

SALINAS
"Pilot"

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. RAILROAD STATION - DAY

The heat and dust of a summer afternoon. A massive STEAM LOCOMOTIVE TRAIN waits as its passengers board.

SUPER:

Los Angeles County

May, 1900

The platform is crowded, farewells and handkerchiefs aplenty.

Through the crowd hurries a woman, ALICE O'NEIL, 32, followed by her three CHILDREN.

Alice strains to see through the mass of people.

She turns to her son, PAUL (16), who carries a crying EVE (4), in his arms.

ALICE

Which car was it, Paulie?

But it is MOLLY (13) who answers first, her ticket at the ready.

MOLLY

Ten.

Alice glances at the nearest coach. 17.

A loud WHISTLE from the front. SHOUTS from workers.

ALICE

Come on. Hurry!

They break into a RUN, suitcases and bags swinging. Paul struggles to keep up, carrying Eve and the largest suitcase.

The train lets out a rush of STEAM. Another WHISTLE.

They dodge the crowd, or try to at least.

COACH TEN materializes through the steam and dust. A WORKER PUSHES at the heavy sliding door -- it's about to close--

ALICE (CONT'D)

Wait!

The worker reluctantly stops at the sight of the mother and children. He HEAVES and the door SLIDES back open.

Alice gratefully accepts his outstretched hand, and climbs aboard. Next, Molly. Paul barely catches up.

Paul passes Eve to Alice, then wearily climbs aboard.

The door CLOSES behind them with a THUD and CLICK.

Alice sighs her relief as the train leaves the station.

INT. TRAIN - DAY - LATER

Close on a worn and tattered brochure. Next to it, half a cup of lukewarm coffee.

Pull out to see Alice, calmer now, a thin, plainly pretty woman with a set jaw and hard eyes. Her pale skin and dark red hair stand out from the worn grey dress she wears.

We see we are in the DINING CAR of the train. Flat farmlands rush by the large windows.

The two teenagers sit across the table from Alice. Molly, in the sweet but awkward stage of female puberty, book in hand. The boy, Paul, moodily directs all his attention out the window.

Alice stares at the brochure, seemingly lost in thought.

Until--

EVE (O.S.)

Mama?

Her face softens. Alice looks down at Eve, who fidgets next to her, eyes still red from crying.

EVE (CONT'D)

Where are we?

Alice glances out the window.

ALICE

I'm not sure. I'll tell you as soon as I find out.

EVE

Where's Daddy?

At this, Paul LOOKS over.

Alice falters.

ALICE

He's not with us anymore.

Eve grasps at Alice's hand, at her WEDDING RING. Alice takes it off and hands it to Eve, who puts it on her thumb.

Alice touches Eve's hair as she plays with it.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Do you remember where we're going?

Eve shakes her head.

ALICE (CONT'D)

A new home.

Alice smiles at her three children. Molly smiles back, looking excited to be going wherever it is.

Paul doesn't even meet her gaze. He sullenly returns to staring out the window.

Alice looks back down at the brochure: vast, rolling hills, a line of trees beyond, and a wide, clear sky.

In huge letters across this sky is written:

SALINAS, California.

FADE OUT.

END TEASER

ACT 1

FADE IN:

INT. TRAIN - DAY

The train looks emptier now. Some passengers take advantage of the spare seats, stretching out across them.

Alice dozes in her seat, slouched in a half-sitting position.

An older man comes down the aisle and heavily BUMPS her shoulder.

She starts awake.

MAN
So sorry, miss.

ALICE
That's all right.

She sits up a little and the man pauses to take her in. He manages another apologetic smile through his beard.

MAN
Having a fine journey?

Fully awake now, she eyes him warily.

ALICE
Fine enough.

The man notices her kids sitting around her.

MAN
All these yours?

Alice nods. Waits for him to go away.

MAN (CONT'D)
Where's your husband?

ALICE
(pointedly)
Meeting us at the next stop.

Paul sits up straighter in his seat, in what he hopes is in a threatening sort of way.

MAN
Ah. Have a good afternoon, miss.

One more smile, a tip of his hat, and he moves on.

Paul moves into the seat right next to Alice.

PAUL
Why didn't you just tell him?

Alice gives him a look.

ALICE
No one but us needs to know we're
alone, Paulie.

He winces at the nickname.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Not until we get to Salinas, anyway.
It's dangerous.

Molly looks up from her book.

MOLLY
Are we almost there?

Alice gets up to move into a window seat. She looks out.

They are passing a tiny town. It looks deserted.

ALICE
I don't know... We might be getting
close.

Then, on the dusty one-lane road running parallel to the train tracks, Alice sees a LINE of WAGONS approaching, from the opposite direction.

The wagons are stuffed full of belongings. Dirty, tired-looking FAMILIES slouch in the seats. Scrawny DOGS trot alongside.

But these people are going the other way. South.

Alice can't take her eyes off of them. The weary people don't even glance at the massive train passing them.

Paul goes to the window to see.

PAUL
Where are all those people going?

ALICE
They're moving. Like us.

PAUL
But they're going the wrong way.

He watches the wagon train until the image is veiled by dust and steam.

Paul looks at Alice.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Why is everyone leaving the place
we're going?

She shrugs, like it's of no interest to her.

ALICE

I don't know. And it's not everyone,
only a few families--

PAUL

This proves that I'm right.

ALICE

Paul, it'll be fine. There's nothing
wrong with Salinas. As soon as we
get there, I'll put you back in
school, you only have a year to go.

PAUL

How do you know they even have a
school? Or anyone my age?

ALICE

Of course there will be boys your
age. You'll make so many new friends.

Paul doesn't answer. Won't look at her.

Alice pulls out the brochure again.

ALICE (CONT'D)

This is all for the best. Just wait.
You'll love it there.

He pulls his cap lower over his eyes and slumps down in his seat.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Well I'm excited. There's so much
land. Horses for you to ride, herding
the cattle. It'll be just like back
home.

MOLLY

Can I learn?

Alice is on a roll now.

ALICE

Yes! You can teach Molly!

Paul just shrugs.

Alice leans over and pulls up his cap.

ALICE (CONT'D)

(mock serious)

I'm counting on you, cowboy.

A fleeting smile comes and goes across his face. She leans back into her own seat. It's the best she's going to get.

INT. TRAIN - DAY - LATER

Late afternoon.

Alice and the kids look out the windows as the train pulls into the station.

A huge sign reads "SALINAS." We've made it.

Their train car is almost deserted now. Alice stands and begins gathering their bags, as the train slows to a crawl, huffing and puffing.

