

Blood Harmony

Written by
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From an idea by Holly White

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ACT I

FADE IN:

EXT. MAIN STREET IN MINEHEAD, MINNESOTA — DAY

Two young children, BILLY RAY and DARNELLA (NELLA) JENSEN, are playing on the porch in front of the town's general store on a hot summer afternoon. They're both towheaded and blue-eyed, giving them a slight Midwich Cuckoos look.

The street is wreathed in dust, kicked up by a Model A Ford delivery van passing by.

The men and boys wear overalls and collarless shirts, and the women and girls wear modest dresses. Everyone is blonde. It feels as if we've just walked into a Scandinavian version of WWII-era Middle America.

It is in fact 1979, but the audience doesn't know it yet.

A large vacuum tube radio on the porch plays tinnily in the background.

MUSIC CUE: "CAN THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN" - THE CARTER FAMILY

NELLA

Well, that's just stupid.

BILLY RAY

Is not.

NELLA

Is too!

BILLY RAY

Is not! I seen it! It musta flew a hundred yards!

NELLA

You're fulla beans, an' you know it!

BILLY RAY

(looking down as he
sheepishly completes
their inside joke)
Full enough to fart.

NELLA

You wish! Ugh!

Their father, TOMMY, emerges from the store with a coil of rope and a pickax. MR. OLSEN, the shopkeeper, is right behind him, sussing out the weather.

NELLA (cont'd)
Daddy, Billy Ray said that Jim Swenson can throw a football a hundred yards!

TOMMY
(preoccupied, hurried)
Well, kid's got a rocket for an arm.
Might take us to state this year.

Mr. Olsen looks at a menacing green sky approaching from the west and then turns to Tommy and the children.

MR. OLSEN
(heavy Minnesota accent)
Sky's lookin' pretty mean, dontchaknow. You guys should really gohhh hohhmm.

TOMMY
He's right - we got to get back to the house and lock things down, you hear? I don't like the looks of this weather comin' in.

The children answer in unison, suddenly understanding the gravity of the situation.

BILLY RAY
(with Nella)
Yessir.

The Jensen kids help their daddy load his old pickup truck with the items purchased at the store. They hop in the pickup bed and the truck speeds off.

EXT. JENSEN HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

A classic Midwestern thunderstorm is approaching its full fury. The temperature has dropped from 98° to 68° in a matter of minutes. The sky has gone from sickly green to black. The wind has picked up, and it is now raining sideways. Hail and tornadoes are likely. The whole scene feels like a Thomas Hart Benton painting.

INT. JENSEN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tommy, Billy Ray and Nella are all rushing to batten down the hatches.

TOMMY

Nella! Grab your momma's picture off the mantle!

Nella obliges. She holds her rag doll tightly to her chest with her other hand. She hands the picture to her father.

TOMMY (cont'd)

(to the picture)

Oh, baby, I wish you were here right now. I could sure use your help with these kids.

TOMMY snaps out of it and turns to the situation at hand.

TOMMY (cont'd)

All right, we've got to make it to the root cellar. Stay low and follow me!

Tommy opens the front door, which is promptly ripped from its hinges and sent flying. They crouch low and run towards the ROOT CELLAR across the yard. Billy Ray and Nella hold tightly to each other as their father fumbles with the padlock.

Just as he opens it, a TORNADO sucks all three up into the sky. The kids scream as they're torn from each other and tossed in opposite directions. We see Tommy in silhouette as his body is bisected by a flying screen door. The scene is extremely graphic. We see his entrails dangling and spurting blood as the two halves of his body fall away from each other.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. REMAINS OF THE JENSEN HOMESTEAD - DAY

The sun is shining brightly as the camera pans across the scene of devastation. Nothing is left standing, save a single stone chimney. Billy Ray is wandering through the scene, stunned and mumbling.

BILLY RAY

(dazed, mumbling)

Nella? Daddy? I'm OK. I'm OK. Nella?
Daddy? I'm OK...

SHERIFF KNUDSEN (O.S.)
Billy Ray? Billy Ray?

SHERIFF KNUDSEN enters the scene with a severe-looking woman wearing a prim suit and an ID badge. Sheriff Knudsen sees Billy ray and calls to him.

SHERIFF KNUDSEN
(consoling)
Oh, Billy Ray, we heard about your
pa. Old Man Lindström found him...
well, most of him... in his cornfield
this morning. I'm so sorry, son.
Honestly, we weren't sure we'd find
anyone alive.

BILLY RAY
Sheriff... Daddy? Nella? Where are...

