

Network Draft
1-12-2010

THE WYOMING PROJECT

"Pilot"

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FIRST DRAFT

January 11, 2010

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PILOT

FADE IN:

EXT. RANCH - DAY (DAY 1)

A two-story farmhouse bathed in the blue light of the Wyoming dawn. A horse corral, a barn... and land. Lots of land.

AN ALARM CLOCK pierces the morning quiet.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME TIME

CLOSE on the offending clock, a MAN'S hand slamming into it.

WIDER to reveal him slowly sitting up, his back to us, shoulders heavy. (**Note: this man's face is obscured, anonymous, until indicated.**)

A SERIES OF SHOTS: A dusty pair of boots sit by the door... A much-used Stetson hangs on a hook... There's a chair with a shirt tossed on it. A hand grabs the shirt... In a mirror with crumpled rodeo leaflets stuck in the sides, we see the back of the man as he puts his shirt on... He grabs his Stetson, puts it on and exits.

INT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Dark except for shafts of light streaking in from up high, like light from stained glass windows... The barn door opens and the MAN strides in. Only his figure can be seen. Horses step forward from the shadows, snorting, nickering, greeting him as he passes. In the last stall...

A WHITE HORSE, powerful, majestic. It almost bows to the MAN as he approaches. Over this:

BOY'S DAD (V.O.)
Hold your ground, son! Hold your
ground!

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. CORRAL - DAY - 14 YEARS EARLIER (**FLASHBACK**)

The same WHITE HORSE rears up on its hind legs, untamed, wild, spooked by...

An 8-YEAR OLD BOY reaching for its reins. The BOY staggers back from the bucking horse, stumbles and falls.

WIDEN to reveal the BOY'S DAD coaching from outside the fence.

BOY'S DAD
Get him focused, like I taught you.
(beat)
Hesitatin' just makes him think
he's boss. He ain't. Go on.

The BOY gets up, gathers his courage. He faces the horse, braver now.

BOY
(to the horse, determined)
I'm naming you Anakin.

We PUSH IN on the BOY'S face. Over this:

MAN (V.O.)
Come on, Anakin!

INT. BARN - PRESENT DAY

The MAN mounts the white horse, gives it a kick, and they're off!

EXT. RANCH - MOMENTS LATER

The MAN and horse fly out of the barn, fast, blazing, riding off into the endless horizon.

EXT. RANCH - FENCE AREA - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON THE MAN'S BOOTS hitting the ground.

WIDER SHOT as he walks to an open gate and shuts it, bolting it locked. With his back to us, he contemplates the road stretching away from the property. We push past him as we:

BLEND TO:

EXT. RANCH - FENCE AREA - DAY (3 YEARS EARLIER) (**FLASHBACK**)

Same road, three years earlier. The MAN walks away, duffel bag in hand. His DAD (older now) rushes up to the gate.

DAD
Go! Just go! You just see if what
you're looking for is out there.

The MAN'S MOM joins DAD.

MOM
 (calling out)
 Call when you get where you're
 going, son!

MAN
 (without looking back)
 Don't know where I'm goin'!

The MAN just keeps walking.

CUT TO:

EXT. RANCH - FENCE AREA - PRESENT DAY

The MAN still looking down the road. He spots a bottle on the ground, picks it up and throws it.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT - ONE YEAR EARLIER (**FLASHBACK**)

CLOSE ON A BOTTLE landing in a trash can with a CRASH. It was tossed by a BARTENDER who takes us past a throng of CUSTOMERS to an open back door where the MAN (we don't see his face) is pulling cases of beer out of a storage shed.

BARTENDER
 Gideon! Phone! Someone from home!

We follow the BARTENDER back in. The man called GIDEON comes in behind him and takes the phone (again, no face.)

GIDEON
 Yeah?

He listens. His body slumps. It's bad news.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. RANCH - DAY - ONE YEAR EARLIER (**FLASHBACK**)

ONE SHOT - A WIDE SHOT on a funeral taking place in the distance. A double funeral. Two headstones in an area surrounded by a white picket fence. The FAMILY of the deceased cling to one another - the MAN, his BROTHER, their three younger SISTERS. OTHER FAMILY, FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS, and a MINISTER presiding. Sorrow, shock... The sad tableau fades away as we slowly...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RANCH - DAY - SAME ANGLE - PRESENT DAY

SAME SHOT as previous, but no people. Just the two headstones and the picket fence. THE CAMERA PULLS BACK revealing our MAN on his horse gazing at the graves. THE CAMERA CIRCLES AROUND THE HORSE AND RIDER, ZOOMING UP AND IN ON OUR HERO'S FACE - GIDEON THORPE, 22, rugged, a young John Wayne. He's deep in thought as he contemplates his parents' graves. Thoughts of the past, present, future... His thoughts interrupted by:

GIRL (O.C.)
Gideon! Breakfast!

In the distance, a GIRL stands on the porch beckoning to him. GIDEON takes off riding toward the house.

INT. THORPE HOUSE/DOWNSTAIRS - MORNING (DAY 1)

A large, open space spanning the length of the house and encompassing living room, dining room and kitchen. Comfy chairs and a couch in the living room, with an oversized fireplace in the center. A day bed and lots of worn rugs strewn here and there. In the the kitchen, a long wooden table serves as dinner table, kitchen island and homework central all in one. It all threatens to be messy but for the moment, everything has its place.

GIDEON enters from outside.

DINAH (O.C.)
Boots!

GIDEON
(stops, backs up)
Oh, for crying out...

DINAH (O.C.)
We've been waiting forty minutes to eat.

GIDEON kicks off his boots and heads to the kitchen, joining his sister **DINAH**. She's short but sturdy, a sixteen-year old version of Holly Hunter in "Broadcast News." DINAH yanks biscuits out of the oven and dumps them in a bowl.

DINAH (CONT'D)
Eggs are cold. Biscuits are hard...

GIDEON
I had to check on the--

DINAH

Then you waltz in here with your boots on. Nothing like the smell of horse crap and coffee in the morning.

GIDEON

The boots are off, Dinah.

DINAH

(calling off)
Maggie! Bird!
(pours Gideon coffee)
The girls are going to be late.

GIDEON

No one asked you to wait to eat.

DINAH

We eat together. You know we eat together. I tell you every morning that we always eat together.

GIDEON takes a biscuit as DINAH starts to pop things into four paper lunch bags with assembly-line efficiency.

DINAH (CONT'D)

Hard? Is it hard?

GIDEON

It's fine.

DINAH

Biscuits get hard after sitting forty minutes.

GIDEON

Are there eggs or just grief to go with the biscuits?

Unseen by DINAH, a thirteen-year old girl bounds down the stairs. This is **MAGGIE**, in jeans, ponytail and dirty high-tops. She climbs up on a table to stare at a high-up shelf of books as DINAH spoons eggs onto every plate on the table.

DINAH

All you have to do is eat before you hit the barn. Eat/barn -- that's not hard to remember.
(yells out)
Maggie!

MAGGIE

I'm here.

DINAH

Oh. Well, get down. I don't have time for any concussions today.

MAGGIE stays where she is as a serious-faced nine-year old GIRL quietly takes her place at the table.

DINAH (CONT'D)

(to Gideon, challenging)
How are the eggs? Cold?

GIDEON

Eggs are good.

DINAH

Eggs get cold sitting in a pan for forty minutes.
(yelling)
Bird!

She suddenly notices the nine-year old sitting at the table.

DINAH (CONT'D)

Oh. Well, make a noise when you come into a room. Your name is Bird. Chirp or something....
Maggie! I mean it.

MAGGIE

I need a book for a book report.

DINAH

The one that's due today?

MAGGIE

(lying)
Nope.

DINAH sits at the table to eat. As she does, she slides a checkbook across the table to GIDEON.

GIDEON

(clueless)
What...

DINAH

Did you write a check yesterday and forget to record it?

GIDEON

I don't know. Maybe.

DINAH
 You remember the amount?
 (to Bird, who's about to
 put a pat of butter
 directly in her mouth)
 Where is that going?

BIRD puts the butter down.

GIDEON
 It was forty-five something--

DINAH
 It was forty-six dollars and
 sixteen cents.

GIDEON
 So you had the carbon...

DINAH
 Yup.

GIDEON
 Then why'd you ask?

DINAH
 I was giving you a chance to come
 clean.

GIDEON
 (gets up)
 I'm done.

MAGGIE
 (to Bird, smiling)
 Wow - three minutes. Took her
 seven to drive him off yesterday.

GIDEON exits, slamming the door.

DINAH
 What time is it?

BIRD
 Seven thirty.

DINAH
 We're late. Move, move, move!

They get up and rush to get coats and shoes and book bags.
 DINAH runs over to the lunches and grabs two of them.

DINAH (CONT'D)
 Books, homework, coats, lunch...

She hands the lunches to the girls. All three stop at a mirror by the door. DINAH gives them a once over.

DINAH (CONT'D)

Okay - whose shirt is on backwards?

BIRD

Yours.

