PETER
What shall we talk about?

Rose sits on her rose patterned sofa.

ROSE

You've got to be quite friendly
with Phil haven't you? Is he nice
to you?

Rose sips from a glass on the table and looks expectantly at Peter.

PETER

He's making a rope for me.

ROSE

Making a rope?

PETER

He's good with his hands, he's
making it out of rawhide.

ROSE

What is rawhide?

Peter is patient.

PETER

Nothing much, just dried strips of
cowhide, and you soak them and -
well, fashion them.

ROSE

Fashion them?

PETER

Braid them.

ROSE

Peter I wish you wouldn't make that
sound with your comb.

Pete stops dragging his thumb across the teeth of his comb.

PETER

I wasn't aware.

He stands near the window, ready to move on. His Mother is drunk, the neck of her flask pokes out between the cushions. Rose gets up unsteadily and moves towards Peter

ROSE

When I was little I felt a chill in
my spine when I heard chalk squeak
on the blackboard... Ah, Miss
Merchant that's who it was, she
drew chalk stars by our names on
the blackboard.

Peter moves aside. Rose draws a star on the fogged window where Peter was standing.

ROSE (CONT'D)

I wonder why it was always stars we
got, why not diamonds or spades?
Why not hearts? I wonder why it was
stars?

Peter speaks in profile and like a ventriloquist he scarcely
moves his lips.

PETER

Because they're supposed to be
unreachable.

ROSE (SLURRED)

Yes. But they weren't unreachable
because she gave them to us.
And Peter...

PETER

Hmm?

ROSE

We used to have a Valentine box, it
was covered with white crepe paper
and we'd paste big red hearts on
it, lopsided hearts, because all of
us didn't understand about folding
the paper so both sides would
match.

PETER

And you got a great many
Valentines.

ROSE

A great many?

PETER

Because you were beautiful even
then.

Rose looks at Peter feeling chagrined, had she forced him to
say 'you were beautiful', and he said it with such intensity
it made him blush.

ROSE

Is there a sound that makes you
shiver?

PETER

I don't remember, I've go to go
upstairs now. I've got something to
finish.

She reaches over and passes her palm clumsily over his neatly
combed hair.

ROSE (SLURRED)
 It's been a nice talk hasn't it?
 We're not unreachable.

Peter lifts his eyes and caught hers.

PETER
 Mother, you don't have to do this.

His eyes still held hers.

PETER (CONT'D)
 I'll see you don't have to do it.

Peter goes to the door closing it carefully, noiselessly.
 Rose turns to look at the rain falling and falling.

116

EXT - BURBANK RANCH/CORRAL (OR PADDOCK) - DAY

116

Peter bent forward clutching the pommel, joggles badly about the saddle, his horse, ears back trots in a circle on a lunge lead. Juan keeps the horse going by cracking a bull whip behind it. Peter is wearing his boots and his cowboy hat is squashed down over his ears. He wears a pair of leather forearm bands like many of the Cowhands sport, but on his slim wrists they are comically loose. There are "Ohhhhs" and laughter from Five Cowhands sitting on the rails as Peter lurches to one side almost falling. Phil walks past them into the corral.

PHIL
 Why are you joggling? You rise to that trot or you sit it. No one told you how to fix your Levis? You put them in the river for a week with a big 'ol stone on them.

Peter nods, joggling on.

PHIL (TO JUAN) (CONT'D)
 This his first week?

JUAN
 Nope it's the third.

PHIL
 Third? Take that lunge off. He can't be led forever.

Juan looks at Phil disbelievingly, so does Peter.

PHIL (CONT'D)
 Go on. Take her out.

The horse with Peter clutching on trots out of the corral. Phil follows behind giving the horse a whack, it bolts into the paddock shying left and right, Peter clutching low over it's neck making a squeaking sound. The Cowhands are hooting. The horse disappears over a hill then trots back down the other side with no Peter. Peter emerges from the hill a look of resolute determination despite his limp. Juan goes to help.

PHIL (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

JUAN
Give him a hand.

PHIL
No. Let him work it out, or not.
(To Peter) Keep practicing. That's all there is, fall off get back on.

Peter nods he is using the high side of the hill to mount and once more he is trotting, zig-zagging about the paddock in a chaotic but determined effort.

