

PART 1 : THE DEATH OF A FARMER

ON BLACK:

WHISPERS on the wind. Distant WAILING. Ethereal HUM.

YOUNG MAN (V.O.)
*Ain't much you can rely on in this
world, 'cept dying.*

FADE IN:

CLOUDLESS SUMMER

Dust hangs. White-hot sky. Cicadas SCRATCH and CHIRP. The flat plains of the corn belt stretch to the horizon.

YOUNG MAN (V.O.)
*You hear lots a talk of the dead
'round here, ghosts and the like,
keepin' eye from beyond the grave.
Common babble; good as gossip.*

Grid after grid of farmland. All manner of farm animal under shelter from the midday sun. Rustic farm houses and barns litter the dusty land.

YOUNG MAN (V.O.)
*Someone's long dead gran slamming
doors and throwing dishes round
'cause you fell out of step with
the Lord. Hauntin' up a place just
to bother you some...*

A BEETLE IN DRY GRASS

Spindly legs claw unbalanced along dry grass and orange dirt. Exoskeletal shell opens to wings, shooting off.

YOUNG MAN (V.O.)
*But that's never been my
experience.*

It latches onto dusty jeans -- low on the hip of a **MAN**
FACE DOWN IN THE DIRT.

Beetle crawls from jeans to skin... Man doesn't flinch.

CORN FARM - CONTINUOUS

TWO BOYS stare: ABRAHAM (17), wiser than he should be,
and the teary-eyed ELIJAH (14) thinner than he should be.
Both as dusty as the dead Man they stare at.

We concentrate on Elijah.

YOUNG MAN (V.O.)

*Mostly, the dead just stubborn to
how they left it. Stickin' round
melancholy-like, regrettin' a life
they barely lived. Wasted time,
wasted love, forgiveness...
Worries you figure dying clears
up.*

ABRAHAM (O.C.)

Is he here?

Elijah glances to Abraham's concerned face, giving a look
of recognition: *I didn't think to listen.*

Elijah closes his eyes, mind open, ears strained:

CICADAS and CRICKETS call out to each other...
BEES and WASPS float and dab...
CORN HUSKS squeak and sway in the breeze...
ALL MANNER of INSECTS tear and bite at the husks...
MANY MORE lay BELLY UP in the dirt below...

Elijah's brow tightens--

--LIVE OAK TREE on the edge of the corn field. Something
feels off, as though a shadow looms where it shouldn't.

The hundred year old tree sways in the breeze. Dust
hangs, backlit in shafts. Shadow and light dance to
reveal a human shape of backlit dust beneath the tree. A
mirage of a Man. Just a glimpse. Elijah's eyes open.

ELIJAH

There.

Abraham follows his gaze, keen to see something he
cannot. The longer he looks, the more disappointing the
sight of only branches and leaf.

ABRAHAM

You better get miss Anna.

ELIJAH

You want me to tell her?

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We know his voice as the VO. Abraham sends a stern look.

ABRAHAM

Go on, now.

Elijah folds. Rushing away toward to a grouping of farm houses, each a different shade of brown.

Abraham takes in the full scale of the Man: hands at his waist, jeans awkwardly low, belt curled in one hand as though he was about to punish someone.

Abraham kneels to the Man with a heavy look.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

*In the end, no matter how hard
they wish it, ain't no one gonna
change what they done.*

Abraham digs through the Man's pockets, pulling A LARGE SET OF KEYS for all manner of farm equipment and doors. He peels off a smaller set, placing the rest back.

Abraham guides his gaze over to the large oak. Branches sway, no shape appears.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

*That's the thing about the dead.
They too caught up pityin'
themselves to spook nobody.*

Then comes the WAILING of a new widow.

FARM ROAD - LATE DAY

WAILING echoes over miles of flat farmland. We float high above, flashing lights of emergency response below. Speeding silently on the empty highway.

INT. DINING ROOM / LIVING ROOM - LATE DAY

A heavy silence in the failing light.