DINAH

Right. Go.

BIRD and MAGGIE rush out. DINAH follows, turning her shirt around as she goes. The door closes. It whips open again and DINAH rushes in, grabs her own lunch and runs out.

EXT. THORPE RANCH - CONTINUOUS

DINAH catches up to MAGGIE and BIRD and they head toward an old pick-up parked by a corral.

DINAH

Go on ahead, guys.

DINAH hangs back with GIDEON.

DINAH (CONT'D)

The Baptists' bake-off is this weekend. Rides, games and stuff. I thought we could take the girls.

GIDEON

I'll be working.

DINAH

Gideon, come on. We never go anywhere as a family anymore. And we need to be more social. We keep locking ourselves in this house, people will think we're werewolves or poets or something.

(notices something, sighs)

Oh, no.

(yells)

Bird!

DINAH and GIDEON'S POV: BIRD has taken a mysterious sharp turn away from the truck and is determinedly walking in the wrong direction.

DINAH (CONT'D)

Come on! Not today, please!

(to Gideon, exasperated)

She's doing it again.

GIDEON

Yup.

DINAH

This is ridiculous. How can she be afraid of horses?

GIDEON

She always was.

DINAH

Well, that's not acceptable. That's not who we are.

GIDEON

It's who she is. Let her be.

DINAH frowns and heads to the truck.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

MAGGIE'S riding shotgun as DINAH climbs in and shuts the door. Before she's fully seated:

DINAH

Phone book.

In one deft maneuver, DINAH lifts her butt and MAGGIE slides a phone book under her. Now she can see over the steering wheel. DINAH slams it into reverse and backs the truck up to BIRD. MAGGIE opens the door and BIRD climbs in.

DINAH (CONT'D)

You killed five trees and two polar bears making me drive like that.

BIRD

(re: horses)

Then next time park away from them.

DINAH shifts the gear into drive.

EXT. TRUCK/THORPE RANCH - CONTINUOUS

The truck pulls away, passing GIDEON. A young ranch hand, **RUSTY**, joins him.

RUSTY

Hey - you see see 'em out there?

GIDEON

Saw 'em when I came out.

GIDEON and RUSTY look off into the distance... Where a GROUP OF MEN mill around several vehicles, setting up some kind of equipment.

RUSTY
They're surveying. Your property.
Who'd be poking around like that?

GIDEON
(eyes narrowing)
I've got a pretty good idea.

EXT. JOHN MUIR SCHOOL - DAY

A small, clean school draped with colorful royal blue silver and white banners: "Home of the Mighty Mustangs". Classes are already in session, and we hear:

MR. MARSH (V.O.)
When Catherine the Great finally
wound up on the throne, she found a
country in tatters.

INT. SCHOOL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MR. MARSH paces as he lectures. THE CAMERA MOVES over the students, taking in their various states of attentiveness.

MR. MARSH
She wrote many letters, one reading
"The fleet was abandoned, the army
in disarray..."

MR. MARSH continues as THE CAMERA finds DINAH, cell phone to her ear, day planner open in front of her.

DINAH
(into phone)
Yes, hi, I need to make an
appointment with Dr. Brogmus. It's
for Maggie Thorpe and Bird Thorpe.
Just a cleaning and some x-rays...
Oh, no, I'm really looking to have
them come on the same day. Big
time saver... Yeah, I'll hold.

MR. MARSH
In an effort to entice people to
move to Russia, on July 22, 1763,
Catherine the Great issued a
manifesto. Who can name three
promises on this manifesto...
(notices Dinah)
Dinah Thorpe?

DINAH holds a finger up to MR. MARSH.

MR. MARSH (CONT'D)
 (annoyed)
 Are you 'one seconding' me?

DINAH
 (into phone)
 Oh, do you have something later?...
 School...

MR. MARSH
 Dinah.

DINAH
 (into phone)
 Hold on.
 (quickly to Mr. Marsh)
 Free transportation to Russia;
 freedom to settle anywhere in the
 country; freedom to practice their
 trade or profession. You said
 three?

MR. MARSH
 Yes.

DINAH
 I know more.

MR. MARSH
 I'm good.

DINAH
 Okay.
 (into phone)
 Four-fifteen is fine. Thank you.
 (hangs up)

The bell RINGS.

MR. MARSH
 Chapter six tomorrow, everybody.

STUDENTS happily rush out. DINAH stuffs all her things into multiple giant bags. A folder falls to the ground and scraps of paper scatter all over the floor.

DINAH
 (cursing)
 Sugarfoot.

DINAH starts gathering them up. A CHEERLEADER passes by and picks up a bunch.

CHEERLEADER
You dropped these.

DINAH
Oh, thanks... Coupons. It's
grocery day. You know how it is.

The CHEERLEADER smiles faintly at her - she has no idea how grocery day is. She joins some other CHEERLEADERS and they happily head off to the pep rally. DINAH looks after them. No time for pep rallies for her.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY (LATER)

MRS. PROSE, a soft, kind-hearted teacher, sits behind her desk reviewing a stack of papers.

MRS. PROSE
Very energetic about learning.
Well-liked by her peers. Her
English scores are up, algebra's
the same. I'd say all in all,
Maggie is doing just fine.

DINAH sits across from her at a student's desk.

DINAH
Really.

MRS. PROSE
Absolutely.

DINAH
What about her science scores? Her
paper on evolution, to be precise.

MRS. PROSE
Well...
(looks it up)
She got a B-minus.

DINAH
A B-minus. Yes. And when were you
going to bring that up, Mrs. Prose?

MRS. PROSE
A B-minus is very respectable.

DINAH
A B-minus is almost an F.

MRS. PROSE
Look, I understand it may not be up
to your standards, Dinah, but--

DINAH

It's not up to anyone's standards. This is a paper on evolution, not cocktail waitressing. The girl needs a firm grasp of the subject or she'll slip into superstition. I don't know if you've looked around lately, but this town is full o' crackers!

MRS. PROSE

I understand that, but--

DINAH

Good. So does she rewrite the paper? What about a tutor? Maybe she should repeat the whole course next semester.

MRS. PROSE

Dinah, she's going to be fine. There's no need for a tutor and we can find an extra credit project for her to do if she doesn't improve on the next test. Okay?

DINAH

(begrudgingly)
All right.

DINAH gathers up her many bags and heads to the door.

DINAH (CONT'D)

But you have to mention these things to me. What if I didn't catch this?

MRS. PROSE

I know. I apologize.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

MAGGIE and BIRD wait on a bench as DINAH emerges, followed by MRS. PROSE.

DINAH

(to the girls)
Get those coats on, you two.
(shakes Mrs. Prose's hand)
You're a good teacher and I know you mean well.

DINAH turns to go but MRS. PROSE holds onto her hand.

MRS. PROSE
(sympathetically)
And how are you doing, Dinah? You
holding up okay?

DINAH
(oblivious)
Yeah. Why?

MRS. PROSE
(gently)
Honey, it's been a terrible year
for you.

DINAH'S in-charge look slowly fades from her face. Suddenly she's just a sixteen-year old girl who not so long ago lost her parents. She catches herself and quickly recovers.

DINAH
I've got to go. I'm making a crock
pot chicken for dinner and the
potatoes have to go in at three.

DINAH hustles MAGGIE and BIRD down the hall.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. WOMAN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Candles and a couple of low lights glow. GIDEON pushes some fancy silk covers back from a bed and reaches for his jeans. He puts them on, gets up, and reveals **TEA "SUGAR" AMES** lounging in bed beside him. Thirty and beautiful, SUGAR used to be a beauty queen. Now she's just bored.

SUGAR
(examining her nails)
Air's too dry in here.
(glances at Gideon pacing)
What are you doing?

GIDEON
Lookin' for my shirt.

SUGAR
Oh.
(back to her nails)
I should get a humidifier. Did you
have a shirt when you came in?

GIDEON finds his shirt and holds it up.

SUGAR (CONT'D)
Huh.

She watches him put it on.

GIDEON
I'm gonna have to charge you for a
show if you keep staring like that.

SUGAR
(sighs)
You know what the problem with us
getting together is? It eventually
ends and then there goes my fun for
the week.

SUGAR dons a lacy, sheer robe and saunters over to a vanity table. Her "Miss Cheyenne" crown glitters on a special stand. She sits and stares at herself in the mirror.

SUGAR (CONT'D)
Want to see me in my crown?

GIDEON
I've seen you in your crown.

SUGAR

Maybe next time you come over I'll wear it. And only it.

GIDEON

Your call.

SUGAR

Now you're going to go home and I'm going to be here all alone.

(Gideon doesn't answer)

You know, when I was competing in pageants, I never had a minute to myself. I always had an event or a rehearsal or a fitting...

(she fiddles with her crown, straightening it)

Now I've got nothing but minutes.

GIDEON

So do another pageant.

SUGAR

What? Please.

SUGAR stands and examines her perfect body in the mirror.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

I'm so fat now. I'd never fit in my competition bathing suit.