117 INT - BURBANK RANCH/BACK DINING ROOM - DAY

117

Peter stands at the back of the breakfast room wrapping pancakes and bacon into a parcel and putting it into his back pack. The Cowhands are eating or finishing their breakfast.

118 EXT - BURBANK RANCH/DISTANT PADDOCK - DAY

118

Peter trotting, a little more confidently but not yet well has a back pack, a water bottle and his lunch ration. He has ventured off from the Ranch House.

He rides until he finds the rock fall but he doesn't stop, he picks his way across and hurries further until the rocks disappear and there are just old tumble weeds. He comes to a ravine and follows an ancient cow path down its side. Below is a drop into a Gorge. As he continues the path becomes faint and perilous, stones are dislodged and skitter down. Peter closes his eyes and holds on as his horse stumbles but finds it's footing. They arrive at the bottom of a cliff and Peter pulls up next to a dead calf. Peter looks around as calmly, as coyotes looked at him. Then he reaches into his pocket and draws out his surgeon's gloves and pulls them on as a doctor might, gets down from his horse and gets to work on the animal, with his knife as sharp as a scalpel, he carefully slices the hide from the carcass.

119

INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/ROSE'S BEDROOM/YARD - DAY

119

Rose wakes alone. Dogs are barking below in the yard. Through the lace on the window Rose can see George, his square solid horse in hand talking to Phil on his Sorrel with Peter close beside Phil on his mare. Rose watches Phil and Peter's horses quietly snuffling each other's nostrils. Pete looks at Phil with a dog-like loyalty. The sort of loyalty Phil likes. Rose is building herself into a painful fury. She goes to the wardrobe and sticks her feet into pearl coloured high-heels, shoes chosen unwisely and at random. She takes a desensitizing swig on her stashed flask, though she is still thick headed from the night before.

120

EXT - BURBANK RANCH/YARD/RANCH HOUSE STEPS - DAY

120

Rose staggers badly out of the front door, all the men look towards her. George moves towards Rose to greet her.

Phil and Peter turn their horses for the trail and leave before Rose can join them. Phil with no gloves, Peter with his Sears catalogue gloves.

GEORGE

Hello there Rose, you feeling better?

ROSE

Peter! (Shouting after him)

Peter doesn't stop or look back.

ROSE (TO GEORGE) (CONT'D)

Peter! Can't Peter go with you today?

GEORGE

Well he could, but Phil and him have kind of paired up.

ROSE

I don't want that, I don't want him to be with Phil at all.

George is surprised, for the first time Rose does not smile. She is angry but unsteady and grasps hold of George's reins then saddle to stop herself falling. George looks at her perplexed.

GEORGE

But Rose, he's helping him. Look, he's taught him how to ride.

A thunderhead looms in the sky and is piling up over the mountains to the north. An unnameable loneliness rises inside of Rose.

121

EXT - BURBANK RANCH/HILL AND STREAM - DAY

121

As Phil and Peter make their way out to a far hay stack Phil stops. His sharp eyes have seen smoke coming from a stream. Phil turns his horse towards it and Peter follows behind still awkward in the saddle.

Phil rides down the bank towards a small encampment where there's a horse trap and an ancient sway-backed animal grazing nearby. A YOUNG INDIAN SHOSHONE BOY is playing in the creek and his father EDWARD NAPPO is cooking a salmon over a small fire.

Peter's horse descends the path too fast for Peter barging past Phil finally stopping at some sweet riverside grass. Phil keeps his focus on the trespassers.

PHIL

What the hell do you think you're doing here?

EDWARD

My boy and I are camping a little while. That's my boy.

The Boy about nine joins his father.

BOY

My grandfather is buried up there.

The Boy points above them to the mountains.

EDWARD

He's right about that.

PHIL

Right about what?

EDWARD

My father was the Chief.

PHIL

Is that right. Well let me tell you I don't care who in the hell he was. You get yourself packed up in that contraption and get going.

EDWARD

We'd only stay a couple of days, long enough for the horse to rest. It's a real old horse.

PHIL

Nothing doing.

Edward walks to his buggy he picks up something from under the seat. Peter looks at Phil suddenly alert, both think it might be a gun but it's nothing but a battered box.

Edward walks up to Phil with his box and removes the lid. Inside are gauntlet gloves rich with bead work.

EDWARD

One or two days. They're worth five
bucks.

