

The Last Of Us

Episode 103 - "Long Long Time"

Written for television by

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Double Pink Rev

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EXT. WOODS - MORNING (D6)

The just-rising sun shines straight at us, filtered and dappled through red oaks and eastern pines.

The soft, gentle creak of a New England woods. Bird songs. The hum of insects.

A large pond. Bullfrogs. Dragonflies.

Two old rock walls... a tiered mill dam, slouching from age. Streamwater pours through an opening that was once a sluice.

A brook in a glade. Cold, crystal-clear water rolls by over smoothed stones. We hold on it, and then:

A HAND, bruised and cut, lowers into the water.

JOEL - winces as the water rolls over his bare hand. His breath puffs out in the frigid morning air. He's not wearing his coat. Shivering. But he keeps his hand in the water. Even though it hurts.

After a few moments, his hand closes around a stone. He pulls it from the brook, and TOSSES it to the side, where it thunks softly on weedy grass.

ON THE STONE - thunk, clack, thunk, time skipping as more stones hit the ground... the pile grows...

Another little skip ahead, and we see:

A CAIRN - seven stones, one stacked upon the other, from largest to smallest as the cairn rises.

Joel places another stone on the top. Then a final one.

It's done. He rests on his knees in front of the cairn by the brook by the woods by the sunrise...

He's probably supposed to cry or something, but that's not happening. All he feels is anger at himself. *Couldn't save her. Can't save anyone. Fucking useless.*

A moment or two, and then he makes a vaguely apologetic gesture to the pile of stones.

This is the best I can do.

He gets up on his feet, and then looks back behind him toward the thick part of the woods.

Hard to say what he's thinking. But it's nothing good.

EXT. DEEPER IN THE WOODS - LATER (D6)

On Joel's boots. Crunching softly on the dead leaves. The occasional snap of twig. A slow, steady pace.

On Joel's back - we follow him, his breath trailing behind as he moves inexorably through the woods.

crunch crunch crunch...

And then he stops.

REVERSE TO REVEAL - ELLIE - cross-legged on the ground, Joel's jacket around her like a blanket, facing forward. Joel stands in the B.G. behind her.

She doesn't turn around. Until she does.

ELLIE

You want your jacket back?

He avoids her eyes the moment she turns around. And he doesn't answer. He just sits down next to his backpack, and pulls out some beef jerky.

He tosses her some. Maybe like you would to a dog.

Okay. Fine. If that's how it is. She takes it and eats some.

They both chew in silence. Then:

ELLIE

I've never been in the woods.

He gives a little shrug.

ELLIE

There's more bugs than I thought.

(beat)

Look, I--

JOEL

I don't want your sorries.

ELLIE

I wasn't going to say I'm sorry. I was going to say I've been thinking about what happened. No one made you take me. No one made you or Tess go along with this plan. You needed a truck battery or whatever, and you made a choice.

He looks at her. Wants to be disgusted, but sees how easily her emotions come. His eyes won't fill up. Hers do.

ELLIE
So don't blame me for something that
isn't my fault.

He starts to say something, but nothing comes. Because he has no argument for that. She's right.

And she's just a kid. What's wrong with you? So after a bit, he gives her the tiniest acknowledgment. It isn't her fault.

Good. She wills her eyes to dry. Then:

ELLIE
How much longer?

JOEL
Five hour hike.

She nods. Grabs her backpack and stands up.

ELLIE
We can manage that.

Yeah. Five hours. He can.

EXT. THROUGH THE WOODS - LATER (D6)

Joel and Ellie hike silently up an incline. Ellie keeps looking around like a tourist.

She passes through a small cloud of moths. Holds her arm out, waves through them... it's beautiful...

EXT. STONE BRIDGE - LATER (D6)

Joel and Ellie from a distance, crossing an old stone bridge. No one else around. No one in sight.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - LATER (D6)

Ellie and Joel walk side by side, right down the middle of an old two lane road.

Joel carries his rifle loosely in his hands. Looks to the sides of the road, toward the woods one way or the meadow the other way, as they follow the yellow divider line.

Ellie occasionally takes an extra skip or two to keep up. They continue in silence, and then:

ELLIE
You've gone this way a lot?

Joel's surprised to hear her voice. Been so quiet for a while now. He nods. *Yes. I've gone this way a lot.*

ELLIE
No Infected?

JOEL
Not often.

ELLIE
So what are you looking out for?

JOEL
People.

ELLIE
Oh.
(beat)
Are Bill and Frank nice?

JOEL
Frank is.

ELLIE
(the side of his head)
How'd you get that scar?

JOEL
(not a topic)
Come on.

ELLIE
What? Is it something lame, like you just fell down the stairs or something?

He shoots her a look. *I didn't fall down any goddamn stairs.*

ELLIE
So what then?

JOEL
(just to shut her up)
Someone shot at me and missed.

ELLIE
See? That's cool. You shoot back?

JOEL

Yeah.

ELLIE

You get 'em?

JOEL

No, I also missed. Happens more often than you'd think.

ELLIE

Because you suck at shooting, or like in general?

JOEL

In general. Where'd you get *your* scar?

ELLIE

Breaking and entering a 7-11.

What the fuuuuck? But before he can ask her to elaborate-- she's already moved on to what *she* wants to talk about, which is guns. Like the revolver holstered on his belt.

ELLIE

You know, it's just the two of us, maybe I should have--

JOEL

Nope.

Ellie shrugs. *Whatever, I don't care (yes I do).*

EXT. INTERSECTION / CUMBERLAND FARMS - LATER (D6)

A cluster of three buildings here. A gas station. A convenience store. A podunk bar & grill.

Ivy has crept up through cracks in the asphalt and has engulfed the old gas pumps.

The bar & grill's roof has caved in... too many snows and rains. The walls slump inward.

The convenience store hasn't been reclaimed yet. ELLIE stands before it, looking up at the weathered sign.

ELLIE

Cumberland Farms.

As Joel passes her...

JOEL
Gimme a minute. I gotta grab some
stuff I stashed.

He heads in, and she follows.

ELLIE
Stashed? Why do you have stuff
stashed here?

INT. CUMBERLAND FARMS - SAME (D6)

Joists creak under peeling linoleum, and glass crunches
under foot as Joel enters.

JOEL
We hide supplies on routes in case we
find ourselves short on gear, which I
currently am, cuz--

ELLIE
(not listening)
No way!

She runs over to a MORTAL KOMBAT II ARCADE GAME up against
the wall. No power, cracked glass, but Ellie is wiggling the
joystick and mashing the buttons as if it somehow worked.

ELLIE
You ever play this one?

JOEL
No, wasn't really into those.

ELLIE
I had a friend who knew everything
about this game. There's this one
character called Mileena who takes
off her mask and she has monster
teeth and she swallows you whole and
then barfs out your bones.

Joel winces. Gross.

ELLIE
(wishes it worked)
Man...

Joel is walking around slowly, pushing on the floor with his
boot in spots. Ellie watches for a moment. Amused.

ELLIE
You forgot where you hid your stuff.

JOEL
(defensive)
I'm zeroing in on it. Been a couple
of years.

Now bored with the dead arcade game, Ellie scans the space. Nothing in here but bare shelves and smashed display cases. But there *is* a door to a back room...

ELLIE
I'm gonna look around, see if there's
anything good.

JOEL
Trust me, everything's been picked
over.

ELLIE
Maybe, maybe not.

She heads for the back room door, then:

ELLIE
Anything bad back there?

JOEL
(same as before)
Just you.

ELLIE
Ah. Getting funnier.

She pushes her way through, and exits into the back and out of sight.

Joel stops. Looks around at the floor. Puzzled. He has *definitely* forgotten where he stashed that stuff...

INT. CUMBERLAND FARMS - BACK AREA - SAME (D6)

Ellie turns her flashlight on. Windows back here are covered in grime. There's a desk for the store manager, some empty metal shelves, a file cabinet missing its drawers, torn Dept. of Labor posters, and a rusted open and empty safe.

Bummer. It really has been picked over. And she's about to leave when she sees:

IN THE CORNER OF THE BACK ROOM - the concrete floor has collapsed down where part of the exterior wall failed and crumbled inward.

She moves toward the small crater in the floor. There's a metal hatch under the rubble. Like the kind that might lead to a cellar maybe?

And a tiny gap in the rubble of the crumbled wall/floor.

She shines her flashlight in, and sees: A STORAGE SPACE. Yup. Cellar! She listens carefully. No sound. She tosses a small bit of rubble through the hole. It hits the ground. Nothing screams back or clicks or anything.

Cool. And the hole is juuuuust wide enough for someone really small to wriggle through...

INT. CUMBERLAND FARMS - FRONT AREA - SAME (D6)

Joel PUSHES an empty floor shelving unit. Starts banging on the floor with the butt of his rifle as he goes.

Nope. Wait. Was it behind the counter?

Then that little timer goes off. The one every adult has buried in their brain. The one that makes us call out:

JOEL
You alright back there?

ELLIE (O.S.)
Yup!

All he needed. He heads behind the counter, THUMPING on the floor as he goes...

INT. CUMBERLAND FARMS - CELLAR - SAME (D6)

A beam of light glares down through the hole... then goes out as Ellie squeezes through... then comes back as she slips fully through the hole, her legs dangling... then she drops down the remaining few feet and lands safely.

Her light finds a metal TRASH CAN. She turns it over and moves it under the hole. There's her way out.

Now she looks around, and we only get to see what she sees... just whatever her flashlight lands on.

THE SPACE - cinderblock wall cellar. A few shelves. Some old boxes. Garbage in a corner where rats tore into a Hefty bag. Cans lost to rust, disintegrating containers of god knows what, rotting piles of water-damaged goods. All useless.