SUGAR glances over at GIDEON. His back is to her as he puts on his boots.

GIDEON

(knows she's looking)

You're not fat.

SUGAR

No?

(looks back in the mirror)

I hear they're cutting out all the swimsuit competitions nowadays.

Trying to pretend like a beauty pageant's not a beauty pageant. I don't see what's wrong with being really, really pretty.

(then)

Do you ever feel guilty?

GIDEON

'Bout being really pretty?

SUGAR

You are sleeping with another man's wife, you know. Sometimes I feel guilty. Sometimes I wake up next to him simply wracked with guilt. I have to pretend I've had a nightmare.

(beat)

Maybe we should stop. Put an end to it before anyone gets hurt.

GIDEON

Okay.

SUGAR

(ignoring him)

Not that my husband would even care if he knew.

GIDEON

He'd care. He'd care plenty.

SUGAR

(brightening a bit)

You think?

GIDEON

I've seen him knock a man's lights out for getting too close to his truck. He doesn't like people touching his stuff.

GIDEON grabs his coat and heads toward the door.

SUGAR

You sure you have to go? The maid's gone for another hour.

GIDEON

Gotta get home. Dinner with the girls.

SUGAR

You and your girls.
(teasing)
Daddy.

GIDEON

(prickly)
I'm nobody's "Daddy".

GIDEON heads out.

EXT. SUGAR'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

GIDEON heads toward his truck. The upstairs window opens, and SUGAR sticks her head out.

SUGAR

Hey!

GIDEON looks up.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

I forgot he has a poker game Friday night. Nine o'clock?

GIDEON

Yep.

GIDEON turns to go.

SUGAR

Hey!

GIDEON stops. Again.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

You want one of my handkerchiefs?

GIDEON

(beat, confused)
What?

SUGAR

Or maybe a lock of my hair?

(off Gideon's confused
look)

It would be like a keepsake.

(again, confusion)

A token. You know, something to
make you think about me.

(still the confused stare)

When you're not with me. It would
be romantic. They do it in the
movies all the, oh, you know what,
never mind.

SUGAR slams the window shut.

GIDEON

A lock of her hair?

He shrugs and gets in his truck.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Crazy women.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

A greyhound bus rounds the corner and stops. The doors open and PASSENGERS disembark - just a stream of exhaustion and weariness until the bright shining face of a girl with huge eyes and a giddy smile appears. This is **LUCY DECEMBER**. 21 and adorable, Lucy is all sunshine and energy. She hops off the bus, looks around, and smiles like it's Christmas morning. She holds a brand new cowboy hat and a cellphone. She bounces to the middle of the street, aims her cell, snaps a picture of the town and examines it happily. She notices a group of LOCALS staring at her quizzically.

LUCY
(re: phone)
Wallpaper.

They shrug and disperse.

LUCY (CONT'D)
(gazes at picture, smiles)
Can't believe it. Can't believe
it. Can't believe I'm really...

LUCY puts the hat on her head proudly.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Ow!

She takes it off and yanks at a large price tag.

LUCY (CONT'D)
(to people walking past)
Forgot to take the tag off. Who do
I think I am, Minnie Pearl?
(she giggles to herself)
So silly... Girl found bleeding
from the head. Cause of death -
Nordstrom's. There.

She puts the hat back on and heads down the street, catching the eye of anyone who will look at her.

LUCY (CONT'D)
(to a passing person)
Hi.
(to another person)
Hello.
(to another person, she
tips her hat)
Howdy.

LUCY giggles again. She unfolds a map and tries to decipher it, not sure which way to go.

Two skinny, sunbaked 40-something WOMEN stand in the doorway of a boutique. They eye LUCY like she's chum to their shark.

MITZI
(calls out to her)
Lost, honey?

LUCY
Oh, constantly.

JUNE
Yeah, but at the moment...

LUCY
(joins them)
Yes! At the moment I am lost. Do you know how to get to Clover Street?

MITZI and JUNE look at each other. They got one.

JUNE
Clover? That's over by Treemont, isn't it, Mitz?

MITZI
No. Clover's west. Past the hippie yogurt shop.

JUNE
(puts her arm around Lucy)
Tell you what... Why don't we just go in and look at a map.

MITZI and JUNE lead their prey into their lair.

LUCY
Okay. A map sounds... Hey, is this your store?

INT. COWGIRL CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

An upscale western-themed clothing store.

MITZI
Oh, it's not really a store. It's more like a hobby.

LUCY
Well, it's very impressive. My aunt has a store. Well, a chain of stores. Bloomingdales, actually. She's not a close aunt, but then no one in my family is particularly close.

(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)

It's kind of a December family tradition. Goose on Christmas and "for god's sake don't tell me anything about your life"!

(she giggles to herself)

Dinners go by really fast.

MITZI

What a nice story. What size are you honey? Two? Four?

LUCY

Four. Why?

MITZI

No reason. So where you from?

JUNE is grabbing skirts in the background.

LUCY

I'm from New York.

MITZI

New York, well, well. You like it out there in New York?

LUCY

No!!

(giggles)

Well, that was loud. Actually, no I don't. I should. I grew up there. My family is there. It's a big family. A big important family. Real estate. One of my ancestors actually brokered the sale of Manhattan. Top that one, right?

JUNE runs over with an armful of clothes.

JUNE

Amazing how many lovely things come in a size four.

JUNE starts wrapping a skirt around LUCY'S waist.

LUCY

I mean, don't get me wrong. They're not bad people, my family. I had the best of everything. Beautiful homes. Wonderful clothes. None of my nannies were drunk. Not even on St. Patrick's day.

JUNE
 (to Mitzi, re: skirt)
 Hard to choose...

MITZI
 Let's do one in each color.

JUNE scurries away.

MITZI (CONT'D)
 (to Lucy)
 So what brings you to Wyoming?

LUCY
 Well, my grandmother lives here and she just had a stroke so I came to take care of her.

JUNE
 What a good granddaughter. Where's all your stuff?

LUCY
 I had it shipped ahead. Should've arrived yesterday.

MITZI
 You pack some weatherized boots?

LUCY
 No.

MITZI
 (yelling)
 She'll need boots, June!
 (to Lucy)
 And how long are you gonna be staying with us? We talking rainy season, parka weather?

JUNE (O.C.)
 (from somewhere in back)
 If you're gonna hunt, you gotta have something orange!

LUCY
 I don't really know. It depends on Grandma.
 (gazes out the window)
 Wow. That's a really big sky. I've always wanted to live in a place with a really big sky. Have you ever read "Little House On The Prairie"?

MITZI

I'm still trying to get through
Shogun.

LUCY

I was obsessed with it as a little
girl. And as a not-so-little girl.
There's a copy in my purse right
now. Once I read it, I knew
someday I'd live in a small town
like Mankato. This is my Mankato!
It's just so beautiful... I mean,
those mountains! You have those
mountains! Have you ever really
looked at those mountains?

MITZI

I know... It can be very spiritual.
(then, all business)
I need your card, Sweetie.

EXT. MARIE DECEMBER'S HOUSE - DAY

A slightly run-down clapboard house with a wrap-around porch. Buckets, canvases, tarps and discarded bits of wooden frames are randomly piled up outside. Lucy comes trudging up the drive lugging ten giant shopping bags, four in each hand and one slung over each shoulder. She stops when she sees sitting in the dusty and unkempt yard six pieces of very expensive luggage covered with a layer of dust. Her luggage. Without dropping her shopping bags, she attempts to pick up a suitcase. No luck. She makes her way to the front door, drops the shopping bags and KNOCKS. No answer.

LUCY

Grandma?
(knocks again)
It's Lucy! I found the house!

She waits. Nothing. She KNOCKS again.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Grandma?

She moves around to a window and KNOCKS.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Grandma?

She moves over to the next window and KNOCKS.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Grandma?

She moves around to the side of the house out of sight. We hear ANOTHER KNOCK:

LUCY (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Grandma?

EXT. BACK OF THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

LUCY KNOCKS on another window.

LUCY
Grandma?

She hears some PATSY CLINE wafting in the air. She peeks through the window and sees a WOMAN about seventy-years old, long disheveled grey hair hanging about her shoulders, sitting with her back to her, sipping a cup of tea.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Oh, poor thing. She's deaf.

MARIE
(does not look at her)
I'm not deaf!

LUCY
(startled)
Oh! Wow. My heart. Strokes all around... Anyhow, hi.
(tries to open the door;
it's locked)
I'm here.
(no response)
The door's locked.
(no response)
You look good. From the back.
(beat)
Can you move?

MARIE flaps her elbows up and down.

LUCY (CONT'D)
What was that?

MARIE
Chicken dance. Just showing you I can move.

LUCY
Okay. Well, you look great. You'd never know you'd just had a stroke.

MARIE
It wasn't a stroke.

LUCY

The doctor said it was.

MARIE

I was on the phone with Fed-Ex trying to get them to leave a package without my having to sign. That'd make anybody keel over.