PHIL

They sure are pretty slick. But I
don't wear gloves. Never have. And
I don't take bribes. Pack up.

Peter looks at the Boy his old patched oversized overalls, his proud face. Phil looks over at Peter and gives him a wink. The Shoshone Father and Son move slowly putting out the fire and beginning to stack the buggy.

122

EXT - HAYSTACK/FIELD/POLES - DAY

122

The threatening thunder storm has retreated somewhat and Phil works on a pole fence to protect the hay from the cattle. Nearby a derrick, stands a makeshift hay sling used to catapult hay up on top of the twenty foot stack.

Phil is struggling to find the right note of ease with Peter who has sauntered off looking up at the clouds and at insects he sees in the grass. Phil watches him suspecting he feels bad for the Indians and it annoys him.

PHIL

Hey Pete my pal, you going to help?

Peter trots across to Phil and Phil is relieved to see the frank eagerness in the boy. Phil gets Peter to hold the pole while he thumps it into the hole he's made.

PHIL (CONT'D)

You know who started riding as late as you? Bronco Henry. Never rode or roped at all till he was your age... oh hello look at that cottontail.

The rabbit might have been tame it was so bold. Phil smiled, removed his hat and took aim and shied it at the rabbit; like a hawk the hat rose its shadow a hawk's shadow and it descended. The rabbit cowers at the shadow then leaps under a pile of old poles. Phil saunters over and retrieves his hat, knocking the dust. Then frowning, he stooped and shook the top pole of the pile.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Hey Pete, let's see how long it takes before Peter Cottontail makes a run for the open.

(MORE)

PHIL (CONT'D)

As boys we used to bet on how many
poles we'd have to remove before
the animals ran for it.

Peter on one end of the pile, Phil on the other, they remove first this one, then that, and set it aside. At the end of the tenth pole, Phil thought he saw it.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Ah, yeah he's in there. Gutsy
little bugger.

PETER

I guess he has to be gutsy.

They removed two more poles, the second disturbed the precarious balance and poles collapsed like huge pick up sticks. Underneath there was wild scurrying, then a clap of thunder. The rabbit emerged dragging a broken leg

PHIL

Well put the thing out of its
misery.

Peter picks it up, Phil watches as Peter smooths his hand over the rabbit's head calming it and then the next minute he was wringing its neck. Phil is shocked and admiring of Peter's proficiency, his deftness in dispatching the rabbit. Now the rabbit's hind leg relaxed, the eyes glazing over in death.

Phil brings up his own hand, quite bloody and looks at it.

PETER

That's deep. Are you all right
Phil?

Blood drips onto the yellow grass. Phil pulls out his blue bandana and swabs off the wound.

PHIL

What the hell, must be a splinter.

The thunder booms and echoes over the vast valleys. Black clouds hide the sun.

123

EXT - HAYSTACK - DAY

123

The Two sit on the shady side of the stack. Peter's knees are drawn up with his arms around them. Phil is looking a little disappointed. The rabbit hunt didn't create the nostalgia he'd hoped. They pick at their lunch. Phil thinks it's curious how Peter's face and arms seem to glow.

PHIL

That's a tan, a Cowboy tan you got.

Peter looks mildly at his arms.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Bronco Henry told me that a man's
made by patience and odds against
him.

PETER

My Father said obstacles, and you
had to try and remove them.

PHIL

Another way to put it. Well Pete,
you've got obstacles, that's a fact
Pete-me-bye.

PETER

Obstacles?

Peter's eyes are thoughtful.

PHIL

Take your Maw today or any day. How
she's on the sauce.

Phil's movements are slowed, he's worried he might alienate
Peter by speaking too much to point. He tries to keep the
atmosphere pleasant, easy.

PETER

On the sauce?

Peter looks puzzled.

PHIL

Drinking, Pete. Boozing it up.

Peter winces and Phil knows now that Peter knows and it's not
possible for Phil to say too much.

PHIL (CONT'D)

I'm guessing you know she's been
half shot all summer.

PETER

I know she has. She didn't use to
drink.

PHIL

Didn't she now? (Using an Irish
accent)

PETER

No, she never did.

PHIL

But your Paw Pete?

PETER

My Father?

PHIL

I guess he hit the bottle pretty hard. The booze.

PETER

Until right at the end. Then he hung himself. I found him, I cut him down but he was, he was gone.