But also...

ONE SMALL PURPLE BOX on a shelf. Pristine, still largely under the plastic wrapping of what must have been a multi-unit shipment.

Ellie walks over, gets on her tiptoes... nope, steps up on the bottom rung of the shelf... and grabs the box. We can't see what it is yet, but she's pumped. This is *awesome*.

Then: *a small shuffling sound*

Ellie freezes. Turns slowly...

INT. CUMBERLAND FARMS - FRONT AREA - SAME (D6)

Joel has moved on from the counter area, and is further toward the back now. His boot thunks on something hollow. *Finally*. He gets down on one knee, and starts prying up the loose piece of flooring. And there it is. An old metal TOOLBOX.

He pulls it out.

JOEL
(calling to Ellie)
Found it...

INT. CUMBERLAND FARMS - CELLAR - SAME (D6)

She can't hear Joel down here.

She walks slowly toward the sound... *shuffle...scritch... scritch... shuffle...*

ON THE FAR WALL - where the cinderblocks have crumbled down... the sound is coming from below where her light is shining. So Ellie stops, and slowly crouches...

...the light lowers...

...and there he is.

An Infected.

He's PINNED DOWN under the rubble, which has crushed him to the ground, leaving only its head and one shoulder exposed.

The arm is shoved deep into a ruptured crack in the floor. Seems stuck there.

The Infected looks at Ellie. His mouth opens a bit. The skin cracks. This poor fucker is doomed down here. Can't move. Can't hurt her. Can't do anything but live as long as the Cordyceps can keep it alive. It must have been here for a long time. *Maybe for years...*

Ellie gets closer. Morbid fascination.

She crouches down. The Infected's eyes track her.

She cocks her head, staring at his face... the beautiful fungus and mold and stalks rippling through its skin...

Then she takes out her SWITCHBLADE. *Snick.*

Ellie slowly extends her arm. The Infected watches. Cannot stop what is about to happen.

Ellie touches the edge of the blade to the Infected's forehead... then *presses in* and SLICES across.

FUNGAL FIBERS and white fuzzy mold erupt out through the gash. No blood. No hard skull left... no sign that he feels any pain. This is what's in them. *Nothing human at all.*

For a moment, we think Ellie is feeling pity for this thing. He is pitiful. But then... something else rises in her.

Anger. Her hand tightens around her knife--

--and she PLUNGES it into the top of the Infected's head, burying it all the way to the hilt, piercing through whatever minimal brain tissue Cordyceps has preserved.

The Infected's eyes move to look right at her, and then they lose focus as he finally dies.

Ellie just stares at him. Then pulls her knife out. Satisfied. Good. *Fuck you.*

INT. CUMBERLAND FARMS - FRONT AREA - SAME (D6)

Joel has the toolbox up on a counter. Pulls out BULLETS mostly. A couple of small tools. A roll of bandages and some disinfectant.

JOEL
(annoyed)
Ellie?

No answer.

The other timer in him goes off. The one that fires adrenaline into his gut whether he wants it to or not. Joel grabs his rifle.

JOEL

Ellie?

INT. CUMBERLAND FARMS - BACK AREA - SAME (D6)

He pushes into the back room. Where the hell is she?

JOEL

ELLIE?

ELLIE (O.S.)

Over here...

He turns toward the far corner, and sees her WRIGGLING BACK OUT through the hole, covered in cinderblock dust, but otherwise perfectly fine. She gets to her feet and holds out the PURPLE BOX like a trophy.

It's a box of TAMPAX PEARL tampons.

ELLIE

(triumphant)

Picked over my ass.

She walks right past him, back into the front area. He watches her go. Utterly mystified. And ready to scold her for being so incredibly reckless and stupid, but--

--then he remembers. *He doesn't care.* One hour to go.

INT. CUMBERLAND FARMS - FRONT AREA - MOMENTS LATER (D6)

While Ellie loads the tampons into her backpack. Joel fills his jacket pockets with ammo for his revolver, then takes the rifle and stashes it into the hidey hole.

ELLIE

What are you doing?

JOEL

Not much ammo out there for this thing. Makes it mostly useless.

ELLIE
 (oh come on)
 I mean... if you're just gonna leave
 it there--

He kicks the floorboard back into place, then looks at her with serene finality. Almost a smile, even.

JOEL
 No.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - LATER (D6)

Joel and Ellie walk along. She takes a drink from her canteen, then stows it in her backpack. Then:

ELLIE
 Holy shit.

MILES IN THE DISTANCE, the shape of half of a JET PLANE, wings and all, tilted upright and leaning, and tangled in dead power lines strung between huge metal electrical pylons.

Like the far-off corpse of some ancient titan.

ELLIE
 You fly in one of those?

JOEL
 Few times. Sure.

ELLIE
 So lucky.

JOEL
 Didn't feel like it at the time. Get shoved into a middle seat, pay twelve bucks for a sandwich...

ELLIE
 Dude. You got to go up in the sky.

JOEL
 (the downed plane)
 Yeah well, so did they.

Fair point. A bit more quiet walking, but now something's rolling around in Ellie's head.

ELLIE

So everything came crashing down in one day.

JOEL

Pretty much.

ELLIE

How? I mean, nobody's infected with Cordyceps, everyone's fine, flying around in planes and eating in restaurants... and then all at once? How did it even start? If you have to get bit to be infected, then who bit the first person? Was it a monkey? I bet it was a monkey.

JOEL

It wasn't a monkey. I thought you went to school.

ELLIE

FEDRA school. They don't teach us about how their shitty government failed to prevent a pandemic.

Yeah. That actually makes sense. So:

JOEL

No one knows for sure, but best guess-- Cordyceps mutated. Some of it got in the food supply. Probably a basic ingredient like sugar or flour.

(explains)

There were certain brands of food that were sold everywhere. Across the whole country. Across the world. Bread, cereal...

(remembering)

...pancake mix. You eat enough of it, it'll get you infected.

(beat)

So the food that was tainted all made it to store shelves around the same time on Thursday. People bought it, ate some late Thursday night or Friday morning-- day goes on, they started to get sick. Afternoon, evening, they got worse. Then they started biting. Friday night, September 26, 2003. By Monday, everything was gone.

Ellie takes that in. Heavy. But also--

ELLIE
That makes more sense than monkeys.
(sincerely)
Thanks.

JOEL
(shrugs)
Sure.

They start rounding a bend, and then Joel stops. Suddenly realized something. Ellie stops too. Worried.

ELLIE
What.

JOEL
(points off-road)
We'll cut through the woods here.

ELLIE
Isn't the road easier?

JOEL
Yeah, just-- there's stuff up there
you shouldn't see.

She starts walking backwards, facing him, but heading toward the bend in the road.

ELLIE
But now I have to see.

JOEL
I don't want you to. I'm serious.
Ellie.

ELLIE
Can it hurt me?

JOEL
(reluctantly)
No.

She shrugs and keeps heading for the bend.

ELLIE
You're too honest, man. Shoulda said
axe murderer...

Joel waits a beat, then follows. *If she wants to see, then she's gonna see.*

EXT. AROUND THE BEND - COUNTRY ROAD - MOMENTS LATER (D6)

A patch of dandelions. A butterfly.

The *churr* of unseen cicadas in the air.

Ellie emerges into view. Looks ahead. Nothing. Just road. She calls back to Joel, who hasn't caught up yet.

ELLIE

Uh, whatever it was, it's gone...

She keeps walking. This is actually one of the nicer places she's seen. Cool shady trees to the left, and to the right, a soft field of tall green grass and yellow meadow-rue.

Then Ellie stops.

Ahead, where the meadow turns bare... BONES.

Ellie wills herself to walk closer. Because she wants to see. And at last, she does.

IN THE FIELD - scattered among the weeds and scrub brush...

SKELETONS. Hundreds of bones, some partially covered by soil, some fully exposed and bleached.

Scraps of clothes still flutter about a few of them. There are some damaged SUITCASES littered about as well. Mummified skin stretches across a few skulls, but that's about all.

A massacre. A war crime. Ellie stares in a daze at the field of bones. Men. Women. Children. One skeleton is curled around a tiny cluster of bones. A baby.

Joel joins her. Doesn't say "I told you." No point in it. So he just answers her question before she has to ask.

JOEL

The first week after Outbreak Day, soldiers moved through the countryside, evacuated all the small towns. They'd say you were going to a QZ. And you were, if there was room. If there wasn't...

...you'd get *this*.

ELLIE

These people weren't sick?

JOEL
Probably not, no.

ELLIE
Why kill them? Why not leave them be?

JOEL
Dead people can't get Infected.

Jesus.

ELLIE
How the hell did anyone survive? How
did you survive?

I shouldn't have. But--

JOEL
Turned out I was good at it.

CLOSE ON - the Mother Skeleton. A scrap of faded BLUE fabric flutters under her femur.

PUSH IN ON THE BLUE until it FILLS OUR VISION, and:

flick

The BLUE is GRAY now. The picture is BLACK AND WHITE. Low-res scan lines. We're watching on:

INT. UNFAMILIAR ROOM - DAY - 2003 - FLASHBACK (FB2)

CHEAP CLOSED-CIRCUIT MONITOR - the kind you might see in a store or bank...

The GRAY/BLUE clears the lens of whatever camera is shooting this, and then comes back in, but now we can see it's the DRESS being worn by a woman holding a BABY.

Soldiers are gesturing for her to get in a LINE.

We PULL BACK and see SIX MONITORS, all stacked neatly. On each one, a different view. Four of a HOME INTERIOR. And two are a STREET view. The room is DARK, but for the light coming from the monitors.

