

4-21-2014

Moral Geography: A Screenplay

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MORAL GEOGRAPHY

A Screenplay

Written by

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Capstone fulfillment of MAPW

Kennesaw State University

April 21, 2014

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College of Humanities & Social Sciences
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Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the Capstone Project of


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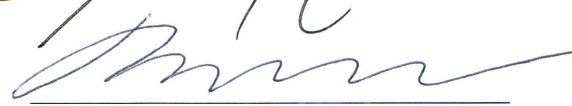
the Master of Arts in Professional Writing
in the Department of English

At the May, 2014 graduation

Capstone committee:



Member



Member

INT. THE WOOLYBUCKET SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY - 5/18/1998

BOB DOLLAR (22) sits on a cot in a cell with a styrofoam cup of coffee. He wears cowboy boots and jeans. There are voices from the Sheriff's inner office.

SHERIFF (O.C.)

So how come they call you Coolbroth
and not Hot Stew?

COOLBROTH (O.C.)

I told you, it's a family name.

SHERIFF (O.C.)

Sounds like some hippie nickname.

COOLBROTH (O.C.)

Sheriff, no one else has thought
about hippies since 1970. Am I
under arrest?

SHERIFF (O.C.)

No, just keep off private property.

COOLBROTH FRONK (22) exits the inner office. He has a full beard and ponytail, and wears a T-shirt with large block letters F.O.E. He carries a sign reading "End Animal Torture." He looks at Bob in the cell and give him a thumbs up; Bob replies with a peace sign.

INT. LAVON'S KITCHEN - DAY - TWO MONTHS EARLIER (3/13/1998)

LAVON FRONK (60), thin as a fifth-grader, is multi-tasking: attending two pots on the stove, putting things away, wiping counters and the table. There is a light tapping at the door.

LAVON

Come on in, Mr. Dollar.

Bob enters. He wears cowboy boots and carries a notepad.

BOB

Good morning, Mrs. Fronk. I brought
the water cans to fill. And please,
call me Bob.

LAVON

And I'm LaVon. We're gonna get
along just fine. Get yourself a cup
a coffee and set for a while.

Bob takes a mug from the counter, pours coffee, and sits at the table. LaVon continues to stay busy.

LAVON (CONT'D)

Were you able to get all the stuff you needed at Scotties?

BOB

Pretty much, but I'm going to have to get some sort of lantern if I don't want to go to bed at sunset.

LAVON

I've got a kerosene lamp that'll do you just fine. You can get the kerosene at the Drag On store. It's next to the grain elevator. They have fuel oil too - you'll need that if you want hot showers.

BOB

Thanks. I'll go by there today.

Bob sips coffee and looks around the room. On the side-board are cardboard boxes filled with folders, newspapers, magazines, and photo albums. He waves a hand at them.

BOB (CONT'D)

Are you doing a major clean up?

LAVON

Those are materials for the Rural Compendium. I'm putting together a history of the county called the Woollybucket Rural Compendium and folks have loaned me that stuff.

BOB

That's a lot of stuff. How long have you been working on it?

LAVON

Thirteen years. And those are just a sample - there's about fifty more boxes in the front bedroom. It just keeps getting bigger and I don't see an end in sight.

BOB

Maybe you could break it up, do it in several volumes. The first could deal with the early years.

LAVON

No, I could not. My material is filed by family, not by year. It's alphabetical, not chronological.

BOB

But . . .

LAVON

Do not worry about it. Every pie got its own crust. I'm sure you have your work that interests you.

BOB

Well, yeah.

LaVon stops her activity and looks squarely at Bob.

LAVON

And just what is your work? What brings you down here in the panhandle, which has so few voluntary visitors?

Bob did not see the trap coming and starts to improvise.

BOB

It's kind of complicated. It's not really work at all.

LAVON

Oh? A vacation perhaps in sunny Woolybucket?

BOB

I'm looking for . . .

LaVon sits across the table from Bob.

LAVON

Yes?

BOB

I'm . . . I'm writing a profile of the panhandle for a magazine.

LAVON

What magazine is that?

BOB

Ah . . . I haven't got one lined up yet. I thought I'd write the article and then send it out.

LAVON

I don't think so, Bob. That's not how you get an article in a magazine. People get assignments. You must think I'm pretty dumb.

BOB

No. No. You're right. I'm not writing an article. I'm here looking for . . . a girlfriend. My mother always told me to marry a girl from Texas.

LAVON

Let's leave your admiration for Texas girls at that. Are you employed or should I worry about you comin' up with your rent?

BOB

I am employed. I'm scouting the region for nice pieces of land for . . . a luxury home development. I work for Global Properties Deluxe.

LAVON

Plenty of people have come here lookin' to buy land for one thing or another, but luxury homes is a new one to me. But that's your most believable story so far, Bob, so you best stick with it.

INT. CLUKE'S OFFICE - DAY - TWO WEEKS EARLIER (3/2/1998)

RIBEYE CLUKE (50) leans against the side of his desk. He wears a red bow tie and wide red suspenders. Bob sits in a chair in front of the desk.

CLUKE

And here's another thing, Bob. You will have to have a cover story because you can't go down there and say you're working for us. Some people would be openly hostile. The fellow we had before told people he was a reporter for a national magazine working on a panhandle story. He thought that was a good cover story.

BOB

What magazine did that fellow say he was working for, sir?

CLUKE

I believe he said *Vogue*. He thought he would be safe with that one in the Panhandle.

BOB

And it didn't work for him?

CLUKE

No. No, it didn't. I would stay away from the magazine idea, but you'll think of something. Now, Bob, your best bet is to rent a room with someone in the area. Find some old lady or elderly couple with plenty of relatives. You'll get a beeline on what's happening.

Cluke rises and walks toward the door. Bob rises and follows.

CLUKE (CONT'D)

Lucille has made up a packet for you with maps, brochures, county profiles. Report back to me by mail every week. And I don't mean that damn e-mail. I won't touch that. Get a post office box. You write to me at home and I'll respond from same so your postmaster down there doesn't see the company name on the envelopes. Use a pay phone if there's an emergency.

BOB

Yes, sir.

Cluke puts his hand on Bob's shoulder and leans close.

CLUKE

And remember, the thing that's *really* important is that - that we - that we *do* what we do.

EXT. THE WOOLYBUCKET GRAIN ELEVATOR - DAY - (3/13/1998)

Bob parks in front. A sign reads "Drag-On Farm Supplies." Five men in their 50s/60s sit on steps. Bob approaches them.

BOB

Good morning.

FIRST MAN

Morning to you, young fella. You stayin' in LaVon's bunkhouse?

BOB

Yes, sir. My name's Bob Dollar.

FIRST MAN

Good to meetcha Bob. I'm Bill Williams.

BOB

Same here, Bill. I just moved in - I guess news travels fast here.

BILL

Yeah, Woolybucket's not much of a place for secrets. This here's Charles Grapewine and Bud Hank and Bill Williams.

BOB

Two Bill Williams? Doesn't that get confusing.

Bill lifts his hat to show his thinning blond hair.

BILL

We're called by the colors of our manes. I'm Buckskin Bill.

The other Bill shows his greying auburn hair.

OTHER BILL

And they call me Sorrel Bill.

BOB

Glad to meet all of you.

BUCKSKIN

And this is Wayne Etter. He runs this place.

BOB

I guess you're the man I need to see about kerosene and fuel oil.

WAYNE

Ab's inside - he'll fix you up.

CHARLES

Sit down, Bob. Talk for a spell.

BOB

Is something special going on? Are you guys waiting for something?

SORREL

No. This is where folks come in the morning to check Chicago prices.

Bob looks puzzled.

BUCKSKIN

The commodities markets. Small shifts in prices can be a big deal.

BOB

But isn't that something you can check online in a few minutes.

CHARLES

It is now, and most of us do. But twenty years ago Wayne's ticker was all we had.

WAYNE

It's how we keep in touch, keep up with what each other is doin'.

BUD

New jokes and stories - stuff you don't talk about Sunday mornings.

SORREL

Local news and gossip.

BUCKSKIN

How do you think we knew about you movin' in?

Bob nods and smiles.

WAYNE

CNN says it's gonna hit ninety today.

CHARLES

Damn! And it's not even April yet.

EXT. A RURAL ROAD - DAY

Bob checks out the farms and ranches. Established trees surround many of the houses and all have functioning windmills. He stops occasionally to write in a notebook.

EXT. THE PORCH OF THE BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT

Bob lights the kerosene lantern. He eats a sandwich and drinks from a Diet Mountain Dew. He writes in his notebook.

EXT. BOB HEAD-ON, CLOSE-UP

BOB

Dear Mr. Cluke. It took me a few days to find a place, but I have moved into a ranch bunkhouse near a town called Woolybucket. The ranch is owned by a widow, LaVon Fronk, who is compiling a history of the county and should be a source of good contacts with local property owners. My cover is that I am scouting sites for luxury homes. This should work OK, since these owners are used to speculators checking out their land. The people here seem very set in what they believe and how they behave. None that I have met are indifferent - a few are hostile to outsiders, but most are open and accepting. I have been making some circumspect contacts with local ranchers when they gather in the morning at the grain elevator to catch up on local happenings, but much of my time is spent driving the rural roads of the county. The land is surprising - I had images of a flat, treeless prairie, and much of it fits that description. But there are small hills and ravines, and wooded depressions along the creeks that flow into the Canadian River. Many of the houses are surrounded by well-established trees, which I am told is possible because of water from the Ogallala aquifer pumped up by windmills. I have not yet heard of any owners looking to sell, but I am investigating the conditions you suggested. I will write next week with another update. Yours truly, Bob Dollar.

EXT. THE BUNKHOUSE PORCH - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING.

Bob rereads the letter and puts it into an envelope. He leans back and takes a sip of his Diet Mountain Dew.

EXT. A CITY STREET - EARLY MORNING - 11/14/1984.

A car pulls up in front of a two story storefront with "COLFAX THRIFT" in large letters across the window; smaller letters at the bottom read "Tambourine Bapp - Prop.". VIOLA DOLLAR (34) exits the front passenger seat and opens the back door. She wears outdoor winter clothes. BOB DOLLAR (8) gets out of the back seat with a small fabric suitcase. He wears a winter coat, jeans, a billed cap with earflaps, and mittens. Viola gets a cardboard box tied with twine from the back seat. She takes Bob's hand and leads him to the steps. She sets the box down and puts her hands on Bob's shoulders.

VIOLA

Now when Uncle Tam gets up and starts slamming things around inside, you knock on the door. You're going to stay with him. We've got to run now or we'll miss the plane. Quick hug goodbye.

She hugs him and gets into the passenger seat. ADAM DOLLAR (35) looks toward Bob and gives him a salute. The car pulls away. Bob sits on the step between his box and a box of discarded donations, holding his suitcase on his lap.

EXT. COLFAX AVE - MORNING - 11/14/1984.

Bob Dollar sits on the front steps of Colfax Thrift. UNCLE TAM (40) opens the door. Bob stands up and turns toward him.

UNCLE TAM

Bob! What are you doing on my front steps?

BOB

Mama said I should sit here until I heard you moving around. I never heard you.

Tam comes down the steps and puts a hand on Bob's shoulder.

UNCLE TAM

Well, come on in out of the cold.

Bob enters with his suitcase. Tam follows with the boxes.

INT. THE COLFAX THRIFT SHOWROOM - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING.

There are shelves and tables with small appliances and electronics, and a glass showcase with watches and jewelry.

A side wall is filled with books. Racks of clothes are at the back of the room. Tam sets the boxes on the floor.

UNCLE TAM

Leave your bag here and come on up to the kitchen; we'll get you some milk and breakfast.

They start up the stairs.

UNCLE TAM (CONT'D)

Where are your folks?

BOB

On their way to Alaska. They had to catch the plane early this morning. Mama said I'd be staying with you.

INT. THE KITCHEN OF COLFAX THRIFT - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

UNCLE TAM

Sit down, Bob. I'll get you some milk and grub.

Tam gets cereal, milk, and a banana. Bob eats hungrily.

UNCLE TAM (CONT'D)

Oh, yeah! We talked about that. I told them to bring you over. You're going to stay with me while they get set up in Alaska. When they get their cabin built and are settled in a bit, they'll come back and get you, and you'll all live there.

BOB

How long is that gonna be?

UNCLE TAM

That's hard to say, but we'll do just fine here until they get back. After you finish breakfast, we'll clear out that spare room and set it up as a bedroom for you.

Tam tousles Bob's hair; Bob looks up and smiles at him.

EXT. A RURAL ROAD - DAY - 3/20/1998.

Bob drives along a rural road and stops in front of a well-kept frame house with a sturdy picket fence.

An elderly couple, H.H. (68) and HILDY (65), sit on rocking chairs on the porch. Bob walks to the gate.

BOB

Hello. Nice day for taking the air.

H.H. waves to Bob.

H.H.

Come on up.

Bob enters the gate and walks to the porch

H.H. (CONT'D)

You the young fella stayin' in LaVon's bunkhouse?

BOB

Yes, sir, I am. My name is Bob Dollar. Does everyone in the county know where I live?

H.H.

Proibly. I'm H.H. Potts and this is my wife Hildy.

HILDY

How do, Bob. What brings you out here?

BOB

I'm looking for properties that might be developed into luxury home sites. Your place is beautiful, and I don't see much activity going on.

H.H.

Naw, we haven't worked the land in five years, except for Hildy's garden. Ad Slauter leases most of it to grow alfalfa for his cattle.

BOB

Have you ever considered selling?

H.H. and Hildy stare at Bob in disbelief.

HILDY

Why would we sell? We don't want a live anywhere else.

BOB

You could move into town. Things would be much more convenient.

H.H.

We couldn't live like that -
stacked on top of each other like
folks in town do.

HILDY

My friend Ida Carson lives in town,
and she can see five other houses
from her porch.

EXT. THE BUNKHOUSE PORCH - NIGHT - 3/22/1998.

Bob eats slices of pizza as he writes.

EXT. BOB HEAD-ON, CLOSE-UP

BOB

Dear Uncle Tam. I'm starting to get
a feel for this place. I told Mr.
Cluke that I'm confident about
finding available properties, but
that may have been optimistic.
These people are attached to their
land. The only places listed for
sale are small plots in or near the
towns. Mr. Cluke cautioned me that
I might encounter some opposition,
and I have begun to sense a
prevailing hostility. I will need
to deal carefully with this, but I
am still determined to accomplish
my assignment. I told you I had
doubts about living so isolated in
this bunkhouse, but my time here
has become the best part of this
experience. I look forward to
sitting on my porch in the evening
while I read or just watch the sky.
You take care now. Love, Bob.

EXT. THE BUNKHOUSE PORCH - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING.

Bob rereads the letter and puts it into an envelope. He leans
back with another slice of pizza.

INT. THE COLFAX THRIFT SHOWROOM - AFTER SCHOOL - 4/16/1986.

Bob (10) arranges books along the wall. Tam sorts boxes and
carries one through a doorway marked "Art Plastic - By
Appointment Only." He reappears and stands watching Bob.

UNCLE TAM

I'm going to make you librarian.
You have a feeling for those books.

BOB

I figure arranging them is the best
way to know what we've got.

UNCLE TAM

When you're finished, we'll have
nice labels made for the shelves.

BOB

That would be great. Uncle Tam, why
is Art Plastic by appointment only.

UNCLE TAM

Because I don't want browsers
wandering around in there; that's
the most important stuff we've got.

BOB

But it's all just plastic.

UNCLE TAM

One day people will collect plastic
from the twentieth century as art.
This stuff will be worth a fortune.
They started making that Bakelite
jewelry in the twenties and it was
considered high style in the
thirties. Because it was cheap,
folks didn't keep it, so some of
the pieces are getting really rare.

BOB

I'll start looking for it at the
swap meets and flea markets.

UNCLE TAM

Thanks, Bob. That'll be a big help.

INT. THE KITCHEN OF COLFAX THRIFT - NIGHT - 05/14/1988.

Bob Dollar (12) sits at the table with a travel book called
"Wild Alaska." He wears jeans and a T shirt with a rock band
logo. Uncle Tam enters with another book.

UNCLE TAM

Someone left another book that
ought to help you with those
crossword puzzles.

The book is called "The Child's Illustrated Dictionary."

BOB

Thanks, Uncle Tam. I'm gonna learn at least five new words every day.

Tam sits across from Bob and picks up the Alaska book.

UNCLE TAM

I guess you still think about your folks sometimes. You making plans to go looking for them?

BOB

No, but I try to imagine what they might be doing. You told me that leaving me here with you was something all of you planned, but that's not true, is it?