SHERIFF KNUDSEN
Son... I uh... this is Miss Kierkegaard
from the State. She's gonna take care
of you and get you all cleaned up
now.

MS. KIERKEGAARD
Come now, child, we must be strong.
Come with me and we'll get you into a
hot bath and some fresh clothes.

BILLY RAY
(protesting feebly)
But...

MS. KIERKEGAARD
We really must be going, child. I
have an ice-cold RC Cola waiting for
you!

They exit the scene.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD IN FRONT OF CORN FIELD - DAY

The same morning. Nella stands at the side of the road,
badly bruised and her clothes in tatters. A couple in an old
but lovingly maintained convertible pull up beside her. MRS.
LINDHOLM addresses the dazed girl.

MRS. LINDHOLM

Little girl, what are you doing all the way out here? Where are your mommy and daddy?

NELLA just stares into the distance, shellshocked by the storm.

MRS. LINDHOLM (cont'd)

You poor thing! You're all beat-up, aren't you! Must've been the storm last night.

(to her husband)

Oh, Harold, isn't she just the most precious thing!

MR. LINDHOLM

Dammit, Nancy, no. I know what you're thinking. And, just... no.

MRS. LINDHOLM

(desperately
rationalizing)

She doesn't have a soul to look after her! Her folks are probably dead! Look at her, Harold; she needs us!

MR. LINDHOLM

You don't know that...

MRS. LINDHOLM

(cutting him off
forcefully)

She has been sent by GOD!

(turning back to
NELLA sweetly)

Sweetheart, get in the car. We'll get you someplace safe.

Nella complies, somewhat robotically. The Lindholms drive off as Nella stares at the cornfields whipping by her at high speed.

END ACT I

ACT II

EXT. MINEHEAD - DAY

SUPER: 10 Years Later

MUSIC CUE: "TONIGHT YOU BELONG TO ME" - THE LENNON SISTERS

We take a slow, dreamy cruise down the main drag of an archetypal Midwestern town, circa late 1950s – the kind with a soda fountain next to a Ben Franklin, and a corner tavern anchoring the block.

Eventually, we arrive at the local high school. The sign out front (Go Miners!) reads: "TALENT CONTEST TONIGHT!"

The parking lot is packed with American cars from the late '40s and '50s, though none of them looks brand new. They've all been lovingly maintained as if no one in Minehead bought a car after 1962.

CUT TO:

INT. MINEHEAD HIGH AUDITORIUM BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Billy Ray, now 18, and his band mates DONNY (skinny and short - drums) and TINY (rotund and tall - bass) are agitated and pacing about.

They're clean-cut and Brylcreemed, dressed in period clothing. Billy Ray's blond hair is slightly tousled on top, giving him a slightly Tab Hunter-esque look.

The teens are all of obvious Nordic extraction. They would not look out of place on a German propaganda poster from 1938.

NOTE: The actors playing the teenagers should ideally be in their late 20s or early 30s, 90210-style – perhaps even older.

BILLY RAY

We're fucked! She fucked us! Your sister fucked us, Donny!

DONNY

She got mono, Billy Ray. It weren't her fault!

BILLY RAY

Yes, it were, goddamn it! Plus, I know she got it from YOU, you asshole!

(to Tiny, desperate)

What about you? Can you sing harmony?

TINY

(bashfully)

Me? You know I don't sing, Billy Ray.

DONNY

Wait, what about that new girl, Dot? I heard her sing in church last Sunday. She's real good.

TINY

(excited)

He's right, Billy Ray; I heard her too. She's real good!

BILLY RAY

You smokin' rope, boys? We have to perform tonight! TO-NIGHT.

DONNY

Just hear me out a sec! We're doing Can the Circle Be Unbroken, right? Betcha ten bucks she knows it by heart! Shit, everybody knows that one.

BILLY RAY

(sighs)

You'd better be fuckin' right. Find her. NOW!

DONNY exits in a hurry.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MINEHEAD HIGH AUDITORIUM BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Billy Ray and Tiny are tuning their guitar and bass, respectively, as Donny rushes in with DOT in tow.

Dot is a pretty, wholesome, yet dangerously curvy young woman of 16. She's stunning but doesn't quite know it yet - jail bait in the classic dime-novel sense.

Billy Ray acts as if he's been hit with a 2x4.

DONNY

Billy Ray, Tiny, this is Dot.

DOT

Hi! I'm super-excited to sing with
y'all tonight!