INT. DMITRY'S OFFICE, RAILROAD STATION - DAY

DMITRY GRUBICH (40s) stretches across an elegant sofa in an otherwise shabby office. He looks over some papers, glancing up from time to time to take in the woman across the room.

This woman is ROSIE PROVIDENCE (late 20s), prostitute extraordinaire. Half-dressed, she drapes herself across an armchair, appearing to read a book. A small glass of crushed ICE is melting on the side table, from which she periodically drinks.

Dmitry watches her, looking annoyed.

DMITRY

You're supposed to chew it.

His Russian accent isn't so strong anymore, but it's there.

Rosie takes her time transferring her attention to him.

ROSIE

What?

DMITRY

You're supposed to eat the ice.
Before it melts. That's the point.

ROSIE
It hurts my teeth.

She bares them at him in a sarcastic grin. Then shrugs.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
Water is water.

DMITRY
You're unappreciative.

Rosie puts her book aside, stands, and comes over.

He doesn't make room for her on the sofa, so she sits on his lap.

ROSIE
You're mean.

She leans in for a kiss but he turns his head away.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
Oh, come on, it's just *ice*.

He lets her peck him on the cheek before pushing her off his lap. He stands, now seeming fully uninterested in her.

DMITRY
Time to go.

She gives him a look.

ROSIE
Where?

DMITRY
That new family. O'Neils. I'm meeting them on the platform.

He takes up her glass of ice and tips some into his mouth.

DMITRY (CONT'D)
(mouth full)
Get dressed.

Rosie doesn't move.

ROSIE
What if I don't feel like it?

Dmitry crosses his arms and looks down at her.

She slowly pulls the hem of her slip up, revealing a smooth leg and a bright red garter.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
What's fifteen more minutes?

DMITRY
Make it ten.

EXT. RAILROAD STATION PLATFORM - DAY

Much later.

The platform is completely DESERTED, but for The O'Neils. Alice and the girls sit on their suitcases. Paul sits on the ground. They've been here for a while.

Alice reads over a worn-looking letter.

ALICE
I don't understand...he said he'd meet us right here.

EVE
Mama, I'm hungry...

They all look starved, thirsty, and exhausted.

Alice strokes Eve's messy hair.

ALICE
I know. Hang on for a minute.

PAUL
Maybe we got the date wrong.

ALICE
No, it says right here...

EVE
(whining)
Mama...

ALICE
Shh...
(to Paul)
Do you think we're in the wrong place?

Paul looks around at the tiny platform.

PAUL
No, I think this is it.

Eve is starting to cry now.

EVE
I'm thirsty...

Alice looks around, hopelessly.

ALICE
Okay, just a second--

PAUL
Look!

He points to the far end of the platform, where a MAN has materialized.

Paul and Alice stand up and WAVE to him.

ALICE
(calling)
Excuse me! Do you know how to find,
uh--
(consults the letter)
Dmitry Grubich?

The man is close now. It's him.

He sweeps off his cap gallantly.

DMITRY
Pleased to meet you.

ALICE
You're Dmitry? Oh, thank God. We've
been sitting here, waiting. We didn't
know where to go--

He picks up two of their suitcases.

DMITRY
So sorry about that. I had a business
meeting I couldn't get out of...

They set off back the way he came.

DMITRY (CONT'D)
My office is just here, let's take
care of some things so we can get
you to your new home.

Alice excitedly squeezes Paul's arm, excited.

EXT./INT. DMITRY'S OFFICE, RAILROAD STATION - DAY - CONTINUOUS

As the group approaches Dmitry's office, Rosie opens the door and strides out.

She looks different now, decked out in an expensive-looking red dress with plenty of ruffles, her face made up and an extravagant hat perched on her curly head of hair.

Dmitry looks surprised to see Rosie still here, but covers fast.

DMITRY

Ah, Alice, this is Rosie. She lives in town.

Paul can't take his eyes off of her.

ALICE

Alice O'Neil.

ROSIE

Rosie Providence. Nice to meet you.

Rosie sweetly takes Alice's hand in both of her own and even leans in to do a quick peck-peck on each of Alice's cheeks.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

So nice to finally see a fellow independent woman show up in these parts.

Alice just smiles, trying to figure this woman out.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

I'd love to show you around sometime.

ALICE

Oh! Well--

ROSIE

Just come by the brothel. Dmitry can show you where it is, I'm sure.

Dmitry laughs like that was a joke. Rosie flashes one more charming smile at Alice before walking away.

Dmitry quickly ushers Alice and the kids into the office.

DMITRY

Rosie loves to kid. She's so funny.

He waves his hand dismissively.

DMITRY (CONT'D)

I'm just helping her with a contract.

ALICE

Ah. The "business meeting?"

Dmitry only smiles. He offers her a seat. She takes it, lifting Eve onto her lap.

Paul remains standing and looks around the room, taking in every detail, from the dust on the bookshelf to the melting cup of ice on the table--which has a prominent red LIPSTICK MARK on its rim.

Molly perches on the armchair, immediately pulls out her book.

Dmitry takes the seat across the desk from Alice.

ALICE (CONT'D)

So, when can I see the place?

DMITRY

Well--

EVE

Mama, I'm hungry...

ALICE

(whispering)

Shh. We'll have lunch real soon.

DMITRY

Oh! Of course, so forgetful of me.

He strides to the door, pokes his head out and SHOUTS something to someone in Russian.

Coming back in:

DMITRY (CONT'D)

I had my workers prepare something for you. They'll bring it now.

Alice looks surprised, but pleased.

ALICE

You didn't have to do that.

Dmitry shrugs. His charming smile plastered to his face.

Just then, a CHINESE WORKER comes in with a tray PILED with FOOD.

Alice's jaw DROPS. The kids get up and come closer as the tray is carefully placed on the table.

Fruits, bread, butter, thick sausage. A glass pitcher full of water and--

ALICE (CONT'D)

Is that *ice*?

Dmitry pours her a glass.

DMITRY

But of course.

She sips it and her face lights up.

ALICE

Mmm.

She hands it to Eve, who gulps it.

Alice takes a clump of grapes. Paul rips into a hunk of soft bread.

ALICE (CONT'D)

(to Paul)

Isn't this great, Paulie?

His mouth is full, but for once he is actually smiling.

Dmitry watches them enjoy the feast.

DMITRY

All of this comes from my own farm.

ALICE

Wow.

DMITRY

Did you know we are to be neighbors?

ALICE

Really?

He nods.