UNCLE TAM

No, it's not. I couldn't stand the thought of an eight-year-old boy knowing his parents dumped him. They'd been talking about the great opportunities in Alaska, but they never told me they were going.

BOB

I guess they figured I'd get in their way.

UNCLE TAM

Some people are like that - they never think about how what they do affects others.

BOB

And you never heard from them again after those two letters?

UNCLE TAM

Nope. Two letters in the first two months. They said they found some work and maybe a place where they could build their cabin. You probably don't remember, but your Uncle Xylo flew up there the next year to see what he could learn. Couldn't find a trace.

BOB

I don't know anything about them. What did they do to make a living?

(MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)

I mean, what was my dad, an engineer, a computer guy or what?

UNCLE TAM

Well, your mother was artistic. She painted neckties. You know the one I've got of the Titanic sinking? That's one of hers. It'll be yours someday. As for your dad, that's a little hard to say. He was a nice guy, a really nice guy, but a little unfocused. He never could settle on anything. He had about a hundred jobs before they went to Alaska. Are you still missing them?

BOB

Not really, but sometimes I do wonder what happened to them.

UNCLE TAM

I don't think we'll ever know. For a couple of years we phoned and sent letters to every agency and individual we could contact. Alaska is a very big place.

Bob nods; Tam puts his hand on Bob's shoulder.

EXT. THE GRAIN ELEVATOR - DAY - 3/23/1998.

Bob wears a hat and sits on the steps with the usual gang.

WAYNE

Did you see that winter wheat dropped another four cents?

SORREL

It's that damned NAFTA. We got Canadian wheat floodin' the market.

WAYNE

Methiel Huff is switchin' over to milo and sorghum.

BUD

With so many shiftin' to cow/calf that's a smart move. He'll be able to sell a good chunk of it locally.

BOB

Are a lot of the farmers moving to cattle?

WAYNE

Oh yeah. Grain shipments are off almost fifty percent in the last five years.

BUCKSKIN

How's your work goin', Bob? You findin' any luxury sites?

BOB

None for sale. I just saw a beautiful spread out on Rattler Gulch Road.

SORREL

H.H. and Hildy's place?

BOB

Yeah. We had a nice long chat, but they're not going to sell. They don't even work the place anymore.

BUD

Right. They own it free and clear, and live on the lease money.

BUCKSKIN

That's how farmers and ranchers retire in the panhandle.

BOB

So the properties never get sold?

SORREL

Sometimes, when the owners pass on and the kids don't want to deal with it. But some of the kids hang on for the lease income.

BOB

I guess I'll have to keep scouting.

EXT. THE BUNKHOUSE PORCH - NIGHT - 3/28/1998.

Bob eats a burger and looks at the sky.

INT. TAM'S LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING - 06/4/1994.

A banner on the wall reads "Congratulations Bob - Honor Graduate! Front Range HS Class of '94." A dozen people (40s/50s) are present. Bob (18) sits on the couch between UNCLE XYLO (48) and AUNT SIOBHAN (45).

SIOBHAN

Bob, we are so proud of you. Just think, an Honor Graduate with all you've had to overcome.

BOB

Thanks, Aunt Siobhan.

XYLO

It's a wonderful accomplishment. It speaks well for your character and for your future.

BOB

Thanks, Uncle Xylo.

XYLO

Tam says that you've been offered a scholarship to the University.

BOB

Yeah, that's right.

SIOBHAN

Will you be enrolling in the Fall?

BOB

The scholarship is for tuition only and Boulder is too far to commute. I'm going to start at Denver South.

XYLO

That's a good school, too. You're going to do fine wherever you go.

BOB

I'm going to say hello to some of the others. Thanks for being here.

XYLO

You're on the right track, my boy

SIOBHAN

You come up to Pickens to visit when you can.

BOB

I will.

Bob walks to MR. WEBER (45) and MRS. WEBER (44).

MR. WEBER

Congratulations, Bob. This is something to be proud of.

BOB

Thanks, Mr. Weber.

MRS. WEBER

You have come so far after the bad luck you had to start out.

BOB

Thank you, Mrs. Weber, but I've had good luck too. This was an OK place to grow up, with good neighbors like you, and Uncle Tam giving me all the books I could read.

MRS. WEBER

You've been a fine neighbor too and a wonderful influence on Will and Susie. You were always their favorite baby sitter. I do believe they like to read because of you.

BOB

They're really great kids - I've enjoyed hanging out with them.

Tam picks up some empty plates and heads for the kitchen.

BOB (CONT'D)

Excuse me, I need to catch Uncle Tam while he's free.

Bob follows Tam into the kitchen.

INT. THE KITCHEN OF COLFAX THRIFT - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Tam stands at the table filling bowls and plates with chips, crackers, and cheese. Bob gets a can of soft drink.

BOB

Thanks for doing this, Uncle Tam - it's a really nice party.

UNCLE TAM

I wish I could have done more - not just tonight, but all the time you've been here. You deserved better than growing up with a crazy unrich uncle in a junk shop.

BOB

It sure beat growing up on Uncle Xylo's farm. I guess it wasn't easy bringing up someone else's kid.

UNCLE TAM

Ah, you were an easy kid - except for the library fines. You always pitched in and helped. You never complained, never got down and mopey when things didn't go your way, you never quit - you just got through it.

BOB

You got any advice about how to be an adult.

UNCLE TAM

I suppose the only thing I'd like to impress on you is a sense of responsibility. Viola never had it, and for sure Adam didn't. If you take on a project then, dammit, see it through to the end. Let your word mean something. It about broke my heart to see you run to the mailbox every day expecting a letter from Alaska. Adam and Viola were not what I'd call responsible.

BOB

That's not going to happen to me. I'm going to be successful; I'm going to be stable; I'm going to do what I say I'll do. People are going to trust me. I'm not going to wind up like my parents.

Tam looks at Bob and nods his understanding.

INT. LAVON'S KITCHEN - DAY - 3/30/1998.

LaVon sorts Compendium material. Bob enters.

BOB

Good morning, LaVon.

LAVON

Mornin', Bob. Get yourself coffee and get me a refill if you would.

Bob fills both cups and returns to the table.

BOB

What's up with the Compendium?

LAVON

Clearin' space for some new files.
I got lucky. Tater Crouch is gonna
loan me his scrapbooks.

BOB

Who's Tater Crouch?

LAVON

He's one of the old-timers. He's
seventy-six and was born on the
ranch he still lives on. If you
want a learn something about the
county, you should come with me.
Tater's condition isn't good, but
get him wound up, he'll talk your
ear off about the early days.

BOB

When are you going over there?

LAVON

Now.

BOB

I'm in.

INT. THE CAB OF LAVON'S TRUCK - DAY - 3/30/1998.

Bob sits next to LaVon as she drives on a rural road.

LAVON

Tater's dad bought the Bar Owl in
1910, when they split up the XIT.

BOB

What's the XIT?

LAVON

You got a lot to learn. In the last
century, the XIT was the largest
ranch in the country - three
million acres - covered half the
panhandle. For thirty years it had
thousands of cattle and hundreds of
cowhands, but it never made a dime.
Debts piled up and it went into
bankruptcy - creditors sold it off
in parcels. That's where most of
the ranches around here came from.

BOB
Is the Bar Owl still a going
operation?

LAVON
No, Tater's not up to runnin' it
any more. Most of the land is
leased out to other outfits.

BOB
Do you think he might consider
selling?

LAVON
He might. His life would be easier
if he moved into town. But the Bar
Owl's not a candidate for your
luxury sites.

BOB
Why not?

LAVON
You'll see.

EXT. THE YARD OF THE BAR OWL RANCH - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

The truck pulls up in front of a simple two story house; they
get out. Bob stops, raises his head, and crinkles his nose.

BOB
What's that smell?

LAVON
That's hogs. The King Karolina hog
farm is a half mile down the road.

BOB
That's pretty nasty.

LAVON
That's nothin'. We're upwind today.
When it shifts, your eyes burn and
your throat wants to close up. I
don't think your luxury home folks
are gonna want that.

INT. THE KITCHEN OF COLFAX THRIFT - NIGHT - 3/1/1998.

Bob (22) and Tam sit at the table.

UNCLE TAM

So you think this new job might be what you've been looking for? You never seemed to have a problem getting hired.

BOB

Yeah, but those other jobs weren't going to lead to anything. There aren't a lot of career-track jobs for someone with a two-year degree.

UNCLE TAM

And the name of the company is Global . . .

BOB

Global Pork Rind!

UNCLE TAM

What do they do, make snack foods?

BOB

No, they're one of the biggest operators of hog farms in the world. Their headquarters is in Tokyo, but they have a regional office here in Denver.

UNCLE TAM

What is it you're going to do?

BOB

I'll be a location scout, going on the road to find new sites for hog farms. I'll have a company car and an expense account. They're a huge corporation, so I might have good opportunities to move up. This could be my chance to make something of myself.

UNCLE TAM

Oh, someone dropped off something you might be able to use.

Tam goes to the counter and returns with a shoe box.

UNCLE TAM (CONT'D)

These are Cole Haans - about three-hundred bucks a pair. They're in your size and they look brand new.

Bob takes out a pair of elegant-looking brown oxfords.

BOB

Thanks, Uncle Tam. These will go great with the new suit I got for my meeting tomorrow morning.

INT. AN OFFICE AT GLOBAL PORK RIND - DAY - 3/2/1998.

Bob wears his new tan suit and brown oxfords. The Secretary, LUCILLE (30), picks up her phone.

LUCILLE

Mr. Cluke will see you now.

The door to the inner office reads "Ribeye Cluke - Regional Operations Manager." Bob rises and walks to it.

BOB

Thank you.

INT. CLUKE'S OFFICE - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Bob enters. Cluke has a large, bristly mustache and a mirror on a wire frame suspended around his neck. He has just finished shaving with a straight razor.

CLUKE

Come in, Bob Dollar. Have a seat!

Cluke wipes his face with a towel. Bob sits.

BOB

Thank you, sir.

CLUKE

So, Bob, you're going to be our location man in the Texas panhandle. We don't have many friends down there, so we have to go about our business pretty quietly. I want you to be as circumspect as possible - do you know what "circumspect" means?

BOB

Yes, sir. Keep a low profile.

CLUKE

Well, that's good, Bob Dollar. Last fellow we thought could scout for us believed it meant something that happened to him in the hospital when he was a baby.

(MORE)

CLUKE (CONT'D)

So he was no use to us. But you're smart, Bob, smart as a dollar, ha-ha.

BOB

(Agreeably)

Ha-ha!

Cluke rises and leans against the side of his desk.

CLUKE

In other words, Bob, don't let the folks down there know that you are looking for hog sites or they will prevaricate and try to take us to the cleaners. They have been brainwashed by the Sierra Club to think that hog facilities are bad, even the folks who love baby back ribs, even the ones hunting jobs. The panhandle region is perfect for hog operations - lots of room, low population, nice long dry seasons, plenty of water. The Texas panhandle can produce seventy-five percent of the world's pork.

Cluke looks down at Bob's shoes.

CLUKE (CONT'D)

Bob, I notice you are wearing brown oxford shoes.

BOB

(Holds one foot up)

Yes, sir.

CLUKE

Now, Bob, you cannot go down to Texas wearing brown oxfords. Take my word for it. The figure of respect in Texas is still the cattleman and the cattleman wants to look like a cowboy. For sure you have got to get yourself a decent pair of cowboy boots and wear them.

BOB

Yes, sir.

CLUKE

And Bob, here's a list of the qualities that I want you to look for - on the q.t.

(MORE)

CLUKE (CONT'D)

Look for your smaller cow outfits and farms. Look for areas where everybody is grey-headed. Older. Keep your eyes and ears open for farmers whose children went off to school and are not coming back. Read the obits for rural property owners who just died and their kids are thinking "show me the money."

INT. TATER CROUCH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - 3/30/1998.

LOUISE (60), a spry housekeeper, opens the door. TATER CROUCH (76) is in a wheelchair by the window.

LAVON

Hello, Louise. Tater said I could come by to pick up his scrapbooks.

LOUISE

Hello, Miz Fronk. He had me get 'em out. They're over on the table.

LAVON

I appreciate that. Louise, this is Bob Dollar. He's stayin' in my bunkhouse and learnin' about the county.

BOB

Hello, Louise. It's very nice to meet you.

Louise squints at Bob and utters a grunt.

LOUISE

(Shouts)

Tater! LaVon's here.

TATER

Well, I know. I seen her drive in, didn't I.

LAVON

Tater, thanks so much for the scrapbooks. They're going to be a big help. I'll be very careful and get them back to you real soon.

TATER

This your son?

LAVON

No. Coolbroth's in school down at A&M. This is Bob Dollar. He's stayin' in the Spur bunkhouse and wants to learn about the county. I told him you were a good one to talk to about the old days.

Tater coughs deeply as he holds a bandanna to his mouth.

TATER

I ain't as old as I look.

LAVON

Tater, I hope you don't got the flu. You sound bad.

TATER

Hell, it ain't the flu. It's that damn pig farm down the road. Them fans sucks out the ammonia and sulfide. They say it gives you pneumonia and artharitis.

LAVON

Tater, those hog farms are a crime. But I don't know what we can do about them. Anyway, Bob here is interested in hearin' about the old days in the county.

Tater turns toward Bob and leans back in his chair.

TATER

I was born in this house in 1922 and I seen pretty much everything that's happened since then.

BOB

LaVon told me how these spreads came from the break-up of the XIT, but weren't there homesteaders around here before that?

TATER

Yeah, there was, but not many of them made a go of it. Not enough water. They didn't know about the Ogallala back then. The only ones that stuck were the places along the river.

BOB

But the XIT ran thousands of cows.

TATER

The XIT had money behind it. They drilled deep wells and put up hundreds of windmills to suck up the water. Each cow needs about six gallons a water a day.

BOB

So you ran cattle here?

TATER

When my daddy bought the place, it already had more'n a dozen mills, and over the years we put up a bunch more.

Tater pauses and his head nods.

TATER (CONT'D)

He ran cows 'til he died. I took over then, 'cause he'd already run my brother off.

Tater's head droops as he drifts into sleep.

LAVON

Come on, Bob. Let's go. That's all your gonna get today.

Bob nods and follows her as she heads for the door.

INT. THE CAB OF LAVON'S TRUCK - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Bob looks back at the Bar Owl house as they pull away.

BOB

Tater said that his father kicked his brother out.

LAVON

Yeah, Tater's old man was a mean SOB. When the brother started workin' at one a the big spreads, his daddy wanted his pay. His son told him to go to hell and got put on the road. He was sixteen.

EXT. A TWO LANE HIGHWAY - EARLY MORNING - 3/9/1998.

A beige Saturn sedan passes a highway sign for Colorado 182 and pulls off at a railroad crossing. Bob Dollar exits. He wears jeans and cowboy boots - no hat.

He walks to the tracks and looks down the road. No cars are in sight, but a bicycle approaches. The CYCLIST (25) pulls up next to Bob.

CYCLIST
Everything OK?

BOB
Yeah, just stretching my legs.
Thanks for asking.

CYCLIST
Not many cars on this road - you're
the first I've seen this morning.
Where are you headed?

BOB
Texas panhandle.

CYCLIST
You on vacation?

BOB
No. I'm headed for a new job.
Couldn't deal with the freeways.

CYCLIST
I can sure relate to that. Well,
have a good trip.

The Cyclist continues his ride. Bob gives him a wave.

BOB
You, too.

Bob looks down the track - straight and endless as the road. He gets back into the Saturn and continues his trip.

INT. BOB'S CAR - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING.

Bob glances at his map and selects a classic-rock station. He opens a bottle of Diet Mountain Dew.

INT. BOB DOLLAR'S CAR - MID MORNING - 3/9/1998.

A sign reads New Mexico 221. The radio is static. Bob selects NPR and sips from his Diet Mountain Dew. A sign says "Entering Ocotillo - The Town Where No One Wears a Frown."

INT. BOB DOLLAR'S CAR - LATE MORNING - 3/9/1998.

NPR is fading; Bob presses the scan; NPR reappears clear on another station. He drinks from the Diet Mountain Dew.

INT. BOB DOLLAR'S CAR - NOON - 3/9/1998.

A sign reads New Mexico 109. NPR is fading; the radio scans religious and country music stations. Bob selects music. A sign reads "Grain City - The Richest Land and the Finest People." He finishes the Diet Mountain Dew.

INT. BOB DOLLAR'S CAR - AFTERNOON - 3/9/1998.

A sign reads "Oklahoma is OK!" Bob glances at the map and presses the scan. A single country music station comes up; he selects it and drinks from a water bottle.

