

# RANSOM CANYON

"Don't Let Me Fall"

Episode #101

Written by

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Based on the novel by Jodi Thomas

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OPEN ON:

CAMERA SOARS through a dawn sky... over rolling fields of prairie grass as far as the eye can see, crossing a cold creek, through a grove of ancient oaks, then landing on...

STATEN KIRKLAND, 40s, steely, riding his horse along the outskirts of his ranch: 25,000 acres of Texas Hill Country.

He trots to a stop at a cliff's edge, then reaches into his well-worn Carhartt coat. Extracts a small package wrapped in brown paper, eyes scanning the horizon, waiting for someone.

He waits. And waits. Frustrated, Staten pockets the package.

EXT. DOUBLE K LODGE - MORNING

A Pioneer-era timber lodge sits near a large barn and state-of-the-art corrals. RANCH WORKERS hustle hay. COWBOYS saddle horses. The sun's just up, but the work started hours ago...

JAKE LONGBOW, 50s, the muscled ranch manager, spots Staten exit the barn, cutting across the field towards the lodge.

JAKE  
Mornin' boss!

Staten grumbles, keeps walking. Jake chuckles to himself.

INT. DOUBLE K LODGE - MORNING

WE FLOAT THROUGH THE LODGE. Softly-worn leather couches, sun filtering through gossamer curtains. An enviable Nancy Meyers-esque rustic chic vibe tells us that a woman lived here once.

Staten pours a cup of black coffee in the kitchen, calls out:

STATEN  
*Randall? I waited for you, son.*

No answer. Staten kicks off his dusty boots and pads up the stairs... Checks Randall's empty bedroom, bed unmade.

INT. BATHROOM - DOUBLE K LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

Staten cranks on the shower, peeling off his clothes to reveal a body chiseled and tanned by years of hard ranch work. He climbs in, letting the hot water rush over him.

INT. STATEN'S TRUCK - DAY

POV out the windshield as Staten drives his hulking Dodge through the pin dot town of Ransom Canyon... quaint and quintessentially Texan. Town square dotted with cypress trees. An old stone courthouse. Vintage-era storefronts.

QUICK TIME CUT

As Staten's truck finds its way up a country road, banking right through the gates of the BAR W RANCH. Driving past rolling pastures and grazing thoroughbreds, then pulling up the long drive of a sprawling, modern ranch house where...

An outdoor Bar-B-Que is in full swing.

EXT. BAR W RANCH - DAY

TIGHT ON a slab of glazed beef brisket sizzling on a grill.

PULLING BACK to find Staten making his way through the party. He tips his cowboy hat as he passes familiar faces, scanning the crowd. Stops short as his eyes fall on QUINN O'GRADY, 39, warm, elegant features, setting out a bowl of potato salad...

Staten watches Quinn for a beat, until finally (as if she can feel his gaze on her skin) she looks up, eyes connecting.

A beat. And then Quinn crosses to him, smiling.

QUINN

Well, if it isn't Staten Kirkland.

STATEN

In the flesh.

He looks uncomfortable, glancing around, wishing he could be anywhere else... Which she senses. Sweetly squeezes his arm.

QUINN

You did the right thing coming.

STATEN

Didn't really have a choice, did I?

QUINN

Still. It's his birthday. He might not say it, but Randall needs you to show up for him. We both know it's what Amalah would've wanted.

Just then, DAVIS COLLINS, 40s, straightforward good looks, the type of rancher who gets his jeans pressed, slides up.

DAVIS  
Quinn... Staten...

STATEN  
(tight)  
Davis.

It's awkward; a underlying thread of tension between the men. Quinn tries to ease the tension, throwing Davis a compliment.

QUINN  
Great party, by the way.

And it is. In fact, it's a blowout. Full bar. Uniformed wait staff manning the grill. A towering birthday cake on display.

DAVIS  
What can I say? Anything for our boy. Isn't that right, Staten?

Staten tenses as Davis throws a familial arm around him.

DAVIS (CONT'D)  
Wasn't sure you'd make it today.

STATEN  
(curt)  
Said I'd be here, I'm here.

Davis slides an amused look at Quinn. Then takes her in.

DAVIS  
And look at you. New dress? Brings out the blue flecks in your eyes.

Quinn blushes, flattered. Staten pulls an annoyed face.

STATEN  
Looks like you brought something new as well.

Staten nods at a hot YOUNG WOMAN nearby on her phone, clearly not from around here. Davis smirks. *Touché*.

DAVIS  
I'll leave you two to it then. Got a big birthday reveal in the works.

He peels off, excited. Staten gives Quinn a look.

STATEN  
"Blue flecks in your eyes..."

QUINN

Be nice. He's your son's uncle.

STATEN

(annoyed)

I don't need to be reminded.

QUINN

(hurt)

Fine.

STATEN

Fine.

After a half-beat, he glances over at Quinn. Her brow is knit, clearly a bit wounded by the sting in his comment.

STATEN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

QUINN

I said, it's fine.

STATEN

It's not. It's just-- I haven't been off the ranch much since...

QUINN

Since she passed. I know. But it's been two years. You and Randall deserve to be happy... *We all do.*

Seeing the pain on his face, she attempts a subject change.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Speaking of. How'd this morning go? Did Randall like the riding gloves?

STATEN

He, uh-- He didn't show. He's been distant. For a while now.

QUINN

He's sixteen, Staten. Teenagers are distant with their parents. Hell, we were... you *hated* your daddy.

STATEN

Guess I hoped we'd be different.

QUINN

Well, the good news is--

Staten follows her pointed gaze to RANDALL KIRKLAND, 16, the spitting image of his dad, joking with buddies by a fire pit.

QUINN (CONT'D)

It's still his birthday. Go. Give him his gift. And *talk to him*.

Off Staten weighing this--

ANGLE ON

LUCAS RUSSELL, 17, curious, clean-scrubbed, as he helps his brother, KIT, 21, shaved head, tats, unload cases of beer from the back of a truck. Lucas stops short as he spots:

LAUREN LOZANO, 16, a teen Texan rose with a twinkle in her eye, crossing the lawn in SLOW-MOTION. Dreamy beat, then--

KIT

*Don't even think about it, Lucas.*

LUCAS

I'm not thinking anything. I'm just here helping you, Kit, that's all.

KIT

Better be. Reid Collins catches you eyeing his girl, I'll be out a job.

Off Lucas, looking back for a final glimpse of Lauren as she tucks a loose strand of hair behind her ear in the breeze.

ANGLE ON

Randall and his friends smile as his cousin, REID COLLINS, 16, cocky as the day is long, charges up, pulling open his shirt to reveal a bottle of Jack with a wink...

REID

Shots for the birthday boy!!!

Lauren slides up behind him, playfully scolding--

LAUREN

Always looking for trouble.

REID

*Looking?* Lauren, babe... You know I'm never looking for trouble.

(kisses her)

I *am* trouble.

She shoots an eye-roll at Randall, who laughs.

RANDALL  
(spots Staten, *shit*)  
Incoming.

Reid snaps his flannel over the bottle and swings around:

REID  
Hey, Uncle Staten.

STATEN  
Boys... Lauren... would you mind?

They all quickly peel off, leaving Staten and Randall alone.

STATEN (CONT'D)  
I waited at the cliff.

RANDALL  
Never said I was coming.

STATEN  
It's our tradition.

RANDALL  
No. It was *her* tradition. And she's  
not here anymore, so why pretend?

Staten takes a deep breath, tries again.

STATEN  
Randall. Son, I--

The sound of a car engine REVVING drowns Staten out as... WE  
SEE a brand new CAMARO zip up the driveway, kicking dust. A  
beat. Then Davis climbs out. Everyone's attention is drawn.

DAVIS  
Most of you knew my sister, but if  
you knew her well you knew the one  
thing Amalah wanted in life, *more  
than anything*, was a son... And I  
just know she's looking down on us  
right now and she's saying, "Davy,  
you are *spoiling* that boy..."

Davis holds up the keys to the Camaro. Smiles at his nephew.

DAVIS (CONT'D)  
Happy Birthday, Randall.

Randall BEAR HUGS Davis. His friends gather around, admiring  
the new car as party goers all applaud. Quinn clocks Staten.