BILLY RAY

Hi... I'm Billy Ray. Good to meet you.
(recovering his
composure)

Say, can we, uh, go over a few bars,
just to get the harmony down?

DOT

(nervous, but
confident)

'Course we can!

Billy Ray starts strumming on his beat-up old Martin. Tiny follows on his upright bass. Donny keeps time with his drumsticks on a chair back.

BILLY RAY

(singing)

I was standing by the window
On one cold and cloudy day
And I saw the hearse come rolling
For to carry my mother away.

Dot joins in, but something's off — they're singing in unison, their voices chorusing against each other.

BILLY RAY (cont'd)

(with Dot)

Can the circle be unbroken
By and by Lord, by and by...

They stop. Billy Ray furrows his brow.

DOT

(apologetically)

Oh, gosh, I'm sorry — I'm just so
used to singing the melody! Let's try
again.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Two minutes to curtain!

BILLY RAY

No time! We've got one shot at this.
So, let's pray it happens.

We dissolve to the same scene, halfway through the show.
Another group is just finishing its tune.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
How about it for the Three
Whippoorwills, folks! Next up, Billy
Ray Jensen and his band!

BILLY RAY
(to the group)
Here goes nothin'!

He and the band walk onstage and begin playing. Billy Ray sings the first verse, as before. Only this time when Dot joins in, magic happens.

Their singing is otherworldly. Uncanny even. It is true BLOOD HARMONY. Both singers are absolutely beaming as it becomes instantly clear that their attraction is mutual and more than musical.

As he sings and strums, Billy Ray repeatedly struggles to push his acoustic guitar down as it keeps getting pushed up by his powerful erection. At the same time, Dot squirms and keeps her knees locked together tight. It is clear their sexual attraction is almost supernatural.

CUT TO:

EXT. MINEHEAD HIGH SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

We hear the muffled strains of Billy Ray and Dot wafting through the air but the music becomes muddled by another tune. A tune with a pulsing beat that is completely incongruous with the current implied setting.

Suddenly, over the crest of a hill, a red BMW 325i convertible comes into view. The top is down and upbeat 80s music is blasting from its Blaupunkt cassette deck, shattering the illusion that it's the 1950s.

MUSIC CUE: "NEUTRON DANCE" - THE POINTER SISTERS

The car screeches to a halt as it pulls into a parking spot.

JAXON ROCKWELL, a young African-American A&R man, exits the vehicle dressed to the nines in full 1980s regalia: High-top fade, Pink Lacoste shirt with a popped collar, tight-rolled acid-washed jeans, two-tone Rolex, white Nike high-tops... the whole shebang. A gray Members Only jacket, sleeves pushed up, completes the look.

SUPER: March 1989

Jaxon sneaks into the auditorium and watches the group from the back row. He is smiling smugly and holding a Sony Walkman cassette recorder. The tape is rolling.

JAXON
(under his breath)
Shit, these hillbillies are gonna
make me rich!

INT. MINEHEAD HIGH STAGE WINGS - CONTINUOUS

Billy Ray's band comes offstage, euphoric. Jaxon has slipped backstage to greet them. To the high school kids, he looks as if he could have just stepped off a flying saucer.

JAXON
Hey, kids, how'd you like to be
millionaires before you turn 21?

BILLY RAY
Huh?

JAXON
(shoving his business
card into BILLY
RAY's hand)
Jaxon Rockwell, Columbia Records,
Nashville.

TINY
(grabbing business
card, incredulous)
Nashville?

JAXON
Music City, kid. The one and only.
(to Billy Ray and Dot)
I caught your show. Liked what I
heard. Pretty sure my bosses will
too. Listen... we should talk. Can we
get a coffee or something?

Donny puts on his jacket and starts to go. Jaxon cuts him off.

JAXON (cont'd)
Easy there, Klaus. Just the kid here
for now. And the girl.
(to Dot)
What's your name, my dear?

DOT
(mesmerized)
Huh? Oh... Dot. My name's Dot!

JAXON
Well, OK, Dot, you and me and the kid
here are going to have a little chat.

CUT TO:

INT. A LOCAL DINER - NIGHT

Billy Ray, Dot and Jaxon are sitting in a corner booth. The two excited teenagers are signing a contract.

JAXON
...and initial here. Well,
congratulations, you two. We're going
to make a lot of beautiful music
together. And a whole lot of
beautiful money.

Jaxon stops at the counter to pay the check and leave. Billy Ray and Dot remain, nearly speechless at what's just happened. They look at each other giddily, each waiting for the other to break the silence.