INT. BOB DOLLAR'S CAR - MID-AFTERNOON - 3/9/1998.

A sign reads "COMANCHE NATIONAL GRASSLANDS." Bob consults his map.

BOB

Shit! I'm back in Colorado!

His water bottle is empty. The scan finds no stations. Bob turns the car around and heads back.

INT. BOB DOLLAR'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON - 3/9/1998.

A larger town approaches. A sign reads "Welcome to Boise City - 1,266 Friendly People and One or Two Old Grumps." A sign says "Badger Hole B&B - 1 Block." Bob turns, drives the block, and parks in front of a modest two story house.

INT. A RESTAURANT - PREVIOUS DAY - NIGHT - 3/8/1998.

Bob and Uncle Tam sit at a booth dining on huge steaks.

UNCLE TAM

You didn't need to do this. We could eat for a week at Chickee's for what this meal is costing you.

BOB

I did need to do this. I'm on the road tomorrow and I wanted us to have something special to remember.

UNCLE TAM

Well, it is special and I do appreciate it. Meat is getting so expensive I'm thinking of getting into vegetables - becoming a vegetarian.

BOB

You will definitely save some money, and it would likely be good for your health, too.

UNCLE TAM

Now, Bob, I want you to call me when you get there - call collect.

BOB

I will, and I'll do it collect, since I'm not likely to have a phone of my own, but I'll send you money to cover the calls.

UNCLE TAM

You don't need to do that.

BOB

Uncle Tam, I'm working full-time and for pretty good pay - let me start paying my way.

UNCLE TAM

OK! Oh, I almost forgot.

Tam gets two small packages from his coat pocket.

UNCLE TAM (CONT'D)

Here are a couple of going-away presents for you. Don't open them until you get there.

BOB

Thanks, Uncle Tam. For these and for everything.

INT. BOB'S ROOM AT THE B&B - NIGHT - 3/9/1998.

Bob unwraps the gifts from Tam. The first is a wide, light blue tie with a detailed painting of the Titanic: an iceberg, lifeboats, people jumping. The other is a book: *Expedition to the Southwest, An 1845 Reconnaissance of Colorado, New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma* by Lieutenant James Albert Abert. Bob opens the book and a letter falls out; he begins reading.

INT. UNCLE TAM HEAD-ON, CLOSE-UP

UNCLE TAM

Dear Bob. I thought the adventures of Lieutenant Abert might interest you. He was the first to explore the region you are now in and at approximately your age. I hope you will take as much interest in what you see as he did. The broadly engaged mind is the source of a happy life. Good luck!

INT. THE PARLOR OF THE B&B - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Bob comes down the stairs and goes to a table with a phone. The OWNER (55) sits at the desk by the front door.

BOB

Can I call collect from this phone?

OWNER

Sure, dial zero for the operator.

BOB

Thanks. A collect call to Area Code 720 555 6162. Bob Dollar. Hi, Uncle Tam, it's me.

UNCLE TAM (V.O.)

Well, I'll be damned. Haven't heard from you in twenty-four hours. How do you like it down there?

BOB

I'm not there yet. I got mixed up on some back roads. I'm in Oklahoma. It got too late to keep going. Anyway, I want to see the country in daylight. Thought I'd call and tell you I'm really happy about the tie. I know it meant a lot to you.

UNCLE TAM (V.O.)

Well, seemed right you should have something from your mother. I was going to give it to you when you graduated from Denver South, but something told me to wait. What about that book?

BOB

Pretty remarkable. It's like Lieutenant Abert and I are on the same mission - a hundred and fifty years apart. I'll start reading it tonight. How's the vegetarian program coming?

UNCLE TAM (V.O.)

Good. I went to Wild Oats and got me some tofu and vegetables and fruit.

BOB

That's great. I'll call you when I get there and write as soon as I have a post office box.

UNCLE TAM (V.O.)

I can't wait to hear about your adventures. You get some sleep now.

BOB

Good night, Uncle Tam. Take care of yourself.

Bob hangs up the phone and sits quietly.

OWNER

Checking in with your family?

BOB

Yes, Ma'am. Just letting my dad know I'm OK.

EXT. THE GRAIN ELEVATOR - DAY - 4/6/1998.

Bob parks in front. Buckskin Bill moves fifty pound burlap bags from a pallet to his truck. Bob trots over to him.

BOB

Hey, Buckskin. Let me give you a hand with that.

BUCKSKIN

Thanks, Bob. I think I'm gettin' too old for hard labor.

BOB

Where's the rest of the crew?

BUCKSKIN

They all seem to have urgent obligations when there's real work to be done.

BOB

Well, I'm sorry I missed them. These morning conversations provide my news and information.

BUCKSKIN

If you really want a keep in touch with what's goin' on, you need to start coming to the Old Dog for noon dinner. Every rancher, farmer, and businessman in the county shows up, and plenty of them are just dyin' for someone new to listen to their bullshit. Besides, Cy's food is the best in the panhandle.

BOB

Buckskin, you talked me right into it. I'll see you there.

EXT. THE SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF THE OLD DOG CAFE - DAY

Bob parks in front as FRANCIS SCOTT KEISTER (50) exits. He stops and glares at Bob for several seconds. Bob gets out and reads the sign on the door: "Old Dog Cafe - Dinner 12:00-1:30 - Mon-Sat - \$5.00". Bob enters the cafe.

INT. THE OLD DOG CAFE - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

The cafe has a few booths at one side, tables in the center, and the kitchen area on the other side. The kitchen is defined by long tables containing the food selections. A gallon jar is labeled "Dinner - \$5.00." Bob puts in a five and picks up a plate. CY FREASE (45) comes from the kitchen with a platter of food.

CY

We got everything left except the jello with marshmallows and bananas. That always goes fast.

INT. THE OLD DOG CAFE - DAY

Bob returns to his table with tea and dessert. Cy approaches wiping his hands on a towel and sits across from Bob.

CY

My guess is you're spendin' your nights in LaVon's bunkhouse.

BOB

Yes, sir. My name is Bob Dollar.

Cy reaches his hand across the table.

CY

Good to meet you, Bob. I'm Cy Frease, founder, owner, and only employee of the Old Dog Cafe.

BOB

Cy, I have to tell you that your food is remarkable. The selection is amazing, and every dish is delicious, even the vegetables.

CY

I appreciate hearin' that - most of my complements come in grunts and burps.

BOB

How long have you been open?

CY

Goin' on six months. Everyone was sure I'd go belly-up in a few weeks. Some thought I was some sort a health food hippie. I'm still doin' ranch work, but this place is startin' to pay its own way.

BOB

What gave you the idea to open a cafe? Were you in the restaurant business before?

CY

No, I grew up here and moved away to work the oil fields. Learned to cook some there, but my education really came at Huntsville Prison.

BOB

You did time?

CY

Only as the assistant chef. The chef there was the brother of a guy I knew from the drilling crews.

BOB

How long were you there?

CY

Nine years. I learned about food and cooking from a man who kept dangerous prisoners content for thirty years.

BOB

Why'd you leave?

CY

My folks were fading and couldn't keep up the ranch. When they passed, I sold and started workin' for other outfits. That's when I realized just how pitiful the restaurant choices were around here. I figured cowboys deserve wholesome food as much as prisoners do. So about a year ago, I started thinking about this place.

BOB

I always thought starting a restaurant took a hefty investment.

CY

Yeah, it does. But I was able to use legwork and persistence in place of some of the cash. I spent a couple a months hittin' every flea market and equipment auction in the panhandle. The final piece was the commercial dishwasher - I got it for a song from the chef at the prison when he got a new one.

BOB

Where do you get your food?

CY

I buy most of the meat and produce locally. Lots of the folks around here have gardens. On Sundays, I visit the Whole Foods and the Farmer's Market in Amarillo.

BOB

Well, it's working. You've got another regular right here.

CY

Glad to have you, Bob.

INT. BOB'S CAR - EARLY MORNING - 3/10/1998.

A sign reads U.S. 412 East. Clouds of dust and trash blow across the road. Bob flinches when a large tumbleweed hits in the middle of his windshield. A sign reads "Entering Texas County, Oklahoma - Saddle Bronc Capital of the World."

INT. BOB'S CAR - DAY - 3/10/1998.

The radio station is fading. Bob presses the scan and selects more country music. A sign reads "Don't Mess With Texas."

EXT. ENTERING A SMALL TOWN - DAY - 3/10/1998.

The town has green lawns and many trees. A sign reads "Welcome to Cowboy Rose - Garden City of the Panhandle." Bob parks in front of a frame building with a hand-painted sign reading "Cactus Spike Cafe." He walks to the door.

INT. THE CACTUS SPIKE CAFE - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Bob sits at the counter. A blackboard on the wall reads "Today's Special - Chicken Fried Steak with Pinto Beans and One Side - \$3.95." A heavy-set WAITER (30) in a white apron and paper cap puts a glass of water in front of Bob.

WAITER

What can I get for ya?

BOB

I'll have the special with a side salad and ice tea.

WAITER

Coming right up. Chicken Fry One!

The waiter pours a glass of tea and sets it in front of Bob.

BOB

Thanks! Where's a good place to stay in town?

WAITER

There's a couple a motels that are OK, but they're gonna be full the next few days because of the Baptist meeting.

(MORE)

WAITER (CONT'D)

The Hoss Barn might have a room,
but it's pretty nasty. What kind a
dressing you want on this salad?

BOB

Blue cheese, please.

The waiter puts the salad, utensils, and a napkin in front of
Bob. Bob starts eating the salad and drinking the tea.

BOB (CONT'D)

I could be staying a while. You
know of anyone that might have a
room for rent?

WAITER

Well, you could try Beryl and
Harvey Schwarm. They got a room
they rent out sometimes, but
usually to a lady. They got the big
yellow house on Wild Turkey Street.
Worth a try.

BOB

Thanks, I'll check it out.

The waiter sets a large plate in front of Bob.

EXT. A TREE-LINED STREET - DAY - 3/10/1998.

Bob parks, walks to the door, and rings the bell. BERYL
SCHWARM (50) opens the door. She wears jeans and a western
shirt; on the threshold she is a head taller than Bob.

BERYL

What can I do for you?

BOB

Are you Mrs. Schwarm?

BERYL

I am!

BOB

My name is Bob Dollar. I was told
you might have a room to rent.

BERYL

Who told you that?

BOB

The waiter at the Cactus Spike - a
heavysset fellow.

BERYL

Big Head Haley. That fool. He don't know nothin' about nothin'. I stopped rentin' that room a year ago. I had trouble with a woman stayed in that room and I swore I'd never rent it out again.

BOB

Mrs. Schwarm, I swear, you would have no problem -

BERYL

No. I'm not havin' no problem because I'm not gonna rent it out.

Beryl closes the door, and Bob walks back to his car.

EXT. THE PARKING LOT OF THE HOSS BARN - DAY - 3/10/1998.

Bob parks in front of a corrugated metal building with no windows. A sign reads "HOSS BARN - Rooms." A hand-painted banner says "Welcome Baptists." Bob walks to the door.

INT. THE LOBBY OF THE HOSS BARN - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Bob enters. The lobby has no furniture and a badly worn counter. The CLERK (35) is unshaven with prison tatoos.

BOB

Do you have a room?

CLERK

You with the Baptists?

BOB

No.

CLERK

Gotta charge you the full rate - seventeen dollars. How many days?

BOB

Two for now.

Bob gets change from two twenties. The Clerk puts a card on the counter and hands Bob a key on a large plastic fob.

CLERK

Write down your name and tag number. It's room nine down the hall to the left. Checkout is noon.

BOB

Thanks.

Bob fills out the card and walks down the hall.

INT. HOSS BARN ROOM NINE - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

There is a bed with metal coil springs, a table and chair, and one nightstand. A light bulb hangs with a pull string. A bible is on the nightstand; another on the table. Bob peers into the bathroom and sees chipped porcelain conveniences; there is a bible on top of the toilet. Bob takes the Lt. Abert book from his bag, sits in the chair, and reads.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE BUNKHOUSE - DAY - 4/9/1998.

Bob exits the bunkhouse and looks at the windmill. The blades are not turning and it is making a repetitive squeaking sound. The shaft that drives the gears is not moving. A sign on the mill reads "Melkebeek and Crouch - Windmills."

INT. LAVON'S KITCHEN - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

LaVon is at the stove when Bob enters and pours his coffee.

BOB

Morning, LaVon. I think there's something wrong with the windmill. It's not turning and it's making a loud squeaking noise.

LAVON

Yeah, I thought it was sounding funny. I'll put in a call to get it looked at.

Bob sits and picks up *The Woollybucket Banner*.

BOB

I keep looking in the classifieds for land for sale and don't see much. Some houses and businesses, but no ranches or farms.

LAVON

Not many places change hands, and when they do, the deal is oft-times made somewhere else. You still makin' contacts?

BOB

I'm learning a lot during dinners
at the Old Dog.

LAVON

Yep. That's where it's goin' on,
and I'm hearin' good things about
Cy's food. He's doin' much better
than most thought he would. But
it's definitely a boys club. I'm
not likely to patronize it, nor are
any of the other ladies.

INT. THE OLD DOG CAFE - DAY - 4/9/1998.

The cafe is packed. Bob sits with a half-dozen men. Cy
struggles to fill serving platters while he clears tables.

BUCKSKIN

That catfish is Cy's best dish.

SORREL

It's OK, if you like fish. I'd like
those ribs more than once a month.

CHARLES

Cy says they take too long to fix -
he might do 'em more often when he
stops workin' ranch jobs.

BOB

Everything I've tasted here is
amazing. Cy seems to have a way of
knowing what you boys like.

BUCKSKIN

Cy's a good bit younger than us,
but he grew up here, and he heard
plenty of stories about what it was
like back when we was kids. He
fixes dishes that remind us of that
time, like vinegar pie and cocoa
gravy over biscuits.

SORREL

And the cowboy favorite is that
jello made with ginger ale and cut-
up marshmallows.

METHIEL HUFF

Some dishes are the ones that kept
us goin' when we was dirt poor,
like the beans with salt pork.

(MORE)

METHIEL HUFF (CONT'D)

There was times we couldn't afford salt pork, so we flavored them with windmill grease.

DIXIE GOODLOE

We was so poor there was a time my Daddy shot and skinned a coyote and we et coyote stew. And I guarantee you we wasn't the only ones.

BOB

How was it?

DIXIE GOODLOE

At the time it was the most goddamn delicious thing I ever et.

Cy moves frantically clearing and filling platters. Bob stacks the empty dishes and carries them into the kitchen.

CY

Thanks, Bob. I appreciate the help.

Cy starts to clear other tables.

BOB

I'll get the tables cleared. You keep the food coming.

Bob loads dishes into the racks of the big dishwasher.

CY

Push that red button, Bob.

Bob presses the button, and the big machine begins to chug.

BOB

Man, that's fun.

CY

Thanks again, Bob. You bailed me out. Tell you what - help me out a little every day, you eat free.

BOB

OK, Cy. That's the best offer I've had since I got here.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE BUNKHOUSE - EVENING - 4/9/1998.

Bob gets out of the Saturn. Two men are on top of the windmill. One appears to be a teenager and the other is significantly older.

Bob walks to the porch, sits, and watches them. The younger man climbs down and moves a lever; the windmill starts turning smoothly.

OLDER MAN

I think that's got 'er.

He lowers a box of tools by a rope. The young man loads the box into their truck. The older man climbs down with the agility of someone much younger. Bob watches as they drive off. The door of their truck reads "Ace Windmills." He picks up Lt. Abert and reads.

INT. THE CACTUS SPIKE CAFE - DAY - 3/11/1998.

HALEY is behind the counter; Bob sits at his stool.

HALEY

Hey, you're still here. Did you find a room?

BOB

I wound up at the Hoss Barn.

HALEY

Sorry about that. I'll keep my ears open for anything else.

Haley reaches a hand out to Bob.

HALEY (CONT'D)

I'm Mervin Haley. Most folks call me Big Head.

BOB

Glad to meet you. I'm Bob Dollar.

HALEY

What can I get you, Bob?

BOB

Two eggs over with bacon, home fries, wheat toast, and coffee.

HALEY

I like a man who knows what he wants. We're gonna get along just fine. Coming right up.

EXT. THE ROADS IN AND AROUND COWBOY ROSE - DAY - 3/11/1998.

Bob drives the back roads observing rural properties; most have functioning windmills. There are numerous churches - mostly Baptist. Many vehicles have bumper stickers - one gets Bob's attention: "7-Letter Word for Stink - Hogfarm."

INT. THE CACTUS SPIKE CAFE - DAY - 3/12/1998.