He doesn't look happy. To put a finer point, he's pissed.

EXT. DOUBLE K LODGE - LATER THAT NIGHT

A crack of lightning slices across prairie sky, storm raging.

INT. DOUBLE K LODGE - NIGHT

FIND Staten and Randall, mid-argument.

STATEN

...You WILL be returning that car,  
first thing. People like Davis do  
not give gifts without strings.

RANDALL

What've you got against Uncle Davis  
anyway? I mean, seriously... You  
act like you're the only one who  
lost somebody. *You're an asshole.*

STATEN

Randall, I'm warning you...

RANDALL

Even Mom used to say it.

Both lashing out angrily, both saying things they don't mean.

STATEN

*That's enough outta you!*

RANDALL

*I wish it was you that died.*

STATEN

*So do I. Every damn day. 'Cause if  
your mother was still alive, she'd  
be the one having to deal with you.*

Off this, Randall snatches up his new car keys and storms out  
of the house. A beat. We hear an engine rev, tires spinning.

STATEN (CONT'D)

Dammit.

EXT. ROAD - DOUBLE K RANCH - NIGHT

Randall fishtails out of the gates of the DOUBLE K RANCH as  
he swipes tears off his cheeks. He angrily takes a sharp turn  
up a steep hill, punching his foot down on the gas pedal...

Suddenly, a FLASH of lightning - or are those headlights -  
blinds Randall. His hand shoots up, shielding his eyes.



SWERVES. Something CLIPS the car, sending it careening off the road, smashing through some fencing, and barrel rolling heavily into a ditch with a sickening CRUNCH. Then silence.

PUSHING IN now on twisted metal and shattered glass as we...

FADE TO BLACK.

**CHYRON: ONE YEAR LATER**

FADE UP ON: A pair of horse's wild eyes filling frame.

The horse bucks and snorts as we REVERSE ON an outstretched hand inching forward. Slowly. Staten steps into frame now, murmuring softly to the panicked bronco that we reveal...

Has a YOUNG COWBOY'S leg wrapped in its stirrup, DRAGGING him roughly through the dirt inside the corral.

But, step by step, one calming whisper after another, Staten eases his hand around the harness, murmuring to the horse:

STATEN

There now. It's gonna be alright.

QUICK TIME CUT

Staten gives the shaken cowboy a pat on the back.

STATEN (CONT'D)

You can't rush him, okay? Breaking a horse takes patience, you hear?

COWBOY

Yes, sir.

A truck rolls up. Jake Longbow cranks down the window.

JAKE

You ready, boss?

Tight nod from Staten. As he tips off his cowboy hat he spots a little cluster of blue bonnets growing outside the corral.

EXT. FENCE LINE - DOUBLE K RANCH - DAY

TIGHT ON the blue bonnets clenched in a fist. Staten's fist.

Jake hangs back at a respectful distance as Staten approaches the weathered split rail fence bordering his ranch. We can't help but notice two of the sections are newer than the rest. The exact spot where we saw Randall's car flip off the road.

A measured breath as Staten places the flowers on the post.

Suddenly, a beam of refracted light causes him to blink in the searing Texas heat. Staten's eyes trace the source to...

Something glinting in the grass just beyond the fence line.

Staten climbs over in a hurry and kneels to examine it... A piece of twisted blue and chrome metal buried in the grass.

JAKE  
(calling out)  
*Whatcha got there, Staten?*

STATEN  
(a beat, to himself)  
An answer.

Staten pockets the piece, beelines for the truck. Then stops--

STATEN (CONT'D)  
*Jake?*

The ranch manager hot foots it over. Staten squints, annoyed.

STATEN (CONT'D)  
Who in the hell is that?

ANGLE ON a guy in dress slacks and work vest sweating buckets as he sets up survey equipment forty feet or so up the road.

JAKE  
Looks like Austin Water and Power  
surveying for the pipeline again.

STATEN  
You tell him he's on private land.  
And if he doesn't leave, shoot him.

Jake wide-eyes. *Shoot him?* Staten pulls an exasperated face.

STATEN (CONT'D)  
Just get rid of him.

Off Jake, relieved, as Staten pulls off down the road.

EXT. ROADHOUSE DANCE HALL - DAY

A green pick-up pulls up to an old, tin-roofed, road-side dance hall on the outskirts of Ransom. Quinn piles out with an armful of fresh lavender and heads inside, where we...

INT. ROADHOUSE DANCE HALL - CONTINUOUS

FIND an old school dance hall strung with party lights. Juke box in the corner, bar at the front, small stage at the back.

ELLIE CATAWNEE, 26, a spitfire beauty, looks up from mopping the worn wooden floor as Quinn enters, her LABRADOR in tow.

QUINN

Sorry I'm late. The tractor broke down again and I've got three acres of lavender all coming in to bloom.

ELLIE

(levels a look)  
The Banjees just cancelled.

QUINN

But they're playing *tonight*.

ELLIE

Not anymore they're not.

QUINN

How am I supposed to run a dance hall when the musical acts keep cancelling on me? What'd they say?

ELLIE

That Bob has strep. But more likely they got a better paying gig.

QUINN

'Course they did.  
(spiraling a bit)  
I took out a mortgage on the farm to buy this place, to bring music and culture to Ransom Canyon. And now here we are... I can barely get musicians, let alone customers. Why did I think this was a good idea?

ELLIE

It *is* a good idea. It's just gonna take time. Until then, I happen to know a musical act that's avail.

Quinn follows Ellie's gaze to an old piano in the corner.

QUINN

No. You know I don't play anymore. Besides, the kind of piano I play, isn't the kind that people around here like to dance to. That, and--  
(MORE)

QUINN (CONT'D)

(off Ellie's look, rapid)

I'm-meeting-Staten-over-at-the-game-  
tonight-and-do-not-give-me-that-  
look.

ELLIE

What look?

QUINN

*That* look.

ELLIE

I'm not giving any look.

QUINN

He's *my friend*, Ellie.

ELLIE

It's not your job to put that man's  
heart back into one piece, Quinn.  
And even if it were... I'm not so  
sure you could. Not after Randall.

Off Quinn as this sinks in--

EXT. LOZANO HOUSE - DAY - TO ESTABLISH

A simple working class home, sprinklers chugging in the heat.

INT. LOZANO HOUSE - DAY

PAN ALONG the wall of a teen girl's bedroom, plastered with  
cheer photos, posters of pop stars, and a UT Austin banner.

Quick snippets of: a tiny cheer skirt pulling up over hips.  
Lip gloss going on. Hair pulling back into a tight pony tail.  
Ribbons topping it off now, tied up in a big old bow.

PULL BACK to reveal Lauren Lozano reviewing her reflection.  
You don't have to look twice to see that she's destined for  
bigger things than Ransom. Exits her room, peering back at--

INT. LOZANO HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Where her mother, MARGARET, stares vacantly at the droning TV  
as she nurses a Seabreeze. Lauren sighs, taps out a text on  
her cell to **Dad**: *Heading to the game. Mom's drinking again.*

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - SAME

ON the incoming text from **Lauren** buzzing on a cell. SHERIFF DAN LOZANO, picks the phone up off his desk and reads. *CLANK*. He startles as the piece of mangled metal lands on his desk.

Staten looms overhead.

STATEN

There it is. There's your proof.

SHERIFF LOZANO

Proof of *what* exactly?

STATEN

Proof there was another car on the road that night... *Someone out there caused Randall to crash.*

SHERIFF LOZANO

Not this again, Staten...

STATEN

Right here. Piece of bumper. Plain as day. Found it this morning. In the very same spot where he--

Trails off, can't bring himself to complete the sentence.

SHERIFF LOZANO

We've been over this. There was never evidence of another car.

STATEN

*I just gave you the evidence!*

A deputy by the name of KAI, mid-20s, Native American, gives a sympathetic side glance. Lozano softens slightly.

SHERIFF LOZANO

Look. I know this is hard for you, today being a year and all. But your boy was alone... It was an accident. A *tragic* accident. It's time for you to let this theory go.

It's clear, from Staten's expression, that's not an option.

SHERIFF LOZANO (CONT'D)

Hey, you going down to the school tonight? Team's dedicating their game to Randall. It'd do you good.

A fuming Staten storms off. Kai gives a look.