DMITRY

We share a fence, me and you. It's not far from here. I'll take you there myself after you're finished.

Alice, done with the grapes, moves on to the sausage.

ALICE

I can't wait to see it. The advertisement was so lovely. And judging by this food--

DMITRY

I admit I have been anxious to sell
it. It will be nice to finally have
some company.

Alice nods agreement.

ALICE

You live alone?

DMITRY

At the moment. Now...

He pulls a paper from a stack on his desk.

DMITRY (CONT'D)

All you have to do is sign here...

He hands her a pen.

DMITRY (CONT'D)

And it's all yours.

Alice SIGNS. She breathes a sigh of relief.

ALICE

Wow. I own my own property.

DMITRY

Yes you do.

Alice smiles at the kids, excitement shining on her face.

EXT. SALINAS PASTURES - SUNSET

As the sun sets, Dmitry's wagon bumps along a dirt road,
pulled by two big horses. A small trail of disturbed dust
floats behind them.

DMITRY

Not too far now. There's our shared
border.

He points at a wood fence some distance along. Beyond it
stands a large HOUSE. Two huge trees stand on either side
of it like guards.

ALICE

Wow.

They pass through the gate.

EXT. O'NEIL PROPERTY - SUNSET - CONTINUOUS

As they get closer to the house, Alice starts to look worried.
Paul has noticed something, too.

PAUL
Why is everything so...

ALICE
Dry.

Dmitry innocently shrugs.

DMITRY
It's a dry season. They come and
go.

The wagon pulls to a stop. The family gets off with their
bags. Dmitry remains in his seat.

Alice puts down her suitcase and walks around a little. Not
a blade of green grass or a drop of water in sight.

They approach the house. Broken windows, sagging stairs.
Paint peeling and a huge hole in the porch in front of the
front door.

It looks like it's about to fall over.

ALICE
This can't be it. Mr. Grubich...?

She turns back to talk to Dmitry, but he is already pulling
away.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Hey. HEY!

Dmitry doesn't look back.

Paul lifts his lantern to inspect a cracking wooden post.

ALICE (CONT'D)
(stunned)
Oh my God. Oh, Jesus.

They look up at their new home. They are utterly alone.
Shit.

END ACT ONE

ACT 2

FADE IN:

EXT. O'NEIL HOUSE - DAY

The summer SUN rises behind the O'Neil's new home.

Insects are already BUZZING loudly over the hot, dead grass.

The faint WHISTLE (O.S.) of a train can be heard from the station across the fields.

INT. O'NEIL HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The WHISTLE (O.S.) sounds again, as we drift through a large, dirty ENTRY.

Past the sagging STAIRCASE,

Through a dark HALLWAY,

And into the PARLOR, where the O'Neil family sleeps, lying on blankets on the dirty floor.

The room is high-ceilinged. Void of any furniture. Bright sunlight streams through the huge windows, making the dust shine.

Alice AWAKES, already sweating. She squints against the sun as she gets up and approaches one of the windows.

She pushes on it. Nothing. Harder. It suddenly POPS open with a cloud of dust. Alice wipes her sweaty face with a sleeve. Takes in the hopeless view.

INT. STAIRCASE, O'NEIL HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Alice tests the bottom stair gently with her foot, then gingerly ascends the creaking staircase, entering the

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY, O'NEIL HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

She pushes open the first door she sees. An empty bedroom, but for a wooden desk attached to the wall.

She approaches it. Pulls open a drawer. Empty.

The next, empty.

The third-- something's there.

Alice pulls out a FOLDED PAPER and a wooden HAIR BRUSH.

She unfolds the yellowing paper. It's an ad for corsets, ripped out of a catalogue.

Drawings of women with huge busts and tiny waists, posing happily, or admiring themselves in hand-mirrors.

Alice smiles, refolds it, and puts it in her pocket.

INT. ENTRY, O'NEIL HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Alice descends the stairs again, crosses the entry, and heads out the front door.

EXT. O'NEIL HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Alice carefully navigates past a gaping hole in the porch and descends the stairs to the grass.

A RUSTLE behind her.

Alice turns to see a scrawny CAT slinking out from under the porch. It freezes at the sight of her.

ALICE

Here, kitty.

She crouches, holds out a hand. The cat regards her for a moment. Alice leans closer.

It HISSES fiercely and DARTS back under the porch.

Alice straightens up, looking vaguely disappointed.

She looks around, opts to head for the dilapidated BARN some yards away.

INT. PARLOR, O'NEIL HOUSE - DAY - SAME TIME

Paul AWAKES. He looks around, notices Alice is gone.

INT. BARN, O'NEIL PROPERTY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

A worn SADDLE hangs on a huge hook. A couple HORSE SHOES lie in a corner.

Alice inspects the three horse STALLS. Names are carved into the wood of each: "CHASER," "LOUISE," "O'BRIEN." One of the stall doors is missing, the other two are falling off their hinges.

Alice releases a frustrated GROAN.

ALICE

Unbelievable.

The train WHISTLE (O.S.) sounds again. As if prompted by it, Alice suddenly and angrily takes the saddle off the hook and heads back towards the house.

EXT. O'NEIL HOUSE - DAY

Paul walks out onto the porch to see Alice coming towards him from the barn, carrying the saddle. Walking fast.

PAUL
What are you doing?

She pushes the saddle into his arms, and passes by him, through the front door.

Paul follows her.

INT. O'NEIL HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

They head down the HALLWAY--

ALICE
Are your sisters awake?

PAUL
No, what are you--

Alice passes into the

PARLOR

Where Molly and Eve lie sleeping.

ALICE
Get up!

They blink awake.

MOLLY
What's going on?

ALICE
We're going out.

PAUL
Going where?

ALICE
(to the girls)
Up, up, up!

She snaps her fingers at them.

Molly and Eve slowly get to their feet, looking grumpy.

MOLLY
Aren't we going to have breakfast?

ALICE
We'll eat in town. Come on.

Paul shifts his weight, hefting the saddle.

PAUL
Can you please tell me what's going on?

Alice is already headed for the door.

ALICE
I need to talk to Mr. Grubich. Right now.

Paul and Molly share a look. Here we go...

EXT. SALINAS PASTURES - DAY

The family walks wearily down the dusty road, half-way between home and the railroad station.

Each of them have handkerchiefs tied around their nose and mouth, somewhat protected against the hot, dusty wind.

Paul's forehead is covered in sweat. He stops a moment to get a better grip on the saddle, then presses on.