Big Head is behind the counter; Bob enters.

BOB
Morning, Big Head.

Bob sits at his usual stool.

HALEY
Morning, Bob. You want the usual?

BOB
Sausage and sunnyside up today.

HALEY
You got it.

Big Head pours coffee and begins preparing the breakfast.

HALEY (CONT'D)
Oh, I got something for you.
Someone left a church newsletter
with a note that a lady in
Woolybucket has a place to rent.

Big Head hands Bob a folded paper from under the counter.

HALEY (CONT'D)
I circled the number. You can use
the phone by the cash register.

BOB
Thanks, Big Head.

Bob walks to the phone and dials.

BOB (CONT'D)
Hi. Is this LaVon Fronk?

LAVON (V.O.)
It is.

BOB
My name is Bob Dollar. I'm calling
about the room you have to rent.

LAVON (V.O.)
It's a log bunkhouse with no running water or electricity for fifty dollars a month.

BOB
Could I see it this afternoon?

LAVON (V.O.)
That would be fine. I'll be here all day. Just ask anyone in town how to get to the Busted Spur.

BOB
Thank you, Ms. Fronk. I'll see you then.

Bob hangs up the phone and returns to his stool. Big Head places the breakfast plate on the counter.

HALEY
Woolybucket's the next town south. It's a pretty dead place, but it might be worth checkin' out.

BOB
Thanks, Big Head. I really appreciate your help.

HALEY
I don't know about the restaurants there. You might want to take some food with you.

BOB
Good idea. Fix me some fried chicken to go.

INT. LAVON'S KITCHEN - DAY - 4/17/1998.

LaVon sits with Compendium stuff. Bob enters.

BOB
Morning, LaVon.

LAVON
Mornin', Bob. There's some coffee cake there, help yourself.

Bob picks up a piece of the cake and sits across from her.

BOB
What part are you working on today?

LAVON

This is a section called Customs of the Country. It's about some of the bizarre beliefs and behaviors you find around here.

BOB

Like what?

LAVON

Oh, some of it is just silly mischief like tippin' over outhouses while they're occupied. Others are ignorant superstitions such as sayin' "rabbit, rabbit, rabbit" before you go to bed on the last day of the month.

BOB

Those are pretty funny.

LAVON

I suppose. But some of the stuff is more serious. There's a deep strain of mistrust that fires some strange beliefs: don't trust folks with out-of-state plates, or stopped with flat tires - or with darker skin.

BOB

You find ignorance and prejudice everywhere.

LAVON

I guess you do at that.

BOB

Well, I better get moving.

LAVON

Oh, Bob, one other thing. Next Tuesday I'm hostin' the quilting circle. If you really want to learn about the history and nature of this county, you need to be here. You'll meet twenty ladies who are the movers and shakers of this community, regardless of what the boys at the Old Dog might say.

BOB

I wouldn't miss it.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE POST OFFICE - DAY - 4/17/1998.

Bob walks down the steps opening a letter. He nods to the three old men, sits in his car and reads.

INT. CLUKE HEAD-ON, CLOSE-UP

CLUKE

Bob Dollar - It appears that you are having some success in establishing contacts. It also appears that you have not had any success locating prospective sites. Keep in mind that you are being paid for results, not good intentions - keep your eye on the prize. Also, I do not need your descriptions of the land and the people - you are working for Global Pork Rind, not National Geographic. Write me when you have some success to report. Ribeye Cluke.

INT. BOB'S CAR ON A TWO LANE ROAD - DAY - 3/12/1998.

Bob checks out the farms and ranches on the road to Woolybucket. Most are well-maintained and many have windmills. Ahead are two tall grain elevators and a water tower on which some wag has hand-painted H2O. An undecorated sign reads WOOLYBUCKET - THIS IS THE BEST PLACE IN THE WORLD.

EXT. THE TOWN OF WOOLYBUCKET - DAY - 3/12/1998.

Bob's Saturn passes the courthouse with a sign for the sheriff's office. Opposite the courthouse are small-town businesses: the Speedwell Market, the Woolybucket Bank, A sign reads, "Post Office - 1 Block." The car passes a Thai-Mexican restaurant, a fitness center named Gym Bob's, and Cousin Dougie's Donut Shop with a sign announcing "YES WE HAVE CAPACINO AND LATE." Bob parks and walks into the post office past a bench with three 60+ men smoking silently.

INT. THE POST OFFICE LOBBY - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Bob enters. A female CLERK (55) waits on a CUSTOMER (45).

CLERK

And ten makes twenty. You need anything else?

CUSTOMER

No thanks, Ida. See you next week.

CLERK

Take care, Gloria. Say Hi to Ralph.

The Customer leaves and Bob steps up to the counter.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Hi there. I don't believe we've met. I'm Ida Carson.

Ida reaches a hand to Bob, who takes it and smiles.

BOB

I'm new here. My name's Bob Dollar.

IDA

Pleased to meet you, Bob. What can I do for you?

BOB

I was told you'd be able to give me directions to the Busted Spur.

IDA

You gonna rent LaVon's bunkhouse?

BOB

Maybe. I'm on my way to look at it.

IDA

It's spare and simple, but solid and dry, and LaVon's one of the few really interesting folks around here. Go back to the courthouse and turn right. It's about three miles and there's a sign on the gate.

BOB

Thanks a lot, Ms. Carson.

IDA

Call me Ida. Need anything else?

BOB

If this works out, I'm going to need a PO Box. Do you have some available?

IDA

Sure do. Come on in and we'll work it out.

BOB

Thanks, Ida. It's good to meet you.

EXT. THE FRONT YARD OF THE BUSTED SPUR - DAY - 3/12/1998.

Bob turns into a gravel driveway past a wooden sign with a carving of a broken spur and the words "The Busted Spur." He stops in front of a rambling but well-maintained farm house and gets out. LaVon appears from the side of the house.

LAVON

You must be Bob Dollar. Come on
into the kitchen.

Bob follows her to the kitchen door and into the house.

INT. LAVON'S KITCHEN - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Bob enters the kitchen; it is orderly, and spotlessly clean. Flamboyant knick-knackery is everywhere, much with a French theme: a calendar displaying the Eiffel Tower, dishtowels stamped Bonjour, and jars labeled CAFE', SUCRE, FARINE.

LAVON

Sit down, Mr. Dollar. Take a load
off. Will you take a glass of water
or some Pepsi?

Bob sits at the white enamel table.

BOB

I'd love some water.

LaVon gets a tall glass from a shelf, rinses it, adds ice, fills it from a glass pitcher in the refrigerator, perches a slice of lemon on the rim, and sets it in front of Bob.

LAVON

There! There's nothing like cold
water, is there?

BOB

Thank you, Mrs. Fronk.

LAVON

I was a Harshberger from Miama -
Miama, Texas, of course. Not the
Florida place. I married Jase Fronk
in 1961 and he died - well, that's
enough of that.

BOB

Woolybucket is kind of a strange name. Is it called after somebody?

LAVON

Named after the woolybucket tree. I guess there used to be a lot of them here. And Cowboy Rose is named after a flar - the wine cup. That's the other name for the cowboy rose. You couldn't have a town called Wine Cup - not in teetotal Woolybucket County.

Bob finishes his water and sets the glass on the table.

LAVON (CONT'D)

Well, let's go have a look at that bunkhouse.

INT. THE BUSTED SPUR BUNKHOUSE - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Bob and LaVon enter. There are log walls, a plank floor, four single bunks, and a solid-looking table with four chairs. LaVon stands by the door while Bob explores the space.

LAVON

Spartan. There's no electricity. Supply your own sheets and towels. You'll have to haul water. Get it down the house - there's a spigot outside the kitchen door. The privy is out back, and there's a tank you can heat with fuel oil for showers.

BOB

I'll take it.

Bob hands LaVon two twenties and a ten.

LAVON

Good. I think we're a fit. Stop by for coffee in the morning.

LaVon turns to leave while Bob takes a look at his new home.

EXT. THE PORCH OF THE BUNKHOUSE - AFTERNOON - 3/12/1998.

Bob sits on a bench. He unscrews the top on a Diet Mountain Dew and opens the bag of fried chicken he brought from the Cactus Spike. He eats as he opens Lt. Abert and reads.

INT. THE OLD DOG CAFE - DAY - 4/17/1998.

A half-dozen of the men sit at a large table. Bob is up and down, clearing tables and helping Cy with the cooking.

BUD
Did ya hear the Fronk kid got
kicked outa A&M?

SORREL
What he get kicked out for?

BUD
Don't know for sure.

CHARLES
Bixby Tate said he saw him and some
a his hippie friends protesting in
front a the Murphy hog farm.

BUD
LaVon just spoilt that kid. Made
everything too easy for him.

CHARLES
Yeah, ya gotta make life on the
ranch unpleasant, so they
appreciate the chance to get away.

BOB
LaVon said he took this term off.
He's gonna finish up in the Fall.

BUD
Maybe so.

ACE CROUCH (78) enters, gets a mug of tea, and sits. He has the appearance, stride, and bearing of a much younger man.

BUCKSKIN
Bob, this here is Ace Crouch -
keeps the windmills runnin'. Ace,
Bob here is lookin' to buy land for
developin' retirement estates.

ACE
Saw you at LaVon's place when I was
fixin' her mill.

BOB
Yes, sir. I'm staying in the
bunkhouse.

JIM SKIN (50) sits with a plate containing a thick ham steak and a pile of pineapple rings. He has a deep, rasping cough.

JIM

Goddamn, I *like* pineapple.

Jim has a coughing fit.

SORREL

Why don't you lay off that pineapple if it irritates your throat that bad?

JIM

It ain't the pineapple, this your panhandle hog farm cough. I been workin' over at Murphy Farms haulin' waste. It's occupational.

Ace turns his gaze on Bob.

ACE

A bad cough goes with a corporate hog farm. And those waste ponds are surely leakin' into the Ogallala.

BOB

I read that the lagoons are lined with nonporous plastic, and that the manure is used as fertilizer.

ACE

Sonny, there is no liner known a mankind that will not leak. And manure on the fields? A little bit is one thing, but wait until you get a whiff of a field fresh spread with a foot a hog poop.

BOB

But hog farms make jobs for local people. They help the economy. Mr. Skin there has a job with them.

ACE

Why Bob, you are innocent a the facts a life. A hog farm makes very few jobs at minimum wage. They don't buy locally, they truck it in. What a you think hog farms do to a rural panhandle community?

BOB

I don't know.

ACE

Hog farms create uninhabitable zones just as sure as if land mines was planted. They got no right to come into the panhandle and wreck it for the people rooted there?

JIM

Ace, they're here and you can't get rid a them. People got a right to run businesses.

ACE

Up to a point. It's what Brother Mesquite calls moral geography.

BOB

Don't hogs on small farms stink?

ACE

Sure, but they are spread out and in the open air. The smell is nothin' compared a closin' in a massive number of animals. And there's the health factor. My brother Tater lives downwind from a hog farm and he get sick from it. Look at Jim here, coughin' his lungs out.

Jim has another coughing fit.

JIM

Amen!

ACE

And those animals are pumped full of antibiotics and growth hormones.

JIM

Hell, Ace, don't think a the hogs as animals. They are "pork units," a crop like corn or wood. That's what they tell us at work.

ACE

Jim, I despise that idea. Pigs are livin' creatures, not corn or wood.

BOB

But they are just pigs, aren't they? I mean, they are animals.

ACE

Pigs are animals, yes, but they are also intelligent, and they like fresh air and scenery. But these - cooped up to breed, no nice dirt or weeds, no friends. Makes me sick.

Ace gulps down his tea and heads for the men's room.

EXT. THE BUNKHOUSE PORCH - NIGHT - 4/17/1998.

Bob eats french fries while he writes.

EXT. BOB HEAD-ON, CLOSE-UP

BOB

Dear Mr. Cluke. I still have no properties lined up, but I continue to expand contacts in the county. I reported encountering hostility to hog farms, but today I was confronted by a much more serious opposition. A respected man in the community spoke at length against the presence of hog facilities. His arguments were passionate, specific, and well-informed. I tried to counter some of his contentions, but found that my level of knowledge was too shallow to be effective. If I could tour one of our facilities, perhaps I could learn enough to be able to argue more intelligently. Could you arrange this for me? I look forward to hearing from you. Yours truly,
Bob Dollar.

INT. LAVON'S KITCHEN - DAY - 4/18/1998.

LaVon is taking notes as she looks through Tater's scrapbooks. Bob pours his coffee and sits.

LAVON

Mornin' Bob. I'm finding some real treasures in Tater's books.

BOB

I met his younger brother Ace yesterday. Is he the one their father kicked out?

LAVON

He's the one. And he's not younger,
Ace is two years older than Tater.

BOB

You're kidding. He looks at least
ten years younger.

LAVON

I guess climbin' windmills for
sixty years keeps you in shape.

BOB

If he was kicked out when he was
sixteen, how did he wind up the
windmill man?

LAVON

He hooked up with the Dutchman.

BOB

Is this some kind of prairie myth?

LAVON

No, the Dutchman is real enough.
Man named Habakuk Van Melkebeek.
Showed up lookin' for work at the
Cutaway, one a the real big spreads
back then. Half their windmills was
busted and most cowboys won't do
work that takes 'em off their
horse, so the foreman asked Habakuk
if he could fix 'em. Turns out he'd
worked on mills in Holland. In a
couple months he had 'em runnin'
smooth. Told the boss it was a two-
man job and he wouldn't do it no
more without an assistant. Ace was
the new hand gettin' the crap jobs
so he volunteered. A year later
they formed their own company.

BOB

So where's the Dutchman now?

LAVON

He made a bunch a good investments;
moved on. Left the company to Ace.

BOB

Is this in the Compendium?

LAVON

You bet. A whole chapter.

INT. LAVON'S PARLOR - DAY - 4/21/1998.

Throughout this scene, Bob and LaVon set up for the quilting circle. Furniture is moved out, two 4x8 sheets of plywood are placed on sawhorses, folding chairs are set up.

BOB

Tell me the name again?

LAVON

The Round Robin Baptist Quilt Circle.

BOB

Is everyone from the same church?

LAVON

No, but most are Baptists of one sort or another. Freda Beautyroom's a Methodist.

BOB

Is she the leader?

LAVON

There's no leader a this group, but Freda's president of the Historical Society.

BOB

And you get together every week?

LAVON

Fifty weeks or so - we take Christmas week off. Bob, if you listen to these ladies for two hours, you'll learn more Woollybucket history than you would in year at the Old Dog.

BOB

Tell me about the quilts.

LAVON

They're always a Bible theme - this one is Cain and Able.

BOB

And they get raffled off for charity?

LAVON

Yep. At the Barbwire Festival in June.

(MORE)

LAVON (CONT'D)
 Some have been resold for thousands
 and a couple are in big-time
 galleries.

She opens a drawer on the sideboard and takes out a magazine:
Art in America. The cover is a full-color print of a quilt.

LAVON (CONT'D)
 This is an early one of the Garden
 a Eden.

Bob looks closely at the picture, which shows a hairy Adam,
 naked except for cowboy boots and a hat held over his crotch.

BOB
 Adam looks sort of familiar.

LAVON
 Yeah, for some reason the ladies
 thought he should be hairy. Cy
 Frease was the hairiest cowboy
 around, so he was the model. That's
 one a the reasons I won't eat at
 the Old Dog - you don't want a find
 one a them hairs in your gravy.

INT. LAVON'S PARLOR - DAY - 4/21/1998.

LaVon and Bob are finishing up as the ladies (50s/60s)
 arrive. Bob is overwhelmed with new faces and names.

LAVON
 Ladies, this is Bob Dollar. He's
 stayin' in my bunkhouse and
 scoutin' for luxury home sites.

RELLA
 Howdy, Bob. I'm Rella Nooncaster
 and this is Janine Huske.

MARTHA
 I'm Martha Williams. I think you
 know my husband, Sorrel Bill.

JULIA
 Hello there, young man. I'm Julia
 Stinchcomb.

The ladies arrange their quilt pieces on the table. FREDA
 BEAUTYROOM (93) enters. She is solidly-built with a stern
 gaze and an air of authority.

LAVON

Freda, this here is Bob Dollar.
 Bob, this is Freda Beautyroom.
 She's a pillar a this community.

BOB

Hello, Mrs. Beautyroom. I've heard
 wonderful things about you.

FREDA

Humph! I don't know about pillars
 and wonderful, but I'm ninety-three
 years young, I speak my mind, and
 have no tolerance for nonsense.

Freda goes to the table and places her quilt sections.
 PHYLLIS CROUCH (38) and DAWN CROUCH (19) enter. Dawn is
 heavily pregnant and very beautiful.