KAI

Why do you let him talk to you like that, Sheriff?

SHERIFF LOZANO

Because. That man's lost everything he loves, Kai. And he's looking for a reason. Even if there isn't one.

Off Lozano's sigh, as the brassy sound of a HIGH SCHOOL BAND PLAYING pep music fills our ears, carrying us over to...

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - RANSOM HIGH - NIGHT

Band playing. Cheerleaders shaking. The football team takes the field, Reid Collins (QB) in the lead. The stands ERUPT. In a small town like Ransom, Friday night football is the main event. Tonight it's Ransom Craters vs. Gatlin Gators.

Lauren and her squad tumble out of a stunt-worthy pyramid at the side line. These girls aren't just eye candy, they're every bit the athletes the boys on the field are. And more.

LAUREN

(claps with her squad)

That was great, y'all. You stuck that landing, Ashley. Nice work!

Lauren turns, searching the stands. ASHLEY joins, whispers.

ASHLEY

Any sign of that UT cheer scout?

LAUREN

No. Nobody'll ever come scout here.

A disappointed sigh. And then--

Lauren spies Lucas, in the band, dancing off field with his snare drum. He's got moves. Ashley clocks her watching.

ASHLEY

Don't know about you, but I'd say Lucas Russell had a summer glow up.

And the Academy Award goes to...

LAUREN

Really? I didn't notice.

Lauren rallies her girls for another cheer as we ANGLE ON:

EXT. THE CONCESSION STAND - RANSOM HIGH - CONTINUOUS

Quinn moves off, balancing two icy cherry cokes and a bucket of nachos drenched in Velveeta, her eyes trained on the gate.

A grinning Davis Collins darts over, matching her step...

DAVIS  
(playful)  
That cherry soda for me?

QUINN  
(amused)  
It is not.

DAVIS  
Well, Quinn O'Grady, I am wounded.

QUINN  
Is that right?

DAVIS  
Hey, can I ask you a question?

QUINN  
Pretty sure you just did.

DAVIS  
You. Me. Dinner for two at Maeve's?

She stops in her tracks, laughs deeply. Davis is amused.

DAVIS (CONT'D)  
Not the reaction I was hoping for.

QUINN  
You want to take *me* out? The little girl with the knobby knees you and your friends used to make fun of?

DAVIS  
Boys are idiots. I can say that with authority now that I'm the father of one. Plus, those knees aren't looking so knobby anymore.

QUINN  
Well, aren't you a charmer?

DAVIS  
I have it on good authority that you spend every night alone at that old farmhouse. You need to get out.

QUINN  
(disapproving cluck)  
Ellie.

DAVIS  
She's just looking out for you.

QUINN  
I don't need looking out for.

DAVIS  
We all need looking out for, Quinn.  
And the offer stands. Think about  
it, okay? I'm a real good time.

QUINN  
(laughs)  
Oh, I bet you are.

He moves off as Quinn's eyes move to the gate again. A beat.  
Then Staten appears... He's cleaned up. Lost the cowboy hat.  
We'd say he's handsome as hell. And it's clear Quinn agrees.

QUINN (CONT'D)  
Hey, you. I've got two seats saved  
at the fifty.

Hands him a soda, smiles. Off Staten, clearly ill at ease.

QUICK TIME CUT

Quinn and Staten sit in the bleachers, game underway. POPS  
of: pads colliding, cleats churning, a thundering tackle.

The crowd leaps to their feet, cheering. Quinn included. But  
she quickly realizes that Staten's still seated, face tight.

QUINN (CONT'D)  
You okay?

He nods, gaze fixed. She follows his line of sight to... a  
memorial BANNER of Randall on the fence bordering the field.

STATEN  
Today isn't just the day he... It's  
his birthday. And he'll never have  
another. Never be seventeen, or...

His voice catches. Quinn instantly shoulders her purse.

QUINN  
Let's get you out of here.

She starts to stand, but Staten stops her. Collects himself.



STATEN

I'm fine. Just not really up for  
this is all. But you should stay.

(then)

I'll be by tomorrow to look after  
that busted tractor, okay?

Off he goes. Quinn watches, heart hurting for him, when--

A ROAR goes up as Reid Collins throws a touchdown! He punches  
his chest, pointing Heavens-ward; that one was for Randall.

EXT. BACKYARD - BAR W RANCH HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Wild post-game after party in progress. Reid CANNONBALLS into  
the infinity pool. FIND Lauren off to the side looking bored.

Reid climbs out, wet T-shirt clinging to his footballer's  
frame, crossing to her. He attempts a kiss. Lauren dodges.

LAUREN

What about "this is over" did you  
not understand, Reid Collins?

REID

Babe, that was just for the summer.  
You wanted space and I gave it. But  
you and me...? This is our year...  
I'm QB1 and you're cheer captain.  
This is what we've always wanted.

LAUREN

No. It's what you wanted. And I'm  
not so sure bragging about being  
first string on a team with forty  
players is a big accomplishment.

Beat. And then, before she can dodge, he lays a kiss on her.

REID

You'll change your mind. You'll  
see. You and me are meant to be.

He races back for another CANNONBALL. Off Lauren, conflicted.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - BAR W RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

A rusted, apple-green Gremlin shudders to a stop at the end  
of the driveway. Lucas piles out of the passenger seat. He's  
rapidly followed by a handful of BAND BUDDIES... The driver,  
JACK YELLOW BIRD, warily eyes the pricey house up the hill.

JACK

This isn't a good idea, man. We weren't even invited.

LUCAS

We're never invited. And it's never a good idea. I say we go for it.

The boys all rally, following Lucas up the drive to the--

EXT. BACKYARD - BAR W RANCH HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Party in full-swing. Keg stands. Girls in bikinis. The band boys gawk... TIM WEBER, Reid's eternal shadow and Ransom's wide receiver, brushes past. He stops, clocking Lucas's crew.

TIM

What're y'all doing here? Shouldn't you be over on *your* side of town?

LUCAS

*Our* side of town?

JACK

(for the save)

Tim. Man, that was a helluva pass you caught in the fourth quarter...

Lucas slides back, spotting Lauren by the bar examining a bottle of Fireball. This is why he's here. Approaches--

LUCAS

Careful. That stuff'll kill you.

She sets down the Fireball with a playful--

LAUREN

Well, consider my life saved.

LUCAS

And now you owe me a blood debt.

LAUREN

A blood debt? Is that right? And will you be collecting on that?

LUCAS

Of course. It's a point of honor. Now you'll have to save me back.

She laughs. Spots Ashley watching. Snatches the Fireball.

LAUREN  
Deal's off.

And disappears across the yard. Off Lucas, watching her go.

INT. LIBRARY - BAR W RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

POV out the window as Reid and his friends do shots in the distance. REVERSE on... Davis, on speakerphone at his desk.

DAVIS  
...You don't have to tell me this town is sitting on liquid gold-- I'm the one who pushed the permits through at city hall, didn't I?

WATER REP (ON SPEAKER)  
We appreciate that, Mister Collins. But in order to run the pipeline to the aquifer, we will need those other ranchers on board. Without them... the deal's off the table.

DAVIS  
Don't you worry. I'll get it done.

WATER REP (ON SPEAKER)  
I'd say those second mortgages on your ranch are depending on it.

DAVIS  
(blinks at this)  
How'd you know about--?

Click. Off Davis, running a hand through his hair, stressed.

EXT. BACKYARD - BAR W RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

Lauren sits alone, party still raging in the background. Sips the Fireball; yuck. Empties it. She starts to head out when:

A HAND yanks her behind a big oak. It's Lucas. Their eyes meet. Before she can speak, HE KISSES HER. She pulls away:

LAUREN  
*What the hell are you doing?*

LUCAS  
Nothing different than what we've been doing all summer.

*Oh, shit.* She gives a surreptitious look around.

LAUREN

And what happens if Reid sees us?

LUCAS

Then he sees us. So what?

LAUREN

Trust me, you don't want a Collins  
on your bad side. Not in Ransom.

LUCAS

(winks)

I can take care of myself.

A beat. Lauren pulls Lucas to her, pressing her mouth to his.

INT. ROADHOUSE DANCE HALL - NIGHT **(BEGIN MONTAGE)**

Quinn enters, after hours. Sits down at the piano and begins  
to play Chopin's Nocturne in E-flat major. It carries over...