EXT. RAILROAD STATION - DAY

Several massive CATTLE CARS at the end of a train, some way from the wooden platform. Loud, endless LOWING.

Cattle are being unloaded from the first of the cars, herded by several WORKERS on horses down a RAMP to the grass, through a GATE, and into a large holding CORRAL.

Dmitry supervises the operation. He points to one man and calls out.

DMITRY
(in Russian, subtitled)
More water! And make sure they're all accounted for.

He turns to head inside, only to come face-to-face with Alice and her children. Paul still carrying the saddle, Molly and Eve looking tired and a little confused.

DMITRY (CONT'D)
Good morning.

ALICE

You're a cheat.

Dmitry is surprised for only a moment, then smiles politely.

DMITRY

Care to join me in my office? Get
out of this terrible wind...

He tries to usher her towards the station platform.

ALICE

No.

(loudly)

Your workers should hear what kind
of man they work for.

A couple men nearby look at her with interest.

DMITRY

They don't speak English, madam.
And they're busy. Taking care of
your cattle.

Then--

DMITRY (CONT'D)

Besides, there's nothing to hear. I
did business with you the same way
as I do with anyone. Man or woman.

Paul steps forward.

PAUL

You should be ashamed.

DMITRY

Of what?

PAUL

You're a liar.

Dmitry laughs.

DMITRY

I'm a business man.

PAUL

Our property was falsely advertised.
There's no water, no nothing!

DMITRY

What did you expect?
(MORE)

DMITRY (CONT'D)

It's a dry spell. They come and go...I thought you were aware.

ALICE

How could we have been aware? You didn't tell us.

PAUL

And that house is falling apart.

DMITRY

That's very unfortunate.

ALICE

Yes it is.

(standing tall)

I trust you will have your workers fix it up, free of charge.

DMITRY

(amused)

Indeed?

PAUL

And we're not leaving until you agree.

Dmitry's smile disappears.

DMITRY

Then you can stand here all day long, boy. But I don't think your little sisters there would be too happy about it.

He nods to Molly and Eve, who stand together in spot of shade under a tiny tree. They look thirsty and hungry.

PAUL

Then we don't want the land. We'll take our money back.

Dmitry shrugs, lighting a cigarette.

DMITRY

You signed a contract.

ALICE

(grasping at straws)

You really won't help a mother and her children get back on their feet?

DMITRY

No one gets preferential treatment in Salinas, madam. If that's what you're after, maybe you'd best go back to where you came from. But no one's getting their money back.

Alice looks away from him, thinking. She begins to notice his land for the first time.

ALICE

Why aren't your fields all dried up?

DMITRY

I dug a well.

Alice looks at him like that was a joke, albeit unfunny.

ALICE

You dug a well.

He shrugs, face blank.

DMITRY

Now, I would be able to offer you a loan to finance something similar...

Alice's eyes harden.

ALICE

(steel)

I wouldn't borrow a penny from you. Ever.

She leans close.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Rot in hell for all I care.

Dmitry looks mildly impressed at that.

DMITRY

Fine.

He nods towards the herd in the corral.

DMITRY (CONT'D)

You owe me thirty dollars for holding your cattle. They need to be off my property by nightfall.

Alice starts to usher the kids away.

ALICE

I'll give you twenty. No more.

Dmitry crosses his arms, watching them go. A light smile plays on his lips.

EXT. SALINAS TOWN - DAY

The main street, lined with shops and restaurants.

Molly and Eve sit at a small table outside one of the restaurants, eating meat and potatoes.

An AUCTION is going on across the road from them, in front of a wooden COURTHOUSE.

The girls watch the small crowd with mild interest.

COURTHOUSE

Alice and Paul stand in the small crowd, surveying a HORSE next to the stage.

ALICE

I'll never buy something without seeing it first. Never again.

Alice takes its bridle and pulls up the horse's lip, looking carefully at its teeth.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Not too old. Not young, either.
I'd pay forty, maybe.

Paul shakes his head.

PAUL

Her ribs are showing. No more than 35.

The AUCTIONEER, a handsome, tall, and brawny farmer named JOHNNY PADMORE (late 30s), approaches and takes the reins of the scrawny horse. Alice and Paul step back.

JOHNNY

Excuse me, missy.

Alice appreciatively notes his IRISH ACCENT.

He leads the horse up a ramp to the stage and Alice and Paul move back into the crowd.

Johnny raises his hand for silence.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
And we start the bidding for old
Thomas's mare.

Johnny pats the horse's flank.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
We'll start the bid at 15.

Alice and Paul exchange a look--that cheap?

Alice raises her hand. Johnny nods at her.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
15 to the pretty missy in back.

Some other townsfolk turn to look at Alice with interest.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
Do I hear 20?

A man lifts his hand.

MAN
20.

JOHNNY
20 to Ben Ames.

Alice looks affronted.

ALICE
(quiet, fierce)
Oh, no you don't.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE, SALINAS TOWN - DAY - LATER

The O'Neils wait as Johnny brings the horse from behind the
auction block.

JOHNNY
One pretty horse for one pretty lady.

ALICE
Thank you.

Eve looks excited. She tugs Alice's skirt.

EVE
Mama, can I ride him?

ALICE

It's a girl, sweetie.

Paul heaves the old saddle onto the horse's back.

The horse SNORTS fiercely, swings her head.

Eve backs up, startled.

Johnny takes the reins and holds out a hand to Eve.

JOHNNY

It's alright, lassy. She's just
scared of folk she don't know.

Eve slowly steps closer. Johnny bends and lifts her up, so
she's level with the horse's head.

He strokes the horse's nose. Eve follows his example.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Her name is Wendy.
(to Alice and Paul)
Old Thomas--he was the shop clerk--
he died last week.

ALICE

Oh, I'm so sorry.

JOHNNY

Ah, he was an arse.

Alice laughs.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I did the auction only because his
wife asked me too.

Paul takes Eve from Johnny's arms and places her in the now-
secure saddle.

PAUL

What do you usually do?

JOHNNY

I run the inn. With my wife, Kitty.

He suddenly slaps his forehead.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I haven't introduced myself. Johnny
Padmore. Pleasure.

Alice takes his outstretched hand.

ALICE

Alice O'Neil. My children, Paul,
Molly, and Eve.

Paul starts to lead the horse, with Eve riding, around the
group in a circle. She GIGGLES happily.

JOHNNY

And where's Mr. O'Neil?

Alice's smile freezes.

ALICE

Oh--he's passed.

JOHNNY

Ah. I'm sorry, pretty lady.