LUCY

Okay. So, no stroke. Got it.
(beat)
Can I come in?

MARIE suddenly marches up to the door.

MARIE

Why are you here?

LUCY

Well, I thought you had a--

MARIE

I left the east coast to get away from you people. Away from your mother, away from your father, your simple brother, your ugly sister...

MARIE walks into another part of the house and LUCY loses sight of her. LUCY heads back around the house, following Marie's voice, trying to catch sight of her again.

MARIE (O.S) (CONT'D)

Did I ever call? No. Did I send letters? No. Gifts at Christmas? No. Because I wanted to be alone. Alone with my painting. I don't need people. Never have.

LUCY rounds the corner back to the front of the house again.

MARIE (CONT'D)

When I was young I was considered a bohemian. Now I'm just considered a bitch. And that's the way I like it!... I did not ask you to come. I did not call when I went in the hospital.

As LUCY reaches the front door, it suddenly flies open and there's MARIE. LUCY jumps.

MARIE (CONT'D)

You left me forty-seven messages
and I never responded! Can't you
take a hint?

LUCY

I just assumed that the phone
confused you, like it does a lot of
old people.

MARIE goes inside and LUCY quickly follows her in.

INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MARIE starts gathering up dirty paintbrushes.

LUCY

Hey! You have a piano!

MARIE

It's not for playing.

LUCY

Why not?

MARIE

It's my piano and I don't want it
played.

LUCY

No playing. Got it, captain.

MARIE

Don't call me captain.

LUCY

Sorry, Grandma.

MARIE

Don't call me Grandma.

LUCY

Sorry...ma'am.

MARIE

And don't touch anything.

LUCY picks up a cloth and folds it.

MARIE (CONT'D)

I just said don't touch anything.

LUCY

(drops the cloth)
Sorry.

(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)
 (smiles broadly)
 Oh Gran...Ma'am. I'm just so happy
 to see you!

She flings her arms around MARIE.

MARIE
 Hey! Haven't you been listening?

LUCY
 Yes. I heard every word you said.
 I'm not deaf either. You don't
 need me or want me here. You are
 not sick, did not have a stroke,
 and no one is playing the piano.
 But see, here's the thing, I was
 wondering if I could stay.

MARIE
 Oh crap...

LUCY
 Just for a while. I mean, you were
 in the hospital and even though it
 wasn't a stroke you might need to
 have a package delivered again and
 if I can't help you recover then at
 least I could be here to sign for
 it and I will not get in the way.
 I will not clean. I will not talk
 to you or take care of you. I will
 do nothing. I can sleep on the
 couch or...
 (seeing the crappy paint
 smeared couch)
 ...somewhere else. It doesn't
 matter, just so long as it's here.
 Please let me stay. For a while.
 A short while. Really short. I
 won't even unpack.

MARIE studies this slightly crazy girl for a moment. She
 pushes a small door open to reveal a tiny, cluttered room
 crammed full of paintings and canvasses small and large.

MARIE
 Don't mess it up.

MARIE walks off. LUCY smiles, picks the cloth back up and
 happily refolds it.

EXT. THORPE RANCH - CORRAL - DAY

CLOSE ON a beautiful palomino - ill-tempered, bucking, wild.

GIDEON standing about twenty feet back, assessing it, measuring its temperament.

WIDEN to include an imperious looking man, Goldman Sachs-y, his Maybach parked nearby. Name's TERRY.

TERRY

(arrogance dripping)

I want to make this clear: I know horses...

GIDEON

(eyes on the horse)

Mm-hmm...

TERRY

I keep a stable at all my properties: Connecticut, Montana, I've got a dozen Arabians in Santa Barbara, prize winners... And bottom line, there's something very wrong with this horse.

GIDEON'S attention remains solely on the palomino.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Every vet says she's fine. She's clearly not fine. Do you know how many CATscans this horse has had?

GIDEON circles the nervous animal - slowly, deliberately, never taking his eyes off it.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Someone told me about your operation up here, but you're not easy to find, you know that? You're not even in the phone book... Makes it hard to verify your training...

GIDEON

(abruptly)

Step off of her.

This startles TERRY - no one talks to him like this. But he does what he's told, stepping away from the horse.

TERRY

If my daughter hadn't picked out this reject for her birthday, I'd've sold it by now. But what Autumn wants, Autumn gets...

GIDEON slowly moves toward the horse.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Oh-ho-ho-ho, I wouldn't do that,
cowboy. She's a kicker...

GIDEON reaches out to touch the horse's nose. The horse backs off a bit, nervous, prickly, but only a bit. TERRY watches in amazement as GIDEON pets the horse's nose, calming it completely. GIDEON looks at TERRY for the first time.

GIDEON

She doesn't like you.

TERRY

What do you mean, doesn't like me?
It's a horse.

GIDEON

Yeah - my training taught me that
much.

DINAH (O.C.)

Gideon...

DINAH'S there, needing a word. GIDEON joins her.

DINAH (CONT'D)

(to Terry)

Excuse me.

(to Gideon)

Dakin called.

GIDEON

(stiffens)

What did he want?

DINAH

He was offering to come home for
foaling season. He made it seem
like he could move things around at
school, but I know he's swamped and
since we're already hiring guys,
there's no need for him to do it.
So I told him no. There it is.

GIDEON

There what is?

DINAH

I settled it.

GIDEON

So why come to me?

DINAH

To let you know.

GIDEON
 Okay, so I know.
 (walks off, turns back)
 You know what, Dinah? This is
exactly the checkbook thing.

DINAH
 What checkbook thing?

GIDEON
 You knew I wrote a check but you
 wasted my time asking about it.
 Then you tell Dakin not to come and
 you waste my time asking about it.

DINAH
 I wasn't asking you about it, I was
 telling you about it.

GIDEON
 Exactly. So good - I'm all up to
 speed on baby brother. Now go on,
 scoot - I'm busy.

We follow GIDEON back to TERRY.

GIDEON (CONT'D)
 Excuse her. She's a girl.

TERRY
 So how soon can you have the
 palomino fixed?

GIDEON
 Leave her a couple of days.

TERRY
 Days? You mean weeks. I need this
 thing rideable by Christmas.

DINAH (O.C.)
 She'll be rideable.

TERRY looks, astonished, at...

DINAH up on the palomino, walking it around a little bit,
 firmly in control.

DINAH (CONT'D)
 She really doesn't like you.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. TOWN - DAY

GIDEON makes his way down the street, when he hears an unwelcome voice:

MAN (O.C.)
Gideon Thorpe!

GIDEON
(exasperated)
Hollister Ames...

HOLLISTER AMES, 40 and full of himself, pulls his Escalade into a spot and gets out. He's wearing an over-the-top Johnny Reb jacket and cowboy boots that have never seen dirt.

HOLLISTER
(getting out of the car)
Anyone ever call you "Giddy-up" in school?

GIDEON
Anyone looking to get punched.

HOLLISTER
Touche... Hey, I've got something for your girls.

HOLLISTER hands some clothing to GIDEON. GIDEON unfolds one, revealing a pink girl's top with Hollister's ski resort logo emblazoned on it.

HOLLISTER (CONT'D)
That's quality fleece. Thirty-five bucks at the gift shop, but these are on the house.

GIDEON
Why?

HOLLISTER
Because we're friends.

GIDEON
I suppose a town full of walking billboards ain't such a bad thing for you, either.

HOLLISTER
You think like a businessman. I like that.

GIDEON
 (starts off)
 Well, thanks for the fleece...

HOLLISTER
 Whoa, whoa, keep that businessman's
 hat on for a few more seconds now,
 Gideon. I want to talk to you
 about something.

GIDEON
 Yeah - I saw you surveying my land
 yesterday.

HOLLISTER
 Surveying? No. Admiring? Yes.

GIDEON
 The ranch is not for sale.

HOLLISTER
 What about that northwest corner?

GIDEON
 (heading off)
 It's not for sale.

HOLLISTER
 (stops him)
 Hold on... Let me finish my
 pitch... My chuckwagon business is
 booming and I want to expand -
 build an amphitheater for
 melodramas and music, do some
 sleigh rides in the winter - you've
 got that hill...

GIDEON
 No - put your fake cowboys up
 somewhere else.

HOLLISTER
 You should hear the offer.

GIDEON
 It's not for sale.

HOLLISTER
 You really should hear the offer...
 (spots someone)
 Hey, right on time for once...

It's SUGAR. She cozies up to HOLLISTER, gives him a kiss.

SUGAR
 (fake pouting)
 They were all out of the good
 cupcakes. Boo.

HOLLISTER
 (to Gideon)
 You know Sugar, right?

GIDEON
 Yep.

SUGAR
 Hi.

HOLLISTER
 Let's go somewhere, Gideon. Out of
 the cold. Get some coffee.

GIDEON
 No. Look - I know what you want -
 I'm not inclined. Okay? Here.
 (thrusts the fleece back
 at him)
 They've got clothes.

HOLLISTER stares daggers at Gideon as GIDEON walks away.