CLOSE ON - a MAN, 55, his face illuminated by the glow of the monitors. White guy. Grizzled beard. Quietly seething. But not surprised. No. He knew this day would come.

This is **BILL**. His eyes glance to the monitor with the high angle shot of the street.

EXT. LINCOLN TOWNSHIP STREET - DAY (FB2)

A small lipstick cam is duct-taped to the transformer at the top of a POWER POLE. It aims down at:

THE STREET - where armed soldiers in gas masks are herding townspeople on to the stakebed trucks.

THE FEDRA OFFICER - face covered in a gas mask, stands with a clipboard. Another soldier is holding a thick stack of DRIVER'S LICENSES. He hands the license to the Officer. The Officer checks the name against his list. Hands the license back. Takes another one.

OTHER SOLDIERS move in and out of the homes and stores that line this quaint, small-town New England street.

INT. DARK ROOM - SAME (FB2)

CLOSE ON BILL - dark eyes moving between monitors. Then... a SOUND from above. A door. Then footsteps coming down stairs. More than one person. Two at least.

WIDE on BILL - from behind as he rises... just a silhouette against the glow of the monitors. A silhouette that has picked up a SHOTGUN.

THE STEPS - thud right above. Boots walking directly on top of the ceiling. Bill tracks them from below as we hear the squawk of a radio from above the ceiling. Hard to make out the words. Then a muffled voice.

SOLDIER (O.S.)

No sir. It's empty. No sir, we're in the basement now. There's no one here.

ON BILL - listening to the soldiers leave. At last, silence. Bill smiles up at the ceiling. The deepest satisfaction.

BILL

(whispers)

Not today, you New World Order jackboot fucks.

EXT. STREET - IN FRONT OF MOTHER'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LTR (FB2)

Two gas-masked soldiers emerge from an UNKEMPT COLONIAL. The weedy lawn, and shaded windows scream "stay the fuck away." They head across the street to one of the trucks, jump on, and the trucks begin DRIVING OUT.

The Mother sits on a makeshift bench on the back of the truck, holding her baby tight to her green dress. She nods to a faceless, gas-masked soldier sitting with them, to thank him for their salvation.

He looks away, and her smile fades. *Something's wrong.*

INT. DARK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER (FB2)

The convoy disappears out of view of the monitor. Bill waits for a moment, watching the empty monitor...

...then hits a switch, and FLUORESCENT LIGHTS flicker on, revealing we are in:

A BUNKER - waaaay bigger than we thought. One large room, cinderblock walls, no windows.

Bill's heading toward a LADDER that leads to a trap door in the ceiling, so we only get a moment to see what the room is filled with, but it's enough.

Racks and racks of canned food. Chemicals. Medical supplies. Exposed electrical wiring and cables. Gas masks, camouflage, rubber gloves, nightvision goggles, stacks of clothes. Power tools, hand tools, table saw, workbench...

And yes of course there's a Gadsden flag on the wall screaming "Don't Tread On Me" in black on yellow. But also-- GUNS. My god... the guns. Dozens of pistols, carbines, hunting rifles, AR-15's, shotguns... all resting in their places on a pegboard wall.

Crates of ammo boxes. Plastic jugs of gunpowder. Clear bags of bulk brass casings and slugs. A bullet press.

Bill slings the shotgun over his shoulder as he climbs. He pushes on the trap door, and:

INT. BASEMENT - DAY (FB2)

A STORAGE TRUNK that seems like it would be heavy but in fact is empty and light, lifts up along with the trap door it's been glued to. Bill emerges into the basement. Waits... no sound... then heads up the basement stairs to:

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - FOYER - MOMENTS LATER (FB2)

A door opens, and Bill emerges. He unslings the shotgun. Waits again. Listens.

It's perfectly quiet. So Bill racks the shotgun, and waits *again*. No response. *Okay*. So he heads for the front door.

EXT. STREET - IN FRONT OF BILL'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER (FB2)

Bill walks across his decrepit front yard to the street. Looks to the left. To the right. Cars abandoned in front of homes. A few house doors still open. And not a sound.

Bill is utterly alone. The last man left in this tiny little New England town.

And a dark smile creeps across his face. Good.

EXT. LINCOLN - VARIOUS - A HALF HOUR LATER (FB2)

Waiting time is over. All of this is quick. Boom boom boom.

BILL'S OLD PICKUP - roars to life. Pulls up in front of a neighbor's house with a MOTORBOAT on a trailer rig. Bill starts PULLING shit out. Seat cushions, lifejackets, tosses it all on the lawn, then UNHITCH-- HITCH and:

BILL'S PICKUP TOWING THE BOAT - stops in front of the Cumberland Farms. Crowbar through glass, alarm goes off, door pried open. Then--

Six 50 gallon plastic DRUMS in the pickup bed. NOZZLE into the first one. Gas pump runs. Time to unscrew the security cams from their housings. More hidden eyes for Bill.

PICKUP TRUCK - jerks to a stop. **HOME DEPOT**. Doors locked up, padlocked, windows boarded. As if that would stop him.

HOME DEPOT AISLE - Bill pushes/pulls two carts loaded with spools of wire. Rolls of fencing. Filters, conduit, lumber, chemicals, screws, nails, hinges, torches, blades, bulbs...

Almost like it's another shopping day.

Then: the INTERIOR LIGHTS turn off. Bill glances upward. So *they've shut the grid down...*

BILL
That was fast.

We move to:

NEW BEDFORD GAS FACILITY - high walls, security fencing, security gate... aaaaaaand here comes Bill's pickup... bed filled with fuel barrels and hardware, towing a BOAT filled with even MORE shit...

Boom. Right through the gate arm, through the fencing... more alarms... Bill HOPS out of the truck, big-ass wrench in one hand, bolt cutters in the other... and heads toward the maze of UTILITY PIPES enclosed by a fence... DANGER DANGER DANGER ELECTRIFIED FENCE - HIGH VOLTAGE

Not anymore it ain't. Bill starts cutting through the fence.

EXT. BILL'S STREET - LATER (FB2)

Bill is DRIVING BACK, then STOPS short again.

ACROSS THE STREET - LINCOLN WINE AND SPIRITS.

No dark smile now. This is a different kind of pleasure.

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER (FB2)

He walks into his kitchen with one of those wine bottle boxes... nine bottles in all. He thunks the box down on the table and heads to the gas range. Takes a breath. Let's see if he's got the flow going.

Turns a knob... *tick tick tick... whoosh.* Gas. *Ohhhhhh* yeah.

EXT. BILL'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER (FB2)

BACKYARD - undo the padlocked chain around the tarp-covered... *whoooosh...* BIG-ASS 24 kilowatt GENERATOR. Bill crouches down and turns the GAS VALVE that feeds from the meter into the generator.

Then starts the generator. It ROARS TO LIFE, like a brick-shaped unmuffled Harley, belching exhaust and putting out sweet, sweet POWER.

EXT. BILL'S TOWN - DAY (FB2)

Houses. A church. A little row of stores. Red white and blue bunting on the VFW. Main Street USA if you've ever seen it.

EXT. BILL'S TOWN - TWO YEARS LATER - DAY - 2005 (FB3)**TITLE: 2005**

A CHAINSAW is cutting into a tree.

BILL - chainsawing the last of a number of trees that we see have been cut down. He's making room for:

FENCING. Electrical cables run from the partially installed fence, draping from re-purposed utility pole transformers back to:

A SMALL FARM OF GENERATORS behind the church - apparently gathered up over time, all running off natural gas...

CARS, TRUCKS, MOTORCYCLES are all parked in a long line in front of the VFW.

Everyone's lawn has gone to shit. Everyone's house looks awful. Peeling paint. Weather damage. Fucked up lawns.

Except for Bill's. Bill's looks BETTER than it ever did. Fresh paint. New gutters. Mowed lawn. And lovely window treatments framing the windows...

MORE CABLES - running like nerve clusters from Bill's roof to various utility poles... heading out to wherever. And CAMERAS - everywhere. On poles. On roofs. Taped to mailboxes. Wires, wires, wires...

IN BILL'S BACKYARD - his land has pushed back from where it had been hemmed in by woods. Now it's a few acres. VEGETABLES GROWING in rows and in planters.

A SHED - REFRIGERATED - skinned and dressed DEER hanging in place. A COOP - bustling with hens. Beyond that... MORE FENCING. Concertina wire.

Chicken wire, with mud and GRASS SEED smeared across it, has been laid over a DEEP PIT.

Rusting PIPES jutting out of the ground toward anyone who might approach... not sure what those are for. Yet.

But what we do know is this: this is both paradise and prison. And it has one resident.

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (FB3)

CLOSE ON - a pan, slices of venison medium-rare... then out of the pan, deglaze, add carrots, sage, salt, cracked pepper...

NOW AT THE TABLE - Bill sits alone. Table set perfectly. The meal, exquisitely plated. Glass of '85 Caymus. Bill eats quietly. Pleased. Secure. Alone.

Then: BZZZZZZT. Piezo alarm. Annoyed, he turns to: A STACK OF MONITORS - mostly repurposed TV's from neighboring homes. He uses a remote to cycle through some views on one of the monitors... yup, there it is...

ON THE SCREEN - a lone Infected is approaching his fence from a side street. Bill puts the remote down and continues to eat, watching this like it's a TV show.

EXT. BILL'S FENCE - SIDE STREET - DAY (FB3)

THE INFECTED - walks slowly toward the fence. Its head swivels unnaturally from left to right to left to right--

twang... its foot has moved through a TRIPWIRE.