He says "pretty lady" now like it's a nickname between old
friends.

Alice laughs. She shrugs.

ALICE

He was also an arse.

She avoids Paul's gaze.

Johnny smiles.

ALICE (CONT'D)

(changing the subject)

So how much do wagons go for in this
place?

JOHNNY

Not much, these days. More than
that horse, though.

Alice pulls BILLS from her pocket and counts some out.

ALICE

Maybe you could show Paul?

Paul looks over at his name.

Johnny nods.

JOHNNY

Of course.

ALICE

Paulie, choose carefully.
(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)
Nothing too big, mind. Then take
the girls, and bring the cattle home.

Paul takes the money from Alice.

PAUL
And then what? What am I supposed
to feed them?

ALICE
I'm sorting that out. You just do
your chores before nightfall.

She shakes hands with Johnny again.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Mr. Padmore, thank you for your help.

He tips his cap to her, then sets off with Paul and the girls,
Eve still giggling atop the horse.

Alice looks down at the remaining bills in her hand. Not
much left.

INT. POST OFFICE, SALINAS TOWN - DAY

Alice scribbles on a small sheet of paper. It's only one
line, but marred by many cross-outs and re-written words.

Her message now amounts to only five words: "NEED HELP.
WIRE MONEY. ALICE."

She re-reads what she has now, then hands it to the
POSTMASTER.

ALICE
What about that? How much?

He counts the words, then scribbles the math on the side of
the paper.

POSTMASTER
One dollar fifty cents.

ALICE
Fine.

She hands over a five-dollar bill.

POSTMASTER
I need to make change...

He bends over the paper again to do the math.

ALICE

It'd be three-fifty change.

He shoots her a dirty look, and continues with his math.
Alice rolls her eyes impatiently.

The BELL on the shop door DINGS.

Alice turns to see Rosie stride in.

ROSIE

Oh. Hello.

Alice smiles.

ALICE

Afternoon.

The postmaster tries not to notice Rosie too much.

ROSIE

What brings you into town?

ALICE

Telegram.

ROSIE

Ah. Sweetheart back home?

ALICE

Sister. And you?

Rosie leans on the counter.

ROSIE

Charlie here keeps my mail for me.
(conspiratorial whisper)
I don't trust the girls at the house.

Alice nods, trying to look casual.

ALICE

Of course.

ROSIE

Speaking of which, I thought you'd
be coming by to see me. Did you get
lost?

ALICE

Oh. No, just--so much to do...

ROSIE

I see. Well, my offer still stands,
doll. To show you around town, I
mean.

ALICE

There's not really that much to see,
it seems.

ROSIE

Things are a little slow these days,
I admit. Still...

She leans closer.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

Independent women like us, we need
to know who our friends are. I can
help you figure that out.

Alice nods slowly.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

And if you get lucky, I could even
introduce you to Madame Greene.
There are open spots right now, you
know. In the house.

Alice doesn't know what to say.

ALICE

(politely)
Oh, I don't think...

After a painful beat, Rosie LAUGHS loudly.

ROSIE

I'm joking!

Alice forces a laugh too.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

I'm not blind.

ALICE

What?

ROSIE

Your wedding band.

Alice looks down at it.

ALICE

Oh! He's...he's dead, actually.

ROSIE

Oh?

Alice pulls it off and puts it in her pocket.

ALICE

I should put it away...a habit.

Rosie looks suspicious for a second, then shrugs.

ROSIE

Well. It's not like anyone expects
you to stick around for much longer,
anyway.

ALICE

Excuse me?

ROSIE

What, a soft little thing like you?
Please.

Rosie continues to giggle, as she turns to the Postmaster.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

Charlie, can I get my damn mail
sometime this year?

(beat)

Pretty please?

Charlie hands over a small stack of envelopes.

Rosie quickly flips through them, then WINKS at Alice.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

(sweet)

Good luck with everything, doll. If
I don't see you before you leave,
have a nice trip.

And she's gone.

Alice wordlessly takes her change from the postmaster,
seething.

EXT. O'NEIL PROPERTY - DAY - MEANWHILE

The sun is getting low in the sky.

The O'Neil CORRAL by the old barn is now teeming with dozens
of COWS.

Molly and Eve sit on the dry grass by the gate.

MOLLY

(pointing)

I like that one, with the white nose.

Eve shakes her head.

EVE

That one's bigger.

HOOFBEATS approaching.

The girls turn to see Paul riding up to the gate on Wendy, leading three more cows on ropes behind him.

Molly gets up and opens the gate for them. Paul brings the cows in.

PAUL

Whoa, girl.

Wendy comes to a stop. Paul dismounts. He and Molly untie the ropes and the cows amble off to join the others.

MOLLY

How many more?

PAUL

Four. I think I can bring 'em all at once.

He pats Wendy's neck.

PAUL (CONT'D)

She's a good horse.

MOLLY

You'd better hurry, before it gets dark.

He gets back on the horse and heads off, back the way he came, towards the STATION.

EXT. RAILROAD STATION - DAY

Paul is busy tying up the remaining four cows.

Dmitry approaches him from the platform.

He leans on the wooden railing of the corral, watching.

DMITRY

Need any help?

Paul doesn't look up.

PAUL
You offer *now*?

DMITRY
I was busy before.

PAUL
Well, no thanks. This is the last
of them...

He watches Paul tie an expert knot.

DMITRY
Do you have the thirty dollars?

PAUL
You mean twenty. My mother has it.

Paul finishes the knots. He tugs the ropes, making sure
they're secure.

DMITRY
I wouldn't go branding them just yet
if I were you.

PAUL
What are you saying?

DMITRY
Just that.

PAUL
You think there's no hope in raising
cattle here?

Dmitry's silence confirms it.

Paul nods ruefully.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Yeah. Not on that land...

DMITRY
Have you ever thought about a
different way of life, boy?

PAUL
Who hasn't?

DMITRY
Strong lad like you, you could do
anything you want. I can tell you
hate it here. You could leave and
never come back.

PAUL

I know that.

Then.

DMITRY

A train comes through my station every few weeks. On the way to Alaska.

PAUL

And?

DMITRY

Those trains are always full. You know why?

Paul looks up, curious.

DMITRY (CONT'D)

There's *gold* in Alaska. A lot of it. You could make a fortune mining up there, boy.

Paul only shrugs.

DMITRY (CONT'D)

I could give you a free ticket north of you want.

Paul looks down. Pulls hard at a knot to test it.

PAUL

And why would you do that?

DMITRY

I think you'd be happier. I became happier when I left home. And I was about your age.