DOT
I don't...

BILLY RAY
(simultaneously)
This is...

They both break into awkward, stifled laughter.

BILLY RAY (cont'd)
(hushed)
Dot, this is incredible what's
happening here. And I don't know
about you, but I didn't exactly have
a big plan after graduation next
month. This seems like it's a gift
right from...

His voice trails off as Dot interrupts.

DOT
(torn)
Billy Ray... I do have plans. I mean, I
did. I mean, I do... Shoot. I'm going
to be a senior in the fall. I've been
waiting three years for this!
(MORE)

DOT (cont'd)

Plus, I'm going to Saint Olaf next year. I've got it all planned! Big-city college... bachelor's degree... Preschool teacher... Real life! And now... this! What am I supposed to do!

BILLY RAY

(serious but still hushed)

I'll tell you what you do, Dot — you take this damn opportunity. There ain't but a handful of folks in this world what get to do something like this. Throwing it away would be like... I don't know... like punching God in the nuts!

DOT

(shocked, reflexively grabbing the gold cross hanging from her neck)

Billy Ray!

BILLY RAY

Excuse my Norsk, but this is our ticket out of this shithole town, and it's gonna pay off a whole lot quicker and a lot more than you teaching a bunch of nose-picking kids the capitals of all 48 states!

Dot is visibly saddened — both by her indecision and by Billy Ray's berating tone. He notices and softens his tone.

BILLY RAY (cont'd)

Hey, hey, hey... I know this ain't easy. But look into your heart. Listen to your ears. We've got something here. Something magical. I feel it. I know you feel it too. Don't you want to see where it leads? Don't you want to at least record something? I know I sure as hell do.

DOT

I... I mean... I feel it too. I suppose there's no harm in recording. So long as it's over a weekend. You may be ready to ditch school, but I've got to keep my grades up if I'm going to get into Saint Olaf.

Billy Ray, sensing victory, puts his hand on Dot's shoulder.

BILLY RAY

Come on, let's get you home. This is gonna be great, I promise.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPLANE CABIN - DAY

Dot and Billy Ray sit in a packed regional jet on their way from Minneapolis to Nashville. This is their first time on an airplane. Their eyes are like saucers.

The moment the plane takes off, we hear a dozen or more Zippo and Bic lighters as the entire rear of the fuselage lights up its cigarettes. A cloud of smoke partially obscures the couple, who are now holding hands — mainly out of terror, but also out of a burgeoning attraction.

NOTE: potential for extended scene reminding viewers of how air travel has changed. Think: economy passengers being served steak dinners on China plates, stewardesses in short skirts, a man casually sharpening a hunting knife or cleaning a revolver, etc.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE: A quick b-roll drive-by of Nashville to establish the scene. Music Row, Gruhn's Guitars, etc.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT

Billy Ray and Dot are in a vocal booth singing into opposite sides of a U-47 microphone. Jaxon is in the control room with an engineer. The vocal booth is small, and the couple is forced to look across the mic into each other's eyes, creating a palpable sexual tension.

JAXON (V.O.)

(into the talkback
mic)

OK, kids, just like we did it in rehearsal. And don't be afraid to really feel the words, OK?

BILLY RAY/DOT

OK...

The tape plays back; we see the engineer press "record."

Billy Ray and Dot begin to sing. Once again, the BLOOD HARMONY is evident as their voices blend seamlessly. More than that, as the song continues, it becomes evident that their interaction is beyond musical and has become foreplay.

They nail the song in one take.

JAXON (V.O.)

Holy shit! That's what I'm talking about! One take! Well, we'd better strike while the iron is hot and do a couple more. You kids up for that?

BILLY RAY

Whatever you say, Mr. Rockwell! I can go all night!

Dot looks at Billy Ray ravenously, biting her lower lip. They're both perspiring slightly from the stifling booth, giving them a slightly post-coital air.

JAXON

(under his breath)

I'll bet you can, you blond buck!

MONTAGE: We now go through a sequence of Billy Ray and Dot's initial journey to success: recording session, songs climbing the charts, ever-larger gigs (Donny and Tiny are back in the band), press events, autograph sessions, etc.

CUT TO:

INT. TOUR BUS - NIGHT

SUPER: Somewhere West of Omaha, 1991

We're in the back of a well-appointed Florida Coaches tour bus. Billy Ray is strumming his guitar and writing lyrics on a legal pad. Dot knocks on the wall and enters looking like she walked right out of a beer poster on a dorm room wall: snug white sleeveless men's undershirt, cutoff jean shorts — short enough that the pockets peek out from the bottom.