FOUR CONCEALED SHOTGUNS go off at once. It's deafening. We cut away before we can see the gore of it all.

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (FB3)

Bill gives a little *heh* and then tucks back into his lunch.

EXT. BY THE GATE - SAFE ZONE - ANOTHER DAY - 2007 (FB4)

TITLE: 2007

Bill's truck and boat pull up to the fenced perimeter.

The truck bed and boat are completely full of more supplies. Power tools, wiring, electronics, piping. Lots of piping.

Through the windshield, we see Bill click a remote. An automatic GATE rolls aside, and he drives in.

INT. BILL'S BUNKER - LATER (FB4)

Bill has a CORDLESS POWER DRILL clamped in place on his workdesk. The drill bit is a diamond-burred GRINDING DISK. There's a small transceiver taped to the top, and some wires feed back into small holes he's made in the casing.

But right now, he's duct-taping a piece of metal to the side of the drill, adjusting it... there. That looks right.

He presses a button on a transmitter, and-- THE DRILL TURNS ON, the grinding disk SPINS, contacts the strapped-in metal--

SPARKS - shoot out in a nice directional line. *Perfect*. He stops the drill, and looks over at: A PILE OF TWENTY MORE OF THE SAME CORDLESS DRILLS - still in their boxes.

And he's about to get to work on them when: BZZZZZT. The damn PIEZO buzzer. He checks the monitors on his desk.

Flick flick flick... there. One of the grassed-over pit covers has caved in. Some poor Infected wretch in it.

EXT. BILL'S FENCE - BACK AREA - MINUTES LATER (FB4)

Bill walks with his shotgun. Gets to a gate in the fence line with a keypad posted next to it. Types in a code to shut off the juice, goes through and closes it behind him.

Now he strides toward the open pit, moving surely in a weaving path around the other pit-covers, which are barely identifiable by their slightly greener grass...

Unpleasant this, but has to be done. He racks the shotgun and:

MAN IN PIT (O.S.)
I'm not infected!

Bill stops. Hasn't heard another voice in four years. Hasn't wanted to. And people are more dangerous than Infected.

BILL
Are you armed?

An oddly long pause, then:

MAN IN PIT (O.S.)
No.

BILL
Why did you take that long to answer?

MAN IN PIT (O.S.)
I don't know. I thought about lying for some reason-- but a reason didn't come.

Bill walks verrrrry carefully to the edge of the pit, then quickly aims down, and we see:

FRANK, 50's - at the bottom of the pit. Filthy. Thin. Scared. He has his hands up.

FRANK
I'm just trying to get to Boston.

BILL
Alone?

FRANK
We started with ten...
(beat)
Yeah. I'm alone.

BILL
From where.

FRANK
Baltimore OZ. It's gone. You've heard
of the Fireflies?
(Bill nods)
They fought FEDRA, then raiders came
in... the whole thing fell apart.
There's rumors the same thing went
down in Dallas and Sacramento...

BILL
Not rumors. Are you hurt?

Frank shakes his head. No. Bill stares at him for a moment... then walks away without a word. Frank flops his head back against the dirt wall of the pit. *Fuck.*

TIME CUT TO: down in the pit with Frank. Eyes closed. Breathing slowly. Trying to stay calm. Then... A CLANKING - and he LOOKS UP as a LADDER slides down.

AT THE TOP OF THE PIT - Bill waits with a gun in one hand and a FEDRA SCANNER in the other. As Frank nears the top--

BILL
Stop there.

Bill starts scanning Frank.

FRANK
Is that real? How did you get that?

Bill doesn't answer. Just waits for-- GREEN. Okay. He holsters the scanner and gestures with his gun for Frank to get all the way out. And once he has...

BILL
Boston's that way. You can make it by
nightfall.

FRANK

I'm really hungry. I haven't eaten in two days.

(beat)

That doesn't sound very long out loud, does it. It *feels* long.

BILL

I'm letting you go, so go.

FRANK

Alright-- first, my name's Frank--

BILL

Oh yeah? Well here's the thing, *Frank*. If I feed you, then every bum you talk to about it is gonna show up here looking for a free lunch, and this isn't an Arby's.

FRANK

Arby's didn't have free lunch. It was a restaurant.

(before Bill can react)

I won't talk about it with any bums or hobos or vagabonds. I promise.

(please)

You already know I'm bad at lying.

The two of them stand there in the meadow... Frank quietly waits to see what happens. Bill... well, Bill's dealing with something else at the moment.

Frank's face. Shining in the sun. Sweat dripping. Frank runs his hand through his still-great hair, wiping it out of his eyes, and Bill has to force himself to look away.

But the thing about forcing yourself to look away is that it's just as noticeable as staring...

And that's when Frank knows he's going to get a free lunch.

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - SPARE BEDROOM - LATER (FB4)

The sound of a SHOWER through a slightly ajar door. Bill enters the bedroom with some clothes. Puts them down on the bed. Then looks at the door. Nervous.

BILL

I left some clothes here for you.

FRANK (O.S.)
What?

BILL
CLOTHES.

FRANK
Thank you! I'm almost done... can I
have five more minutes?

BILL
Sure.
(oh right)
SURE.

FRANK
Thank you! This is AMAZING!

Bill stands rooted to the floor. Frank's in there, just beyond that door, just inside a shower, wet and soapy and... *Jesus Christ... the fuck is wrong with me?*

He exits, closing the door behind him.

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER (FB4)

The formal dining room. It opens to the foyer, and beyond that, a parlor. A grandfather clock softly *ka-tunks*.

FRANK - sits alone at the end of the dining table... wearing Bill's crisp clothes, scrubbed clean, with his (really, really, really good hair) swept back.

He studies the table. China. Silverware. Wine glass. Linen napkins. Interesting...

He gets up and crosses to a mantle. No photos. Swipes a finger across. Dusty. *So. Some things get attention. Some things do not. Noted.*

THE DOOR TO THE KITCHEN - swings open, and Bill catches Frank out of his seat and looking around... whoops, Frank hustles back to his seat, and Bill puts his plate down.

Then Bill takes the seat fully opposite Frank, and puts his own plate down. Takes the bottle of wine he stowed under his left arm, and thunks it on the table.

Frank stares at his plate in shock. Rabbit leg confit, haricot verts, cherry tomatoes, sweet potato puree. He looks up at Bill, then back at the food...

Then TUCKS IN, shoves a chunk of rabbit in his mouth... *oh my sweet lord on high...* barely swallows it, and:

FRANK
What... the fuck.

BILL
(not used to praise)
Everything tastes good when you're starving.

FRANK
Yeah, but-- not like this. My god.

POP. Bill has uncorked the red. As he walks over to Frank and pours, Frank sidewayses his head to read the label.

FRANK
A man who knows to pair rabbit with a Beaujolais.

BILL
I know. I don't seem like the type.

Frank unsidewayses. Looks right up at Bill.

FRANK
Nah, ya do.

Frank gives a little smile, then takes a big sniff of the wine. Now a mouthful. Rolls it. Savors it.

Then swallows. Lets the joy run through him. Looks at Bill. More than appreciation. Pleasure.

CUT TO:

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER (FB4)

BILL - watches Frank finish the last of his food. Finally:

BILL
I have more, if--

FRANK
I can't. I want to, believe me. But-- whoof. Thank you. Thank you.

BILL
(awkward)
You're welcome.

FRANK
So I guess I'll be going then.

Oh. Ummm...

FRANK
But *first*--

Ooh?

Frank heads toward the parlor. Bill follows, confused...

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - PARLOR - SAME (FB4)

Frank crosses to a STEINWAY CHIPPENDALE PARLOR GRAND angled in the corner of the parlor. It's a bit dusty.

FRANK
I've been staring at this the whole time. Antique?

BILL
1948.

FRANK
Wow. You know how much these are worth?

BILL
Currently, nothing.

Frank opens the bench, pulls out a stack of sheet music. Before Bill can protest--

FRANK
Fur Elise, Tales of Hoffman? Yuck. These aren't yours.

BILL
My mother's. Could you not--

FRANK
(flip flip flip)
Ugh, ugh, ugh, AH.

Holds up "Best of Linda Ronstadt".

FRANK
This is you.
(flips through, and)
Oh my god. My favorite.

Before Bill can stop him, Frank sits, flops the book open, lifts the keyboard cover, and starts playing.

It's not quite as good as we would have hoped. Frank's more confident than talented. But it's okay at least, until:

FRANK
 (sings)
Love will abide
Take things in stride

Bill's eyes go wide. Frank is pretty much tone-deaf...

FRANK
Sounds like good adviii--

Bill snatches the sheet music away.

BILL
 No!

Frank stops.

BILL
 No no no. Not that song. No.

FRANK
 Well, I'm not a professional--

BILL
 Neither am I, but--

Ah, Bill just realized he fucked up there. Too late. Frank has stood up and moved aside. *Show me, then.*

FRANK
 And then I'll leave.

Goddammit... fine. Bill sits down. Frank shrugs. *Well?*

Bill starts to play. It's already good.

And then he starts to sing, and it's fucking glorious. Heartbreaking. Perfect. Beautiful beautiful beautiful.

We stay with Bill. Only on him. Knows it all by heart.

BILL

*Love will abide
Take things in stride
Sounds like good advice
But there's no one at my side
And time washes clean
Love's wounds unseen
That's what someone told me
But I don't know what it means
'Cause I've done every thing I know
To try to make you mine
And I think I'm gonna love you
A long, long time*

Bill stops. Looks to Frank, and NOW we see Frank, stunned. Tears tracking down his face. He wipes his eyes. Then:

FRANK

Who's the girl? The one you're singing about?