LAVON

Ladies, this is Bob Dollar. Bob,
 this is Phyllis Crouch and her
 daughter Dawn.

Bob's gaze is fixed on Dawn; she averts her eyes.

BOB

Hello, ladies. I'm very glad to
 meet you.

DAWN

Same here.

Phyllis moves to the table and Dawn follows. As the sections
 are laid out, the pattern of the quilt becomes clear, and in
 the center is a burly farmer standing with a large rock over
 a slighter shepherd.

LAVON

Some thought they ought to wear
 those stripy robes and sandals, but
 we voted to go with the way people
 around here dress. To make it more
 real-like.

Bob moves around observing and stands behind Dawn Crouch. She
 applies delicate stitches to the faces of the two brothers.

INT. LAVON'S PARLOR - DAY - 4/21/1998.

The quilt session is winding down. Some continue sewing, but
 others fold their sections into their bags.

Some walk and stretch; some get refreshments. There are multiple conversations. Bob watches Dawn work on the faces.

BOB

Those are really tiny stitches.

DAWN

I guess 'cause I'm the youngest, they think I got the most nimble fingers.

BOB

It's really beautiful work. Cain looks like the actor James Dean.

Dawn turns to face Bob.

DAWN

Didn't you see *East of Eden*? It was based on the Cain and Abel story. We studied it in English class and watched the movie.

BOB

You were lucky. All we read were *Silas Marner* and *David Copperfield*.

JANE RATT (55) speaks in frustration across the table.

JANE

These mesquite leaves are the worst things to sew. My fingers are numb.

JULIA

Jane, you remember those deer antlers on the Noah's Ark? Those were terrible.

RELLA

Oh, I remember. Thought we'd never get 'em finished.

JANE

You're right. They were worse. I like to went blind workin' on them.

A small group is sipping on glasses of tea.

MARTHA

It's awful hot and sticky for April. Maybe fixin' to storm.

JANINE

It's got that feelin'. I can feel
that old ache in my pelvis.

LENGTHY

Tornado weather.

Bob sits and finds Freda standing directly in front of him.

FREDA

Young man, we are not used to
having a visitor of the opposite
sex when we sew, and I hope you
don't get the wrong impression of
us. We don't talk about poetry and
politics, but there's plenty could.

BOB

Oh, no ma'am. LaVon told me about
the purpose and character of this
group.

Bob notices a large and spectacularly colorful Art Plastic
brooch pinned to the shoulder of Freda's dress.

FREDA

I was born in Roughbug in 1905. I
led a hardscrabble life until I
married O.K. Beautyroom in 1930.

BOB

Don't know that I've come across
Roughbug.

FREDA

Roughbug ain't no more. Back in the
day it was full a cattle men, but
it hit hard times when the rayroad
passed it by and went to a ghost
town. Back durin' the War, that
Dutchman bought the whole place and
turned it into a ranch. He was
drillin' for water and struck awl.

BOB

Is that the same Dutchman who did
the windmills with Ace Crouch?

FREDA

Same fella. Luckiest man ever lived
in these parts. Took the money from
Roughbug and bought a bunch a other
plots. Struck awl on them too.

LAVON

Freda, you're right. Habakuk was lucky, but he was frugal and smart too. He bought that spread with the money he made from the windmills. You gotta admit his company is a huge success.

BOB

What company is that?

LAVON

You ever hear a Kampen Oil?

BOB

Uncle Tam buys his fuel oil from Kampen.

LAVON

Habakuk Van Melkebeek is the CEO and major stockholder.

FREDA

Yeah, the boy did alright.

BABE VANDERSLICE (40) refills her ice tea.

BABE

Was he already gone when that big tornado hit in forty-nine?

FREDA

Oh yeah. He'd moved on to that house in Dallas.

LAVON

Bob, Babe here is *The Banner's* crack reporter. She keeps an eye on everything.

FREDA

That storm wiped out everything that was left.

Several other ladies have moved chairs closer.

BABE

There's hardly a town in the panhandle that hasn't had a bad storm. That fifty-six one in Pampa killed a couple hundred.

JANE

My folks talked about the storms
some, but their biggest sufferin'
was from the dusters. Mama had a
baby sister suffocate one night.

BABE

I've read lots of stories from the
thirties about epidemics and
children dying.

RELLA

Children did used a die bad in
those old days.

JULIA

You know, even with the sports and
dance and music kids today get, I
think parents loved their kids more
back then. We was more involved in
the work a the family. We knew we
had value.

PARMENIA BOYCE (55) moves her chair closer and sits.

PARMENIA

That's true. Children today are not
valued. Contraceptions, abortions -

JULIA

It's a wonder as many lived as did.
You could get a little scratch and
die from lockjaw.

Parmenia is determined to make her point.

PARMENIA

These abortion parlors, they take
the poor little babies and *cut them*
up! They sell the body parts to
godless scientists. Evolutionists.

There is dead silence while most of the women turn away.

PARMENIA (CONT'D)

I heard something even more
horrible.

RELLA

And what might that be?

PARMENIA

I heard that in Washington, D.C.,
the abortionists cut off the parts -
sell them to Chinese restaurants.

FREDA

Parmenia Boyce, how can a woman a
your age believe such claptrap?

PARMENIA

I accept it on faith. It's common
knowledge.

FREDA

It's common foolishness.

The women rise and begin to gather up their things.

PHYLLIS

With all due respect, I know the
old days' sufferin' from storms,
and dust, and dead children was
real and terrible, but why in the
world we have to rake it all up
again I don't know. It all happened
long ago. We'd be better off
talkin' about today's goin-ons.

There is some muttering pro and con as the women depart. As
she follows her mother out, Dawn stops next to Bob.

DAWN

It was nice to meet you, Bob.

BOB

You too, Dawn. Good luck with your
baby.

As Freda reaches the door, Bob walks up to her.

BOB (CONT'D)

Mrs. Beautyroom, I was fascinated
by what you had to say about the
old days here in the panhandle. I
wonder if I could visit you
sometime and hear more?

FREDA

Mr. Dime, or Dollar, or whatever
your name is.

(MORE)

FREDA (CONT'D)

I learned a long time ago that when a young man is interested in pursuing my acquaintance it is because he is determined to persuade me to invest in some foolish venture, or attempt to buy my property for a song. So I will decline your request.

Freda turns and walks out the door; Bob stands speechless.

INT. LAVON'S PARLOR - DAY - 4/21/1998.

LaVon and Bob put the house back in order.

BOB

All right, LaVon, what's the story on that girl?

LAVON

What girl is that?

BOB

There was only one girl there. The one who looked like she was going to give birth on the quilt table.

LAVON

Dawn. Yes. Well, it's the old story. Dawn wasn't any better than she had to be.

BOB

So what happened?

LAVON

She got in trouble. The same thing happened to her mother, Phyllis, that was here today. They both carry the name Crouch - never married. Phyllis, she left home real young. Ace had to go rescue her in Tulsa or Houston, I forget.

BOB

What about Dawn?

LAVON

She was the smartest, sweetest little girl. Ace spoiled her rotten, got her anything she wanted.

(MORE)

LAVON (CONT'D)

Graduated top a her class and was
goin a go to college. And then!
Just like her mother.

BOB

It's nice of the quilt ladies to be
so kind to her. I mean, an
unmarried mother and all . . .

LAVON

I told you, Bob, it's a Christian
group and we try to extend a
helpin' hand to the unfortunate.
Some wasn't so nice to Phyllis in
her time. That's why she made that
angry remark. Besides, Dawn's a
cheerful girl and a good quilter.

BOB

She's very pretty.

LAVON

Ah! You see where it's got her.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE POST OFFICE - DAY - 04/22/1998.

Bob talks on the payphone.

BOB

Hey, Uncle Tam. How's it going?

TAM (V.O.)

Glad to hear your voice. It sure is
lonesome here. What's going on down
there in Texas.

BOB

I sat in on a quilting bee and you
should have seen the Art Plastic
those old ladies were wearing.
Earrings, pins, necklaces, and a
brooch that was the most
spectacular piece I've ever seen.

TAM (V.O.)

Describe it.

BOB

About five inches across, blood-red
petals with jet-black shadows and
rhinestones on thin stamens.

TAM (V.O.)

Sounds amazing. Was it Bakelite?

BOB

Couldn't tell - didn't get close enough.

TAM (V.O.)

You remember how to check?

BOB

By the smell, right?

TAM (V.O.)

Yes, Bob, good for you. Rub the piece hard and fast, and sniff. Bakelite's got a funny musty smell.

BOB

If I can touch one, I'll do that.

TAM (V.O.)

Old ladies always need a little money, maybe you could offer five bucks or so.

BOB

I can try, but don't hold your breath. These are real sharp old gals. Most of them are well off and they tend to keep what they got.

TAM (V.O.)

Well, make an offer. Go as high as twenty if you have to.

BOB

I'll do what I can. Bye for now.

TAM (V.O.)

You take care, Bob.

INT. THE OLD DOG CAFE - DAY - 04/24/1998.

Bob sits at a large table with Buckskin and several others.

SORREL

Cow/calf is just that - cows and calves. You got a bunch a cows and you try to get all a them pregnant every year. In the fall, you sell off the calves and start all over.

BOB

How many cows?

BUD

Some got a couple hundred, others more than a thousand.

BOB

What percentage yield do you get?

CHARLES

Depends on how you do it. With insemination you get up to 95 percent, but it costs more. If you do it natural, it's a lower yield but a lot cheaper.

SORREL

The bottom line tends to even out.

BOB

Why are so many moving to this?

BUCKSKIN

Less risk than raisin' crops, and your investment is only for a year.

CHARLES

Since that NAFTA the return on grain's got real thin - hard to make a livin'.

BUCKSKIN

If you want a hang on here, you gotta be willin' to try somethin' new. I got twenty acres was so played out wouldn't support two cows. Brother Mesquite got me to try out a dozen bison yearlings, and so far they're doin' just fine.

SORREL

Bob, he only tells that story because he wants us to start callin' him Buffalo Bill.

BUCKSKIN

Hell, Ted Turner's proved it works.

Buckskin looks out the window.

BUCKSKIN (CONT'D)

There's my waf. I'll see you boys.

The men stare as Buckskin gets into a red BMW with a gorgeous woman who looks thirty years younger than him.

JIM

What'd you think a her? Some peach, right?

BOB

A little bit younger than he is.

SORREL

Buckskin talks poor, but a few years back they tapped natural gas on his land. He's one a the well-offest men in the county. Got him a new car and a new wife.

BOB

Good for him.

Bob clears the dishes and returns to his seat.

CHARLES

You gotta keep on top a things. That young lawyer in Cowboy Rose is specializin' in findin' subsidies.

Francis Scott Keister stops on his way to the door.

FRANCIS

By mercy God, Grapewine, you'll shoot your mouth off about anything, won't you.

CHARLES

Hell, Francis, I wasn't saying nothin' ain't in the paper.

FRANCIS

(Points at Bob)

Well, let him read it in the paper then. You don't know who he is. You don't know if you're blabbin' to some government man or one a them hog scouts, do you?

Cy Frease listens from the kitchen.

CY

Francis, you want a job warshin' dishes and clearin' tables?

FRANCIS

Rather eat hot cow shit.

CY

Then leave Bob alone. He's workin' part-time for me. I lose him from you talkin' ugly and you will take his place.

FRANCIS

I hope you don't regret hirin' him.

Francis stalks out of the cafe.

JIM

One a these days, someone is gonna whack him right between the horns.

BOB

Who is he?

CHARLES

Hah! Francis Scott Keister, a bullheaded rancher who knows it all. But don't get on his bad side.

BROTHER MESQUITE (35) enters. He wears boots, jeans, a western hat, and a brown cassock tucked into his belt.

MESQUITE

Howdy Cy. What's on the menu today.

CY

Beef stew, fried tomatoes, three-bean salad, and cornbread.

MESQUITE

Sounds good. Has Ace been in?

CY

Haven't seen him. This is Bob Dollar. He's helpin' me out here and scoutin' for luxury home sites.

MESQUITE

Glad to meet ya, Bob. Brother Mesquite from the Triple Cross.

Mesquite grabs a plate and a bowl, and heads for the food.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE POST OFFICE - DAY - 4/27/1998.

Bob exits with a legal-sized envelope. He sits in his car and opens the letter.

INT. WALDO BEAUTYROOM (63) HEAD-ON, CLOSE-UP

WALDO

Dear Mr. Dollar. A mutual acquaintance mentioned your name to me, saying that you are looking for attractive panhandle properties to be tastefully developed as home sites. I believe that the ranch left to my mother, Freda Beautyroom, would admirably suit your needs. It lies on eight thousand beautiful, rolling acres, through which Big Lobo Creek flows, feeding a lake of the same name. Most of the land is leased to local ranchers as Mother is not up to running the operation. At your earliest convenience, please call me at the number listed below. I look forward to a mutually gratifying talk. Sincerely yours, Waldo Beautyroom.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE POST OFFICE - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Bob carries the letter to the payphone and dials.

SECRETARY (V.O.)

Mr. Beautyroom's office. This is Mrs. Tate. How can I help you?

BOB

This is Bob Dollar in Woolybucket. Mr. Beautyroom asked me to call.

SECRETARY (V.O.)

Please hold.

WALDO (V.O.)

Mr. Dollar. Thank you for gettin' back to me so promptly. Is your purpose in the panhandle as I indicated in my letter?

BOB

Yes, sir, it is. And the description of your land sounds like the ideal location.

WALDO (V.O.)

I need to be clear about this, the ranch is my mother's outright.

(MORE)

WALDO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

My sisters and I hold no interest in the property, our concern is for her well-being. Have you met her?

BOB

I have, and I found her intelligent and delightful.

WALDO (V.O.)

She can also be stubborn and outspoken.

BOB

I would not argue with that, sir.

WALDO (V.O.)

Have you seen the ranch?

BOB

I have driven by, but I have not been on the property. Your mother was unreceptive to that suggestion.

WALDO (V.O.)

Well, that has to be our first step. I'll call her and arrange a visit. There's an overseer named Steve who'll be able to show you around. How can I reach you?

BOB

Unfortunately, I don't have regular access to a phone. I could call you in a couple of days.

WALDO (V.O.)

Give me a call on Friday.

BOB

Yes, sir. I'll be in touch then. And thank you.

Bob hangs up the phone and raises both fists.

EXT. THE AXE-HEAD RANCH - DAY - 5/1/1998.

Bob drives through a gate topped by a wrought iron arch with script-lettered AXE-HEAD RANCH flanked by images of axe heads. He parks, walks to the door, and pulls on a piece of rawhide attached to a large bell.

INT. FREDA BEAUTYROOM'S PARLOR - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

A young WOMAN opens the door.

WOMAN

Yes?

BOB

I'm Bob Dollar. I believe Mrs. Beautyroom is expecting me.

WOMAN

You can wait for her here.

The young woman leaves. The room is a mix of English club and western hunting lodge. Bob moves toward voices across the room. Freda is in an inner room talking with someone. Bob catches her eye and waves.

FREDA

I let you come in, Mr. Dime, just a keep Waldo quiet. So we'll just have us a little visit. In a minute. You just set and wait.

Bob sits. EVELYN CHINE (25) talks with Freda.

EVELYN

That's probably enough for today, Mrs. Beautyroom. I'll check back with you tomorrow.

Evelyn enters. She is short, attractive, and "perky."

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Oh, hello, I'm Evelyn Chine. I'm writing my M.A. Sociology thesis on Woolybucket. Mrs. Beautyroom remembers the town before the streets were paved.

Evelyn moves past Bob before he can speak.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Good bye, Mrs. Beautyroom.

FREDA

Get on inside.

Bob stands and walks into the inner room.

BOB

Mrs. Beautyroom, thank you for allowing me to see your place.

FREDA

I know why you're here. Waldo and his sisters been trying for years to get me off the ranch, and now he sends you along to twist my arm about buyin' the place.

BOB

I believe your children just want what's best for you.

FREDA

What they want is for me to go like a lamb to the slaughter and for you to be the man with axe.

BOB

Your son made it clear this ranch belongs to you and the decision is yours.

FREDA

Damn right! I might just sell it and keep all the money. Did he tell you to look around or what?

BOB

He said someone named Steve would show me the place.

FREDA

Steve? He must mean Estafan Escarbada. Haven't seen him for years. I think he moved a San Antone. You better go look around on your own.

Freda becomes unsteady. Bob takes hold of her arm.

BOB

Can I help you to a chair?

Freda wobbles and points to heavy curtains.

FREDA

Bed.