INT. BACK SEAT OF THE GREMLIN - NIGHT **(MONTAGE)**

Lauren and Lucas urgently pull off one another's clothing.  
She straddles him, the heat of a forbidden, steamy secret...

EXT. FENCE LINE - DOUBLE K RANCH - NIGHT **(MONTAGE)**

Staten, flashlight in hand, scans the overgrowth for another  
clue. A series of TIME CUTS, desperation etching his face as:

NIGHT turns to DAWN. Finally, he collapses onto the grass...

EXT. GAS STATION - DAWN **(MONTAGE)**

A Greyhound bus HISSES to a stop. A beat. And then a young  
STRANGER, 25, tight scruff on his face, piles off the bus.

He stops, faces the sky, breathing in the morning air. Hoists  
a duffle over his shoulder and sets off down the road as...

CHOPIN FADES OUT.

INT. SHERIFF LOZANO'S CRUISER - MORNING **(END MONTAGE)**

Lozano nurses a styrofoam cup of coffee as he drives. Passes  
the STRANGER on the road heading in the opposite direction.

A beat, eyes flitting to the rearview. And then... Sheriff Lozano pops a U, circling back. Cranks down his window.

SHERIFF LOZANO

Can I help you, son?

Fingers tense on his duffle strap as he puts on a smile...

STRANGER

Just heading out to the Fuller Ranch. Got work lined up there.

SHERIFF LOZANO

Say no more. I'll give you a ride.

A beat. And then... our stranger climbs in, offers a hand:

YANCY (STRANGER)

Yancy Grey.

SHERIFF LOZANO

Welcome to Ransom Canyon, Yancy.

EXT. QUINN'S LAVENDER FARM - MORNING - TO ESTABLISH

A creamy-white Victorian farmhouse framed by rolling hills lined with rows upon rows of purple lavender.

INT. BATHROOM - QUINN'S FARM HOUSE - MORNING

Quinn reviews her scrubbed clean reflection in the mirror. Anxiously dabs on some red lipstick. Thinks twice and then wipes it off. She hears tires crunching on gravel and bolts.

EXT. QUINN'S FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Quinn hits the porch as Staten pulls up... He half-waves, heading for the tractor. She shakes her head, to herself:

QUINN

Good morning to you, too, Staten.

EXT. RANSOM HIGH - MORNING

Bell RINGS. Students filter in. A battered truck pulls up and Lucas jumps out. Leans in the window as Kit hits a vape pen.

LUCAS

Thanks for the ride... Oh, and don't forget. Rent's due today.

KIT

Yeah, yeah, I got it handled. You just focus on school. Only job you need right now, you hear?

Lucas nods, gives the truck door a grateful tap. Then--

LUCAS

Stay out of trouble, okay?

Kit playfully flips him off, peels out of the parking lot.

INT. HALLWAY - RANSOM HIGH - DAY

ON Lauren, gliding through the halls with her friends. Lucas is at his locker beside Jack now. He spots Lauren, smiles... But she pretends not to see him, keeps walking. Jack laughs.

JACK

Way to shoot your shot, bro.

Off Lucas, smarting.

ANGLE ON

Lauren rounds the corner to find her cheer coach, BUNNY BEE.

LAUREN

Hey, Miss Bee.

MISS BEE

Guess what? UT Austin had their scout there on Friday after all. And they were impressed. They want you to come for a tour, talk... You know what this could mean, right?

LAUREN

A scholarship.

MISS BEE

A scholarship. You did it, lady.

Off Lauren, smiling at the thought. A way out of Ransom.

INT. SHERIFF LOZANO'S CRUISER - DAY (DRIVING)

Lozano behind the wheel, yammering away as Yancy silently watches hill country unfold outside the passenger window.

SHERIFF LOZANO

You got Collins' ranch, Bar W, on one side of the canyon, and you got Kirkland's Double K on the other side... Farther apart the better.

(then)

Feud goes back generations. Started over a strip 'a land. Dead men for decades. Called a truce when one of the Kirkland women got taken. The Collinses agreed to help, but then they never rode out. Kirklands got slaughtered and never forgot it. Wasn't 'til Staten Kirkland and Amalah Collins got together that a peace was brokered. But then, once their son died... it all went to hell again. Small towns, amiright?

No response. Lozano side-eyes his silent, mystery passenger.

SHERIFF LOZANO (CONT'D)

Where'd you say you're from?

YANCY

Here and there. No place special.

SHERIFF LOZANO

Take it you worked a ranch before. Anywhere I'd know?... Lemme guess. *Here and there? No place special?*

Yancy nervously swallows, looks at the Sheriff... who LAUGHS.

SHERIFF LOZANO (CONT'D)

Relax. I'm bustin' your chops. Not the first man come to Ransom for a fresh start... Although from the looks of this place, you might wanna head back to *here and there*.

Points out the windshield as they pull into--

EXT. FULLER RANCH - CONTINUOUS

To say the place has seen better days is an understatement.

Yancy jumps out, gives the Sheriff a grateful nod, then makes his way up to the front door and KNOCKS. After a long beat...

Door swings open on CAP FULLER, 72, grumpy as all get out.

CAP  
Whatever it is you're selling, I  
ain't buying.

SLAM. A beat. Yancy KNOCKS again. Finally... the door opens.

YANCY  
Name's Yancy Grey, Mister Fuller.  
We emailed about the foreman job.

CAP  
(aggravated huff)  
Well, hell, why didn't you say so?

ON Lozano, backing down the drive with a chuckle to himself.

SHERIFF LOZANO  
Good luck, kid. You'll need it.

INT. BARN - FULLER RANCH - DAY

Cap leads Yancy into the barn, door wobbling on its hinges.

CAP  
Stalls need mucking. Horses need  
shoeing. Fences need fencing. The  
days are long and the pay is what  
it is. No negotiations, you hear?

YANCY  
I'm your man, Mister Fuller.

CAP  
Call me Cap... I was captain of the  
volunteer fire department here back  
in the day. Name stuck.

Cap swings open the door of a tack room at the back of the  
barn to reveal-- An unmade cot, sheets folded at the foot.

CAP (CONT'D)  
This here's you. That a problem?

YANCY  
No, sir. This'll do just fine.

INT. KITCHEN - QUINN'S FARM HOUSE - DAY

TIGHT ON a ham and butter sandwich plated on the table. Quinn  
sits, sweet-faced Labrador at her feet, waiting... And then,  
Staten enters. Takes a seat, digging in without a word, then--



STATEN

Tractor needs a new belt.

QUINN

Just my luck.

STATEN

I'll head over to Fredericksburg,  
get you a new one this afternoon.

QUINN

Thanks. I'll grab you a check.

Moves for her purse. He lays a hand on her arm to stop her.

STATEN

I can think of *another* way you can  
pay me back... One I'd prefer.

Quinn blinks. Is Staten Kirkland *propositioning* her?

He points over at a pie topped with a volcano of meringue.

STATEN (CONT'D)

A slice of that coconut pie.

QUICK TIME CUT

Staten rinses his pie plate at the sink. Quinn steps up.

QUINN

I can do that.

STATEN

(cranks faucet off)  
Already done.

He looks over at her for a beat, reaches out and touches the  
end of the braid that's draped loosely over her shoulder.

STATEN (CONT'D)

Do you remember in third grade when  
I sat behind you... used to always  
undo your braids during class?

QUINN

(smiles at the memory)  
And Amalah would call you an idiot.

STATEN

But you? You never said a word.

QUINN

Suppose I liked it.

Suppose I did, too.

She turns and meets his gaze. They stand, locked in place for a moment. There's something there between them. But then--

Staten's walls abruptly go up. Swivels, heads for the door.

STATEN (CONT'D)  
I'll stop back in with that new  
belt tomorrow.

QUINN  
See you--  
(screen door SLAMS)  
--then.

She looks down at her Labrador. He stares back.

QUINN (CONT'D)  
Earl, I do *not* need your judgement.

INT. LOZANO HOUSE - DUSK

Sheriff Lozano drops his Stetson on a hat rack by the door and enters after a long day at work, to find--

The dinner table set. Candles lit. Bowls of pasta waiting.