Phil reaches out to pat or touch the boy's back, but he withdraws his hand and adjusts his bloody bandana.

PETER (CONT'D)

He used to worry that I wasn't kind enough, that I was too strong.

PHIL

You, too strong? He got that wrong, you poor kid.

Peter smiles faintly.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Things will work out for you yet.

PETER

Thanks Phil.

124

INT/EXT (VIEW) - BURBANK RANCH/KITCHEN/KILLING SHED - DAY 124

Lola is looking out the kitchen window very absorbed as she is filling a glass of water. Rose sits herself at the kitchen table hunched over, her head hurting. She still wears the pearl coloured high heels and now a silk dress that seems overdressed for the afternoon. Lola gives Rose the water then returns to ironing the great white table cloth.

ROSE

Where's Mrs Lewis?

LOLA

She's with the Indians.

Rose looks at Lola, not believing.

ROSE

What Indians?

LOLA

Those ones.

Rose is making her way, chairback to bench holding each to steady herself. She looks out the window beside Lola.

In front of the killing shed rail where the cow hides are piled, Mrs Lewis is talking at some distance to Edward Nappo and his Son. Their wagon and ancient horse stand nearby. Mrs Lewis is shaking her head and walking away. The Indian's begin to turn their wagon around.

Mrs Lewis steps into the kitchen.

MRS LEWIS

They were standing in front of the damn things and asking 'Do we have any hides?' Huh!

Mrs Lewis sits at the kitchen table.

MRS LEWIS (CONT'D)

Water! Are they leaving?

Lola pours Mrs Lewis a glass.

LOLA

Yes they've turned their horse.

MRS LEWIS

I told them the hides are going to be burnt.

ROSE

Why? Why are they going to be burnt?

MRS LEWIS

Phil doesn't want anyone else to have them. He waits till there's a pile and burns the lot. It's a terrible smell all day.

Rose looks back out the window as the Father and son lead their horse off.

ROSE

Where do they come from?

MRS LEWIS

I don't know, a reservation... The old Indian had me understand his Father was once the Chief here.

ROSE

What will that little boy feel? A white woman turning away his father, the son of a Chief. He'll never forget it his whole life.

Mrs Lewis and Lola are startled by Rose's speech, they look at each other afraid.

MRS LEWIS

'A white woman!' What can you mean?

But Rose is out the kitchen door. She's trotting, hobbling in her high heels towards the Father and his son. When they see Rose running after them they take fright and keeping their heads down continue walking away. Rose falls over, but she doesn't stop, she gets up and runs, shouting.

ROSE

Hey! Stop, wait! Wait!

Edward Nappo, pauses as Rose approaches.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Please take the skins, please have them. Take them. I would be honoured if you would take them.

Edward Nappo doesn't move. Rose is dust covered, sweating and out of breath.

ROSE (CONT'D)

My husband owns the Ranch, please come back, take them.

After a pause, Edward Nappo speaks to the Boy in their Shoshone language. The Boy comes forward with a brown paper parcel, Edward Nappo signals the Boy to give it to Rose.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Ohh...

She leans against the wagon as she is having trouble standing, inside the brown paper is a pair of carefully crafted and beaded gloves. Rose is touched by the Indian's gift, the kindness. She smiles and then cries all at once.

ROSE (CONT'D)

They're so soft, deliciously soft.
And beautiful, but don't you need them?

Edward Nappo confers with his son, then turns to Rose and indicates with his hand they are hers now.

Two of the Cowhands are watching uncertainly alerted by Rose's shouts.

ROSE (CONT'D)

But you will take the hides?

Edward Nappo nods. The Boy and Edward lead their horse back towards the killing shed and begin to transfer the hides to their buggy.

Rose pulls on the gloves as exhausted, she staggers back to the house.

George on his way back sees Rose fall to her knees then topple to the side where she lies still. The Cowhands look at each other then walk slowly towards Rose frightened to touch the bosses wife. George joins them and dismounts. He gently sits Rose up. Her head flops sideways, her eyes flutter, she's out cold.

125 INT - BURBANK RANCH/STAIRCASE/BEDROOM/BATHROOM - DAY 125

George and a Cowhand carry Rose up the staircase to her bedroom. Lola leads carrying Rose's high heels and opening the door. George and the Cowhand put her down on the bed. As they pull back the covers a bottle of Bourbon is briefly revealed. George dismisses the others and pours the contents of the bottle down the bathroom sink. George brings a flannel to wipe Rose's face.