Bob helps her through the curtains into an elegant and frilly bedroom. He assists her to lying on a canopy bed. Freda dozes and Bob walks back to the parlor.

BOB

Hello! Is someone there?

The young woman who let him in appears.

BOB (CONT'D)

I think Mrs. Beautyroom might need some help.

The woman goes to the curtain and looks in.

WOMAN

She's all right. She just gets tired real easy.

EXT. THE AXE-HEAD RANCH - DAY - 5/1/1998.

Bob's car passes immaculately kept sheds, barns, and bunkhouses. Further along there are pastures with waving grass and brilliant wildflowers. He stops at the top of a small rise, gets out, and walks to the front of the car. Below him is a gleaming blue lake with a densely-wooded shoreline. Both ends of the lake are also wooded, where a creek flows in and out. Bob leans against the front of the Saturn, takes off his hat, and lifts his face to the sun.

EXT. A FARM ROAD - DAY - 5/5/1998.

Bob drives slowly, checking out properties. He hears a siren and sees a Sheriff's car approaching with lights flashing. He slows, pulls to the right side of the road, and keeps driving. The car stays close behind him for several seconds, and he can see the Sheriff gesturing. He pulls over and stops. SHERIFF DOUGH (45) gets out and walks to Bob.

BOB

Hey there, Sheriff. Did I do something wrong?

SHERIFF

Let me see your registration.

Bob reaches for his wallet.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

No, not your license. The registration.

Bob gets the paper from the glove compartment and hands it to the Sheriff. The Sheriff looks at it and hands it back.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

You better come down to the office and see me sometime tomorrow.

BOB

All right.

The sheriff returns to his car. Bob looks at the paper and sees that the registered owner is Global Pork Rind, Inc.

INT. THE WOOLYBUCKET SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY - 5/6/1998.

A WOMAN (45) sits at a switchboard. Bob enters; she does not acknowledge him. He walks across the room to a door with an opaque window labeled SHERIFF and knocks.

SHERIFF (O.C.)

Yep?

Bob opens the door and steps inside.

INT. THE SHERIFF'S INNER OFFICE - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

The Sheriff sits behind his desk, clipping his fingernails.

SHERIFF

Do for you?

BOB

Yesterday? You told me to come in.
Bob Dollar.

SHERIFF

Right, right. Sit down.

Bob sits in a plastic chair in front of the desk.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

What's your business in Woolybucket
County, Bob?

BOB

I'm scouting for properties up for
sale. I know the car registration
says Global Pork Rind, but I'm
working for a subsidiary - Global
Properties Deluxe. I'm looking for
land for luxury home sites.

There is silence for a few seconds.

SHERIFF

I spose you got a reason for sayin'
what you say, but you might have
boxed yourself into a corner.

(MORE)

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

I checked with GPR and found out that you're scoutin' for hog farms pure and simple, and that Global Properties Deluxe don't exist.

BOB

Yeah, that's why I was sent here, but some of the places I've seen are much better suited to . . .

SHERIFF

(Interrupts)

There's no law against searchin' out property for swine production. But it could be unhealthy to say you're a development front man when it ain't true. I don't know why you and the other two hog farm scouts workin' the panhandle pretend to be in some other business.

BOB

Who? Who are the others?

SHERIFF

You're so smart, you find out. I was you, I wouldn't give no time to that chickenshit hog farm work. You ought a think about prisons.

BOB

You saying I could go to prison?

SHERIFF

No, you ought a be scoutin' for a prison-builder operation. There's good money in prisons. A prison is a stable source a income, hires locals, pays taxes, attracts other businesses. Prison visitors need motels, restaurants, gas stations, and Wal-Marts. I'd purely love to see a Wal-Mart in Woolybucket.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE POST OFFICE - DAY - 5/15/1998.

Bob walks down the steps looking at a regular letter and a large manila envelope. He gets into his car and puts the mail in the glove box.

EXT. A STREET IN WOOLYBUCKET - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Bob's car passes a small storefront with a brightly colored sign reading: HEALTHY CHRISTIAN CAFE - Afternoon Tea 3:00 - 5:00 - Today: Carrot Cake. Bob parks and enters the cafe.

INT. THE HEALTHY CHRISTIAN CAFE - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

The café is colorful: red and white tablecloths and religious plaques on the walls. Bob looks at the menu: one page of soups, sandwiches, and salads. A waitress approaches.

BOB

Is there any carrot cake left?

DAWN

You're lucky, Bob Dollar. It's usually gone by now, but we made extra today.

Bob looks up at Dawn Crouch, trim and prettier than ever.

BOB

Hey, Dawn. You had your baby. Was it a boy or a girl?

DAWN

Twins. One a each. I named them James and Jeanette. My grandmama takes care a them while I work. How you doin'?

BOB

Oh, pretty well. So, who owns this restaurant?

DAWN

(Reciting)

It's a multidenominational cooperative church venture.

BOB

Wow! That's mouthful. How's the quilt coming?

DAWN

Almost done. Just doin' finishin' touches now. They raffle it off at the Barbwire next month. You gonna be here then?

BOB

Maybe. I don't know exactly when this job will end.

DAWN

Oh, you gotta stay for the Barbwire Festival. It's the biggest thing we got. Dozens a booths with food and stuff for sale, the rodeo at noon, and the dance that night. Bob Dollar, you got to be there.

BOB

I wouldn't miss it. Give me a cup of coffee with that carrot cake.

DAWN

Comin' right up.

Bob watches her as she walks away.

EXT. THE BUNKHOUSE PORCH - NIGHT - 5/15/1998.

Bob opens the regular letter and reads.

INT. CLUKE HEAD-ON, CLOSE-UP

CLUKE

Dear Bob Dollar. Don't try to line up any properties. Just put in your time letting people know what a swell guy you are. You never can tell - they might just decide to sell on their own. Of course, if they do, it will likely be to one of our competitors. As to your request for a site visitation. Global Pork Rind's company policy prohibits site scouts from entering operational units. You do not need to know anything about operations to do your job. If you need more motivation, check the Top Scouts column in the GPR newsletter I have sent you. Pin those wrestlers to the mat. Ribeye Cluke.

EXT. THE BUNKHOUSE PORCH - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Bob opens the manila envelope which contains a newsletter titled GPR Notes.

Inside is a column labeled TOP SCOUTS with headings: SALES WIZARD HOW MUCH WHERE. The first entry on the list is Evelyn Chine, 6,000 acres, Guymon, OK.

BOB
Son of a bitch!

INT. LAVON'S KITCHEN - DAY - 05/17/1998.

Coolbroth sits at the table. Bob enters and pours a cup of coffee.

BOB
You must be Coolbroth.

COOLBROTH
And you must be the fella livin' in my bunkhouse.

LaVon enters from the parlor, dressed for church.

LAVON
I see you two have met.

Bob sits at the table opposite Coolbroth.

BOB
We have. Your mom tells me you're taking this semester off.

COOLBROTH
I'm volunteering with the Friends of Environment. We're organizing protests against corporate ag.

BOB
Yeah, I heard about demonstrating at the Murphy hog farm.

COOLBROTH
We're against all corporate ag, but the hog farms are the worst.

BOB
I think a lot of folks around here agree with you on that.

LAVON
Bob, Coolbroth still claims to be an atheist, you want a come to services with me?

BOB
 I'd love to, but there's a property
 I've got to check out this morning.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE KING KAROLINA HOG FARM - DAY - 05/17/1998.

Bob parks in front of an eight foot chain-link fence with a gate on wheels. A sign reads "King Karolina Pork Products - No Trespassing." He looks along the fence and into the parking lot, where there are company trucks, but no private vehicles. Bob puts on gloves and climbs over the gate.

EXT. THE KING KAROLINA PARKING LOT - DAY - 05/17/1998.

Bob appears around a corner of the building peering into windows. The gate opens and the Sheriff's car drives in. The Sheriff gets out and walks toward Bob.

SHERIFF
 Well, well, well, look who I got
 tryin' a break into the hog house.

BOB
 Sheriff, I know this sounds stupid,
 but I was just trying to get a look
 inside.

SHERIFF
 That's what the Defenders a
 Wildlife say, that what PETA says
 when they try to break in. I think
 you're a front man for an animal
 activist group. Put your hands
 behind you.

The Sheriff handcuffs Bob and puts him in the back seat. The Sheriff answers his cell phone.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
 Yeah. I know the guy. I'm takin'
 him in.

INT. THE SHERIFF'S CAR - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

The gate closes as the Sheriff turns onto the road.

SHERIFF
 What is the thing about you and
 hogs, anyway?

BOB

It's a job. It's just my job. I thought I could do it better if I could get a look inside.

SHERIFF

Well, we'll find out if that's true, or if you're a nosy reporter or a bloodthirsty activist.

INT. THE WOOLYBUCKET SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY - 05/18/1998.

Coolbroth nods at Bob's peace sign and exits with his protest sign. The Sheriff walks to Bob's cell and unlocks it.

SHERIFF

I had a long chat with a man named Cluke.

BOB

He's my boss in Denver.

SHERIFF

I know. He's kind a upset and wants you to call him. There's a payphone out in the hall. When you're done, I'll drive you back to your car.

Bob heads for the door.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Bob, I told you once before you ought to git another job. You ain't cut out for this one.

INT. A COURTHOUSE HALLWAY - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Bob is on the phone.

LUCILLE (V.O.)

Mr. Cluke's office.

BOB

It's Bob Dollar. Is he in?

LUCILLE (V.O.)

Oh yes, Mr. Dollar. He is anxious to speak with you.

CLUKE (V.O.)

(Shouts)

Bob Dollar, you imbecile. What the hell are you doing down there?

BOB

I'm sorry, Mr. Cluke, I was just trying to find a way . . .

CLUKE (V.O.)

You're damn right you're sorry. You're the sorriest excuse for a scout I've ever seen. It's bad enough you've been there two months with no sites signed up, but now you've got the law down on us and one of our major competitors accusing us of industrial spying.

BOB

Mr. Cluke, I . . .

CLUKE (V.O.)

I want you here in my office next Monday at 8:00 AM sharp.

BOB

Yes, sir. I . . .

Bob realizes that Cluke has hung up.

INT. LAVON'S KITCHEN - DAY - 5/18/1998.

LaVon is at the stove. Bob enters and stands in the door.

LAVON

Well, look who's here. Coolbroth said last time he saw you, you was sittin' in a cell.

Bob gets coffee and sits at the table.

BOB

I suppose the whole county knows.

LAVON

I expect.

BOB

I guess they know about me and the hog farms too?

LAVON

Yeah, but some of us figured that out a while back.

BOB

LaVon, I feel bad about what a mess I've made of things, but I feel even worse about lying to you and everyone else. But I thought it was necessary to do my job.

LAVON

Bob, don't beat yourself up so much. Sometimes you got a do what you got a do.

BOB

What I've got to do now is go back to Denver - my boss wants to see me next Monday. I'll be taking all my stuff with me, because I'm likely to get fired.

LAVON

Are you sorry to lose this job?

BOB

I'm sorry I wasn't able to do it.

INT. TATER CROUCH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - 5/19/1998.

Tater is in his wheelchair. Bob knocks and enters.

TATER

What, you again?

BOB

Well, I have something to discuss.

Bob sits in a chair near Tater.

BOB (CONT'D)

I want to buy your place for a hog farm. I represent Global Pork Rind.

TATER

What makes you think I would sell it for such a vile purpose?

BOB

Because, sir, the hog farm smell is already here. You can't sell to anyone but a hog farm.

TATER

So you're not lookin' for luxury estate property at all.

BOB

No sir, that was the lie I told.

TATER

I knew it was a lie. That little girl come around was a liar too.

BOB

Mr. Crouch, if you sold, you could move into town. You could eat at the Old Dog and see your friends.

TATER

I would like to live in town, be closer to my sister, maybe get cable TV. I'd have to talk to my brother - he owns half this place. What kind a price you offerin'?

BOB

I don't make the offer. Someone comes down from the Denver office.

TATER

How long will that take?

BOB

Maybe a week.

TATER

I'll see you then.

INT. THE OLD DOG CAFE - DAY - 5/21/1998.

Bob enters a mostly empty cafe.

CY

Hey there, Jailbird. You on parole?

BOB

Yeah, I'm out on bad behavior.

CY

Potatoes and jello are gone, but there's still steaks and onion pie. Cowboys won't eat quiche, but any kinda pie and is just fine.

BOB

I need some meat before I head for Denver. My uncle's still doing his vegetarian thing.

Bob fills a plate and sits. Brother Mesquite enters.

MESQUITE

Howdy, Bob. Looks like we beat the rush.

CY

If ya want it hot and good, ya gotta get here at noon.

Mesquite fills a plate and walks to Bob's table.

MESQUITE

Mind if I sit with you?

BOB

No, sit down. Glad for the company.

CY

Brother Mesquite, I got a joke for you. Remind me later.

MESQUITE

I can hardly wait. Boy, I worked up an appetite. Been puttin' in buff fences all morning.

BOB

Is that different than for cows?

MESQUITE

Oh yeah. Bigger, longer posts, not so many cross fences. Buffs don't graze like cows - cows eat the creme-puff grasses. You have to keep movin' them. The buffs, they evolved on the plains with the plants - the two grew up together, they have a relationship. Sorry, Bob, but I do tend to go on.

BOB

No, this is really interesting. Tell me more about the bison.

MESQUITE

Well, to keep cows you gotta pump up water from the Ogallala.

(MORE)

MESQUITE (CONT'D)

The buffs lived here for thousands of years before anyone built a windmill. Tell you what, you want to get an idea of what this country looked like a hundred fifty years ago, come pay us a visit at the Triple Cross.

BOB

I'd really like that, but I've got to go to Denver tomorrow and I may not be coming back.

MESQUITE

Why not?

BOB

I'm in trouble with my boss. I messed up my assignment and told a bunch of lies.

MESQUITE

Why don't you tell me about it after I get us some dessert.

Mesquite gets up. Bob looks out the window and sees Francis Scott Keister get out of his truck. Mesquite returns.

BOB

Oh, no. That guy hates my guts.

MESQUITE

Francis? What'd you do to him?

BOB

I lied about why I was here, and he smelled it out first thing.

Evelyn Chine exit the truck and walks with Francis.

BOB (CONT'D)

My God, that's Evelyn Chine.

MESQUITE

I don't believe I know her.

Francis and Evelyn enter the cafe.

CY

Potatoes are gone, but we still got steaks and onion pie, and . . .

FRANCIS

Ham sandwich good enough for me.
That good enough for you, Evvie?

EVELYN

I'd love a ham sandwich, Francis.

FRANCIS

Bring us coffee, too.

Francis and Evelyn move to a back booth.

MESQUITE

So, Bob, how'd your life get so complicated.

BOB

This was the first job I found with any promise. My boss convinced me I had to lie about why I was here. I did that and still couldn't do the job. I feel rotten about both.

MESQUITE

You know, Bob, maybe you shouldn't have taken a job that asks you to lie about what you're doin'. Is this job, this work, something you feel is valuable and worthy?

BOB

God, no! I hate all this skulking around. I'm only doing this because I said I would.

MESQUITE

What would you like to be doin'?

BOB

I don't know. I like history. And books. I really like books.

MESQUITE

I had the same kind a questions at your age. I tried teaching and mission work; nothing clicked. When I was 28, I joined the order, moved west, and everything came clear.

FRANCIS

Goddammit, Cy. This coffee's got a fly in it.

CY

I'll brew a fresh pot.

FRANCIS

Forget it. Come on, Evvie. Let's go down to the old ladies' tearoom.

Francis and Evelyn exit and head for the truck. Bob and Mesquite watch as the couple embrace passionately.

MESQUITE

Oh Lord!

BOB

I thought she was just after his ranch for a hog farm.

MESQUITE

Why would she care about hog farms?

BOB

She's doing what I'm doing. She's hogging my territory. Literally.

CY

Sure hope Tazzy Keister don't know her husband's takin' up with that girl. Bold as brass about it, too.

MESQUITE

What was that joke you were gonna tell me?

CY

Oh, yeah. Cowboy walks into a bar and it's almost empty. Where is everyone? Gone to the hangin'. Who they hangin? Brown Paper Pete. Why they call him Brown Paper? Wears brown paper shirt, brown paper pants, hat, boots. What they hangin' him for? Rustlin'!

Bob laughs out loud while Mesquite groans.

CY (CONT'D)

Bob, I'll bet you don't know that Brother Mesquite is the best heeler in the panhandle.

BOB

He's some kind of medicine man?

CY

No, a team roper. The header ropes the horns, but any decent cowhand can do that. The heeler snares the rear legs of a runnin' steer.