BILL

(doesn't understand)
There is no girl.

FRANK

I know.

Frank leans down, and kisses Bill. Bill freezes, then rises so Frank's not so stooped over, and kisses him back, and we just let them be together until the kiss ends.

And now it's Bill's turn to look like he's seen God.

FRANK

What's your name?

BILL

Bill.

FRANK

(pleased)
Go take a shower, Bill.

INT. BILL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER (FB4)

Curtains drawn. Dim light. The door opens, and Bill stands there with just a towel around his waist.

ON THE BED - Frank is lying down, waiting. Nude, but the low light and shadows add mystery.

Bill takes a breath, then walks over to the bed. Stops.
Doesn't have the nerve to--

Never mind. Frank just reached over and undid the towel. He
looks at Bill's body, then up at Bill's face.

Yes. I like you.

Bill gets next to Frank on the bed. Frank rolls over so that
he's lying on top of Bill, chest to chest, face to face,
everything to everything.

Bill tenses.

FRANK
Have you done this before?

Bill shakes his head no.

FRANK
Not with anyone?

BILL
With a girl a long time ago. But--

FRANK
Oh I know. So. I'm going to start
with the simple things.

BILL
(scared)
Okay.

FRANK
But before I do, I want you to know
I'm not a whore. I don't have sex for
lunches. Not even great ones. So if I
do this, I'm going to stay for a few
more days.

Frank lowers his face to Bill's. Whispering. Mouth to mouth.

FRANK
Is that okay?

BILL
Yes.

Frank gives Bill a soft, slow kiss...

...then he slides down Bill's body, and:

EXT. BILL'S HOUSE - STREET - DAY - 2010 (FB5)

BLAM. Bill's screen door flings open as Frank STORMS OUT, with Bill following.

FRANK

Oh FUCK you!

Frank's hair is shorter. Bill's beard is grayer.

TITLE: 2010

BILL

Come on. Hey, would you stop?

Frank stops in the street. Turns on him.

FRANK

Do I ask for things? Ever? No-- why am I saying that? This isn't even for ME. It's for us.

Bill gestures to the other houses on the street. Their unkempt lawns.

BILL

Who cares what they look like?

FRANK

I do! Our home is not just our house. It's everything around us.

BILL

Oh give me a fucking break--

FRANK

I'm sorry, I forgot-- I live in *this* world-- you live in a psycho bunker where 9-11 was an inside job and the government are all Nazis.

BILL

The government ARE all Nazis!

FRANK

Well, yeah, NOW, but not THEN!

(keep it to a simmer)

I am asking for some paint and some gasoline for the lawnmower. That's all. I'll do everything else myself.

Bill starts to speak, but:

FRANK

Bill, if you say "resource management" so help me I will run through one of your tripwires.

Okay. Okay. Bill relents.

BILL

Just tell me why.

FRANK

I did.

(trying to connect)

Paying attention to things is how we show love. This is my street too. Let me love it the way I want to.

Before Bill can say yes...

FRANK

And I'm fixing up some of the shops.

BILL

Whoa whoa whoa--

FRANK

Not the stupid ones. But the wine shop and the furniture store. And the clothing boutique.

BILL

The *boutique*? Are we hosting formal garden parties now?

FRANK

No, but we are going to have friends.

Bill gets very, very serious.

BILL

Excuse me?

FRANK

(not backing down)

We are going to make friends, and we will invite them to visit.

BILL

We don't have friends, Frank. We will never have friends because there are no friends to be had.

Frank weighs his next words carefully. Because he knows they're a bit explosive.

FRANK
I've actually been talking to a nice woman on the radio.

A volcano explodes inside Bill.

BILL
You WH--

EXT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - ANOTHER DAY (FB6)

JOEL and TESS sit at a table. Lunch laid out before them. Tess eats with gusto, almost done. Joel just stares ahead.

REVERSE TO REVEAL - Bill and Frank on the other side of the table. Frank is almost finished as well. Bill pokes at his food with a fork in one hand. He rests his other hand on a GUN on the table, basically aiming at Joel.

TESS
This is amazing.

FRANK
Right?
(glances at Bill's gun)
Can you not, please?

Bill keeps his hand on the gun.

JOEL
(shrugs)
I'm the same way.

FRANK
Oh, you're a paranoid schizophrenic too?

BILL
(annoyed)
I'm not schizophrenic.

Tess redirects the conversation.

TESS
Can I just say-- gun aside, which I get-- how nice this is? I mean, to have a civilized meal in such a beautiful place?

THE STREET - has been transformed. Houses are painted. Lawns are mowed. Flowers in window planters. Trimmed hedges.

TESS

It's been a long time. Thank you. I mean that. Even if we don't end up working together... I needed this.

Frank reaches across the table. Hand on hers.

FRANK

We *are* working together.
 (no-look reply to Bill)
 We are.
 (to Tess)
 C'mon, I want to show you something.

He gets up, leading her into the house.

BILL

No-- not inside. Frank. FRANK.

Frank and Tess head inside, leaving Bill and Joel alone.

Goddammit. Bill fumes, then turns his angry eyes toward Joel, who was about to bite into a roll... but opts instead to put it back down on his plate.

JOEL

I understand. If my--

Hmm. Joel's not sure what to call Frank. So he goes with:

JOEL

--if *mine*... invited strangers into our situation, I wouldn't be happy either. But of all the people he *could* have found on the radio? We're actually decent people just trying to get by.

BILL

Oh. Aren't I lucky then.

JOEL

(short fuse)
 There's stuff we have in the QZ you don't have here. Medicines, books, machine parts. We could help each other and get that gun out of my face.

Bill leans back. Impressed with Joel's anger. He holsters his gun. And starts eating his food.

Joel goes back to eating his food too, now that he can. There's a quiet moment, then gestures to the surroundings.

JOEL

So what-- you were a prepper or something?

BILL

"Survivalist."

(puts his fork down)

Maybe you are decent people, maybe you're not, doesn't matter. We're self-sufficient here. And I don't need you or your friend complicating our lives. Is that clear?

A beat, then Joel nods toward the electrified fence.

JOEL

That's got another year on it, tops. Galvanized wire, already starting to corrode. I can get you ten spools of high-tensile aluminum. Last you the rest of your life.

(and Frank's too)

Lives.

Then Joel goes back to eating. Bill turns back to look at his fence. Then back at Joel. *Son of a bitch...*

EXT. STREET BY THE GATE - SAFE ZONE - A LITTLE LATER (FB6)

By the gate, Frank helps Tess shove two backpacks full of JEANS and SHIRTS.

TESS

You sure about this?

FRANK

It's not a *gift*. You'll come back, we'll trade-- oh! and I had this idea that we use codes for the radio, in case anyone's listening...

FURTHER BACK - Bill watches. Annoyed. Joel walks up from behind, carrying yet another one of Frank's donated backpacks. He stops by Bill's side. Something he feels compelled to tell the man.

JOEL

FEDRA's never gonna come out here,
and you're well-protected against
stray Infected. But sooner or later,
there'll be raiders. They'll beat
that fence. And your tripwires.
They'll most likely come at night,
quiet and armed.

Bill stares right into Joel. *You sure know a lot about raiders, pal.* And Joel senses what Bill's implying, but he's not about to respond to that.

BILL

We'll be fine.

Okay. Joel warned the man... nothing else to do. So he leaves Bill to join Tess and Frank.

And now that he's alone, Bill doesn't seem so casual about Joel's words. Or confident. No... *he's afraid.*

EXT. BACK AREA - JUST BEYOND FENCE LINE - LATE NIGHT (FB6)

Work lights illuminate the ground. Bill is TRENCHING between those METAL PIPES that are sticking up. We see now that the POWER DRILLS have been taped to the end of the pipes.

Bill's got MORE PIPE out here. He's installing more of these things, whatever they are.

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME (FB6)

Frank peeks out at this through the drapes. Worried.

EXT. STREET - SAFE ZONE - ANOTHER DAY - 2013 (FB7)

BILL - RUNNING, panting for breath, as if being CHASED. But:

He's just trying to keep up with Frank as they jog in a LOOP around their safety zone. Frank is sweating, but barely breathing hard.

TITLE: 2013

FRANK

(looks back)

Pick it up...

BILL
 (gasping)
 I can't. Ow.

Bill slows to a stop. Then painfully sits. Starts rubbing to make the shin splints go away as Frank jogs back to him.

FRANK
 Another half mile.
 (tempting him)
 I have something to show you...

Bill looks up at him, hopeful.

FRANK
 Not that.

Bill scowls. But fine. He struggles to his feet, and:

EXT. ANNIE'S BOUTIQUE - LATER (FB7)

A small clothing shop. Frank's been keeping it up. But right now, he's got his hands over Bill's eyes, and leading him to:

BEHIND THE BOUTIQUE

FRANK
 Ready?

BILL
 (sighs)
 Yes.

Frank removes his hands, and Bill sees something that actually makes him smile. A real fucking smile.

BILL
 Oh.

BILL'S POV - Frank has turned the ground behind the boutique into a STRAWBERRY PATCH. Bright red berries hang from their stems, sharing the plants with white and yellow flowers.

Bill turns to Frank. Amazed.

FRANK
 I traded Joel and Tess one of your guns for a packet of seeds.

BILL
 (uhhh)
 Which gun?

FRANK

A little one.

A beat, then Bill shrugs. Not like he doesn't have enough guns. Frank takes him by the hand, and they sit down in the strawberry patch. Each one picks a berry. EATS.

Amazing. A moment where they just enjoy. Then Bill looks at his sweat-soaked shirt, and Frank's not-that-wet shirt, and:

BILL

I'm sorry.