HOLLISTER
 (calling after him)
 It may not have much to do with
 being inclined, Gideon...

GIDEON keeps walking.

HOLLISTER (CONT'D)
 You talk to Frank lately?

GIDEON'S step hesitates ever so slightly. Frank? A shadow
 crosses his face, but he keeps walking.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY (LATER)

A man in his fifties sits behind an antique desk, in a
 crowded old office full of antique things: an adding machine,
 a Bakelite ashtray... even the laptop is antique. This is
 FRANK, the trusted Thorpe family accountant. A bunch of
 financial documents sit on the desk in front of him. A
 pensive GIDEON stands behind FRANK, too tense to sit.

FRANK
 I've been trying not to burden you
 with the unnecessaries, Gideon...

GIDEON

I know...

FRANK

And truth be told, this all would be a tad easier if you sat across from me so I could look at you and show you what we're talking about...

GIDEON

I'm comfortable here.

FRANK

(resigned)

Okay... See, it's all that acreage, son. You Thorpes got a lot of land sittin' dormant, land that don't make nothin'... I've got figures here... You lookin'?

(glances back at Gideon)

No? Fine, I'll just read it to you.

GIDEON

I just need the headlines, Frank. I trust you to the details.

FRANK

Now, whatever way you want to use the land, that's your prerogative, but every year come tax time you get hammered. And I mean hammered. See?

Without turning around, FRANK holds the figures over his head so that GIDEON can see if he wants.

GIDEON

How did Hollister know about this?

FRANK

Aah, that Hollister Ames dips that bony beak of his everywhere it don't belong. The man knows everything.

GIDEON

He don't know everything...

GIDEON starts to pace, agitation bubbling.

FRANK

You pacing now? 'Cause this chair doesn't swivel...

GIDEON
We got cash flow?

FRANK
You got that. And don't worry
about foaling season. I can
stretch it for you to hire those
extra hands, what with Dakin off at
school...

GIDEON
(under his breath,
disgusted)
Dakin...

FRANK
Say, how's he doing out there in
California?

GIDEON
(ignores that)
So where are we, Frank? What's the
future look like?

FRANK
(trying to glance back at
him)
Well, you see, there's a couple
contingencies, so there's a few
different scenarios, so it's... ah,
hell.

Frustrated, FRANK picks up his chair and sets it facing
GIDEON so he can look at him.

FRANK (CONT'D)
You're not on the brink, son. I
wouldn't let it get that far
without telling you. But you might
be pushing up to the brink of being
on the brink. I'm sorry to say.

GIDEON takes this in. Without a word, he storms out the
door. FRANK remains looking at the wall.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Yeah, no, I've got another
appointment, so this is a good time
to wrap this up.

EXT. TOWN/THE COWBOY CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

GIDEON storms down the sidewalk toward his truck when he happens upon a dozen over-stuffed shopping bags hogging the entire walkway, practically falling over them. LUCY spills out of The Cowboy Closet, bumping up against GIDEON.

LUCY

Oh! Ow - the belt buckles out here are sharp.

GIDEON

What the hell is all this?

LUCY

(fiddling with the bags)
It's mine. Sorry. I just left them here for a second while I tried to find some string to tie them all into a handle so I could carry them. The ladies in there gave me some. String - see?
(holds up string)
I actually came to return stuff.

GIDEON

Then do it.

LUCY

Well, that's the thing. While I was returning stuff, they started pointing out other stuff that I don't remember trying on or saying yes to but apparently I did, so this is the stuff I bought after I returned everything I bought here before. I know - crazy with a 'K.'
(fiddling with the string)
I have forgotten how to tie a knot.

GIDEON

(impatient)
Here...

GIDEON grabs the string from her and starts tying.

LUCY

I'm sorry, I'm just a little 'aaahh' because Grandma's not going to let me bring all this in the house plus I wound up spending all of the cash I brought and I'm sure I'll find somewhere to wear the diamond decorated spurs, but--

GIDEON
 (had enough)
 Oh good god...

In one fell swoop, GIDEON scoops up all the bags and marches them into the store.

LUCY
 Don't go in there! They're
 killers!

INT. COWGIRL CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

GIDEON dumps the bags in front of a startled MITZI and JUNE.

GIDEON
 (to the ladies, adamant)
 Give her back her money!

JUNE
 But--

GIDEON
 Now!

GIDEON turns and marches out, exposing LUCY, who had snuck in behind him.

LUCY
 (caught)
 I-- He--

LUCY hurries out.

EXT. TOWN - CONTINUOUS

GIDEON marches down the street. LUCY hangs in the background, thrilled.

LUCY
 (calling after him)
 Thank you, whoever you are! Hey!
 Who are you?!

On a mission, GIDEON keeps walking.

INT. THORPE HOUSE - DAY (LATER) (**SCENE 18**)

DINAH's in the kitchen, a couple textbooks open, tv on, elbows deep in bread dough.

ON THE TV: A Lady Gaga video comes on.

DINAH watches, flour on her face, hair a mess, a bit mystified. But intrigued.

She watches for a beat - the song, the dancing. She subtly starts moving to the music, awkwardly trying to mimic the choreography, awkwardly trying to be sixteen, when...

The front door FLIES OPEN and in comes a hell-bent GIDEON.

GIDEON

Call Dakin!

DINAH

You scared the hell out of me!

GIDEON

Call Dakin and tell him to get down here for foaling!

DINAH

But--

GIDEON

We can't afford extra guys. He's our extra guy. And I won't take no! Do it!

A stunned DINAH watches GIDEON storm upstairs.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. THE COUNTRY CLUB - NIGHT

The local no-frills roadhouse where all the locals go dancing on a Saturday night. A long bar runs the length of the room. The HOUSE BAND plays and the dance floor is a swirl of Saturday night jeans, boots, and cowboy hats.

GIDEON enters and takes a spot at the bar. He looks for the bartender then sees LUCY on the other side of the room. She stands out like a sore thumb in an outfit that screams "not from anywhere around here." She's talking up the bartender.

LUCY

My grandmother has the most beautiful piano but she doesn't really want me to use it or to have children in the house so that makes giving piano lessons a little tricky. Anyhow, I happened to notice that you also have a...
 (glances at a sad upright littered with the beer bottles)
 ...really nice piano in here and I was just...

A LOCAL MAN taps her on the shoulder.

LOCAL MAN

(gruffly)
 Can you move so we can get in here?

LUCY

What? Oh sure. No problem.
 (moves over)
 Thanks.

The MAN and his group move into her spot.

LUCY (CONT'D)

(to the bartender)
 Anyhow, I thought maybe I could rent your piano during the...

A LOCAL WOMAN taps her on the shoulder.

LOCAL WOMAN

You're standing in front of our drinks.

LUCY

Oh wow. So sorry.
 (moving)
 I once stood right in front of
 Leonardo Dicaprio at the Shake
 Shack. Didn't notice him either.
 (they ignore her)
 Okay.
 (to the bartender)
 So, I could rent your piano during
 the day to give lessons.

Another COUPLE shoves her.

LUCY (CONT'D)

(to the couple)
 Your space? Right.
 (moves; to the bartender)
 I'd be done before you open and I'd
 even have it tuned for you if you--
 (gets bumped again)
 I'm moving.

LUCY moves near GIDEON who is still watching her. LUCY
 doesn't notice him.

LUCY (CONT'D)

(to the bartender)
 I asked around and there doesn't
 seem to be a piano teacher in town
 so I thought hey, niche!

THREE COWBOYS come up to her

COWBOY #1

Make way, darlin'.

GIDEON

(forcefully)
 She was here first.

The COWBOY and LUCY both look at GIDEON startled.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

(to the cowboy)
 Go down by the popcorn machine.

The COWBOY GRUMBLES but he and his BUDDIES move off, staring
 at LUCY, curious to know who this newcomer is. LUCY turns to
 GIDEON and smiles.

LUCY

Well, if it isn't my knight in
 shining armor again. You're saving
 me a lot these days.

GIDEON
Seems like.

LUCY
Well, thanks.
(looks for the bartender;
he's washing glasses)
Oh shoot. Lost him.

GIDEON
Marty!

MARTY the bartender turns around.

GIDEON (CONT'D)
The lady was talking to you.

LUCY
Yes. I...
(to Gideon)
...thank you.
(to Marty)
I was wondering about your piano.
For lessons.

MARTY
This is a bar.

LUCY
It is a bar. At night. But by
day, it could be a portal to
Chopin.

MARTY
Right now it's a bar. Do you want
a drink or not?

LUCY
(sighs)
Sure.
(glances at Gideon)
I'll have what he's having. And
another one for him, too.
(to Gideon)
Unless you're trying to cut down
for some reason.

GIDEON downs his shot and holds out his hand for another.
MARTY fills his glass then fills one for LUCY.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I'm Lucy.

GIDEON
Gideon.

LUCY
 Gideon. Like the bible. Well,
 Gideon...
 (holds up her shot glass)
 Nice to meet you.

They clink glasses.