ROSE (MISERABLY)
George, George...

George blinks to hear her say his name. He removes her gloves and she rouses herself to keep them near her.

126 EXT - TRAIL BACK TO BURBANK RANCH HOUSE - EVE 126

Phil and Peter ride back towards the Ranch side by side, the Ranch House small in the distance. The whole layout of the place visible at once, the house, the corral, the barn, the abandoned tennis court, the kill house. All bathed in a golden light, dramatized by the still distant build of clouds.

Phil rises suddenly in his stirrups, as he looks intently at the empty rail beside the kill house.

PHIL
Well I'll be damned.

127 INT - BURBANK RANCH/STAIRS/GEORGE'S BEDROOM - DAY 127

Mrs Lewis heaves herself up the stairs breaking into George's room where Rose still sleeps off her hangover.

MRS LEWIS
You told me to tell you when he's here and he's here. Rode right about the killing shed looking where the hides should be.

George gets up gravely from the side of the bed. He puts on his hat.

GEORGE
Thank you. Please make sure Mrs Burbank stays in bed.

MRS LEWIS

I don't want your brother thinking
I gave the skins up. Indeed I did
not, I told them they were not for
sale or barter.

George leaves the room.

128 EXT/INT - BURBANK RANCH/BARNYARD/BARN - DAY 128

Phil has spurred his Sorrel into the barnyard. Peter alarmed,
follows behind.

PETER

Phil - Phil what's wrong? Phil is
something wrong?

Phil dismounts in the barn.

PHIL

Wrong, wrong for Christ sake? Every
God damned hide is gone.

Phil is tense with fury. He roughly hangs up his saddle from
its stirrup and the bridle beneath it. Peter stands behind
holding up his heavy western saddle and bridle.

PHIL (CONT'D)

She's really put her foot into it
this time.

PETER

You think she did it Phil - sold
them?

Phil takes Peter's saddle and slings it up on a wooden peg.

PHIL

You bloody tootin'. Or maybe gave
them away.

PETER

Why would she do that Phil? Why?
She knew we needed the hides.

PHIL

Because she was drunk. Pie-eyed.
She was stewed. I'd think you'd
know from the books your Paw left
you that your Maw's got a
whatchamacallit alcoholic
personality. It comes under the
letter A.

PETER

Phil - you're not going to say
anything to her?

PHIL

Say anything? I won't say nothing
but sure as one good hell brother
George is going to.

Peter turns to see that George has walked quietly into the barn. Peter is abashed and worried by what he might have heard.

GEORGE

Rose is not well Phil, she's ill.

Phil walks towards George.

PHIL

Not well?! It's high time that bozo
and you got next to a few
whatchamacallit facts. She stashes
alcohol all around the place, even
drinks from the stinking pit. Look
at yourself in the mirror fatso. Is
it that she could like? Or is it
our money. Wake the hell up.

Peter slips out the back of the barn.

GEORGE

That's enough Phil. What's the
harm? The skins were only going to
be burnt.

PHIL

I needed them!

GEORGE

Well I apologise.

George turns to leave.

PHIL

They were mine!

129

EXT/INT - BURBANK RANCH/BARN SIDE/BARN - DAY

129

Peter is walking in a strange tight circle his boots kicking up the dust in the shadow of the barn. He's as tense and focused as we've ever seen him, as he sees George leave he goes back into the barn and walks up beside Phil staring down his departing brother.

PETER

Phil?

PHIL

Mmmmm?

Then Peter touches his arm - touches it. Phil is stilled, he looks down at Peter's hand on his own arm.

PETER

Phil - I've got rawhide to finish
the rope.

PHIL

You've got it? What you doing with
rawhide?

PETER

I cut some up, Phil. I wanted to be
like you - to braid like you.
Please take what I've got?

They are facing each other in the dark barn AND still the boy's hand remains on Phil's arm.

PETER (CONT'D)

You've been good to me, Phil.

At that moment Phil feels a catch in his throat that he'd felt once before and never expected or wanted to feel again, for the loss of it breaks your heart. Sure the boy might want to save his pretty little Maw, but he was trying to emulate him. Why else would he cut up the rawhide? He wanted to merge to become Phil. Ah, but Phil had almost forgot what the touch of a hand will do and in his heart counted the seconds that Peter's was on him and rejoiced at the quality of the pressure. It told him what his heart required to know.