PAUL

Well that's you. My place is here.

With that, Paul mounts his horse.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Thanks for the offer.

He looks like he might be sincere. Then DIGS in his heels, hard.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Yaa!

And they're off, a cloud of dust in their wake.

Dmitry watches them go.

END ACT 2

ACT 3

OVER BLACK:

Loud LOWING of the cows, desperate and in pain. It continues as we

FADE IN ON:

INT. PARLOR, O'NEIL HOUSE - DAY

The lowing awakes Alice, who sits up from the makeshift bed of dirty blankets on the parlor floor.

She looks distressed at the sounds, and afraid.

She stands and goes to the window. Looks out and sees the cattle, all trying to crowd under the shade of the barn, seeking refuge from the morning sun. They nose the dirt, hopelessly searching for food and water.

Alice sighs. She too is hot, sweaty, dirty.

She picks up a metal WATER CANISTER from their pile of belongings. SHAKES it. Empty.

INT. BARN, O'NEIL PROPERTY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Alice saddles up Wendy, who is now housed in the stall labeled "LOUISE".

ALICE

Wendy Louise, is it, now? Come on, then.

As she leads the horse out, she bends to grab two metal BUCKETS by the door.

EXT. SALINAS PASTURES - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Alice and Wendy ride down the dusty road towards TOWN.

EXT. SALINAS TOWN - DAY

Still early. The streets of town are nearly empty.

Alice rides up to a PUBLIC WATER PUMP near the courthouse.

She dismounts with the buckets, bends and begins pumping.

Alice splashes some water on her face, and cups some in her hand to drink. Relief.

Then:

JOHNNY (O.S.)
Dmitry's been trying to shut that
thing down for ages.

Alice straightens up, turns to see Johnny Padmore.

ALICE
What?

JOHNNY
Dmitry. He thinks everyone should
have their own pump on their own
property.

ALICE
Why?

He shrugs, like it's obvious.

JOHNNY
He wants everyone to hire his workers
to dig their wells.

ALICE
But he can't actually shut it down,
can he? It's public property.

A pause.

JOHNNY
I guess not. Not legally, anyway.

He nods at the horse.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
How do you like Wendy?

ALICE
She's a good horse.

Johnny nods. They've run out of things to talk about.

Then:

JOHNNY
So how do you plan on getting those
buckets of water back home?

Alice looks at them. Johnny smiles.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
May I offer a suggestion, pretty
lady?

EXT. O'NEIL PROPERTY - DAY

Alice slowly rides back to the house, the buckets of water attached to a wooden pole across Wendy's back.

INT. KITCHEN, O'NEIL HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The girls and Alice, kneeling on the floor of the kitchen in their underclothes, share one of the buckets of water, washing their faces and arms.

A KNOCK on the door.

PAUL (O.S.)
Are you done yet?

The girls GIGGLE. Molly splashes some water on Eve.

ALICE
A minute, Paulie.

She watches her girls enjoying the water.

EXT. O'NEIL PROPERTY - DAY

Alice and the girls, looking much cleaner now and a little more content, stand at the corral fence, watching the miserable cows.

Paul comes out of the house behind them, carrying the bucket of water.

PAUL
All clean. What about all this water?

Alice nods at the cows.

ALICE
They'll drink it.

Paul pours the dirty water into the trough. Not enough for all of them by far.

PAUL
We'll need to get more.

ALICE
I know, we're both going to town right now. Buy feed and get water at the pump. It's free there.

PAUL
We can't go riding into town ten times a day for water.

ALICE

Well, we may have to for a while.
Until I can pay for someone to dig
our well, anyway.

PAUL

When will that be?

Alice gives him a look.

ALICE

Leave that to me, alright?

Paul looks mutinous, but backs off.

PAUL

I'll get Wendy...

Alice plays with Molly's hair.

ALICE

Guess what else I got today?

The girls look at her questioningly.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Beds, linens, pillows...

They look excited.

ALICE (CONT'D)

They'll be delivered in a couple of
days. See? Everything will be fine.

CUT TO:

INT. POST OFFICE, SALINAS TOWN - DAY

The Postmaster hands Alice a telegram.

She unfolds it.

"CAN'T SPARE IT. SO SORRY. --M."

Alice looks stunned.

ALICE

Damn.

She leaves the office, looking close to a panic.

EXT. SALINAS TOWN - DAY

Alice wanders the streets.

Passing by a shop, a sign in the window catches her eye.

HIRING HELP. NO BEGGARS.

Alice hesitates. Then steps inside.

INT. WILLIAMS SHOP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The shop is completely empty, save a grizzled old WOMAN behind the counter.

WOMAN

Yes?

ALICE

Hello. My name is Alice O'Neil.

She extends her hand. The woman looks at it, then slowly shakes it.

WOMAN

Mary Williams.

ALICE

Mary? That's my sister's name.

Mary just stares at her. Alice points at the sign in the window.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I'm looking for work.

Mary shakes her head.

MARY WILLIAMS

Can't afford it now, not since my Thomas died.

ALICE

Thomas-- you mean Old Thomas?

MARY WILLIAMS

What?

Alice smiles at her.

ALICE

I think I bought your horse. Wendy?

Mary suddenly looks very sad.

MARY WILLIAMS

Ahh.

(MORE)

MARY WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

(nods)
She's a good horse.

Alice nods.

ALICE

I'm very sorry for your loss. And
you can borrow Wendy anytime, if you
want.

A tiny hint of a smile from Mary. She looks on Alice kindly
now.

MARY WILLIAMS

I'll let you know if I hear of anyone
needing help, missy.

ALICE

Oh--thank you. I actually think
we'll be fine--we're raising cattle,
see. Just a little short on change
right now.

MARY WILLIAMS

Raising cattle? Here?

Alice nods.

MARY WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

(chuckling)
That's quite a challenge, these days,
sweet pea.

Alice looks at her.

ALICE

I'm digging a well. I'm getting a
loan for it.

MARY WILLIAMS

From Dmitry?

Alice looks surprised.

ALICE

No. I thought the bank... Well, I
haven't actually gone to see them
yet...

Mary looks like she wants to comment on this, but doesn't.

MARY WILLIAMS

(gently)

Good luck, dear.

A forced smile. Alice tries to return it before heading to the door.

EXT. FEED SHOP, SALINAS TOWN - DAY

Paul waits, holding Wendy's bridle, as two men load huge bags of feed into the wagon.

ACROSS THE STREET, Rosie sees Paul and makes a beeline for him.