GIDEON
 Careful, that's straight--

LUCY downs her drink in one gulp. She's completely unfazed.
 GIDEON looks impressed.

LUCY
 (explaining)
 Kappa Delta Phi.
 (to Marty)
 Two more.
 (to Gideon)
 So I just moved here.

GIDEON
 You don't say.

LUCY
 Well, I didn't exactly move here.
 My grandmother's sick and I came to
 help her.

GIDEON
 Help her do what?

LUCY
 You know, cook, clean. I thought
 she'd need help getting in and out
 of the bathtub but she washes her
 paint brushes in there so you
 wouldn't want to bathe in it.
 Actually she seems fine. I don't
 think she needs much help at all.

GIDEON
 Well, that's a good thing.

LUCY
 (unconvincing)
 It is a good thing. A very very
 good thing.

GIDEON
 So, since she's not gonna be
 bathing much, how long are you
 staying?

LUCY

I don't know. Strokes are funny things. They're kind of like cookies. You can't have just one. That's a terrible joke. I guess I'm a little nervous.

GIDEON

I'm making you nervous?

LUCY

Yes. No. I'm...you're...I just don't seem to be fitting in very well around here. Everything I do seems to scream "Hey, I don't live here! Shove me and take my money!" Oh well, bored with me. What about you, do you live here?

GIDEON

On a ranch just a couple miles outside of town.

LUCY

What kind of ranch?

GIDEON

Horses. We're horse people, my family. Me and my three sisters.

LUCY

(excited)

Three sisters! Oh my God. Mary, Laura, and Carrie!

GIDEON

What?

LUCY

"Little House On The Prairie"! The book. Mary was the oldest, Laura was the tomboy and Pa's favorite, and Carrie was...never mind. Three sisters. That's great.

GIDEON

And I got a brother off at school.

LUCY

What about your parents?

GIDEON

Dead.

LUCY

Oh. I'm sorry.

(beat)

Gee, and it was going so well there for a minute... Well, I'd love to meet them sometimes. Your family. I'd love to have you all over for dinner. I'm actually a very good cook. I had a French nanny who taught me everything about cooking. And Michael Madsen. She just loved Michael Madsen. So odd. I'd invite you guys over to grandmother's house but I'm not allowed to have dinner there yet. I just negotiated the daily use of the bathroom which is great because that Chevron station is a hike, but dinner's a ways off. Anyhow, what do you think?

GIDEON

About what?

LUCY

About me coming over to your house and cooking for you and the girls?

GIDEON

When did you say that?

LUCY

Just now.

GIDEON

Nope.

LUCY

You sure?

GIDEON

Fairly certain.

LUCY

I'm sorry. I get ahead of myself. Could I come over and cook for you and the girls dinner one night? I'd be really grateful. I mean, I'm grateful to you already. But this would be grateful with dinner rolls. Please? I know it seems crazy and pushy but I don't really know anybody in town yet and I'd really like to make some new friends. Please?

LUCY looks at him, big eyes and all. GIDEON stares at her. There's something about her. He SHRUGS.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Really? Oh thank you! That shrug meant "yes" right? You won't be sorry. So tomorrow? Seven? Yes? Good. So I go where?

GIDEON

It's the Thorpe Ranch. Ask anyone, they'll guide you.

LUCY

Wonderful!

A YOUNG MAN comes up to LUCY.

YOUNG MAN

Excuse me, you want to dance?

LUCY

Me? Oh. I would but I don't really know the choreography. I mean I've taken dance, you know ballet, tap, a little Martha Graham, but I've never done what you guys are doing.

YOUNG MAN

You'll catch on.

LUCY

Well...

She looks at GIDEON.

GIDEON

You said you wanted to make new friends.

LUCY

Okay. Yes. I'd love to.

The YOUNG MAN leads LUCY out onto the floor and they start to dance. At first, LUCY just stares at everyone's feet, but in no time she starts to pick it up. In fact, she's a natural and is having more fun than anyone on the floor. Men are cutting in to dance with her. GIDEON watches a beat. He grabs his hat and starts out. He stops at the door, gives LUCY one more glance. A very small and rare smile crosses his face as he exits.

EXT. THORPE RANCH HOUSE - DAY (NEXT DAY)

WIDE on the house as a truck pulls up with a MAN riding in back. It slows down, he hops out with a duffel bag and waves goodbye.

EXT./INT. THORPE HOUSE PORCH/ENTRY - DUSK (NEXT DAY)

We're on his back as the 20-year old MAN, another farm boy but more urban than Gideon, KNOCKS on the door. MAGGIE opens it, lighting up when she sees...

MAGGIE

Dakin!

(hugs him, breaks it off)

Dinah! Bird! Dakin's home!

The CAMERA FOLLOWS DAKIN THORPE INSIDE as DINAH and BIRD excitedly rush up to greet him.

DINAH

Dakin!

BIRD

Yay!

He lifts BIRD in the air and swings her around.

DAKIN

How's my little honeypie?

BIRD

(laughing)

That tickles!

DINAH

Get that coat off.

DAKIN

I guess I'll stay a while, if you ladies insist.

BIRD

We insist!

As DINAH takes the duffel bag away, DAKIN'S expression sours. There's GIDEON, at the foot of the stairs, giving him a cold stare. The two of them eye each other across the room, gunslingers poised to draw.

DAKIN

(greeted him,
perfunctorily)

Brother...

GIDEON
 (nods, needling)
 Sister...

GIDEON walks off. DAKIN is less than happy with that greeting.

FADE OUT:

OVER BLACK WE HEAR THE GIRLS' LAUGHTER, ENERGY, FUN...

FADE IN:

INT. THORPE HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

DAKIN in an armchair regaling the girls with tales of college. BIRD'S on his lap, MAGGIE and DINAH are at his feet, and all three are festooned with Stanford University swag - caps, sweaters, etc.

DINAH
 A California surfer?

DAKIN
 Nicknamed Buzz. Gets cold when the thermometer drops below seventy.

The GIRLS LAUGH. Everything Dakin says is brilliant.

DAKIN (CONT'D)
 (demonstrating)
 Sits in the corner shivering like he's a popsicle caked in ice and I'm sweating buckets.

MAGGIE
 So get a different roommate.

DINAH
 One that's not defective.

DAKIN
 Aah, old Buzzy's all right. Fairly quiet and he doesn't smell so much.

BIRD
 Do you have classes with him?

DAKIN
 No, Birdie, it's not like your school. There's thousands of us at Stanford, studying all sorts of things: law and medicine and philosophy and--

BANG! The sound of metal hitting the floor. They turn and find GIDEON busy fixing a broken doorknob. GIDEON picks up the tool he dropped and continues working, never looking over at them.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. BARN - MINUTES LATER

A WIDE SHOT of GIDEON brushing his horse. DAKIN enters and we're over his shoulder as he stands assessing his recalcitrant brother.

DAKIN
We gonna talk?

GIDEON keeps brushing... Doesn't even look up. DAKIN walks away.

FADE OUT:

INT. THORPE HOUSE - NIGHT (LATER)

Bustle in the kitchen as dinner prep reaches its peak. BIRD slices radishes as MAGGIE sets another pan of food on the already crowded dinner table. DINAH juggles several things at once - pots on the stove, meat in the oven, everything's suddenly ready at once. A TIMER goes off.

DINAH
That's the cornbread. Mags, hurry back and get it.

A different TIMER sounds.

DINAH (CONT'D)
What the hell is that?...
(Bird giggles)
Slice those thin, Bird, that's how Dakin likes 'em. And get me the red pepper.

BIRD
I can't do both.

There's a KNOCK on the front door.

BIRD (CONT'D)
Someone's here.

DINAH
(annoyed)
Oh, the Jehovah's and their timing.

Still wearing her Ove-Gloves, she opens the front door...

And there's LUCY - beaming, beautiful, holding a heavy, expensive metal pan with a big orange lid.

LUCY

Hi! I brought cassoulet!

DINAH stares for a beat then closes the door and yells:

DINAH

Gideon!

GIDEON comes downstairs, still buttoning his shirt.

DINAH (CONT'D)

There's a strange girl at the door.

GIDEON

Hmm?

DINAH

Wispy thing? Big chunk of cheery?

GIDEON

(remembering)

Oh, yeah... I forgot to tell you.
I invited her over for dinner.

DINAH

To Dakin's "Welcome Home" dinner.

GIDEON

Didn't know the dinner had a title.

DINAH

I've been planning this for days.

GIDEON

It's chile - brown meat, dump
beans, what's to plan?

DINAH

You're an infant.

GIDEON

Is she standing outside?

DINAH

Unless her seven dwarves came and
fetched her.

GIDEON

Let her in.

DINAH

Gideon!

GIDEON

Hey, you're the one that said we should be more social. Now open it up, I'm not ready

She stares defiantly. He buttons very slowly. She SIGHS and goes to the door, opens it and finds LUCY sagging a bit from the weight of her pan.

DINAH

Come in, I guess.

LUCY

Okay. Thank you.