Phil slides his long arm about the boy's shoulders his voice sounding husky.

PHIL

I'll tell you one thing.
Everything's going to be clear
sailing for you from now on in.
And do you know, I'm going to work
and finish up that rope tonight.
Peter, will you watch me do it?

As Phil gripped his shoulder, Peter felt as special as he believed himself to be.

Phil plunges his hand into the bucket swishing around Peter's rawhide worms, fat and swollen. The water in the bucket turns pink from Phil's wounded hand but Phil takes no notice, he's squeezing the water out of a worm and braiding it in. Peter watches mesmerised. The light from the kerosene lamp makes for a cosy intimacy in the big wooden barn. Phil starts to work on the weaving, keeping a steady tension with the many threads he plaited and weaves.

Peter watches carefully as the rope grows in Phil's tough dirty hands. Peter drifts across to Bronco Henry's shrine where his saddle sits gleaming.

PETER

How old were you when you met
Bronco Henry?

Phil takes a sip of beer.

PHIL

Well Pete you know what, about your
age now.

PETER

Was he your best friend?

Phil tosses Peter his tobacco. Peter eagerly sits cross-legged to roll Phil a cigarette. Phil looks over at Peter his pale elegant fingers working the paper into a perfect hollow. But what was he thinking? Phil couldn't tell. There was an aloofness in the boy, a distance Phil felt mystified by, it drew Phil to say daring things, things perhaps he shouldn't say.

PHIL

Yeah, but more than that - once he even saved my life. We were way up in the hills shooting Elk when the weather turned mean. He kept me alive by lying body against body in a bed roll. Fell off to sleep that way.

Peter looks up at Phil very interested.

PETER

Naked?

Peter lights the tight rolled cigarette and once it's lit he puts it to Phil's lips. Phil is amused and encouraged.

PHIL

Just know a man's feeling for another can go very deep. It happened with me and Bronco, shocked the life out of me I can tell you.

Phil glances at Peter who is listening thoughtfully. Phil passes him the cigarette and Peter takes an experienced puff.

PHIL (CONT'D)

We could go camping ourselves way out back. Your ever hear wolves howling Peter?

PETER

No. Is that cigarette too tight?
I'll make a better one.

Peter passes back the cigarette to Phil and sets about rolling more. The rope is coiled between Phil's legs it's long now and almost complete. Phil doesn't want the evening to finish. The boys attention gives him a warm buzz just to know his clever big eyes are on him makes Phil feel he could go on braiding all night.

MUSIC OVER

131

INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/BACK DINING ROOM - DAY

131

The mousy sound of forks and knives and the 'plink' of china as the men arrive and eat breakfast, each surprised that Phil for once is not here first. Bobby stands looking at Phil's empty place.

BOBBY

Phil left already?

JOCK

Nah. He's not come

Bobby's eyebrows rise. 'Wuh'. He sits and reaches for the pancakes, glances again at Phil's empty place. The men, to ease the nervousness discuss a water snake prank played on a sullen and angry looking Cowboy, CURT.

JOCK (CONT'D)

The thing was curled up right at
your neck.

Curt looks at Jock thinking him childish.

BOBBY (GIGGLING)

Sure take a snake to sleep with
you, ha, ha.

CURT

Who the hell ever asked you? Not
me...

There's a general 'Ohhh', then Phil walks in, no jokes, or accents or 'hellos'. He doesn't even look like Phil, he's grave and wet faced. Several Cowhands greet Phil but he does not reply. Mrs Lewis brings a fresh round of pancakes on her unsatisfactory feet and places them in front of Phil, who pulls out his chair and sits.

Peter comes in silently and sits unnoticed. Two fast eaters get up with their plates. George walks in.

GEORGE

Hello.

Lola, afraid of Phil's wet face puts a steaming cup of coffee in front of him. He reaches out a hand picks up the cup and puts it down again and continues to look at his hand, bright red around the now black cut. He looks about the table with a curious mild expression, pushes back his chair, and leaves the room. George turns to watch him go.

132 EXT - BURBANK RANCH/YARD - DAY

132

Phil is bent forward leaning his backside against the barn. The light shines hard on his face and moisture from the night is rising mist like from the ground in front of him. Phil pushes himself off; and old man like, walks back to the house.