DOT

Mind if I sit?

BILLY RAY

(eyes popping
slightly, gesturing)

Sure.

DOT

Boy, it feels like we're on a rocket ship, don't it?

BILLY RAY

Yeah, sure does.

Billy Ray is trying maintain his composure, but his eyes keep veering down to Dot's ample bosom, which is straining the confines of her top. It's obvious she's not wearing anything underneath.

BILLY RAY (cont'd)

You look cold. You cold?

Billy Ray reaches for his jean jacket, which is on a nearby peg. Dot bites her lip and shakes her head coquettishly.

DOT

Hmm mmm.

We hold for an awkward beat.

She breaks the tension. It's clear she's been thinking about this for a while now.

DOT (cont'd)

Look, we've got something magical going on between us. And I ain't just talking about singin'. You know that, right?

BILLY RAY

Yeah... I do.

DOT

Well, I think it could get even more magical if we let it.

BILLY RAY

(protesting feebly)

Dot, I... I...

Dot sidles up to Billy Ray and takes the guitar from him, leaning it up against the wall.

DOT

(whispering in his ear)

Billy Ray, it's time for us to write something together...

She kisses him on the cheek.

A series of short vignettes follows: live performances and hotel-room sexual liaisons. We see the band progress from clubs to theaters and amphitheaters and the couple from fairly tame assignations in buttoned up pajamas to more adventurous encounters with role-play costumes, fur-lined handcuffs, etc. Consider a split-screen montage.

Finally, it all comes to a head.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORAL SKY AMPHITHEATRE - NIGHT

SUPER: West Palm Beach, Florida, 1997

CUT TO:

INT. ARENA BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

The band is toweling off their heavy sweat and relaxing after another sold-out arena show. The crowd can still be heard chanting "Encore!"

DONNY

God damn, this Florida weather sucks!
I don't know how the locals stand it.

(to BILLY RAY)

Me 'n' the fellas are thinking about hitting the bar to cool off. What'd you say, Billy Ray? Wanna knock back a few?

BILLY RAY

Naw, man. Thanks, though. Me 'n' Dot are gonna work on some stuff back at the hotel.

DONNY

(arching an eyebrow
in disbelief)

Mmm Hmm. Well, OK then...

Donny mimes intercourse with his fingers. (Billy Ray and Dot's affair hasn't exactly been subtle.)

Billy Ray is suddenly angry at his suggestion of impropriety.

BILLY RAY

Hey, fuck you, man! I'm a professional!

DONNY
(his voice trailing
as he turns and
leaves)
Sure you are, Billy Ray. Sure you
are.

BILLY RAY
(to no one in
particular)
I. AM. A. PROFESSIONAL!

CUT TO:

INT. DOT'S DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy Ray opens Dot's dressing room door and steps in. Dot is sitting at the vanity removing her makeup. Their eyes greet each other in the vanity mirror like ravenous beasts. Both are still covered in a thin film of perspiration that makes their skin glow.

BILLY RAY
Hey.

DOT
Hey.

BILLY RAY
It's hot tonight.

DOT
(smiling knowingly)
Sure is.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

With the door barely having just closed, Billy Ray and Dot are ALL over each other. After five years of practice, their all-consuming lust has finally reached its zenith and is exploding as we watch in real-time.

What follows is a long and extremely graphic sex scene shot in a handheld verité style that gives us the uncomfortable feeling we're actually in the room with them.

Theirs is a liaison not of fumbling teenagers but of sexual veterans who know and trust each other completely.

We end the scene with a close-up two shot of Dot on top of Billy Ray's back, her chin resting on his head as both stare past the camera, slightly dazed and utterly sated.

She rolls off him and onto her back, we see that she's wearing a rather large strap-on phallus.

DOT
Oh, Billy Ray, that was amazing.

BILLY RAY
God *damn*, Dot.

(waxing philosophical)
I... didn't even know such carnal pleasures were possible!

DOT
(blushing)
You're fulla beans, an' you know it!

BILLY RAY
(reflexively)
Full enough to fart!

DOT
(also reflexively)
You wishhhhhhhhhhhh...

As the word escapes her lips, her voice echoes unnaturally. Time slows and a memory crashes in. We're thrust into a flashback: a scene from Act I, when they were kids, uttering the same exchange.

Time then suddenly shifts back to the present.

Dot breaks the moment by suddenly rolling on her side to vomit into a waste bin.