MESQUITE

The joke was bad enough, but this is worse.

As Mesquite gets up, a white Lexus pulls up in front.

CY

That is Tazzy Keister. I bet she's lookin' for Francis and that girl.

INT. BOB'S CAR ON A HIGHWAY - DAY - 5/22/1998.

Bob sees an OLD INDIAN (70) with long braids and a black hat with a feather. The man makes no gestures. Bob pulls over.

BOB

Where are you going?

OLD INDIAN

Trinidad, Colorado. My daughter lives there.

BOB

That's right on my way. Hop in.

The Indian gets in. All he carries is a plastic Niemann-Marcus shopping bag.

BOB (CONT'D)

So, you're going to visit your daughter.

OLD INDIAN

Not visit. Move in.

BOB

Where are you from?

OLD INDIAN

Oklahoma.

Bob nods and shifts his focus back to the road.

INT. BOB'S CAR ON I-25 - DAY - 5/22/1998.

Bob takes the exit labeled Trinidad and heads for town.

BOB
How much farther is it?

OLD INDIAN
I don't know.

BOB
What do you mean?

OLD INDIAN
I never been there.

BOB
What's the name of the road?

OLD INDIAN
I don't know. I forgot my
daughter's letter.

Bob pulls into a gas station/convenience store.

BOB
Do you have her phone number?

OLD INDIAN
No. She's most likely at work.

BOB
Where does she work?

OLD INDIAN
She's a nurse.

BOB
Come on.

They get out of the car and enter the store.

INT. A CONVENIENCE STORE - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

A CLERK (35) is behind the counter.

BOB
Do you have a phone directory?

CLERK
Here you go.

BOB
What's her name.

OLD INDIAN
Shirley. Shirley Brassleg.

Bob consults the directory.

BOB

There's no Brassleg listed. Do you have a payphone?

CLERK

No. They took it out last month. You can use this phone.

BOB

Thanks. Yes, a number for Shirley Brassleg. B-r-a-s-s-l-e-g. Thank you. No Brasslegs listed. Where's the hospital?

CLERK

About a half-mile west.

INT. A HOSPITAL LOBBY - DAY - 5/22/1998.

Bob and the Indian enter and approach the reception desk. SHIRLEY MASON (45) enters pushing a man in a wheelchair.

SHIRLEY

Father. What are you doing here?

OLD INDIAN

Daughter. I forgot your letter. We been looking. This man gave me a ride. He helped me look for you.

BOB

He was hitchhiking.

SHIRLEY

Father, I sent you money for a bus.

OLD INDIAN

I lost that money.

SHIRLEY

Thank you for helping him. I'm Shirley Mason. I have to take Mr. Gunnel back to the nursing home. If you could take father to my house it would be a great help. I'll draw you a map. And please, stay for dinner. We're having an elk roast.

INT. THE MASONS' HOUSE - NIGHT - 5/22/1998.

The Masons, the Indian, and Bob are finishing dinner.

BOB

So I spent a night in jail and everyone knows I was lying to them. I'll likely get fired on Monday. After that, I don't know.

OLD INDIAN

You, a rich white boy, eat good, drive a nice car, fancy clothes, do not know where your life goes?

BOB

I'm not rich. I grew up in a junk shop. The car's not mine. I've spent the last two years trying to figure out what I should do.

OLD INDIAN

This not-knowing is a young man's question, but you are lucky, you have chances. On the reservation no chances: no jobs, no school, no money, get drunk, die young. Young men there do not think "What am I going to be in my life," they think "How long will I live."

There is silence. The Indian looks upward.

OLD INDIAN (CONT'D)

Have pity. Help this poor man to lead a good life.

INT. UNCLE TAM'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - 5/22/1998.

Bob enters and turns on the overhead light. He puts a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Tam appears wearing a bathrobe.

TAM

Thought I heard you come in.

BOB

Did I wake you? I'm sorry.

TAM

Naw, I was just dozing a little. Want some decaf?

BOB

Sure.

Tam starts making the coffee.

BOB (CONT'D)

I see you're sorting out bills.
Things been tight?

TAM

I'm losing faith in this location.
I'm considering selling out
everything but the Art Plastic and
moving. Start over somewhere else.

BOB

I wish I could. I'm getting to hate
this hog farm job. I think I might
like to have a little bookstore.

TAM

That's how I started out. It just
grew into all-around junk. I've
still got thousands of books in the
back room. You're welcome to them.

BOB

Thanks, Uncle Tam. I'll think about
that after I get fired on Monday.
Oh, there's a big slice of elk in
the refrigerator.

TAM

Great! I'll have it for lunch. Tell
me more about the Art Plastic.

BOB

I told you about the brooch, but
there was other amazing stuff.

Bob begins to sketch on the back of a bill.

BOB (CONT'D)

One lady was wearing a pendant on a
silver chain - this is Nile green
and this is black . . .

INT. THE OFFICE AT GLOBAL PORK RIND - DAY - 5/25/1998.

Bob enters wearing his Cole-Haan oxfords and his Titanic tie.

BOB

Good morning, Lucille.

LUCILLE

Hello, Mr. Dollar. Go right in.

INT. RIBEYE CLUKE'S OFFICE - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Cluke is behind his desk and MR. RAGSDALE (55), impeccably dressed and groomed, sits in a chair by the window.

CLUKE

Sit down, Bob. This is Mr. Ragsdale from the Tokyo office.

BOB

How do you do, sir.

CLUKE

Well, Bob, I wonder if you know how close you are to being let go?

BOB

Yes, sir, I had that feeling. But now that I don't have to be circumspect, I have a prospect lined up. He asked what kind of money we could offer, and I told him someone else would do that.

CLUKE

Bob, you contact me as soon as you get back. I'll put you in touch with the Money Offer Person. She'll get with you in a day or two.

BOB

Please, Mr. Cluke. Not Evelyn Chine.

CLUKE

What! You've met Evelyn Chine?

BOB

Sir, she's been after my prospects all along. Mr. Crouch told me he doesn't like her. And she's having an affair with a local married man.

CLUKE

That is malicious gossip, Bob, and it's unacceptable.

BOB

Oh? But it's all right to lie about what I'm doing down there, right?

CLUKE

Watch it, Bob. You are not out of the woods yet.

BOB

Mr. Cluke, people complain about the smell. And they say the animals suffer and live unnatural lives.

Cluke turns to Ragsdale.

CLUKE

I can't believe this conversation. I believe Bob wants me to fire him. We don't think of hogs as animals, Bob, we think of them as pork units - a crop, like corn or beans. It's the American way, Bob.

RAGSDALE

Not only America, Bob, but the whole world. What rules the world is utility - general usefulness. Serving the greater good prevails.

Ragsdale rises and extends his hand to Bob.

RAGSDALE (CONT'D)

Good to meet you, Bob. You're well-guided by Mr. Cluke.

INT. LAVON'S KITCHEN - DAY - 5/27/1998.

LaVon is at the table. Bob enters.

BOB

I'm back.

LAVON

Well, Bob, I guess you did not get fired. But you've missed all the excitement. Anyway, welcome home.

BOB

What did I miss?

LAVON

There's so much goin' on I can't hardly say. Freda Beautyroom died in her sleep last Friday. Her children come up from Houston and they had the funeral on Monday.

BOB

I'm sorry I wasn't here.

LAVON

And that's not all. Francis Scott Keister took some young woman to the Hi-Lo Motel in Cowboy Rose for some hanky panky. His wife Tazzy followed them and shot through the window five times. Francis was killed dead and the woman is in the hospital over in Amarilla. Tazzy's in the county jail.

BOB

Good Lord! By any chance is that woman named Evelyn Chine?

LAVON

That's the name. Thing that worries me is that's two deaths. And they always come in threes.

BOB

Maybe Evelyn won't make it.

LAVON

Could be. Somethin' else. We didn't know if you was comin' back, so Coolbroth moved back into the bunkhouse. But I found you a place with the Shattles over on Coppedge Road. It's an apartment at the back a their house with a bath, phone, and TV. Same price as here.

BOB

Thank, LaVon. It sounds great.

LAVON

I'll give Jaelene a call and tell her you're on your way.

INT. THE SHATTLES' APARTMENT - DAY - 5/27/1998.

Bob and JAELENE SHATTLE (55) are in a small sitting room with a TV, phone, and kitchenette. There is a door to a bedroom.

JAELENE

Yes, we are next to the hog farm.

BOB

Yes, Ma'am, I know. I've seen it
and I've been to Tater's place.

JAELENE

Then you have an idea of what we
deal with. We run six air purifiers
so it's tolerable inside, but some
days you can't stand being outside.

BOB

I'll give it a try.

JAELENE

About the phone. Just use it like
it was your own. We'll split up the
bill when it comes.

Jaelene exits. Bob sits, picks up the phone, and dials.

LUCILLE (V.O.)

Mr. Cluke's office.

BOB

Hi, Lucille. Bob Dollar. Is he in?

LUCILLE (V.O.)

Please hold.

CLUKE (V.O.)

Bob Dollar, talk to me.

BOB

Sir, I'm in new living quarters and
I have a phone. I thought you'd
want to know that Evelyn Chine is
in a hospital.

CLUKE (V.O.)

In a hospital - why?

BOB

She was caught in bed with a
married man. The man's wife shot
them both.

CLUKE (V.O.)

I see. Bob, I want you to go to
that hospital and give me a full
report on her condition.

BOB

You want me to go see her?

CLUKE (V.O.)

She was about to finalize a big deal with a man named Keister, and we need to know where that stands.

BOB

Mr. Keister is the man she was in bed with. He's dead.

CLUKE (V.O.)

I see. That's certainly too bad. Maybe the widow will want to deal. But I still need a full report on her condition. Is your prospect ready for the Money Offer Person?

BOB

Yes, sir.

CLUKE (V.O.)

I'll have Mrs. Betty Doak call you. Give me your number there.

INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY - 5/28/1998.

Bob enters holding a single rose. A DOCTOR (45) writes on a chart. Evelyn is unconscious; her head is bandaged; her face is swollen; her eyes are blackened. She is attached to a heart monitor, a ventilator, and tubes from hanging bottles.

BOB

She was shot in the head?

DOCTOR

You a reporter?

BOB

I'm her brother from Houston.

DOCTOR

She sustained a serious injury. The bullet shattered and scattered fragments in her brain. We had to take out a section of skull to allow for swelling.

BOB

What are her chances?

DOCTOR

Only time will tell. Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.

The Doctor puts a hand on Bob's shoulder as he leaves. Bob stares at Evelyn for a few seconds. He walks to her bedside, kisses her on the cheek, and puts the flower on her pillow.

INT. BOB'S CAR ON COPPEDGE ROAD - NIGHT - 5/28/1998.

Bob sniffs and crinkles his nose. He starts to lower his window, but gags audibly, puts it back up, and holds a bandanna to his mouth and nose. He parks in front of the Shattle house, gets out of his car, and bends forward retching. He runs toward the house.

INT. THE SHATTLES' LIVING ROOM - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Bob stands inside the front door, still gagging and trying to take deep breaths. Jaelene hands him a glass of water.

JAELENE

The wind shifted at sunset.

BOB

No one can live with that.

JAELENE

That's a simple truth. Try to breathe slowly.

BOB

Are your air filters running?

JAELENE

Best they can. Some of the smell gets in no matter what.

BOB

Have you thought about selling?

JAELENE

Who on earth would buy this place?

BOB

A hog farm might. Tater Crouch is thinking about selling.

JAELENE

So we'd be sandwiched between two hog farms? My husband couldn't stand it. He's in the hospital. I'll talk to him tomorrow.

BOB

If he agrees, I might be able to put you in touch with a buyer.

Bob heads for his apartment.

JAELENE

Oh, Mr. Dollar. A Mrs. Betty Doak called for you. Said she'd meet you at the Old Dog noon tomorrow.

INT. TATER CROUCH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - 5/29/1998.

Louise opens the door for Bob and BETTY DOAK (48).

LOUISE

Tater! Tater, they're here.

TATER

I know it. I seen them drive up.

BOB

Mr. Crouch, this is Mrs. Betty Doak. She's the Money Offer Person.

BETTY

Mr. Crouch, it's a pleasure to -

TATER

It won't do me no good now. Ace, he don't want a sell.

BOB

Oh no. What is wrong with him?

TATER

Ain't nothin' wrong. He's tryin' a save a piece a the panhandle. He don't think hog farms belong here.

BOB

But they're already here. Does he have a way to get rid of them?

TATER

You better ask him that. He's the oldest. He's got the say-so.

INT. THE OLD DOG CAFE - DAY - 5/29/1998.

Cy and Buckskin Bill are seated at a table drinking coffee. Bob enters and stands inside the door.

BOB

Cy, you know where Ace Crouch lives? I got to go talk to him.

CY

You got to be careful, is what you got to do. Tazzy Keister's on the warpath and you're her target.

BOB

What the hell? She's in jail.

BUCKSKIN

Not no more. She busted out. Beat up one a them dispatchers and tied her up in a cell.

CY

She found out that Francis was gonna sell out to that young girl - turn their ranch into a hog farm. Swore she was gonna shoot everyone she could find from Global Pork Rind. Took off in a patrol car.

BOB

Wow, thanks. But where does Ace Crouch live?

CY

Bob, you got guts, I'll say that. Ace lives in Cowboy Rose, white house on Kokernut Drive with a ten-foot windmill in front. You watch your back.

EXT. A WINDMILL ON THE HEAD RANCH - DAY - 5/29/1998.

Ace is on top of the windmill. Bob pulls up and gets out in a cloud of dust.

BOB

Mr. Crouch.

ACE

Call me Ace. Well, here you are, Bob Dollar, doin' your thing for Global Pork Rind.

BOB

Yes, sir.

ACE

Climb on up, Bob. I got some ice tea up here and you look like you could use it.

Bob climbs cautiously to the top of the windmill.

ACE (CONT'D)

Better hold the side rails, not clutch on the rungs. Rungs have been known to let go.

Bob sits at the top breathing heavily. Ace passes him a jar of tea from a cooler filled with ice. Bob looks at the view.

BOB

My God, I can see all the way to Woolybucket.

ACE

Why'd you come out here, Bob?

BOB

O.K. I'm here because I don't understand why you tell people not to sell to me. Your brother can't enjoy his life - he'd like to move into town. And the Shattles are desperate, but they won't sell unless Tater does. It's like you have a hold over them; they can't think or speak for themselves.

Ace sweeps a hand at the horizon.

ACE

What do you see out there, Bob? Tell me what you see.

BOB

Barbwire fences, a road with a gate, railroad tracks, grain elevators, and windmills.

ACE

I see more. I see home. Not just the house I live in, my home country, the place my people has lived for a hundred twenty years.

BOB

I think of those times too. I think of Lt.

(MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)

Abert coming here in 1845 and exploring the Canadian River for the first time. But the world moves on - you can't stop change.

ACE

No you can't. Brother Mesquite says, "Things are as the windmill in the wind, constantly changin'." But what things change into is somethin' else. One or two people can stand up and fight back.

BOB

I don't agree. The Indians fought back and you see what happened to them. They had something others wanted. You got what the hog producers want and they'll get it.

ACE

Not as long as I'm around. When you come here, Bob, everybody thought you was a shinin' light. Your home site idea was good. It could work if there wasn't no hog farms around. Maybe not just for rich folks, but decent houses for decent people who respect the land.

BOB

But, Ace, that's a dream. I think the hog farms are here to stay. Hog farms and feedlots - intensive stock-raising - provide food at prices people want to pay. It's the best thing for the general good.

ACE

If you think like that, where does it stop? It's a matter a moral geography - people who live in a place have a right to a voice about how that place is used.

BOB

Don't people have a right to carve out the best life they can with whatever they've got?

ACE

Not when it ruins the lives of the people around them.

Bob is silent. Ace ties a rope to the cooler and lowers it.

ACE (CONT'D)

Hell, it's gettin' to sunset and we're still at loggerheads. Time to git down and head out.

He climbs down with Bob following.

BOB

Ace, is it fair for your brother to suffer when he could be in town enjoying life?

ACE

Son, Tater and me is movin' toward death. We sorted it out - we got an obligation to the panhandle. We won't sell nothin' to no hog corporation. You lose. But remember, you can't win 'em all.

BOB

All!? I haven't won any.

INT. BOB'S APARTMENT AT THE SHATTLES' - NIGHT - 5/29/1998.

Bob enters. He undresses and flops onto the bed. After a few seconds, he goes to the bathroom and returns with a wet washcloth that he places across his face as he lies down.

INT. THE OLD DOG CAFE - DAY - 5/30/1998.