SHERIFF LOZANO  
(*could it be?*)  
Margaret?

Lauren emerges from the kitchen with a green salad.

LAUREN  
She passed out an hour ago. Thought  
you could use a home cooked meal.

Lozano gives his daughter a grateful nod, takes a seat.

SHERIFF LOZANO  
Don't know what I'd do without you.

Tucks in with a satisfied smile. Goes for some small talk.

SHERIFF LOZANO (CONT'D)  
How's the new school year treating  
you? You liking your classes?

LAUREN  
They're-- great. *Amazing* actually.

SHERIFF LOZANO  
"Amazing," huh?

He glances up at her, she hasn't touched her food.

SHERIFF LOZANO (CONT'D)  
Why do I suddenly feel like this  
bolognese is loaded?

LAUREN  
What? No... Okay, yes. There is  
something I wanna talk about.

Lozano sets down his fork, amused expression on his face.

SHERIFF LOZANO  
All ears, kiddo.

LAUREN  
(excited ramble)  
Okay, so, Miss Bee told me that UT  
Austin wants to meet, have me tour.  
She thinks I'll get a scholarship.

SHERIFF LOZANO  
But that's-- Austin is over two  
hours away. You couldn't commute.

LAUREN  
I know, but-- I could come home  
every weekend, holidays, it'd be  
like I was barely even gone.

SHERIFF LOZANO  
Lauren...

LAUREN  
Daddy, please. UT is my dream.

SHERIFF LOZANO  
And I'm good with that.  
(she perks, then)  
After you do your first two years  
at Central, living at home. That  
way, you can keep helping out here  
with your mom... She's sick, Laur.

LAUREN  
Sick in the head.

SHERIFF LOZANO  
Don't talk like that. She needs us.

Lauren angrily shoves back in her chair, stomps to her room.

SHERIFF LOZANO (CONT'D)  
*Lauren--? Lauren! Come on now.*

A door SLAMS. Lozano sighs, goes back to his bolognese.

EXT. DOUBLE K LODGE - NIGHT

Staten climbs out of his truck and spots Davis waiting on the porch. Staten breaches the steps, not in the mood.

STATEN  
I'm gonna need a drink for this.

INT. DOUBLE K LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

Staten enters the living room with some tumblers of Johnnie Walker, hands one to Davis, takes a seat. A slow sip, then--

STATEN (CONT'D)  
To what do I owe the pleasure?

DAVIS  
You're really gonna make me say it?

STATEN  
Well, I *know* it's not because you want me to sell my land to those Austin Water boys for their damn water pipeline... This is my home.

DAVIS  
And it'll stay that way. They'll guarantee a lease-back. Nothing changes. Except you, me, and Cap'll all be several million richer...

STATEN  
I don't *need* anymore money.

DAVIS  
Says the guy who inherited twenty thousand acres and a trust fund.

STATEN  
Not doing too bad yourself there.

We know Davis is in financial straights, but he's not about to admit that to Staten. Instead--

DAVIS  
Oh, come on now, Staten! This would be *good* for this town. *And* for us.

STATEN

You have no damn sense. The world  
is drying up. That aquifer feeds  
our wells, our crops, our cattle.  
And I won't let 'em run it dry.

DAVIS

You are one stubborn man, Staten  
Kirkland. No wonder Randall--

STATEN

Don't. Don't you dare say his name.

Davis' face caves as this lands. The realization that Staten  
blames him for Randall's death. And he's gutted by it.

DAVIS

So that's what this is about--? You  
think I don't beat myself up over  
giving your boy that car? That it  
doesn't break me inside to have  
played any part in what happened?

STATEN

We all played a part.

DAVIS

That we did.

Davis chokes back his feelings. The two men laid bare in  
front of one another for the briefest of moments. Then--

DAVIS (CONT'D)

There's a reason our families have  
stayed on opposite sides of this  
canyon for generations. Leave it to  
you and Amalah to muck it all up.  
(chugs his scotch, stands) Town's  
already granted the permits for  
the pipeline. Just a matter of  
time until I find a way... with or  
without you. Thanks for the drink.

Davis exits. Off Staten, stone faced.

EXT. RANSOM ROCK TRAILER PARK - NIGHT - TO ESTABLISH

A small trailer park outside Ransom. Seasonal ranch workers  
loiter around tire fires drinking beer. Shoeless kids play  
kickball in the dusty street. A pack of mangey dogs wander.

INT. RUSSELL TRAILER - NIGHT

Lucas does his calculus homework by a dim light. A beat. And then he pulls up IG on his cell, clicks on Lauren's page. His finger hovers over the like button on her most recent post...

Just then, a tinny KNOCK at the trailer door. Drops his cell.

EXT. RUSSELL TRAILER - NIGHT

Door opens on a bleached blonde trailer park manager, HELEN.

HELEN  
Your brother in?

LUCAS  
Lemme guess. He didn't pay rent?

HELEN  
Been three months now. Look, I know you boys are on your own and all, and I've been willing to wait, but--

LUCAS  
I'll handle it. I promise.

She gives a sympathetic smile and heads off... Lucas clocks Jake Longbow, Staten's ranch manager, smoking a cigar on the steps of the next trailer over. He gives Lucas a knowing nod.

INT. FULLER RANCH HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING

Ellie enters, keys in hand, calling out--

ELLIE  
Cap, it's me!

Ellie crosses to the kitchen, spots a stranger rummaging through the cabinets. *Oh, shit.* She snatches up a broom.

ELLIE (CONT'D)  
*Freeze! Hands in the air!*

Hands slowly raise as he turns to face her. It's Yancy.

YANCY  
Relax, I'm...

Ellie WHACKS him in the face with the broom handle.

YANCY (CONT'D)  
*Owww!*

Touches his brow, pulls back his finger, now coated in blood.

CAP (O.S.)

I see you've met my pesky niece.

Off Yancy, glancing, confused, between Cap and Ellie-- the craggy, old white dude and the Native American beauty.

TIME CUT

Ellie applies first aid tape to the cut over Yancy's eye as:

CAP (CONT'D)

Technically, Ellie's not related, but her pops and I go way back. She just comes around now to harass me.

ELLIE

Because nobody else'll deal with your stubborn, old, cranky ass... You've scared off every home care nurse west of Gillespie county.

CAP

Don't believe a word she says. I'm charming, and I don't need a nurse.

Ellie gives him a playful eye-roll. Yancy watches, amused, as Ellie finishes bandaging his eye. She gives a guilty smile--

ELLIE

There. You should be fine.

YANCY

You a doctor or something?

ELLIE

Bartender. Used to be a nurse. And sorry about the misunderstanding.

YANCY

No worries. Not every day you find a handsome stranger in the kitchen.

ELLIE

Handsome *and* humble.

Yancy flashes a cocky smile, then pauses, eyes her closely.

YANCY

Don't move.

Brushes her cheek with his fingertip, then pulls away to reveal-- A LOOSE EYELASH. Yancy blows it off his finger.

ELLIE

You stole my wish.

YANCY

Guess I needed it more than you.

She watches, speechless, as he stands and puts on his hat--

YANCY (CONT'D)

Pleasure to meet you, Ellie.

She nods. Yancy exits. Cap chuckles at her watching him go.

CAP

Never seen *you* at a loss for words.

ELLIE

Don't be ridiculous, I'm surprised  
is all... Where did you *find* him?

CAP

I put an ad up on the Craig's list.

ELLIE

I know how cheap you are, Cappy,  
and I know what other ranches pay.  
Why would anyone agree to this--?

CAP

Guess I got lucky.

Off Ellie, curiously watching Yancy out the window.

INT. RANSOM HIGH - DAY

Halls empty. Class in session.

FIND Lauren and Lucas, mid-whisper, tucked out of sight.

LUCAS

Oh, come on. Your dad wouldn't ask  
you to give up a full ride at UT.

LAUREN

Well, he did. It's like he doesn't  
realize being *stuck here* is what  
made my mom the way she is. I don't  
want to end up like her... I don't.

She starts to tear up. Lucas's fingers graze her cheek.

LUCAS

I won't let that happen.



ANGLE ON

Tim rounding the corner down the hall. Spots them, stops.  
Backs around the corner and peers out as Lauren hugs Lucas.