Paul sees her coming and straightens up.

ROSIE

Hello. Paulie-- wasn't it?

Paul eyes the beautiful stranger warily.

PAUL

Paul is fine.

ROSIE

So, how is everything?

PAUL

Great.

Rosie smiles at the lie.

ROSIE

How much did you pay for that feed, there?

PAUL

I bargained them down, but still too much. It won't last long, neither.

She nods, in a deep-thinking kind of way.

ROSIE

Such a shame, those poor cows starving to death. Your mother should really be ashamed of herself.

PAUL

Excuse me?

ROSIE

All that cattle going to waste, and for what?

PAUL

If anyone should be ashamed, it's
Dmitry. If he didn't let that land
go to shit, we would actually have
some grass in all those pastures.

(beat)

And we wouldn't even be having this
conversation.

Rosie's smile doesn't falter.

ROSIE

Yes, and what a shame that would be.

(beat)

Well. I am sorry about the pastures.
But Dmitry can't control nature, can
he?

Paul says nothing.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

Don't worry, sweetling. Your mama
will come to her senses soon enough
and take you all home. I hope so,
anyway, for your sake.

PAUL

If you think so, then you don't know
my mom.

ROSIE

You're right. I'm sorry.

She touches his arm gently.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

Bye, Paulie.

He watches her go, seething.

EXT. O'NEIL HOUSE - DAY

Dmitry rides up on a huge, sleek black horse.

Alice is kneeling at the front door, oiling its hinges.

She hears the hoofbeats and turns to look. Seeing it's
Dmitry, she just goes right back to oiling.

He brings the horse right up to the front steps and dismounts.

He nods at the gaping hole in the porch.

DMITRY
Big hole there.

Alice glances at it, and him.

ALICE
Thanks for noticing.

DMITRY
The word around town is you're already
in debt.

Alice says nothing.

DMITRY (CONT'D)
Cattle don't look good, either.

ALICE
We're doing our best.

DMITRY
You know, normally I would let you
alone. Eventually you'd leave. But
I have an idea. I can help you do
better.

ALICE
No loans, I told you.

DMITRY
I have a business proposal for you.

She rolls her eyes.

ALICE
I'm busy right now, Mr. Grubich.

DMITRY
It's Dmitry. Please. You can keep
oiling those hinges while you listen.

She sighs.

ALICE
Just hurry, and go.

DMITRY
If there's one thing Salinas is really
lacking, it's a restaurant.

Alice has to look at him, surprised.

ALICE
A restaurant.
(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

(laughing)

Who would ever go?

DMITRY

Let me clarify. A restaurant in *my* railroad station. Everyone arriving in town, everyone leaving town, would be eating there.

ALICE

Really.

DMITRY

Really.

ALICE

And what do I have to do with your plan?

DMITRY

I've been waiting for the right business partner to come along for a long time.

ALICE

Me?

(laughing)

I have no experience. My family and my husbands family...we've all been raising livestock for generations.

(beat)

And we're damn good at it, by the way.

Dmitry almost looks apologetic. But not quite.

DMITRY

Well, it won't work here. Not right now.

ALICE

I can make it work.

DMITRY

With what money?

She can only glare.

DMITRY (CONT'D)

I've been where you are now. I started with nothing, and now look where I am.

Alice does look at him, and seems sickened.

DMITRY (CONT'D)
It's simple. You'd own it, you'd
run it. I'd advertise it, be your
accountant, and give you a start-up
loan.

He looks truly hopeful.

DMITRY (CONT'D)
We'd both profit...

Alice looks at him for a moment, trying to read his face.

ALICE
Why me?

He actually thinks about it, then shrugs.

DMITRY
Instinct.

Alice isn't impressed at that.

ALICE
Well, I'm sorry, but the answer is
no.

DMITRY
Why?

ALICE
I don't trust you.

DMITRY
Even if I buy your cattle off of
you? Give you all the money back?

She gets up, swings the door open and closed, testing the
hinges. They're silent.

Finally:

ALICE
No.

DMITRY
Then you won't last here. Especially
without a man.

ALICE
I'm lasting fine. And I have Paul.

DMITRY

For now.

She turns to look at him, confused, but he only tips his cap and turns to go.

DMITRY (CONT'D)

I'll give you a discount on tickets
when you decide to head back home.

Alice opens her mouth to say something, but it's too late. She sighs, angry, frustrated, and at a loss.

After a moment, she reaches into her pocket and pulls out her WEDDING RING.

She turns it over in her hand, deep in thought. After a moment, she slowly puts it on.

INT. BANK, SALINAS TOWN - SUNSET

Alice sits across the table from the banker, JACKSON WALKER (40s), a greasy-haired fellow in all badly-fitting black clothes.

ALICE

I don't understand. How can I
establish good credit if you won't
give me the chance to do so?

JACKSON

Sorry, missy--

ALICE

It's "Miss O'Neil," if you please.

JACKSON

Miss O'Neil. I understand you're
already in some debt--

ALICE

Who told you that?

JACKSON

--And that you hope to get out of it
by raising *livestock*...

He chuckles. She stares him down, eyes of steel.

ALICE

I'm great at it, too.

JACKSON

I'm sure you are, Miss O'Neil. But
up here, with this drought, it's
just never gon' happen.

ALICE

But with a loan, I could dig a well.
Get some water in those fields--

JACKSON

I just can't.
(pointedly)
You understand?

Alice looks at him a long moment. She suddenly stands.

ALICE

Dmitry?

He says nothing more.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Ah. I see. Thinks he runs this
place doesn't he?

She struggles to hold her steely composure. Extends her
hand.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Thank you for your time, Mr. Walker.

He shakes her hand, a hint of sympathy in his eyes.

JACKSON

Good luck, miss.

INT. WILLIAMS SHOP, SALINAS TOWN - NIGHT

Alice pulls her WEDDING RING off her finger. She kisses it,
and carefully places it on the counter.

ALICE

How much?

Mary Williams takes it, inspecting.

ALICE (CONT'D)

And don't you cheat me.

Mary smiles, counts out some bills from a drawer.

Alice takes the money, counts it.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Good enough. Can this buy me a well
and someone to dig it?

Mary considers.

MARY WILLIAMS

Not quite. But it will feed you and
those young ones for a good while.
The horse, too.

Alice sighs.

ALICE

I'll take it.

She gives one last look at her wedding ring, lying small and
alone on the counter, then turns her back and leaves the
shop, money tight in hand.