FRANK

For what?

BILL

Getting older faster than you.

FRANK

I like you older. Older means we're still here.

Bill smiles at that too-- but it fades to a soft ache.

FRANK

What?

BILL

I was never afraid before you showed up.

Frank kisses Bill. Bill starts to lower down to the ground with Frank--

FRANK

(breaks the kiss)

Not on the strawberries.

BILL

Right.

Frank gets up. Bill struggles a bit to his knees-- Frank reaches down. Bill takes his hand, Frank helps him up, and:

EXT. FIELD BEHIND BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - NIGHT (FB7)

Moonlight. Crickets. The wind rustles through the trees.

THROUGH THE CHAIN LINK FENCE - nothing. Until a MAN rises from the ground in the distance. He turns back and gives a little WHISTLE.

And now we see A DOZEN MORE MEN fifty feet back behind HIM getting up... and the silhouettes begin moving toward us...

CLOSE ON - FEET moving quietly on the ground.

CLOSE ON - men's hands on rifles... all of them armed...

THROUGH THE FENCE - the men are very close now. One of them nods to another, and that guy drops a backpack and pulls out a set of BOLT-CUTTERS. Rubber grips.

ON THE BOLT CUTTER GUY - walking in profile... there's a post in the ground up ahead he's not paying attention to...

CLOSE ON THE POST - a small MOTION SENSOR - rack to...

THE BOLT CUTTER GUY crossing in front of it, and:

A WHIRRING - like sprinklers starting? They look around, and they see:

CLOSE ON THE GROUND: one of Bill's ANGLE GRINDERS is attached to a short length of pipe, and it's spinning to full speed, sending a PLUME OF SPARKS OUT...

WIDE AROUND THEM - various GRINDERS send more jets of sparks out... then very quickly: they hear a HISSING NOISE, and:

THE SPARKS IGNITE THE FLOWING GAS - turning each of the stubbed PIPES into FLAMETHROWERS.

Bolt Cutter guy catches a blast FULL ON - stumbling back and to the ground, completely engulfed in fire...

The men SCATTER, shouting at each other in the dark...

VOICES IN THE DARK

Go around! Go around! MOVE! To the back! Make this fucker bleed!

We hear screaming. Another raider has been set on fire, and:

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (FB7)

We find: FRANK - sleeping peacefully. Then:

SHOUTING. Men's voices from somewhere outside.

Frank wakes up. Turns over. Bill isn't there. He looks ahead and... my god. He goes to the window and through it sees:

FOUNTAINS OF FIRE shooting out from all of the pipes Bill had put into the ground... and RUNNING AND STUMBLING amid the light of the flames and the darkness of night--

--PEOPLE ON FIRE. Frank backs away. Terror rising. Then from other directions-- GUNSHOTS. Screaming.

FRANK

BILL?

He runs out of the room and:

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - FOYER - MOMENTS LATER (FB7)

Frank comes rushing down the stairs. Frantic.

FRANK

BILL? BILL?

He stops and sees: THE FRONT DOOR IS OPEN.

He moves into:

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NOW (FB7)

Through the dining room window, Frank can see BILL in the street, firing his RIFLE at unseen targets.

Frank opens the drawer of a corner hutch, pulls out a GUN...

...and screwing up his courage, heads out to:

EXT. STREET - IN FRONT OF BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - CONT. (FB7)

BILL stands alone in the middle of the street, a TRANSMITTER holstered to his belt, and a RIFLE in his hands. He's aiming out into the darkness. Waiting for something to break through his defenses...

Frank rushes over to him. Then looks out to see:

FIRE JETS - dozens of them SPOUTING FLAME at crazy angles, POWER DRILLS shooting SPARKS at the mouths of the pipes to ignite what must be natural gas--

--all of it surrounding their safe zone. We see burning piles on the ground that must be corpses...

We see PEOPLE FLEEING, glimpses of them illuminated by the flames... one last burning body falls to the ground...

--and Bill lowers his rifle. Turns to Frank. Pleased. *You're safe*. He pulls the transmitter from his belt, presses a code into it, and--

--the SPARKS stop firing as the drills stop spinning... the FLAME JETS die down. And Bill is about to stash the transmitter back on his belt when he notices BLOOD on it.

Ow. He looks down and sees his pants SOAKING RED. He pulls the waistband down... and he and Frank see-- a small BULLET HOLE in his HIP.

Blood is PULSING OUT. A lot. A vein or artery. A big one.

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LTR (FB7)

Frank helps Bill in, wipes all the crap off the table, and lays Bill down on it. Bill's already losing consciousness.

Frank heads out of frame. We stay with Bill, even as we hear Frank BANGING AROUND in the kitchen...

BILL
Frank. Frank...?

FRANK (O.S.)
(distracted)
Right here...

Frank RETURNS with a MEDICAL KIT, scissors, whiskey...

BILL
Keep the gas on. The fence will kill the rest...

FRANK
Yup. Okay.

Frank is ALL BUSINESS, moving quickly and confidently as he starts cutting Bill's pants along the seam.

BILL
I made a list for you...

FRANK
Uh huh. Tell me about the list.

Frank washes the wound with whiskey. It's bleeding profusely. He does not panic. He just moves faster.

BILL
I have copies of all the keys.

FRANK
Good.

BILL
Call Joel.

FRANK
Uh huh.

BILL
You can't be here alone.

FRANK
I'm not alone. You're here.

BILL
No. Call Joel. Call Joel.

We PUSH IN ON BILL - his face relaxing. Brain losing oxygen.

BILL
He'll take care of you...

VOICE (O.S.)
Bill. *Bill?*

EXT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY (FB8)

BILL - now in his 70's, looks over at Frank.

BILL
Hmm?

FRANK
It's getting cold.

BILL
Okay. Let me bring you inside.

Bill gets up and crosses to Frank, who is in a wheelchair.

Frank, who looks much older than Bill. Much, much older. Something's happened over the years. He adjusts his lap blanket, and we see the tremor in his hands. Parkinson's. Maybe ALS. Either way, we know enough.

Bill unlocks the wheelchair brakes, and wheels Frank inside.

We let them go, and pan slowly to reveal the street in front of their home. The street we know so well. The paint on the houses has faded. The flower beds are dead. But the lawns are still mowed.

TITLE: 2023

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - PARLOR - DAY (FB8)

THE PARLOR - now an art room. Dozens of PAINTINGS of the house, the streets, the stores...

Some of the paintings are beautiful. Some are shaky and degraded in clarity and form. FRANK - sits in his wheelchair, painting a mad patchwork of red and green. It's not working. And he knows it.

EXT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - ACROSS THE STREET - DAY (FB8)

A LAWNMOWER moves slowly through grass. Wheels rusting. Blade rusting. Motor sputtering.

Bill pushes the mower. A slight limp. The kind that's baked into your bones. His knees ache. His knuckles are arthritic. But he flexes his fingers, then wraps them back around the mower's handlebar, and keeps going.

EXT. BY THE GATE - SAFE ZONE - DAY (FB8)

Frank is TRADING some items from a box on his lap with THREE WOMEN, 30's-40's, each with bikes and baskets. Transients from god-knows-where.

BILL stands behind Frank, RIFLE IN HAND, old eyes on the women. One of them gives him a warm smile.

Which Bill hates. *Fuckin' women aren't even scared of me anymore. No one's scared of an old man.*

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER (FB8)

Bill and Frank eat together, next to each other at the table. Frank struggles a bit with his fork, but this isn't anything new.

BILL
(remembers)
Did you take your pill?

FRANK
Oh. No.

Frank reaches into the pocket of his cardigan and pulls out a ZIPLOC BAGGIE full of pills. Familiar-looking ones.

He tries to open the bag, but Bill just takes it from him, opens it, puts one pill in front of Frank, and seals the baggie up.

Frank doesn't complain. Just takes the baggie, puts it back in his cardigan, and pops the pill.

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - LATER (FB8)

Frank sits in the TUB. Bill is on a stool next to him, helping Frank with his back... his hair...

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER (FB8)

Bill grits his teeth at the pain in his lower back as he maneuvers Frank out of the chair and into the bed.

There we go. Done. No need for mawkish smiles or thanks or pats on the arm. We're seeing this for the first time, but they've been doing this for years.

We stay with Frank. The bed shifts as Bill gets in, rolls over a bit to kiss Frank on the cheek, then rolls back out of frame.

Now the click of a lamp, and the lights go out. Frank closes his eyes.

Then opens them. Thinking.

Deciding.

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING (FB9)

ON BILL - as his eyes open. He rolls over and-- Frank's not beside him. Frank is back in his wheelchair.

Bill doesn't understand. How did he even do that?

FRANK

It took most of the night.

(laughs)

I'm exhausted.

Bill, annoyed, gets out of bed and walks over to the chair.

BILL

I don't want you falling asleep in the chair.

FRANK

I won't.

BILL

You will, and then your feet get blue. I'm not fighting about it. Back in bed.

FRANK

I promise you I'm going to stay up.

BILL

Why?

FRANK

Because this is my last day.

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - PARLOR - LATER (FB9)

Frank sits in his chair by the window, letting the sun warm his face.

Bill sits across from him. Red eyes. At a loss.

BILL

What if we find a doctor? What if someone shows up who can help?

FRANK

Who's coming Bill? The door-to-door MRI salesman?

Bill pleads silently for Frank to work with him, but:

FRANK

There wasn't anything to cure this before the world fell apart.

(shush)

I've made up my mind.

Frank gestures for Bill to come closer. Bill shakes his head petulantly. Looks away. Pursing his lips to keep the feelings down. *No. I don't want to.*

FRANK

Bill.