INT. CLASSROOM - RANSOM HIGH - MOMENTS LATER

Tim takes a seat behind Reid. Whispers urgently at his ear.

EXT. FULLER RANCH - DAY

ON the barn door hoisting back on its hinges. Yancy, sweat soaking his t-shirt, reviews his work with a satisfied nod.

CAP (O.S.)  
That's not gonna hold up.

REVEAL Cap watching from a lawn chair, sunning like a cat.

CAP (CONT'D)  
Need to sand it, *then* re-hang it.

YANCY  
Would've been helpful to tell me  
that *before* I spent the past hour  
getting it up there.

CAP  
I don't like to micromanage.

Just then, Staten's truck rolls up the long drive. Yancy squints in to the sun as Staten emerges, all business.

STATEN  
How you doing Mr. Fuller? Was  
hoping I could have a word.

TIME CUT

Staten and Cap nurse a couple of beers in the yard as Yancy sands the barn door frame, back off its hinges now.

STATEN (CONT'D)  
I know times have been tough, but  
I'm hoping we can lock arms, reject  
those pipeline leases. Least until  
I can get the Utility Commission  
out here to do some oversight...

Yancy makes work of looking busy sanding as he listens in.

CAP

A lot of money they're offering.

STATEN

I know. And I'm more than willing  
to front you some cash to get--

CAP

I don't need a handout.

Staten nods, didn't mean to offend. Cap eyes his ranch in the  
background, taking it in for a sentimental beat, then--

CAP (CONT'D)

Hell, I don't like the idea of a  
pipeline running through my land  
anymore than you do... But Davis  
asked me to hear those city boys  
out, as a personal favor.

STATEN

It's a mistake, Cap. Can you trust  
on me this? Cancel that meeting.

Cap takes it in, looks like he might be wavering, when--

YANCY

Why?

Staten looks up, startled by this sudden weigh-in.

YANCY (CONT'D)

What's the harm in listening?

Staten gives Yancy a confused once-over as he approaches.

STATEN

Who in the hell are you?

YANCY

I'm the new foreman here.

STATEN

Since when?

YANCY

Since yesterday.

Staten stands, eyeballs Yancy, facing off with him a beat.

STATEN

Word of advice? Give it a couple  
weeks before you start talking  
about things above your pay grade.

Staten heads for his truck as Cap starts to laugh, amused.

CAP  
He told you.

EXT. QUINN'S LAVENDER FARM - LATER THAT DAY

Tight on a stalk of lavender swaying in the breeze. Fingers grab it into a bunch, then snip the stalks with shears.

Reveal Quinn and some FIELD WORKERS harvesting the wide rows of blooms by hand, tractor clearly still out of commission.

The sound of metal BANGING takes us...

EXT. BEHIND THE BARN - QUINN'S FARM - CONTINUOUS

Where we find Staten elbows-deep in the hood of the tractor. Socket wrench in hand, Staten stumbles as the old belt snaps.

Still pissed from his visit to Cap and talk of Davis, he angrily KICKS the tire. Kicks it again and again, until...

QUINN (O.S.)  
What'd that tractor ever do to you?

He turns to find Quinn watching, amused.

STATEN  
Having a little trouble is all.

Staten yanks off his shirt, mops his sweat-beaded brow. She can't help but watch him. Catches herself and offers up--

QUINN  
I've got some cold chicken in the fridge. I'll make you a sandwich.

STATEN  
(on edge)  
I don't need food. I just need to fix this damn thing and get outta here, get back to *my own* problems.

Quinn blinks at this, then turns and heads for the house.

INT. KITCHEN - QUINN'S FARM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Quinn splashes cool sink water on her burning cheeks as she swallows back any threat of a tear; won't let herself cry.

Mind turning. Finally, Quinn plucks up her cell and dials.

QUINN

Davis? It's me... On second thought, dinner sounds nice.

EXT. FULLER RANCH - DAY - TO ESTABLISH

Flat plains stretch to the horizon. Black Angus grazing.

INT. BARN - FULLER RANCH - DAY

Ellie enters. Looks around the empty barn.

ELLIE

*Yancy? I'm looking for Cap. Hello?*

Makes her way deeper into the barn, spots the door to the tack room -- Yancy's room -- standing ajar. Peers in.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

You in here?

No answer. She takes a step in. Spots a book of Mary Oliver poems at the foot of his neatly made-up cot. She smiles.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Well, look at you.

Ellie picks up the book, thumbing through its pages when...

A folded paper falls out. Knows she shouldn't, but glances over her shoulder to be sure nobody is coming. Opens it to reveal an article about Cap's ranch in its hey-day. Important details underlined: heads of cattle, acreage, that Cap's only son died in Afghanistan. A barn door CREAKS in the distance.

INT. OUTSIDE YANCY'S ROOM - FULLER RANCH - MOMENTS LATER

Yancy corrals a couple of colts into a stall. Looks up as Ellie steps out of the tack room. He blinks. *What the heck?*

ELLIE

Hey, you know where Cap is?

YANCY

Not in *my* room, that's for sure.

(softens)

Said he was going in to town to pick up his blood pressure meds.

Ellie grimaces, pulls a pharmacy bag out of her purse.

ELLIE

Looks like I beat him to it.

She hands the bag to Yancy and scurries off with a rushed:

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Let him know I came by.

Yancy watches her go, suspicious. Steps over and looks into his room. Book of poems back on the end of the bed. But it's clear from the look on his face Yancy is left a bit on edge.

EXT. DOUBLE K RANCH - DUSK

Staten crosses from his truck to the barn, where Jake waits.

JAKE

Appreciate this. Father took off  
'bout a year back, now the boys are  
struggling. He's a good kid. Smart.

Staten tight nods as Jake follows him into--

INT. BARN - DOUBLE K RANCH - DUSK

Staten stops in his tracks as he spots Lucas, forehead to forehead with a silver mare, head hanging out of her stall.

FLASH CUT TO: *Randall, face laid affectionately against that same silver mare. He looks TO CAMERA now... and smiles.*

FLASH BACK TO: Staten blinks back from the memory, startled.

LUCAS

Nice to meet you, Mr. Kirkland, I--

But Staten cuts him off with a terse...

STATEN

Can't take on anyone else right  
now. And you should know better  
than to touch another man's horse.

Staten spins, heads out of the barn. Lucas gives Jake a look.

LUCAS

What'd I do?

JAKE

Nothing, son. You did nothing.

INT. DOUBLE K LODGE - DUSK

Staten explodes through the door, composure threatening to fail him. Takes some deep gulps of air, closing his eyes.

EXT. RANSOM ROCK - NIGHT

Middle of nowhere. A dome of granite looms. Bonfire party in progress; cooler beers and rowdy teens. They may not be in the halls of Ransom High, but the cliques are still clear:

Rich ranchers' kids smoking weed and chugging whiskey nipped from their parents. A mix of wrong-side-of-the-tracks teens all gathered opposite the bonfire. It's an uneasy combo.

Lauren watches from the hood of a car as... Reid crosses to Lucas, Tim in tow. Lucas tenses, on edge as they approach.

REID

You Lucas Russell?

(off his nod)

Your brother, Kit, works out at our ranch, isn't that right?

LUCAS

It is.

REID

And your old man before him...

Lucas looks anxious, not sure where this is going.

REID (CONT'D)

He was a hell of a wrangler. Taught me how to ride when I was a kid.

A beat, then Reid holds a beer out to Lucas... and smiles.

REID (CONT'D)

You should think about working weekends with us. I could put a word in with my dad, if you like.

LUCAS

Thanks. I just might.

Off Lucas as he accepts the beer, pleasantly surprised.

SMASH TO

Lucas and Reid pounding beers as Reid plays up the part of Lucas's new best friend. Football team jostling and drinking.

Lauren watches this, worried, and a little put off by the spectacle. Finally sidles up to Lucas in the fray, sotto:

LAUREN  
You need to be careful.

LUCAS  
(tipsy)  
Careful of what--? Making friends?  
Not knowing my place in this town?

Suddenly, Reid appears, wrapping an arm around Lauren.

REID  
You two know each other?

LAUREN  
No.

LUCAS  
Yes.

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
(shit)  
We did that college prep program  
over summer together... And, hey,  
Reid, maybe slow down on the beers?