Bob enters and sees LaVon at one of the booths. Bob sits.

LAVON

Bob! I am very relieved to see you. Did you hear about Tazzy?

BOB

I heard she busted out swearing revenge on Global Pork Rind.

LAVON

She drove by my kitchen yesterday. I guess she didn't know you'd moved to the Shattles'. She's still on the loose, so you be careful.

BOB

I will. Thanks for the heads up. I thought you'd never eat here?

LAVON

Coolbroth badgered me into it, but he gobbled and ran. I have to say, Cy's a pretty good cook. You have any luck?

BOB

No. Nobody is selling to me.

LAVON

I don't understand how come you care so much about that company?

BOB

I don't care anything about Global Pork Rind, but I think it's important to finish what you start. You know about my folks. I don't want to be like them.

LAVON

Bob, people change jobs all the time. It's not anything like your folks runnin' off. Things are gonna work out. The Barbwire is next Saturday. You gonna be here?

BOB

Sure. I hear it's the biggest thing around.

LAVON

Could you work for an hour selling tickets at the quilt raffle booth?

BOB

I guess I can spare an hour from my busy schedule.

LAVON

Thanks, Bob. That'll be a big help.

INT. BOB'S APARTMENT AT THE SHATTLES' - NIGHT - 5/30/1998.

Bob is on the phone.

BOB

Hi, Uncle Tam.

TAM (V.O.)

Bob, thank God! I was worried.

BOB

Why?

TAM (V.O.)

There was a shooting at Global Pork Rind.

BOB

Who got shot?

TAM (V.O.)

I've got the Post right here. "An unnamed woman entered a meeting room and opened fire on four executives, killing one and severely wounding another."

BOB

Does it say who got killed?

TAM (V.O.)

"Names were withheld pending notification of next of kin." Bob, you are in dangerous work.

BOB

I was, but I'm out of it now. I'll be headed home for good next week.

TAM (V.O.)

Did you finish up that job?

BOB

No, I busted out completely. Wasn't able to make a single purchase.

TAM (V.O.)

Maybe it's time to think about that bookstore.

BOB

Could be.

INT. BOB'S APARTMENT AT THE SHATTLES' - DAY - 6/1/1998.

Bob is awake staring at the ceiling. The phone rings.

JAELENE (O.C.)

Hello. Well, good morning to you. No, Bob is still asleep.

BOB

I'm awake. I'll pick it up in here.

Bob goes to his sitting room and picks up the phone.

BOB (CONT'D)
I've got it. This is Bob Dollar.

MESQUITE (V.O.)
Good morning to you, Bob. This is Brother Mesquite. Would you like to see a miracle on this fine morning?

BOB
I have never needed a miracle more than I do today.

MESQUITE (V.O.)
Then go pick up the phone in Mrs. Shattle's living room.

Bob pulls on his jeans, and goes to the front of the house.

INT. THE SHATTLES' LIVING ROOM - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING
Jaelene is looking out the front window as Bob enters.

BOB
Good morning, Ms. Shattle.

Bob picks up the receiver on the sideboard.

BOB (CONT'D)
I'm here. Where's the miracle.

MESQUITE (V.O.)
Go look out the front window.

Bob goes to the window. A livestock truck loaded with hogs moves down Coppedge Road, followed shortly by another.

BOB
Brother Mesquite, pardon my language, but what the hell is going on?

MESQUITE
You need to go have a talk with Tater Crouch. He's expecting you.

INT. TATER'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - 6/1/1998.

Tater is in his wheelchair. There is an urgent knocking.

BOB (O.C.)

Tater, are you in there?

TATER

I'm here. Come on in.

Bob enters.

TATER (CONT'D)

Good morning, Bob Dollar. What can I do for ya.

BOB

Brother Mesquite said I should ask you about the trucks hauling hogs away from King Karolina.

TATER

Oh yeah. My brother Ace bought the place. He's movin' the hogs out, tearin' down the buildings, and fillin' in that septic pond.

BOB

How is that possible?

TATER

Ace believes that hog farms don't belong in the panhandle. He's gonna get rid of the ones that are here and make sure no others show up.

BOB

But you told me last week that Ace didn't have a pot to piss in. How can he afford to buy a hog farm?

TATER

Sorry about that, but it was a secret until today. Ace's old partner, that Dutchman Habekuk, died last year with no family. He left everything to Ace. My brother is a petrodollars billionaire.

Bob is speechless and collapses into a chair.

TATER (CONT'D)

Go talk to LaVon. She can fill you in on this better than I can.

INT. LAVON'S KITCHEN - DAY - 6/1/1998.

LaVon is at the stove. Bob taps on the door and enters.

LAVON
Mornin', Bob. I sorta thought I
might be seein' you today.

BOB
Tater said I should talk to you to
find out what's going on with Ace.

LAVON
Grab you some coffee and sit. This
will take a while.

Bob pours a cup of coffee and sits at the table.

LAVON (CONT'D)
I guess you've heard that Ace has
inherited a pile of money.

BOB
Tater said it came from the
Dutchman.

LAVON
That's right. Habekuk died last
year with no heirs. Except for some
chunks to charities, Ace is the
sole beneficiary.

BOB
These things take a lot of time -
how long have people known?

LAVON
Well, Ace has known since the
reading of the will, about a year
and a half ago. He's been talkin'
and plannin' with Brother Mesquite
for over a year, but the rest of us
only found out a couple a weeks
ago. We were all sworn to secrecy
until it became official - and that
was midnight last night.

BOB
He bought the hog farm since then?

LAVON
Oh, no. He's had agents workin' on
deals for months, with the closings
set for this morning.

(MORE)

LAVON (CONT'D)

It's not only King Karolina, he bought the other two hog farms, and a bunch of other properties in the county.

BOB

What kind of other properties.

LAVON

Well, this place for one, and the Shattles', and he's talkin' with Waldo about the Axe Head.

BOB

Why?

LAVON

He's puttin' together a consortium with all of us and the monks at the Triple Cross to create what he calls The Panhandle Bison Range. Coolbroth's even on board with it. Ace wants to tear down the fences and let the buffalo roam; let the other native animals and plants get reestablished.

BOB

Even with all that money, is this a possibility?

LAVON

I was sceptical myself, but Ace is passionate about his dream. And havin' Brother Mesquite on board makes it easier to believe.

BOB

I feel like Alice falling down the rabbit hole.

LAVON

So, Bob, what are your plans now that you aren't going to be buying any hog farm sites.

BOB

My only immediate plan is to drive to Denver and quit my job. After that I don't have a clue.

LAVON

I know things look dark, but you're gonna land on your feet.

(MORE)

LAVON (CONT'D)

You got what we call gumption.
You'll find a way to get through
it.

BOB

Maybe so. I've got some thinking to
do.

LAVON

You still gonna be able to work the
raffle booth on Saturday?

BOB

Sure. It can be my farewell service
to Woolybucket.

LAVON

Maybe, maybe not.

Bob rises and heads for the door.

BOB

If I don't see you at the Festival,
I'll come by again before I leave.

LAVON

You take care, Bob.

BOB

Oh, one other thing. I think Tazzy
Keister shot my boss.

EXT. THE WOOLYBUCKET TOWN SQUARE - DAY - 6/6/1998.

The square is transformed. There are booths with food, arts
and crafts, used items, and charities. Bob wanders coffee and
a variety of food offerings: sausage biscuits, pastries,
fruit cups. He greets and is greeted by many.

EXT. THE RODEO ARENA - DAY - 6/6/1998.

Bob sits in the bleachers watching the team roping event.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

That's eleven point five for the
Wall Street Ranch boys - second
best time so far. Next team is
Charles Grapewine and Shug Capps
out a the Diamond Bar.

Charles makes a clean catch of the head, but Shug ropes only
one of the back legs.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

That's a time a ten point two, plus five seconds for the one-legged heel. Next up is Brother Hesychast and Brother Mesquite from the Triple Cross.

The brothers, with cassocks tucked into their belts, spring from the gate as the steer is released. Hesychast makes a smooth catch of the horns and turns the steer. The animal kicks as it turns and Mesquite's rope snares the hind legs.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Six one. Out a the air! How's that for a panhandle cowhand? That's National Finals stuff we just seen.

Bob leaps to his feet pumping both fists into the air.

BOB

Mes-quite! Mes-quite! Mes-quite!

As Bob continues this chant, many others join in.

EXT. THE WOOLYBUCKET TOWN SQUARE - DAY - 6/6/1998.

Bob comes to a booth with a sign "BBQ and Bison Burgers." Cy Frease is cooking and Coolbroth Fronk is taking orders.

CY

Hey, Bob. Glad you're still here.

BOB

I'm not leaving until Monday. No way I was going to miss this.

COOLBROTH

You need lunch?

BOB

I sure do. Give me one of those bison burgers. Your Mom tells me you're gonna be working with Ace.

COOLBROTH

Yeah. I'm doing environmental impact studies until I go back to A&M. You heading back to Denver?

BOB

I'm driving back on Monday to quit my job.

COOLBROTH

Good for you!

Bob walks as he eats his burger. A booth displays carved wooden signs. The vendors are H.H. and Hildy Potts.

HILDY

Hey, Bob. I hear you're leavin'.

BOB

Yeah, my job here didn't exactly work out.

HILDY

That's OK. There's plenty a better things you can be doing.

BOB

I expect you're right about that. How long you been making signs?

HILDY

H.H. has always liked workin' with wood, but since we retired he's been able to get more serious.

H.H.

How about it, Bob? You need a sign?

BOB

I need two for some folks I know. Make one of them say Vive La France and the other I heart clean air.

H.H.

You got it. Pick 'em up in an hour.

Bob buys a purple snow cone. Sheriff Dough approaches.

SHERIFF

Bob Dollar. I got a call from your uncle. He tried to get you at the Shattles' but no one was home. He said to tell you that the guy Tazzy killed was a vice-president of Global Pork Rind named Ragsdale.

BOB

Did Uncle Tam say anything about Ribeye Cluke?

SHERIFF

Your boss is in the hospital with a bullet wound in his butt.

(MORE)

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

They got Tazzy in custody and she says she went there lookin' for you.

The Sheriff walks away. Bob comes to a booth labeled Church Jumble Sale. Janine Huske is behind the counter.

JANINE

Hello, Bob Dollar. Want a do your Christmas shopping early? We got everything from pot holders to doorstops.

BOB

Hello, Ms. Huske. I only have a few minutes. I'm due for my shift at the quilt raffle booth.

Bob browses a table of books but sees a dresser drawer filled with spectacular Art Plastic jewelry. On top is the fabulous brooch Freda Beautyroom wore at the quilting circle.

JANINE

That's Freda Beautyroom's stuff. It was kind a heartless a her son to just dump it in that drawer.

Bob finds several pieces equally as impressive as the brooch.

BOB

How much for the whole drawer?

JANINE

I don't know. They told me to sell each piece for a dollar. But so far nobody's bought hardly nothin'. I'll go ask Rella. She's in charge.

Janine walks toward the raffle booth, where Rella is glaring at Bob and pointing to her watch.

BOB

Tell her I'll be right there.

Bob finds more amazing pieces. Janine returns smiling.

JANINE

She says you can have the whole shootin' match for twenty dollars.

BOB

Done.

Bob gives Janine a twenty and picks up the drawer.

EXT. THE QUILT RAFFLE BOOTH - IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Bob sets the drawer on the counter.

BOB

Sorry I'm late, Ms. Nooncaster, but I wanted to finish up my dealing with Ms. Huske.

RELLA

I won't ask what you're goin' a do with all that old junk jewelry. You must have a girlfriend somewhere. Or is it for your Mama or Grandma?

BOB

It's for my uncle.

RELLA

Takes all kinds. Anyway, tickets are five dollars each. The pink half to the buyer, the white half goes in this box.

BOB

I got it.

RELLA

Thanks, Bob, for helpin' out.

Rella strolls away and Bob digs deeper into his drawer.

EXT. THE QUILT RAFFLE BOOTH - DAY - 6/6/1998.

Brother Mesquite arrives at the booth.

MESQUITE

Bob. You got a minute?

BOB

Sure. That was beautiful heeling. You could turn professional.

MESQUITE

I already got a profession, Bob. Pretty content the way things are. But I heard you cheerin' for me up there, and I do appreciate the support. Got me a nice belt buckle.

Mesquite holds up a saucer-size buckle, which reads: Champion - 1998 Team Roping - Woollybucket 68th Barbwire Festival.

BOB

That's a beauty to be proud of.

MESQUITE

I'll take a couple of those.

Bob starts to write the tickets.

MESQUITE (CONT'D)

Whoa! I want my mother's name on the tickets. Write Laura Moody. My vows won't let me gamble.

Mesquite reaches under his cassock for a ten.

BOB

Isn't that thing hot?

MESQUITE

You wouldn't believe how hot it is. But it makes a nice statement. After a rodeo we usually get a few boys wantin' a know more about bein' a bison man *and* a monk.

There is silence while Bob completes the tickets.

MESQUITE (CONT'D)

Anyway, Bob, I want to ask you somethin'. I guess you're headin' out pretty soon.

BOB

I suppose so, in a few days.

MESQUITE

Well, you didn't buy any hog farm sites and you riled some folks, but you also made a good impression on some. Showed you had grit. Stuck with it even when it got ugly. Ace is wonderin' if you'd like a job workin' for us?

BOB

Ace! For who? The monastery?

MESQUITE

No, for Prairie Restoration Homesteads. Sort a what you was talkin' about all the while - house sites. Only not particularly for rich folks.

(MORE)

MESQUITE (CONT'D)

Ace is thinkin' there would be people want to live where they can see bison and watch the prairie come back. So he wonders if you'd like doin' that kind a thing?

BOB

What kind of thing?

MESQUITE

Why, sellin' the homestead sites. Talkin' to people about them.

BOB

I don't know. I been thinking about going back to school - studying history. Maybe learning to ride. I might want to open a bookstore.

MESQUITE

A bookstore! Woollybucket needs a bookstore bad. I can teach you how to ride. And where are you gonna learn more history than from the old-timers in this county. And you could still help with the prairie homesteads. Seems like you belong in Woollybucket, Bob. Tell you what, think it all over and get back to Ace or me in a day or so.

BOB

I am. I am thinking it over.

Mesquite punches Bob on the arm and strides away. Bob watches him go. Dawn Crouch walks up to the other side of the booth.

DAWN

Hey, Bob Dollar. Looks like you and Brother Mesquite were havin' a real serious conversation.

BOB

Hi, Dawn. It's good to see you. Yeah, Mesquite gave me a bunch of stuff to think about.

DAWN

He does have a way a doin' that. Am I gonna see you at the dance?

BOB

I'm not much of a dancer.

DAWN

I'll teach you. You be there!

Bob watches her as she walks away. LaVon appears.

BOB

LaVon! The man Tazzy killed in Denver was Mr. Ragsdale. I met him when I was there last week.

LAVON

What about your boss?

BOB

He just got shot in the butt.

LAVON

Well, it's a tragedy, but it's the third death. At least we don't have that hangin' over us. Ace bought Coolbroth a high-powered computer to do those environment studies; he needs to have electricity. So the bunkhouse is empty . . .

Brother Mesquite appears suddenly at Bob's shoulder.

MESQUITE

I'm serious, Bob. You think hard about it. I believe a bookstore would help everybody out. And Ace's is a noble project.

Bob looks at Mesquite and then at LaVon, who nods at him.

EXT. THE WOOLYBUCKET TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT - 6/6/1998.

Bob strolls around the square, peering into storefronts. Buckskin Bill and his wife CLAIRE (30) approach hand-in-hand.

BUCKSKIN

Hey there, Bob, I hear you may be leavin' soon.

BOB

Yeah, I'm going back to Denver on Monday.

BUCKSKIN

Things didn't work out for you, but I'm sorry to see you go.

(MORE)

BUCKSKIN (CONT'D)

You got an honest curiosity about things - makes it a real pleasure to talk to ya. Any chance you might come back?

BOB

Maybe. I got a lot of stuff to think about.

CLAIRE

Oh, you got to come back, Bob. Without you here, I feel like the youngest person in town.

BOB

I'll see what I can do, Claire.

CLAIRE

Take care of yourself, Bob Dollar.

The couple moves on and Bob continues his stroll. He stops in front of the Old Dog and looks in at the tables, booths, and counters. The office of F.B. WEICKS - ATTY has a FOR RENT sign in the window. Bob peers into the dim space and sees a large wooden desk, two long tables, and floor to ceiling bookshelves lining every wall. After a long look, he starts to walk away, but stops and takes out a pen. He writes the phone number from the sign on his hand.