END ACT 3

ACT 4

FADE IN:

EXT. BARN, O'NEIL PROPERTY - DAY

Alice and the kids stand at the fence, looking at the cattle.

The feed bin is EMPTY, the water trough completely DRY.

The animals are in bad shape. Most are just laying down in the dirt. Some still feebly low for water.

Alice looks at them, her calculating eyes finally betraying a hint of regret. She tightly grips a COIL of ROPE.

PAUL

That one.

He points at the LARGEST COW, one of the few still standing.

Alice nods agreement.

Paul hops the gate and approaches the cow. It eyes him lazily.

ALICE

Molly, take Eve to the house. Then
I want you back out here.

She tosses the rope to Paul.

MOLLY

Why?

ALICE

It's high time you learn how these
things are done.

Molly looks at the cow, as Paul loops the rope around its neck.

MOLLY

Mama, I don't want to.

ALICE

Too bad. Go on.

Molly grimaces, but takes Eve's hand and trudges back to the house.

Paul leads the cow out of the corral.

Alice looks at all the others. She pats the chosen one's neck softly.

ALICE (CONT'D)
We'll take it behind the barn.

INT. KITCHEN, O'NEIL HOUSE - DAY - LATER

HUGE SLABS OF RAW BEEF are laid out on the table. Alice and Paul work on cutting it up.

ALICE
We need to salt a lot of this, make sure it'll keep.

PAUL
And the rest of them?

ALICE
The cows?

PAUL
They won't last long enough for us to dig a well. I say we eat this one as fast as we can and then get out of here.

ALICE
You know we can't go back to Los Angeles. For the same reason we had to leave in the first place.

PAUL
We had food there, at least. Water.

Alice's patience is stretching thin.

ALICE
Thanks to me. Your father did nothing to help out, and you know that damn well.

PAUL
It was our home, though. You took us away from everything--

ALICE
How could I stay in that house?
(suddenly furious)
He broke a bottle over your *head*, Paul! He could have killed you.

PAUL
He wouldn't've.

ALICE

I wasn't about to wait around to
find out.

PAUL

He used to be different.

ALICE

Well that man is not coming back.
Not ever again. You got to believe
me.

Paul is silent at that. He swallows hard.

Alice sighs.

ALICE (CONT'D)

We have no choice but to do our best
here. We're not going anywhere. We
can't.

Beat.

ALICE (CONT'D)

(whispers)
God help us.

They look at each other, helpless.

PAUL

Then the cows have got to go, mama.

Off of Alice's resigned face...

CUT TO:

INT. DMITRY'S OFFICE - RAILROAD STATION - DAY

A KNOCK.

Dmitry opens the door to reveal Alice and Paul.

ALICE

Fine. Let's do your deal.

Dmitry looks surprised, but in a good way. He steps back to
let them in.

PAUL

We want our full price for the cattle.
Every head. And you'll pay the
shipping costs.

(beat)

And we want the twenty dollars back.

DMITRY

Fine.

ALICE

I want the contract a day before we sign, you hear? I need copies made, witnesses. A lawyer. Never again am I signing something of yours without reading it properly.

DMITRY

(to Paul)

Is she always such a fast learner?

Paul just glares at him.

DMITRY (CONT'D)

Alright, alright. Your wish is my command. Or so they say.

PAUL

So you say.

DMITRY

You don't trust me?

Alice LAUGHS. She looks him up and down.

ALICE

How do you live with yourself?

He shrugs.

DMITRY

You'll start making money soon, too. It's not a bad thing.

ALICE

As long as it's put to good use.

DMITRY

I've started your new career. Isn't that good use?

ALICE

First you tried to ruin me. I won't forget that.

Alice starts to steer Paul towards the door.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I'll come by tomorrow to look at the contract. Bring the lawyer.

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)
(opening the door)
I mean it.

It CLOSES behind them. Dmitry smiles.

EXT. RAILROAD STATION - DAY

Alice and Paul head down the platform, passing ROSIE, who heads for Dmitry's door.

ROSIE
(mock shock)
What, leaving already?

ALICE
Leaving? No.

ROSIE
What are you doing here, then?

Alice smiles and shrugs casually.

ALICE
Oh, just a business meeting.

She leaves Rosie looking surprised, and not a little angry.

INT. DMITRY'S OFFICE - RAILROAD STATION - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Rosie SLAMS the door behind her and faces Dmitry.

ROSIE
Business deal? You're doing business
with *her*? You don't even know her!

Dmitry returns his attention back to his paperwork.

DMITRY
She's tough. She'll do well.

ROSIE
"Do well?" Doing what?

DMITRY
Running my new restaurant.

Rosie LAUGHS loudly.

ROSIE
Dmitry, darling. What do you need
with a restaurant?

DMITRY

Not for me. Salinas could use one.
It'd be good for the town.

Rosie realizes he's serious.

ROSIE

I could do it. You didn't even ask
me.

DMITRY

I don't want *that* kind of customer
coming into my establishment.

An uncomfortable pause.

ROSIE

Well. This isn't like you. Makes
no sense to me.

Dmitry shrugs.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

You're acting different with this
woman. Helping her, making deals?
(beat)
It's dangerous and I don't like it.

DMITRY

You don't have to.

Rosie holds his gaze for a long beat. When it's clear he'll
say nothing more, she finally turns on her heel and sweeps
out the door.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, O'NEIL HOUSE - NIGHT

Alice lies in her new bed, on new sheets.

Not sleeping.

She lies on her side, looking out the open window at her
property, now void of cattle. All is silent.

She looks like she might cry. But no tears fall.

Closes her eyes against it. A deep breath.

INT. GIRLS ROOM, O'NEIL HOUSE - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Molly and Eve are fast asleep in their shared bed. Dreaming
innocents.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM, O'NEIL HOUSE - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Paul lies on his back, WIDE AWAKE and restless.

He is FULLY-CLOTHED. Boots still on his feet.

He looks deep in thought, torn about something.

Finally, silent as a shadow, he gets out of bed.

Grabs a BAG, opens the door, and creeps out.

INT. STAIRS, O'NEIL HOUSE - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Down the staircase, careful of its creaks.

INT. FOYER, O'NEIL HOUSE - NIGHT

Quickly crosses to the DOOR, now well-oiled and silent.

He opens it and steps out.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, O'NEIL HOUSE - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Alice rolls AWAY from the open window, just as a DARK SHAPE appears, moving across the fields...

CUT TO:

EXT. O'NEIL PROPERTY - NIGHT - SAME TIME

As Paul quickly and silently heads on foot for the RAILROAD STATION...

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF SHOW