REID  
I have a better idea.

Signals to Tim, who snatches up a six pack.

REID (CONT'D)  
Follow me.

Reid, Lucas, and Tim head away from the bonfire towards the canyon rocks, laughing... Lauren hesitates, then follows.

CUT TO

Cicadas THRUM as the foursome crest the top of the canyon.

LAUREN  
Reid, what're we doing up here?

REID  
We're here so I can tell you both a  
story... Isn't that right, Tim?

TIM  
That's right.

Lauren and Lucas exchange a nervous glance now.

REID

Did you know, when settlers were moving out West, this area was an unclaimed, lawless, no-man's-land. And this canyon was controlled by notorious outlaws. The Comancheros.

LAUREN

Didn't you *flunk* American History?

Tim chuckles at this as Reid barrels on, drunk.

REID

This spot... is where they'd hold captives, mostly women, and they'd ransom them back to their families.

Reid, eyes on Lucas, steps towards him, pointed.

REID (CONT'D)

Tried to take what wasn't theirs.

LUCAS

I'm sorry, do we have a problem?

REID

You need to leave my woman alone.

LUCAS

*Your woman?*

LAUREN

(snorts a laugh)

You have *got* to be fucking kidding me right now with this toxic, male whatever it is... Lucas, let's go.

She grabs Lucas's hand, marching off.

BACK AT THE BONFIRE as GUMBALL LIGHTS spin, a pair of patrol cars pulling in. Kids race for their cars, peeling out as...

Sheriff Lozano emerges, kicking dirt to douse the fire.

SHERIFF LOZANO

That's right. Break it up.

ANGLE ON Lauren and Lucas watching from a distance. Reid and Tim catch up behind them. They all stand for a beat as...

The last of the cars vanish in to the night.

LAUREN

None of you drove?



REID  
Nope.

TIM  
Ben was the designated.

LUCAS  
I don't have a car.

Lauren pulls out her cell phone. No signal. She groans.

LAUREN  
Great. Just great. We're stranded.

She reaches over and punches Reid in the arm.

REID  
How is this my fault?

INT. MAEVE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A sweet little, candlelit café on Main Street. FIND Quinn and Davis at a table, animated conversation in progress...

DAVIS  
*I'm serious!* I love Tchaikovsky!

QUINN  
You are so full of it right now.

DAVIS  
Okay, love is a strong word. But I have found an appreciation. When I was up at Yale, Amalah told me you were playing -- some little concert at Julliard -- and I thought, *what the hell?* Took the train in, and I heard you play. It was incredible.

Quinn takes a sip of wine, seeing Davis in a new light.

DAVIS (CONT'D)  
She was so damn proud of you.

She bites her lip, trying to hold back her emotions.

QUINN  
I miss her, you know?

DAVIS  
I thought it'd get easier. But her voice is starting to fade on me...

His voice catches. Composes himself, shaking off the feels...

DAVIS (CONT'D)

Tell me something, Quinn O'Grady.  
How is that you're still single?

QUINN

I'd say-- Supply chain issues? Not  
many eligible bachelors in Ransom.

DAVIS

(re: himself, a joke)  
Trying not to be insulted here.

QUINN

We've been friends forever, Davis.

DAVIS

And I've wanted to ask you out  
forever. Ever since high school.  
But the timing was never right.

QUINN

(laughs)  
Okay, now you're just lying.

DAVIS

Scout's honor.

QUINN

Davis, you were never a boy scout.

DAVIS

(playful wink)  
See? Look how well you know me.

QUINN

I do. I was even at your wedding.  
*Both of them*, in fact.

DAVIS

And both times Amalah told me I was  
making a mistake. I didn't listen.

QUINN

She always knew how to read people.

DAVIS

Except in her own life.

QUINN

Staten? Oh, come on. She loved him.

DAVIS

And when she got sick? That man did  
not step up, Quinn. You know it.

QUINN  
He was hurting.

DAVIS  
We were all hurting.

QUINN  
It's complicated.

Quinn takes another deep sip of wine, her mind wandering.

DAVIS  
So? What about you? You came home  
from New York when she got sick,  
but you never went back... Why?

QUINN  
Also complicated.

DAVIS  
And the dance hall?

QUINN  
Guess I was trying to find a new  
purpose. Searching for something.

ANGLE ON

Staten entering the restaurant. Lands by the hostess.

STATEN  
Hey, June. Pick up for Kirkland.

Staten spots Davis across the dining room. But from this  
angle, he can't see Quinn sitting across the table.

He strides over, lands, eyes on Davis.

STATEN (CONT'D)  
I hope you're proud of yourself...  
Manipulating an old man like Cap?

Suddenly, Staten realizes Quinn's at the table. His eyes dart  
between Davis and Quinn, the wine, the candlelight... *Shit.*

DAVIS  
Mind if we take this up later?  
Quinn and I are on a date here.

A date? Staten's gaze whips to Quinn. His hurt is palpable.

STATEN  
Sorry to intrude.

He storms off, passing a confused waitress with his takeout.  
Off Quinn, watching Staten climb in his truck out the window.

EXT. ROADHOUSE DANCE HALL - NIGHT - TO ESTABLISH

Music pumping inside. We see Yancy climb out of Cap's truck.

INT. ROADHOUSE DANCE HALL - NIGHT

Ellie dries glasses at the bar as Yancy enters, takes a seat on a barstool. Still wary after discovering the article--

ELLIE  
(standoffish)  
What can I get you?

YANCY  
Shiner'd be nice.

ELLIE  
Draft or bottle?

YANCY  
Bottle.

Pops the cap, plants the beer in front of him and FROWNS.

YANCY (CONT'D)  
Did I miss something here?

ELLIE  
I saw that article. The one in your book. Yes, I was snooping. And no, I won't apologize. Because I care about Cap. You could work at half dozen ranches for twice the pay, it doesn't make any sense. And then...

YANCY  
You saw the article and thought the worst. I get it. I really do.

Ellie deflates, she was ready for him to put up a fight.

YANCY (CONT'D)  
Far as other ranches are concerned, last place I was at didn't go so well. And Cap was the only one desperate enough not to ask for references. Far as that paper?  
(MORE)

YANCY (CONT'D)

I was just looking into this place,  
trying to see what it used to be.  
See if I could help bring it back.  
Maybe understand Cap a bit better?

Ellie holds his gaze for a lingering moment, weighing this.

ELLIE

That's it?

YANCY

That's it.

ELLIE

(exhales, nods)

Okay. But you so much as cross that  
old man, I'll see to it you suffer.

YANCY

(laughs)

Deal.

Takes a swig of his beer with a smile, then--

YANCY (CONT'D)

Me? I think you need a new hobby.

ELLIE

What's that supposed to mean?

YANCY

You spend an awful lot of time out  
there taking care of Cap.

ELLIE

He needs me.

YANCY

Or-- maybe you need to be needed?

ELLIE

It's not about need.

YANCY

What's it about then?

ELLIE

(a beat, clear-eyed)

It's about love.

Off Yancy, moved. Hides it with another swig off his beer.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

THUNDER RUMBLES overhead as... Lauren, Lucas, Reid, and Tim make the long walk home on the desolate road, bickering.

TIM  
Jesus Christ, I'm freezing.

LAUREN  
Should have thought of that before  
you dumb asses lured us up the  
canyon to make your stupid point.

REID  
Nobody asked you, Lauren.

LUCAS  
Don't talk to her like that.

REID  
Don't tell me how to talk to her.

And then... a pair of headlights appear up the road.

INT. STATEN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

As he approaches four figures waving on the side of the road.

STATEN  
What in the...?

Staten SLOWS. Spots his nephew, Reid, amongst the kids and makes a decision. Accelerates past them.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

As Staten's truck disappears down the road.

REID  
Son of a bitch.

They JUMP as a slice of lightning licks through the sky illuminating an ABANDONED STONE HOUSE just off the road.

REID (CONT'D)  
There. Let's take cover.

TIM  
The Gypsy House? No way, man, that  
place is haunted.

REID

Fine. Freeze to death.

Reid sets out just as fat drops of rain begin to fall...