133 INT - BURBANK RANCH/CORRIDOR/PHIL'S BEDROOM - DAY

133

George walks to Phil's bedroom door. He knocks, no reply, slowly he opens the door. Phil lies perspiring on his bed.

GEORGE

I'll run you into Herndon.

Phil nods.

134 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

134

Phil arranged in his ill-fitting town suit and black shoes from the Army and Navy store with his hat sitting high, almost comically like a clown's walks through the living room and out the front door. Rose surprised by his approach quickly leaves the living room for the kitchen where she pours herself a cup of coffee with a shaking hand.

135 EXT - BURBANK RANCH/YARD/BARN - DAY

135

The old Reo shoots rings out of it's exhaust into the cold air as George backs it out of the barn. Phil walks stiffly towards the car but instead wanders into the barn where he stoops to pick up the finished rope with the Honda the knot that completed the lasso he had completed late last night. George finds Phil in the barn his hands fingering a rawhide plaited rope.

GEORGE

What is it Phil?

Phil looks down at his infected hand and the rope held in it. There's something, but Phil can't put it together his mind is fogged.

Then Phil steps out of the barn dragging the rope, he looks about the yard, he can't tell if he's cold or if he's hot. The Cowhands joking by the corral melt away. Phil stepping drunkenly seems to be searching, he turns irritated to George.

PHIL

Where's the boy?

GEORGE

Let's go Phil. I'll see he gets it.

Phil looks at the rope, he feels a terrible stab of abandonment, of loneliness. Phil lets the rope drop carelessly onto the dusty, turd stained yard. George opens the passenger door and Phil shuffles the last few steps to the car.

136 INT - BURBANK RANCH/PETER'S BEDROOM/BURBANK DRIVE - DAY 136

Peter is cross-legged in his bedroom sitting out of sight under his window and working on a craft project, a highly realistic paper rose with petals in heart shapes. As he hears the Reo doors close - one, two and the motor start, Peter rises relieved to watch Phil in the Reo leave the Ranch for Herndon.

137 EXT - SALT LAKE CITY HOTEL - DAY 137

Establishing shot of a large grand hotel in the Salt Lake City of 1925.

138 INT - SALT LAKE CITY HOTEL/CORNER SUITE - DAY 138

The Old Lady is dressed ready for travel. She is watering the last of the Geranium pots she keeps dotted about the apartment for colour and homeliness. When finished she takes the can back to the kitchenette.

THE OLD LADY

No, they are good about it, if the tip is big enough. They'll come in and water.

The Old Gent in his Prince Albert top coat checks his pocket watch.

THE OLD LADY (CONT'D)

We can get something to eat on the train.

As The Old Lady comes back into the living room she suddenly covers her face with her hands. The Old Gent walks at once to her as if he expected it.

THE OLD GENT

Now, now. Remember you were always patient, you were always kind.

The Old Lady drops her hands kneading them.

THE OLD LADY

Was I? Was I? Kindness! What else in God's name is there?

139 INT - SALT LAKE CITY HOTEL/A CORNER SUITE/HALL - DAY 139

The Old Gent and The Old Lady leave the apartment and close the door behind them. The Old Gent tries the door once.

140 INT - SALT LAKE CITY HOTEL/LOBBY - DAY 140

The Old Lady and The Old Gent follow behind their luggage as it is ported through the hotel with its grand chandeliers and mixture of soft carpeted and polished floors. They walk towards the revolving doors.

141 INT/EXT - HERNDON FUNERAL HOME - DAY 141

George walks into the darkened funeral home carrying Phil's suit over his arm. He walks past a selection of display coffins to the counter where Mr Weltz the undertaker meets him.

MR WELTZ

Would you like to select a casket?

Mr Weltz moves to turn on the light switch

GEORGE

No, don't turn on the light I can see well enough. I'll take this one.

George points to a Mahogany coffin with a white silk interior.

142 INT - HERNDON FUNERAL HOME/WORKROOM - DAY 142

In the plain workroom of the funeral home Phil's dead body is being fitted into his suit with all the expedience of the trade, the shirt sleeves cut and the shirt front altered for easy dressing. Phil himself has been shaved, his blue eyes as closed as they can be, his hair trimmed and neatened. A white bandage holds his jaw shut and another white bandage covers the wound on his infected hand. His hands are crossed on his chest.