MISS ANNA (50's) sits at the dinning table, posture regimented in a neck to ankle farm dress, hands folded like a good Southern Baptist.

Across sits her three children CARL (12), ANNABELLE (15), and KENNY (16), each as put together and postured as their mother. A grandfather clock CLICKS.

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Elijah and Abraham sit in the conjoining living room. Neither thought to clean up like the others.

WHEELS ON GRAVEL.

Heads turn one after the other: AMBULANCE ATTENDANTS roll the Dead Man's body past the window on a stretcher. Thin sheet covering him. Elijah focuses on his outline.

Two POLICE OFFICERS aim toward the house. Door opens to OFFICER GLENDALE (50's). He trips as he enters. His tall, lanky frame out of place.

OFFICER GLENDALE

Watch your step there, Deputy.

He points at the tripping hazard. DEPUTY CHALMERS (30's) steps without issue, her small frame tucks into the wall.

OFFICER GLENDALE

Sorry to keep you waiting folks,
appreciate you staying put while
we look around.

He offers a wide congenial smile. Miss Anna stands.

MISS ANNA

Did you find anything?

OFFICER GLENDALE

Uh, no not really. Nothing out of
the ordinary anyway. We'll need
the coroner to take a look a
course, but it looks just like you
said, old Walter's ticker failed
him. Lost my Dad the same way two
winters back.

Chalmers CLEARS HER THROAT. Glendale glances at her.

OFFICER GLENDALE

Right, uh, real sorry for your
loss Ma'am, I mean... Well, we
both are I should say. Deputy
Chalmers and I.

He sends a wink to the Deputy.

MISS ANNA

Thank you. Will that be all then?

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OFFICER GLENDALE

Well, there is a bit of business
with the two that found him, if
that would be alright?

All eyes now turn to Elijah and Abraham.

OFFICER GLENDALE

Alone, a course.

Miss Anna measures her annoyance.

MISS ANNA

Of course.

She motions for her children to leave the room with her,
sending a glare to the living room for good measure.

LIVING ROOM

Glendale steps into the living room, Chalmers behind.

OFFICER GLENDALE

May I?

He motions for the chair to sit, Abraham nods, noticing
the Deputy stop at the doorway - blocking any attempt at
a quick exit. Glendale sits.

OFFICER GLENDALE

Now I don't want you to think
you're under suspicion or
anything, not officially.
Although, I could be saying that
to make you *think* you're not under
suspicion.

He jesters that Southern charm. No avail.

OFFICER GLENDALE

Now, well, you're not related to
that bunch, is that right?

ABRAHAM

Walter was our foster father.

OFFICER GLENDALE

Right. So, you two siblings then?

Abraham shakes negative, Elijah's eyes glance to
Glendale's pad of paper as he writes something down.

The SCRATCH of the pencil is LOUD.

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OFFICER GLENDALE

And Miss Anna, would she be your foster parent now that Walter is... Were they married I mean?

ABRAHAM

They were, yes.

OFFICER GLENDALE

What about the other kids?

DEPUTY CHALMERS

From another marriage sir, she mentioned earlier. Remember?

He SNAPS his fingers pointing at her. This startles Elijah, Abraham notices his flinch and sits a bit higher.

OFFICER GLENDALE

That's right, thank you deputy.
From another marriage.

(beat)

Now ain't that a mite curious? Man already living with three kids that ain't his, and then choose to take on a couple fosters. What's the thinking here?

ABRAHAM

Free labour?

Glendale smiles, TAPPING his pencil on the paper. The sound much HEAVIER than it should be, Elijah shivers.

OFFICER GLENDALE

That must be tough. Makes you kinda like a visitor to someone else's family. Not even related yourselves.

TAP... TAP... TAP...

OFFICER GLENDALE

Couldn't help feeling, I don't know, isolating I'd wager. Maybe a bit resentful... If it were me of course.

Here comes that congenial grin. Abraham checks the Deputy, she eagerly awaits a reaction.

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ABRAHAM

Got us figured for outlaws, that
right? Couple foster kids and a
dead fella.