Bill turns back to look at Frank, and he is so angry and so scared all at once, that it nearly breaks Frank's heart.

FRANK

Oh.

A moment. Then Bill takes a heavy breath and crosses over to sit next to Frank. Frank touches his head to Bill's. Then:

FRANK

I'm not going to give you the "every day was a wonderful gift from God" speech. I have had a lot of bad days. I've had bad days with you too. But I've had more good days with you than with anyone else.

(beat)

Give me one more good day. Starting now. Make me some toast. Sit with me while I finish--

(points)

--this terrible painting, and then bring me to the boutique, where I'll pick outfits for us--

(don't argue)

You'll wear what I ask-- then you'll cook me a delicious dinner, we'll get married... then you'll crush all of these up--

Frank removes the BAGGIE OF PILLS from his cardigan pocket and gives them to Bill.

FRANK

--and put them in my wine. I'll drink it, then you will take me by my hand, bring me to our bed... and I will fall asleep in your arms.

Bill starts to cry.

BILL

I can't.

FRANK

Do you love me?

BILL

Yes.

FRANK

Then love me the way I want you to.

Bill nods. Of course. It's killing him. But of course.

EXT. THEIR SAFE ZONE - LATER (FB9)

SCORE ONLY - we see Bill and Frank from afar. Bill pushing the chair. We shouldn't know what they're talking about. That's only for them to know.

DISSOLVE - the strawberry patch, now a HUGE BRAMBLE of fruit, wild and unkempt. A mad patchwork of red and green.

DISSOLVE - the sun is lowering over the neighborhood.

The houses.

The garden.

The pit where Bill once found a dirty, starving man...

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - PARLOR - LATER (FB9)

Bill sits on the piano bench where it all began, right next to Frank, who is in his wheelchair.

No need to kneel for this. Kneeling is for children. Bill puts a RING on Frank's finger. Then he helps Frank put a ring on his own finger.

That's all they need to make it permanent. Two plain rings. And one simple kiss.

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT (FB9)

Frank sits right where he was the first time Bill fed him. Still in his tuxedo. Candles on the table. An open bottle of wine waiting to be poured.

Bill enters and puts a plate down in front of Frank.

Rabbit leg confit, haricot verts, cherry tomatoes, sweet potato puree. Of course.

DISSOLVE TO - candles are lower. Bill and Frank are talking quietly to each other. Bill cuts Frank's food. Feeds him.

DISSOLVE TO - a finished plate. Candles nearly gone. Frank looks ahead. A little scared. But ready.

Score fades. The world comes back.

Bill pours two glasses of wine. Then takes a baggie of CRUSHED WHITE POWDER from his pocket, stirs it into one of the glasses... takes a breath... then slides it to Frank.

FRANK
Will it be enough?

BILL
(big time)
Yeah.

Frank takes the glass with two hands. Then drinks it all down in one go.

Bill watches him. So. It's done. Then Bill lifts his own glass, and drinks all of *his* wine down in one go as well.

Frank looks at him, confused. Why would he gulp his wine down like-- wait. The bottle of wine was already open when they sat down. Oh. For fuck's sake.

FRANK
Was there already-- ?

BILL
Enough to kill a horse.

Frank is stunned. *Why?*

BILL
This isn't the tragic suicide at the end of the play. I'm old. I'm satisfied.
(beat)
And you were my purpose.

Frank takes that in, then:

FRANK
I do not support this. And I should be furious. But from an objective point of view, it's incredibly romantic.

Frank holds his hand out.

FRANK
Take me to bed.

Bill takes Frank's hand... and then puts it on top of his own as he wheels Frank out of the room.

We follow behind them as they move into the foyer... down the hall... toward the open door of their room... their bed just visible to us.

So we stop here and let them go ahead. We watch Bill wheel Frank into their room...

...and then he closes the door, shutting us out of their final hour.

The rest belongs to them.

We DISSOLVE SLOWLY TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE PERIMETER FENCE - PRESENT DAY (D6)

Wind rustles through trees. A slight hum from the fence. Far off, the sound of running generators...

Beyond that... homes. The lawns are decidedly UNMOWED. Six inches of growth. Dandelions.

JOEL AND ELLIE - step into view. She looks at the fence. The town. Something feels creepy about it.

ELLIE

This is...

JOEL

(distracted)

Yeah.

He's studying the scene. Looking up at a CAMERA that's pointing down at them. Then back at the street beyond the fence. Huh.

Joel hesitates for a moment, then walks up to the fence and types a code into a keypad by the gate. 7-2-0-1-2-6.

There's a beep, and the HUM stops. Joel puts his left hand in his pocket, and carefully taps the fence with the gun in his right hand.

No shock. Huh. Good. He opens the gate and nods for her to head in. He follows her, closing the gate behind them, and re-entering the code. The HUM returns.

EXT. STREET - SAFE ZONE - MOMENTS LATER (D6)

Joel walks slowly. Shifting his eyes from left to right. Ellie follows behind.

ELLIE

Who are we watching out for now?

JOEL

I'm not sure.

Then he stops and turns to her.

JOEL

Bill's got this whole town wired up with traps. Step where I step, and only where I step.

She nods. Then follows him carefully as he resumes walking, looking down at his feet and hers.

ELLIE

Why did you put your hand in your pocket? When you touched the fence.

JOEL

Old electrician trick. If you get shocked, the current runs down your right side into the ground instead of crossing through your heart.

ELLIE

Got it. Left hand in pocket.

He doesn't look back at her, but he notes her curiosity. Not what he would expect from a girl. Or anyone, really. He's not used to someone's interest.

ELLIE

Lot of cars. You could get a battery out of one of them.

JOEL

Not a working one. These are all pre-Cordyceps. They stopped holding a charge around the time you were born. The only new ones are military.

ELLIE

So... how are these two guys supposed to help me?

JOEL

I don't know. This wasn't my idea.

Oh. Right. Ellie knows enough to let that go, so they walk along in silence...

EXT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER (D6)

Joel and Ellie stand in front of the house. The lawn is just as overgrown as the others. Not good. Joel frowns.

Already knows. But needs to make sure. He checks his sidearm. Full clip. One in the chamber. Then he listens at the door. Nothing. Turns the knob. It's unlocked.

Hmm. That's not good either. He pushes the door open, and:

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - FOYER - SAME (D6)

He enters. Ellie follows, taking in the beauty of the house. But also the strangeness of its existence in this world.

ELLIE
(softly)
What the fuuuuck....?

JOEL
(calls out)
Bill?

No answer. He double-grips his gun.

JOEL
Frank?

Nothing. He scans the parlor. All the paintings are where we last saw them. Then the dining room. Plates with bits of dried, decayed food.

A dead bouquet in a vase. The blobby wax remains of candles.

Joel looks across the dining room toward the door that leads to the kitchen. It's closed.

Joel agonizes briefly over strategy. Is it safer for Ellie to stay where she is, or to follow him as he searches?

JOEL
(no good choice)
Stay here. If you see anything or
hear anything, just... yell.

Ellie nods. But now there's fear in her stomach. Not of any monsters or men, but:

ELLIE
What if they're gone?

He turns to her. And the look on his face is "I am not having this conversation with you." So she stops.

And then he heads toward the kitchen... and goes through the door, which swings shut behind him.

Ellie's alone.

She looks around, fidgety. Grandfather clock. Dining table. Two plates on it. Two wine glasses. An empty baggie.

Now she looks over at the parlor. All the paintings. The dying house plants. The piano.

She walks into:

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - PARLOR - SAME (D6)

She moves slowly and quietly, as if an invisible voyeur of someone else's life.

The paintings are kind of amazing in their own way. And all the old photos on the mantle. Some black and white. Some fuzzy 70's Kodachrome. All dead people.

She runs her fingers over the piano keys. Tinkles a few notes. Weird...

And then she sees something else. Something perhaps down on a coffee table. Something we don't. She reaches out and:

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER (D6)

Joel moves through the house. It's weird. The lights still work. But no one's here, and from the dust, no one's been here for a while.

He gets to Bill and Frank's bedroom door. Knocks softly.

Sniffs the air. Nothing really. Tries the knob. Locked.

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER (D6)

Looking out toward the foyer.

JOEL (O.S.)

Ellie?

He appears, anxious, then shakes his head. There she is. Sitting at the dining room table.

A handwritten letter in her hand.

ELLIE

It's from Bill.

She holds up the torn-open envelope, which says:

TO WHO^MEVER,

BUT PROBABLY JOEL

So of course she opened it.

ELLIE

Well I figured I fell under
"whomever."

(beat)

It came with this.

She slides a CAR KEY across the table. Joel takes it. Shakes his head, like it's the stupidest gift possible.

JOEL

Useless.

(beat)

So they're dead?

She nods. And he pretty much already knew. But for a moment, he thought maybe the universe wasn't going to punch him in the face again.

He sits down. Defeated.

ELLIE

Do you wanna...?

He waves for her to read it if she wants. Because it's not like it matters.

ELLIE

(reads, reluctant)

*August 29, 2023. If you find this,
please do not come into the bedroom.
We left a window open so that the
house wouldn't smell, but it will
probably be a sight.*

Joel's barely listening. In a daze. Trying to figure out what the hell he's supposed to do now.

ELLIE

*I'm guessing you found this, Joel,
because anyone else would have been
electrocuted or blown up by one of my
traps hehhehheh. Take anything you
need.*

(MORE)

ELLIE (cont'd)

The bunker code is the same as the gate code but in reverse, do not make a mistake or you will also get blown to shit. I am not joking. Don't fuck that up hehhehheh.