MR WELTZ
One, two, three...

Mr Weltz and his SON lift Phil into his casket where he lies stiffly amidst the fine white pleated lining with lace edging.

143

INT/EXT - HERNDON HOTEL/FUNERAL RECEPTION - DAY

143

Black cars crowd the exterior of the Hotel chosen for the funeral reception. The TOWNSPEOPLE and the RANCHER FAMILIES, their children and wives in their furs make their way through the cars into the rooms already crowded with the flowers brought from the church. A BLACK AND WHITE PORTRAIT of Phil is surrounded by a large floral border and stands at the front of the room. The Ranch Cowhands huddle together. WAITERS in black with white shirts hold trays of drink selections. The Old Lady and The Old Gent are already deep in the room, The Old Lady wearing an elegant fur stole turns to The Old Gent sternly.

THE OLD LADY

Remember you had precisely nothing to do with this. Oh so many flowers and in late summer, where do they find them?

The Old Gent shakes the hand of a Herndon ACQUAINTANCE while The Old Lady walks towards Rose and George as she sees them entering. The Old Lady takes Rose's hand and kisses her. Rose looks tenderly at The Old Lady. The Old Gent observes from afar as his wife suddenly removes the rings from one hand then the other and puts them all in Rose's hands. Rose is astonished and moved. George pats Rose and joins The Old Gent.

GEORGE

Rose wants you to join us for Christmas; would you care to?

The Old Gent is watching his wife with Rose. Rose is putting one of The Old Lady's rings on her finger, carefully dropping the others into her purse, he nods in assent.

The DOCTOR from the Herndon Hospital joins George with a glass of sherry in his hand.

DOCTOR

I'm afraid I'm mystified. I'll know in a day or two when the results come back. Those last convulsions...

GEORGE

Yes.

George looks down and shakes his head.

DOCTOR
Terrible, truly frightful. You know
what I'm thinking?

George looks at the Doctor.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Anthrax.

George shakes his head.

GEORGE
But he never handled diseased
animals, he was particular on that!

The Doctor nods. The post funeral chatter is at its peak as the MOURNERS of Phil's shortened life fill the reception room eating the elegant chicken and cress sandwiches and sipping on small glasses of sherry, brandy or champagne.

144 EXT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE - DAY

144

Peter in his cleaned tennis shoes, plays out in the yard with the black and white Collie dog he befriended. Peter laughs finding it funny that it snaps and barks at its reflection in the Ranch House ground level windows.

145 EXT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE - EVE

145

The sun has slipped behind the house which lays a black shadow across the road that creeps up the face of the hill. Peter looks at it moved.

146 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/LOUNGE - EVE

146

Peter browses among the books in the bookcase. It is growing dark in the lounge room so Peter brings the books close. "Memoirs of the Russian Court", "Grasses of the Western United States" and "The Book of Common Prayer". He sits cross legged and begins to read Psalm 22:20.

147 INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/PETER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

147

Peter washes his hands carefully in his bedroom sink then wets and combs his hair.

The dogs begin barking as the Reo returns. Peter opens the window and looks out. At first they are hidden in the black of the shadows, he hears his Mother's voice as George and Rose move softly into the moonlight holding hands. George stands still and pulls Rose towards him, he kisses her.

Peter watches pleased.

148

INT - BURBANK RANCH HOUSE/PETER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

148

Peter sits at his desk under his feet is the curled rope. He turns to Psalm 22:20 from the Common Prayer Book, he cuts with his father's scalpel the words he so liked from the book.

PETER (MUTTERS)

*Deliver my soul from the sword, my
darling from the power of the dog.*

With tweezers and glue he fastens the quote into his scrapbook. Loose next to it is his father's open medical book. We just glance at the open page. "Anthrax is a disease of animals communicable to man. It finds its way into the human bloodstream through cuts or breaks in the skin from a man's handling the hide of a diseased animal.." Peter smooths the page and carefully closes the book. He puts the volume back in the glass fronted display shelves amidst his father's other volumes and sits back on his bed. He takes up the now complete paper rose from his bedside table and looks at it from every side.

CUT TO BLACK

CARD

*Deliver my soul from the sword,
My darling from the power of the
dog.*

Psalm 22.20