DINAH goes back to her kitchen as LUCY comes in.

GIDEON

Hey, Lucy.

LUCY

Hi. I brought cassoulet!
(looks around)
Ooh, I love the western theme you've got going here.

GIDEON

(looks around)
Well out here it's not really a theme, it's just... it. You want a beer?

LUCY

A nice cold beer. Sure.

GIDEON heads to the fridge with LUCY following, still carting the heavy pan.

GIDEON

(as he passes them)
That's Maggie, Bird, and the sparklin' ray of sunshine here is Dinah.

Confused greetings from the littler girls.

LUCY

Well, look at you all, pitching in preparing supper, just like on L-HOP.

(blank stares)

Little House On The Prairie?

(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)
(blank stares)
Do you get cable?

DINAH
Maggie, get an extra chair.

MAGGIE heads off to fetch it. DINAH hustles another heaping platter of food over to the overcrowded dining room table.

LUCY
(re: her pan)
So what should I do with this?

BIRD
Is it for the horses?

LUCY
No.

BIRD
Oh, well then I don't know.

GIDEON
Just put it on the table.

DINAH
(defiant)
We're out of room.

GIDEON
(not having it)
Well, make some room.

DINAH
But it's all set up like I like.

GIDEON
It's a table. What's there to like?

DINAH
I have a system.

GIDEON
Then change your system. There's room by the yams.

DINAH
I don't have a trivet.

GIDEON
(emphatic)
We don't need a trivet.

GIDEON moves the yams a bit and LUCY puts the pan down with an enormous BANG.

LUCY

Loud. Sorry. Stupid French and their stupid heavy pans.

(beat; Dinah glares at Gideon)

And my stupid weak biceps...

(beat)

Is it okay that I'm here?

DINAH

(more at Gideon; pissy)

Of course it is, 'cause we Thorpes are trying to be more social.

(yells off, pissed)

Dinner!

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. THORPE HOUSE - DINING AREA - MINUTES LATER

The group is seated and eating. DINAH acts as host, sitting closest to the kitchen. MAGGIE and BIRD concentrate on their plates. The tension between GIDEON and DAKIN is thick and getting thicker. GIDEON'S not even glancing DAKIN'S way. Dakin occasionally looks Gideon's way and doesn't like the view. LUCY is naturally filling the void, driving the dinner conversation.

LUCY

(tastes something)

Oh my god. Wonderful. Dinah, does the Food Channel know about you?

GIDEON motions for DINAH to respond...

DINAH

(lackluster)

I don't remember being contacted by them at any point, no...

LUCY

Oh! Story! When I was your age, I was at boarding school in Connecticut. The Cheshire School for Girls. Sound pretentious? Très prétentieux. So one night, I start a fire in my room with a can of beans. I mean, I could read Latin, speak German, play Mozart's piano concerto number twenty-three blindfolded, but I didn't know a tin can can't go in a microwave. Plus, the building I set on fire was named after my great Aunt Lydia which was a source of amusement for months to come all up and down Lydia Hall. Guess they won't be naming anything after me in the near future. Unless it's a firehose.

Beat.

BIRD

(mystified)

Who are you?

DAKIN

Could somebody pass the yams?

The yams are right next to GIDEON... who ignores the request and continues eating. DINAH grabs the yams and awkwardly passes them across GIDEON to where DAKIN can reach them. DAKIN glares at his brother.

DAKIN (CONT'D)

Thank you, Dinah.

DAKIN glaring. Atmosphere poisoned. Everyone just sitting there eating, much to DINAH'S annoyance.

DINAH

Now come on, everybody - we're intelligent people here. Someone talk about something.

LUCY

You know, one time--

DINAH

(cuts her off)
Someone else.

MAGGIE

I punched Cherry Thompson in the face.

GIDEON

Good.

DINAH

(unhappy)
Good? Gideon, you're the authority figure here.

GIDEON

Yeah?

DINAH

You want to see if maybe there was an alternative to sucker-punching Cherry Thompson?

GIDEON

(to Maggie)
She ask for it?

MAGGIE

Yeah.

GIDEON

I'm satisfied.

BIRD giggles. DINAH shoots a look that hushes her up. DAKIN focuses on GIDEON, shaking his head in judgment.

DAKIN
 (under his breath)
 Good job, oh patriarch.

GIDEON stops eating... And turns ever so slowly to DAKIN,
 glaring, anger bubbling...

GIDEON
 I didn't catch that.
 (now Dakin ignores him)
 Hey, I'm talking to you.

DAKIN
 So suddenly I'm visible?

DINAH
 (desperate to mitigate)
 We've got two whole chickens left
 here, guys. Don't let them go to
 waste.

DAKIN
 Okay, Gideon, get it off your chest
 so we can get on with things.
 Maybe even enjoy dessert.

DINAH
 There's cobbler!

GIDEON
 (to Dakin)
 You don't want this.

DAKIN
 Try me.

GIDEON
Okay.
 (pushing his plate away)
 How dare you try to get out of
 working foaling season.

DAKIN
 I offered.

GIDEON
 Not to me.

DINAH
 I told you he did to me... Dakin, I
 told him.

DAKIN
 (to Gideon)
 Air all clear now, brother? Good.
 (MORE)

DAKIN (CONT'D)
(to whoever)
Pass that chicken over.

GIDEON
You know, I think it's time we come up with a longer term solution for the running of this ranch.

DAKIN
Solution? There's nothing to solve.

GIDEON
We were both off doing things when everything happened.

DAKIN
I was at Stanford earning a degree and you were steer wrestling in Tulsa.

GIDEON
So?

DAKIN
There's a difference.

GIDEON
Yeah, I was supporting myself.

DAKIN
So you'd have me drop out of college?

GIDEON
Things changed.

DAKIN
The fundamentals didn't.

GIDEON
Well what's more fundamental than those two bumps in the ground?

DINAH
Gideon!

LUCY
(innocently)
What bumps?

DAKIN
(to Gideon)
They wanted me to finish.

GIDEON

Yeah, well they don't get a say anymore.

LUCY

(realizing, embarrassed)

Oh... Bumps.

(to Maggie)

Honey, you okay?

MAGGIE

(off Lucy's cassoulet)

What is that?

DAKIN

(to Gideon, getting hotter)

I'm building my life.

GIDEON

Yeah, well what about me? When do I get to build my life?

DAKIN

This is your life. The ranch is your life.

GIDEON

Well, what if I don't want it to be?

DAKIN

Oh come on, Gideon. Your whole life is horses. You got the gift - Dad always said. And somebody has to run this place.

GIDEON

Well, you're welcome to it, brother.

DAKIN

(adamant)

I'm not dropping out of school.

GIDEON

(gets up, agitated)

Well, then let's say we sell the damn place?! How about that?!

DINAH

(horrified)

No! I want it! I'll run it! You can't sell it!

GIDEON
You're sixteen. You can't run this
place.

DINAH
I'm practically running it now!

An upset BIRD leaves the table.

DINAH (CONT'D)
Bird, come back here!

MAGGIE
(to Lucy)
Still gettin' that L-Hop buzz?

DAKIN gets up and faces GIDEON. The tension rising...

DAKIN
I'm finishing school and becoming
an engineer...

GIDEON
I'm not done deciding...

DAKIN
I'll design a tractor, but I'm not
driving one.

LUCY
I actually minored in engineering.
What good has it done me?

DAKIN
(to Gideon, re: Lucy)
I'm sorry, who is this?

DINAH
(to Lucy)
Yeah, do you mind?

GIDEON
You're coming home.

DAKIN
No.

GIDEON
We'll run the ranch in six month
shifts 'til we figure out a more
permanent way.

DAKIN
No!

GIDEON
Or else I sell.

DINAH
No!

GIDEON
(to Dakin)
You're coming home.

DAKIN
You may be the older brother,
Gideon, but you've got no right
telling me what to do.

GIDEON
I've got every right to--

DAKIN
(cuts him off)
No! Now you listen to me! You
know damn well that I was always
going to be the one that went to
college. I grew up reading books
and you grew up in that barn. That
was your choice, Gideon, your
proclivity. Not something that was
forced on you. You showed no
interest in continuing your
education, and I did and I got the
scholarship to Stanford. And now
I'm on the Dean's List. And
busting my ass working part time at
a crappy job to pay for what my
scholarship doesn't. Hell, I'm
even banking money for the girls to
help them get to college, too. I'm
living up to my responsibilities...

(bearing down harder)
Now I will continue to go to school
and I will graduate as planned and
I will live the life that Mom and
Dad made possible for me. And
might I say that if there's a
heaven, then they're looking down
on me in agreement. And that I'd
like to hear you try to deny.

(beat)
So there. I'm talked out. Go
ahead... Counter.

GIDEON pauses - thinking, considering. And here's his
counter: he PUNCHES DAKIN square in the face!