She glances up at Joel to see if he'll even acknowledge her, but... no. He just stares at the floor. Lost.

ELLIE

Anyway, I never liked you, but still, it's like we're friends. Almost. And I respect you.

Ellie looks at Joel. Seeing him as his own person for once.

And she can tell that in his own way, Joel is proud to hear what Bill just said.

ELLIE

So I'm gonna tell you something because you're probably the only person who'll understand. I used to hate the world, and I was happy when everyone died.

That makes Joel lift his head and look at her. Jesus.

ELLIE

But I was wrong because was one person--

(beat)

He left out the "there" I think... --there was one person worth saving. And that's what I did. I saved him, and then I protected him. That's why men like you and me are here. We have a job to do, and god help any motherfuckers who stand in our way.

Ellie stops. But Joel knows there's no way that's the last sentence. So he waits, and finally:

ELLIE

I leave you all of my weapons and equipment. Use them to keep...

She stops again.

Joel crosses quickly and SNATCHES the letter out of her hand. He stares at it, and we catch a glimpse of:

them to keep Tess safe and

Joel stops reading. Lowers the letter. Then:

JOEL
Stay here.

EXT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - STREET (D6)

Joel emerges from the house and heads to the middle of the street, as if he has any goddamn clue where he's going...

But there's nowhere to go. All he can do is soak in his shame. He's already failed.

He reads the rest of the letter. We don't need to know what it says. Then he crumples it up and tosses it.

Stands for a moment. Then looks back at the house. And the detached GARAGE next to it.

And the key in his hand. *Chevrolet*.

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER (D6)

The door RISES OPEN. Joel walks in, and circles around a TARP-COVERED vehicle. Lifts the back. Chevy S10.

THE TARP - gets pulled off. Joel opens the driver's side door, pulls the hood release. Walks around to the front, lifts the hood, and--

A nice empty space where the battery should be. Fuck.

And he's about to slam the hood back down when he notices a HUM coming from-- a REFRIGERATOR up against the wall.

He crosses to it and opens it.

INSIDE - a metal BOX, no top. In the box, metal plates smeared with some kind of white paste.

On a shelf above that, a metal LID. And a clear tupperware labeled "sulf" and full of WHITE POWDER.

And gallon JUGS of "Sulfuric Acid 98% ACS Reagent Grade"

JOEL
(can't believe it)
Crazy bastard...

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER (D6)

Ellie waits on tenterhooks. No clue what happens now. There's no Bill and Frank. She's not even sure if there's still a Joel.

And then Joel COMES BACK IN from outside, and she sits up straight. Her fate about to be decided. He crosses into the dining room and:

JOEL
Show me your arm.

She holds out her arm. The BITE has subsided to two small red spots... already scabbing over. There's not even redness or swelling. And the black lines underneath the skin never went any further up her arm.

It's still remarkable to him. That it could be like that. And maybe a wiser person would think things over longer... but the sight of her healed arm has already made up his mind.

JOEL
I just finished making a truck battery. It's charging right now.

Ellie knows enough not to be smart-mouthed or ask questions. Not right now. Right now, she has to be perfect.

ELLIE
Okay.

JOEL
I've got a brother out in Wyoming, he's in some kind of trouble. So I'm heading out there to find him.

She nods. Doesn't want to fuck this up.

JOEL
He used to be a Firefly. My guess is he'll know where some of them are out there, maybe they can get you to wherever this lab is.

She nods again. Understood. Then:

ELLIE
Alright.
(beat)
Listen, about Tess...

JOEL

If I take you with me, you're gonna need to follow some rules. Rule One: you don't bring up Tess. Ever. Matter of fact, we can just keep our histories to ourselves.

She nods. Got it.

JOEL

Two: you don't tell anyone about your-- condition. They see that bite mark, they won't think it through, they'll just shoot you.

Right.

JOEL

Three: you do what I say, when I say it. We clear?

ELLIE

Yes.

JOEL

Repeat it.

ELLIE

What you say, goes.

JOEL

Okay.

She takes a big breath, big exhale... trying not to be too obviously happy... but she is.

ELLIE

So-- what now?

JOEL

We grab what we can.

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - VARIOUS - DAY (D6)

JOEL AND ELLIE - moving through the house. Grabbing suitcases and duffel bags from closets. Pulling open kitchen drawers. Knives. Screwdrivers and hammers. Scissors. Tape.

MEDICINE CABINET - pills, rubbing alcohol, bandages.

CLOSET - Ellie finds sharpie-labeled BOXES of clothes. Men, Women, Youth, XL, L, M, S. Ellie starts rifling through.

LAUNDRY ROOM - jugs of BLEACH. D-style battery shells.

IN THE GARAGE - the truck bed gets fuller and fuller...

IN THE BASEMENT - Ellie waits at a very safe distance, holding her breath, while Joel very very very carefully types in the GATE CODE backwards... and....

Beep. Green. Phew.

INT. BILL'S BUNKER - DAY (D6)

RADIO at low volume: "Chains of Love" - Erasure

Light streams in as the TRAPDOOR in the ceiling is raised. Joel descends the ladder, followed by Ellie.

She's halfway down the ladder when she starts to realize what's down here. The posters, the workbenches, the food stores, and the GUNS.

ELLIE

Holy shit. This guy was a genius.

She sees a COMPUTER running on a table, connected to radio equipment. Some kind of audio program.

ELLIE

Whoa.

RADIO

*Come to me, cover me, hold me
Together we'll break these chains of
love
Don't give up, don't give up
Together with me and my--*

Joel taps a key and the music stops. He looks at the screen. A 600 hour timer has run down to zero.

JOEL

If he didn't reset the countdown every few weeks, it would run this playlist over the radio.

ELLIE

80's.

Yeah. 80's. Which once meant trouble. But now, just an echo of something gone. Joel takes a breath. Then looks around at the bunker. Still in good shape down here.

JOEL
Grab cans. Nothing dented or swollen.

She eyes the wall of guns.

ELLIE
Dude.

JOEL
No.

ELLIE
There's a WALL of them.

He glares at her. And she hangs her head. Right, right.
"What you say goes."

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - GARAGE - LATER (D6)

Joel and Ellie get the last of the stuff in the back of the pickup. Then Joel checks the battery, which is connected to a charging setup on a workbench.

JOEL
Needs another hour.

Ellie, curious, turns on the hot water tap at a worksink.

ELLIE
They have hot water.
(decided)
I'm taking a shower.

JOEL
I don't know. I mean... feels
disrespectful.

ELLIE
The way I smell is disrespectful. I'm
showering.
(walking out)
And then you're showering, because...
seriously.

INT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - FOYER - LATER (D6)

Ellie is FRESHLY SHOWERED. Looks like a different kid. Wearing a new SHORTSLEEVED T-SHIRT over her long-sleeved t-shirt. A RED GRAPHIC T of two palm trees in front of big orange sun. If you know, then you know...

She's waiting for Joel, wherever he is. Bored, she starts poking around for anything else cool to take... including in the Chippendale hall table.

Oh. Ooh. THE GUN - the one we saw Frank take from there years earlier. She looks up the stairs... no Joel... so she takes the gun, stashes it her BACKPACK, and:

SOUND - footsteps upstairs. Then JOEL heads down to her. A new man. Wearing some of Bill or Frank's clean clothes.

ELLIE
Well aren't you pretty.

JOEL
Shut up.

He tosses her a stick of DEODORANT.

ELLIE
Nice.

She reaches under her shirt to get her pits, and:

EXT. BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - OPEN GARAGE - LATER (D6)

VROOM - the pickup engine ROARS to life, and--

INT. PICKUP - GARAGE - BILL & FRANK'S HOUSE - CONT. (D6)

Ellie, sitting next to Joel in front, is grinning ear to ear. Looking around at all the buttons and switches...

JOEL
First time in a car?

ELLIE
(yup)
It's like a spaceship.

JOEL
No, it's like a piece of shit Chevy S10, but it'll get us there. I think.
(points)
Seat belt.

She puts a seat belt on. Grins at him. *So cool!*

EXT. MAIN STREET / GATE - SAFE ZONE - CONTINUOUS (D6)

Joel rolls down "Main Street". Ellie has the window down, grinning like an idiot, loving this. Joel hits the remote, and the FENCE GATE AHEAD slides open.

As he drives, Ellie rifles through the glove compartment.

JOEL

Leave it.

She holds up a CASSETTE TAPE. *You sure?* Joel glances over. Frank's handwriting on the case. MIX FOR BILL.

JOEL

Just put it back. Ellie--

Ellie doesn't care. Pops it in. And LINDA RONSTADT comes on.

JOEL

Oh no wait. This is good. This is Linda Ronstadt. You know who Linda Ronstadt is?

ELLIE

You know I don't know who Linda Ronstadt is.

Joel lets the song wash over him. The car, the road, the music... good memories for once.

JOEL

(loving it)

Oh man...

ELLIE

(shrugs)

Eh. Better than nothing.

EXT. LONG ROAD TO SOMEWHERE - SUNSET (D6)

Sun hanging low in the sky. A single truck driving out toward the distant horizon. And for just this moment, the world is beautiful again.

RADIO

*Wait for the day, you'll go away
Knowing that you warned me
of the price I'd have to pay
And life's full of flaws
Who knows the cause?*

(MORE)

RADIO (cont'd)

*Living in the memory
of a love that never was
'Cause I've done everything I know to
try and change your mind
And I think I'm gonna love you
for a long long time*

We RISE up, letting the truck grow small in the distance,
and the song plays out over credits as we:

FADE TO BLACK

END OF EPISODE THREE