Gets a grin out of the Deputy, not from Glendale. Elijah
leans into Abraham. Abraham takes his cue to comfort.

ABRAHAM

Walter wasn't a complete asshole.
We both dealt with worse, and
we're none too pleased to see him
go. Walter was actually alright
sometimes.

Elijah guides his gaze to the window - ambulance lights
flashing silently. Time slows.

Red and white glows the dust hanging in the air.

OUTSIDE

Walter's rigid corpse is lifted into the back of the
ambulance. Hand poking below the sheet.

LIVE OAK TREE

Branches sway in a light breeze, the mirage of Walter
stoic and vacant, black sockets stare right at us.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Walter. What shadow follows you?

DINING ROOM - LATER

Everything still SILENT AND SLOW. Miss Anna argues and
points fingers with Abraham. Face red and spitting venom.

Elijah looks over to Carl, Annabel, and Kenny also at the
table, this conversation is all a bit much for them too.

YOUNG MAN (V.O.)

What ache keeps you hanging 'bout?

SOUND CRASHES BACK.

MISS ANNA

I want to hear from him!

She points to Elijah. All eyes turn.

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ELIJAH

Uh, I wasn't that close.

She SLAMS her hand on the table, startling everyone at the table but Abraham, who lightly grins.

MISS ANNA

I swear to our Lord in heaven, if you do not start telling me the truth, you won't eat another meal in this house. I am not fooling!

ABRAHAM

The heat must have got...

MISS ANNA

You are not to speak!

Miss Anna points in his face, failing to contain her anguish. Face red, hands shaking.

MISS ANNA

Walter was holding his belt like one of you was in for a whoopin'. Now you're going to tell me why, or I'll finish what he started.

Elijah swallows.

ABRAHAM

I called him an ass...

Miss Anna SLAPS Abraham, flinching at her own doing. Glances at her shocked children, her religious roots would not approve, but her shame subsided...

She grabs his ear and twists, Abraham HOWLS! Falls off his chair onto the ground. Miss Anna glares at Elijah.

MISS ANNA

Last warning, boy.

ELIJAH

We were squabbling some, no more 'an usual! Walter went dizzy before he even pulled his belt, we didn't mean nothing by it. Really Miss Anna.

Miss Anna grinds her teeth. Lets Abraham go, he is slow to get up. Brushing a tear away as he does.

MISS ANNA

Get up. Both of you.

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She watches as Elijah stands, Abraham slower to rise.

She then moves to a cabinet: horse riding gear inside.

Kenny and Carl smile light while Annabelle stares at the table. Miss Anna comes back with a leather strap in hand. She folds it in two, grips it tight.

MISS ANNA

Palms up.

Abraham is the first to oblige, raising his hands in front of him. Palms flats and open, facing up. Elijah shudders, then follows suit.

Miss Anna swings... SLAP! Both boys hold their tongues but it looks incredibly painful.

MISS ANNA

You two are lying about something.

Swings again... SLAP! Elijah WINCES. Kenny and Carl share a smile together.

MISS ANNA

And I'm gonna find out what it is.

SLAP! Elijah's eyes go red. Abraham grits his teeth.

MISS ANNA

God as my witness. You will behave in this house.

SLAP! Tears fall down Elijah's cheek.

BEDROOM - NIGHT

Small bedroom set up like a dorm, two single beds against either wall with a shared side table. Elijah lays on his side facing the wall. Abraham sits on his bed watching.

ABRAHAM

Elijah?

Elijah doesn't say anything. Rubbing his sore hands.

ABRAHAM

You okay?

Elijah considers, still turned away.

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ELIJAH

I never seen someone die before.

He rolls onto his back and stares at the ceiling. A spider builds its web in the corner.

ELIJAH

I never sensed no one I knew.
Always just been strangers. But,
Walter...

(beat)

His pain feels like my pain.

ABRAHAM

Can you feel him now?

Elijah nods, holding tears back.

ELIJAH

He's full of guilt. Shame, more
like. Maybe, I'm just sad but it
don't feel right. More intense
n'usual.