And chaos erupts. LUCY lets out a SHRIEK as she, DINAH and MAGGIE jump up from the table. The guys have no control over their direction as they HIT the table, knocking a couple things to the ground. DINAH'S pissed, LUCY'S in shock and MAGGIE'S thrilled as GIDEON and DAKIN stagger together, punching and grunting, into the kitchen area. (Both these guys are good fighters, evenly matched, but the fight is real, sloppy, with few clean punches landing.) DINAH jumps into the fray, PUNCHING at both of them to communicate her displeasure.

DINAH
No! Stop it!

The GUYS bang up against the oven hard.

DINAH (CONT'D)
Oh, you are lucky I'm not doing a
souffle tonight!

They knock more things off counters as they circle the area. DINAH opens the refrigerator door, slamming it into them, sending them staggering out of the kitchen and toward the front door. We spot BIRD hiding under a chair, watching, worried. LUCY is frozen watching.

DINAH (CONT'D)
(to Lucy)
Don't just stand there. Get the
door!

LUCY snaps to and goes to the front door as DINAH does what she can to get the guys heading toward it. LUCY opens the door and the guys stumble outside.

EXT. RANCH - CONTINUOUS

More chaos as GIDEON and DAKIN tumble out the door and land wrestling on the ground. MAGGIE and LUCY stop at the porch with Maggie rooting the fight on.

DINAH comes out of the house with a bucket and as the guys roll on the ground, she dumps a load of cold water on them. They separate, winded, livid.

DAKIN
You don't want me here, Gideon?
Fine! I'm going back to school!

GIDEON
You do that!

DINAH
Dakin, no!

MAGGIE

Stop!

Too late. DAKIN'S heading into the house. No one follows.

DINAH

(beseeching)

Gideon!

GIDEON in a rage. Doesn't know what to do with himself. Cold, wet, still catching his breath. He picks up the bucket and HURLS it.

GIDEON

Damn it!

DINAH'S just as agitated. A little winded herself. Brother and sister stand there a beat. GIDEON then motions to DINAH.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Come on!

GIDEON takes off with DINAH on his heels and MAGGIE catching up to them. They stride purposefully into the barn.

LUCY watches from the porch. BIRD comes out and timidly slinks to her side.

LUCY

They're not fetching guns or anything, are they?

BIRD shakes her head 'no.'

BIRD

They do this when they get upset.

LUCY

Do what?

GIDEON shoots out of the barn on his white horse and flies off into the moonlit night. DINAH is close behind and so is MAGGIE, both riding like the wind.

A SERIES OF SHOTS of GIDEON on his horse, still angry, using the horse's energy to spend his own.

On DINAH and MAGGIE doing the same, all three taking part in a ritual of their own making. This is their element - horse, land, speed.

All three JUMP over a short fence.

Soon, they're chasing each other, jumping over more things, all of them at one with the horses. The anger is receding now. It's just becoming fun.

They turn the horses around and head back toward the house. DINAH and MAGGIE ride past LUCY and BIRD, but GIDEON stops his horse in front of them. BIRD immediately runs toward the house.

BIRD
(as she runs)
Get that thing away from me!

She's inside.

LUCY
Wow. That was like Cirque du Soleil and a cockfight all rolled into one.

GIDEON
You ride?

LUCY
Horses? Oh god, no. Not since that one spit its oats on me in front of the Plaza.

GIDEON
Give me your hand.

LUCY
Oh, no, no...

GIDEON
We'll go slow. I promise.

LUCY
(beat; smiles)
Well, in that case...

LUCY grabs GIDEON'S hand and he easily pulls her up and seats her in front of him. He puts his arm around her waist and walks the horse slow.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Wow. Hey, this is really--

GIDEON
(working the reins)
Hiiyaaaaa!

And the horse takes off like a shot.

LUCY'S terrified... for a couple beats. Then she gets the fun. GIDEON holds her closer as they ride off toward the horizon, bathed in moonlight.

EXT. TOWN/GRANDMA'S HOUSE - LATER

GIDEON and LUCY are on Gideon's horse, the horse walking slow and regal down the street. It's quiet, mountain still. An occasional car passes by, but the predominant sounds are CRICKETS, and the HOWLING of far-off dogs, and the horse's hooves hitting the pavement. LUCY drinks in the quiet, the magic. She scans the sky.

LUCY

You ever look up at those stars?

GIDEON

Not much.

LUCY

You practically have to shield your eyes, they're so bright.

GIDEON glances up trying to see what she sees.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I feel happy. Right now. Really happy.

GIDEON

Yeah? Happier than usual?

LUCY

Well, yes. Am I happy usually? No. I don't think I am. I'm sort of jumpy, you know, and not overly medicated so that sets me apart from my family. But I consider happy being... relaxed, comfortable, no need to talk or think, just to...be. That's how I feel right now.

GIDEON

It's the horse.

LUCY

It's the horse, it's the night, it's this place. You're really lucky to have grown up here.

GIDEON

Hmmm, I guess...

LUCY

You're too close - you don't see it...

(beat)

I was having a tough time in New York. Everyone around me was working and thriving and falling in love and I was having panic attacks. I actually fainted ordering a shawarma on 6th Avenue. Burned my arm on the grill, see? I just never seemed to fit there. I was the only native-born New Yorker who didn't have a fastest route to Penn station from the Upper East Side at rush hour. So when Grandma got sick it just seemed like a perfect excuse to...

(realizing)

...Run away. Oh my god, that's the first time I thought of it that way. I ran away.

(beat)

But now I'm here and I feel like I should've been here my whole life. I just hope I get to stay.

(beat)

You ever been to New York?

GIDEON

No.

(beat)

I always wanted to go.

LUCY

Really?

GIDEON

I was supposed to go once. With the rodeo. Was really looking forward to it. But, I had to come home. I had to come home, run the ranch, raise my sisters, bury my parents... after that, everything pretty much stopped.

LUCY

It'll start again.

GIDEON

Maybe.

(beat)

Sometimes I feel a little....

LUCY

(blurting out)

Handsome? Sorry. I couldn't help myself. I thought you were going to say handsome. Or I thought you should say handsome, because you are. Handsome. See, the medication would help with this a lot but... go ahead. You sometimes feel a little...

GIDEON

Stupid. A little slow. Dakin was always the smart one. Always had ambitions. And aim. I never had aim. I just wanted to get out and find...something. Guess I should've worked on finding it sooner 'cause maybe now...maybe now this is it.

LUCY

Well, if this is it... It's pretty great.

LUCY smiles. GIDEON'S face softens - the weight of the world lifts for a moment as he looks at her.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Oh my -- we're here.

GIDEON

Okay...

GIDEON gets off the horse, then gently lifts LUCY down. She hesitates in his arms for a moment...

LUCY

Well, thank you very much for dinner and the ride.

GIDEON

You're welcome.

LUCY

Good night.

GIDEON lets her go and LUCY heads to her grandmother's house.

LUCY (CONT'D)

(turning back to him)

And FYI - cassoulet is even better the next day.

GIDEON
 Good to know...

LUCY smiles and exits into the house. As GIDEON gets back on his horse:

GRANDMA (O.C.)
 Oh crap, you're still here.

GIDEON rides off.

INT. SUGAR'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

SUGAR is all dolled up, wearing her crown and a silk bathrobe. She sits at her vanity, checks her reflection - she's satisfied. She SIGHS; checks her watch. Her crown is a bit crooked - she straightens it.

EXT. AMES HOUSE - SAME TIME

GIDEON sits on his horse, staring at Sugar's window. The whole thing's not sitting right with him. Not tonight. He turns and walks his horse away.

INT. THORPE HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

It's quiet. Just a few lamps lit here and there and the tv's on. GIDEON enters, takes his hat off. He finds DINAH asleep on the couch, school materials strewn about. She changed into her pajamas - flannel poodle print pajamas - and like this, she looks really young. Like the kid she is and not the adult she has to be. GIDEON grabs a throw blanket and gently places it over her. He heads into the kitchen area and sees Lucy's cassoulet on the table where it was left. He lifts the lid and studies it - it's just as mystifying as before. He hears something and turns.

It's BIRD. She's in her pajamas, robe, slippers. Sitting at the table, just looking at him, expressionless. He considers her for a beat. He puts his hat back on, and heads to the front door, BIRD never taking her eyes off him. GIDEON stops at the door and holds his hand out to her.

GIDEON
 Come on.

BIRD walks over and takes his hand. They head out.

INT. BARN - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

The barn door swings open. GIDEON and BIRD stand there hand in hand. HORSES stir a bit. BIRD braces herself.

GIDEON
 You ready?

BIRD
(tiny)
Yes.

They both take one big step inside the barn and stand there a beat. GIDEON looks at BIRD, with a hint of pride.

GIDEON
You're in.

BIRD'S still nervous but looks pleased with herself.

GIDEON (CONT'D)
You hungry?

She nods. They start out of the barn, heading to the house, aglow in the background. As they walk away:

BIRD
Maybe tomorrow we'll take two
steps.

GIDEON
Let's see how you feel.

As GIDEON walks his little sister back to the house, we:

FADE OUT:

END OF SHOW