INT. GYPSY HOUSE - NIGHT

We hear a few THUDS and then... the door SMASHES open and our kids hurry inside, taking cover. Lauren shivers deeply. Lucas tries to take her hand, but she instinctively pulls it away.

TIM

I don't have a good feeling about this, Reid. I'm telling you.

REID

Don't be such a baby.

Reid sets out across the creaky, old floorboards.

LUCAS

You might want to be careful.

REID

(ignores him)

Come on, Timmy.

Tim reluctantly follows, floor boards GROANING heavily.

LUCAS

I'm serious, man. This floor isn't stable.

Reid JUMPS as a joke, making the floor SHAKE. A low GROAN.

TIM

Reid, don't--

Suddenly, we hear a SNAP and... Tim plunges in to darkness.

INT. DOUBLE K LODGE - NIGHT

Staten enters, shakes the water off his jacket then lights a fire. As he stands, ANOTHER FLASH OF IMAGES: *A pool of blood in the rain, the overturned Camaro, Staten racing up on foot.*

BACK TO PRESENT as...

Decided, Staten pulls his jacket back on, exits in a hurry.

INT. GYPSY HOUSE - NIGHT

More floorboards giving way. Reid, Lucas, and Lauren panic as the floor between them and the front door starts caving...

They're trapped. Lucas spots a broken-out window.

LUCAS

*There! Run!*

Reid blasts forward, hopping over collapsing floorboards as Lucas and Lauren bring up the rear. Reid starts to climb out the window as Lucas reaches him, looking back for Lauren as--

The floor beneath her cracks and Lauren slides backwards, her leg scraping against sharp, decaying wood with a SCREAM.

Lucas grabs the back of Reid's shirt to get his attention.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

*We have to help her!*

Reid wrestles free of Lucas's grip, diving out the window.

Lucas turns back, balancing on a single, creaking board. He inches forward and Lauren comes into view, fingers gripping rotten floor, dangling above a now exposed basement where...

Tim lays, shin bone busting through skin. He MOANS.

LAUREN

*Don't let me fall.*

Lucas braces himself, wrapping his free arm out the window. WE SEE a shard of wood jutting from his arm where his shirt's torn loose... Grabs her wrist just as her fingers slip loose.

LUCAS

*I've got you.*

Slowly, Lucas pulls her up close enough to transfer her free hand around his neck. One, final, pained heave and...

Lucas YANKS her up, shimmying her to the window. He lowers her out as Reid, who's waiting outside, catches her fall.

Lucas turns back, peering into the dark abyss below.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Tim?

Pained CRIES echo back. Lucas shuffles to the edge of the collapsed flooring for a better look, when-- He loses his footing, about to plunge into the darkness along with Tim.



Suddenly... a hand grabs Lucas's arm.

REVEAL Staten as he drags Lucas to safety. And then, he doubles back for Tim, disappearing from view.

EXT. GYPSY HOUSE - NIGHT

Lucas wraps a shivering Lauren in his arms as Reid glares in their direction. A beat. Then Staten emerges, Tim hoisted over his shoulder, hustling for his truck in the rain.

STATEN

*Call the Sheriff... now!*

INT. STATEN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Staten lays Tim on the front seat and then peels out for the hospital. Tim GROANS. Staten reaches over and grips his hand.

STATEN

Stay with me, Randall.

EXT. GYPSY HOUSE - NIGHT

Gumball lights spin. A swarm of patrol cars and ambulances. COPS gather around Reid as he "explains" what happened--

REID

Then I got Lauren out, but Lucas  
and Tim were still in the house...  
I was going in after them next...

They're all eating it up, patting him proudly on the back.

ANGLE ON Lucas and Lauren, wrapped in blankets, listening nearby as EMTs finish wrapping up their wounds and move off.

LAUREN

You're the one who saved me and  
Reid's taking all of the credit.  
I'm gonna tell them the truth.

She starts to stand, on fire. But Lucas pulls her back.

LUCAS

Best let him play the hero.  
(off her confusion)  
You come from my side of town, you  
learn to keep your head down. Even  
if I *did* say what happened, people  
believe what they want to believe.

LAUREN  
So just let him get away with it?

LUCAS  
You know. That's all that matters.

LAUREN  
Well, that and... that you're now  
the proud owner of my blood debt.

She winks. He smiles. Lauren spots her father approaching.

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
I'll be lucky if he lets me out of  
the house again before graduation.

Sheriff Lozano lands, anger coming off of him like steam.

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
I can explain...

SHERIFF LOZANO  
Not right now. I am still mentally  
composing the lecture I'm gonna be  
giving you for the next ten years.  
But first, let's get you down to  
the clinic, get that leg looked at.

The Sheriff helps Lauren up, leading her to his patrol car.

INT. SHERIFF LOZANO'S CRUISER - MOMENTS LATER

Lauren watches Lucas out the window as they pull away.

SHERIFF LOZANO  
I'm gonna say this once, and only  
once. You stay away from that boy.  
That Russell family is *trouble*...

LAUREN  
But, Daddy--

SHERIFF LOZANO  
This isn't up for discussion.  
(recalibrates)  
I'm willing to revisit the whole UT  
Austin subject-- *just the tour for  
now*-- let's see what they say. But  
this-- this is my one condition.

Off Lauren, as... she watches Lucas disappear from view.

INT. WAITING ROOM - HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Tim's worried parents grip hands as they wait for news. ON Staten seated across the room. PUSH IN ON HIS FACE as...

*A memory FLASHES into focus. A DOCTOR emerges, somber.*

DOCTOR

*I'm afraid Randall didn't make it.*

FLASH BACK TO:

Staten, memory searing him in two. ANOTHER DOCTOR emerges, murmuring to Tim's parents. Staten tenses. But then, they break into happy tears... Tim's mom, ANGIE, crosses.

ANGIE

Tim's gonna be okay. Broken leg, a few ribs. I just-- I don't know how to thank you, Staten. Truly.

He gives Angie's arm a friendly squeeze, then silently exits.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Rain has stopped. A stoic Staten exits. Stops as he spots--

Quinn jumping out of her truck in a hurry and racing for the entrance to the hospital. Sees him, rushes over in a panic.

QUINN

*What happened? Is Tim...*

STATEN

He's just a bit banged up is all.  
Your sister's with him now.

She turns to head in. A beat, then Staten calls after her.

STATEN (CONT'D)

What was that tonight--?  
(off her confusion)  
The date? With Davis? I thought you had better sense than that, Quinn.

Quinn reels back a bit at this, unwilling to go there...

QUINN

I should probably get inside.

He tight nods, starts for his truck. But, Quinn spins back.

QUINN (CONT'D)

You-- You are *unbelievable*, you know that? Unbelievably blind. You have had a piece of my heart for... for as long as I can remember...

STATEN

Don't. Don't do this.

But Quinn can't stop, years of unsaid emotions spilling out:

QUINN

I stuffed my heart away when you and Amalah started dating. And I stuffed it even further when you got married. Moved halfway across the country to avoid it... But when she got sick, I was here for you. Been here ever since, through all of it. The pain, the grief... Then Randall. And I've waited. I waited for you to heal, to choose me. But you're never gonna do that are you?

STATEN

Quinn...

QUINN

It's fine. You don't have to say it. I'm your friend. Nothing more. So why do you even care what I do?

Staten wants to tell her he cares, that she's more to him than a friend, that he's a broken man... Instead he says:

STATEN

I don't.

Off Quinn, heart crushed, as she watches Staten stalk off.

INT. STATEN'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Staten climbs in, jaw clenched. His breath quickens, panic attack taking hold as he realizes he might lose Quinn, too.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

TIGHT ON a pair of weathered cowboy boots. PAN UP TO: Yancy standing at the gas station where the bus dropped him at the start. A SUBURBAN with blacked-out windows rolls to a stop.

Yancy gives an anxious look up the dark road. Then jumps in--

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

Yancy lands in the seat, glances over at the driver.

YANCY  
Ellie's suspicious.

REVEAL -- a nervous Davis Collins in the driver's seat.

DAVIS  
Shit.

YANCY  
Nah, I talked her down. We're good.

DAVIS  
You sure you still wanna go through  
with this? Once we do, there's no  
going back. You know that, right?

YANCY  
That's what I'm counting on.

Off Yancy and Davis, sealing their mystery plan with a shake.

**END PILOT**