He finally looks to his foster brother.

ELIJAH

Did we do something wrong,
Abraham?

ABRAHAM

We done nothing more than just
gettin' by. You gotta have some
say-so in your life 'fore you
start claiming blame for it.

(beat)

The way I figure, it's time we
took hold of our fate.

Abraham opens his red, puffy hands to reveal the keys he stole. Elijah is confused.

ABRAHAM

Walter's keys.

ELIJAH

What for?

ABRAHAM

His study, I think.

Elijah sits up slowly. His hands still tender.

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ABRAHAM

I've looked everywhere else, for months. Walter always kept his damn keys with him.

ELIJAH

What's in the study?

ABRAHAM

(beat)

Our paperwork, Elijah. Your paperwork.

ELIJAH

You never told me you were doing that.

Abraham considers him.

ABRAHAM

I didn't know if'd upset you.

(beat)

That don't matter much now. We won't get another chance like this, not once Miss Anna finds out.

Elijah knows he's right, but his nerves are winning.

ABRAHAM

We don't have to do nothing you don't want to. It's just... I know who my parents were. I don't know if it bother you that you don't?

WE FLOAT OVER THE CORN FIELD

SYMPHONY of husks SQUEAK and KNOCK, bathed in moonlight.

ANIMAL BARN - NIGHT

All is calm. A large pen of snoozing cows WHEEZE with heavy breath. Paddock of cuddled pigs.

A WIND BLOWS THROUGH.

Hay flutters and SCRATCHES at the wooden walls. Chains SHUTTER and CLANG. FOOTSTEPS.

We float down the hallway, paddocks and pens on either side. *Are those boots, or hooves?*

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String of lights along the roof sway, shadows dance with eerie glee. One light flickers ahead of us. Then pops to darkness, revealing someone standing below, not having been there in the light. Their eyes glimmer.

The closer we get to the silhouette, the more we see. The glimmering eyes belong to Elijah.

Then his hair sprouts, quick, ominous. Past his ears... shoulders... beyond...

The light flickers, popping on starkly bright--

CUT TO:

CLINICAL HALLWAY

--Elijah now stands in a white brick hallway. Hair to his waist. Naked, with lactating female breasts.

All around, people run for their lives in slow motion...

CUT TO:

A DOG BARKING

The farm hound DIXIE, chases birds. It's dawn. Elijah finds himself in the barn hallway, clothed, normal.

Cows line up as Abraham forks hay from the wheel barrow.

Elijah turns, shaken: exact view from the vision only now in daylight. Same string lights, same bulb burnt out...

ABRAHAM (O.C.)

You okay?

Elijah is frozen.

ELIJAH

Somethin's wrong...

Abraham checks behind him, then WHISPERS.

ABRAHAM

It's just nerves. We'll be alright.

ELIJAH

It's somethin' else. Someone else.

Elijah stares down the hallway, air unsteady.

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ABRAHAM

Here?

ELIJAH

Not no more... or... I feel 'em
but I don't know where...

Abraham is spooked.

ABRAHAM

Is it Walter?

Elijah looks to the field. Closes his eyes, concentrates.

LIVE OAK TREE

LOW SUN casts long shadows, no breeze blows.
ANTS crawl along the bark, some trapped in pitch.
BIRDS scan for danger, protected by branches.
PALE DIRT sits motionless below.

ELIJAH OPENS HIS EYES

ELIJAH

Walter's gone...

THE FARM HOUSE

We float toward the dusty home.

Through the open front door.

Weightless through the dining room.

Over the table, toward a hallway.

We turn into darkness; a window glows at the end.

We move toward it, closer... closer...

The window is a door. We stop.

A CREAK behind. We pivot around to see Abraham standing
statue-still down the end. TICK of the grandfather clock.

Abraham checks behind, then heads down the hallway
quietly. He pulls Walter's keys from his pocket.

Tries the first, doesn't work. The second, nothing.
SWEARS under his breath, checks over his shoulder.

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