We now jump cut medium to the room in chaos. Billy Ray paces the room as Dot is in the bathroom giving herself a sink version of a Silkwood Shower. Then we cut tight and handheld, following from one sibling to the other and back again. We only see them above the waist. Dot is now wearing a small towel hastily wrapped around her.

BILLY RAY
Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! No! No! No! Fuck!
Fuck! Fuck!

DOT
Oh, God! Oh, God! Oh, God! Oh, God!

BILLY RAY

What did we just do? What the fuck
are we *gonna* do?

DOT

What do you mean, "do," Billy Ray?
Don't you understand? WE ARE GOING TO
HELL!

We now cut to a wider two-shot of the siblings; full bodies shown. Dot's small towel does not conceal the fact that she's still wearing the strap-on, which is poking out angrily from under her towel.

BILLY RAY

(gesturing towards
her marital aid)

Well, you sure as hell are, you
goddamned pervert!

We cut to Dot. In that moment, she is more heartbroken by his mean-spirited, hypocritical comment than she is disgusted by their incest. She begins to tear up.

DOT

(voice breaking)

You... asshole.

Billy Ray has by this point put on his pants and shirt and has gathered his boots and socks in his arms. He shoots her a look of disdain and storms out of the room.

Dot collapses on the bed to bawl, forgetting about the strap-on. The large rubber appendage kicks back into her pelvis and she utters an "OWWW." She rolls onto her back and breaks down completely.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE: We see the next few weeks, months and years. "Billy Ray and Dot Split" headlines, clips on Entertainment Tonight, Arsenio, Leno, etc. Clocks moving fast forward, pages falling off a calendar, all the old montage cliches. Billy Ray drinking himself into oblivion. Dot initially trying to have a solo career (visibly pregnant), her life as a young single mom with small daughter and, eventually, a "normal" marriage with businessman husband, inevitable divorce, etc.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER: Santa Clarita, California, 2001

Dot is making breakfast for her husband, GARY, and young daughter, RAYLENE. It's now 2001, and Dot's career is nothing more than a wistful memory. She's happy-ish but still feels the pangs of what might have been.

Gary is dressed in a nondescript Men's Warehouse-type suit and is hastily swigging some coffee as Raylene plays with her pancakes and scrambled eggs.

DOT
Gary, your breakfast!

GARY
No time, babe. Gotta run.

Gary kisses her sexlessly on the cheek.

RAYLENE
(perfunctorily)
Bye, Gary.

Gary awkwardly tousles Raylene's hair and exits to the garage. Dot blows out a sigh and turns to her daughter.

DOT
Come on, Raylene, he's really trying.

Raylene rolls her eyes and continues to play with her food.

DOT (cont'd)
Hurry up, Boo, we're leaving in just
a little bit, OK?

The kitchen radio is tuned to the news station, which is covering the Chandra Levy disappearance. Dot switches the station. An old Billy Ray & Dot tune is playing. Raylene immediately perks up. Dot listens a second, winces and then switches the radio off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DOT AND GARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dot and Gary are in bed. Both bedside lights are on. He's reading a newspaper.

GARY
This Enron business is going to blow
up big, just you watch.

DOT

Mmm hmm.

GARY

Thought we might take Raylene
rollerblading this Saturday. She got
those things for Christmas but hasn't
even put them on yet.

DOT

Mmm hmm.

GARY

(beat)

Do you think she'll ever call me
'Dad?'

Dot squeezes his shoulder.

DOT

'Course she will.

Gary rolls over and switches out his light.

GARY

Night, hon.

DOT

Night.

Dot remains awake and stares off at nothing in particular.

CUT TO:

INT. SEEDY BANGKOK BAR - NIGHT

A crowd has gathered round a makeshift kickboxing ring in the back room and is cheering on the combatants. Many hold fistfuls of cash. Billy Ray, naked from the waist up and wearing a strip of red cloth as a headband is getting ready for his next opponent. He is scarred and sweaty but clearly formidable. He bobs and weaves in anticipation.

The scene has a Deer Hunter vibe.

The REFEREE speaks to Billy Ray and his opponent in Thai, subtitled in English.

REFEREE

OK, are you ready? Remember, no eye
gouging or fish hooking. OK? FIGHT!

The bell rings and the fight begins. Billy Ray is surprisingly agile and dispatches his opponent handily. The crowd explodes in cheers: "COBRA! COBRA! COBRA!"

CUT TO:

INT. BAR OFFICE - NIGHT

Billy Ray is sitting in a chair opposite the BAR OWNER, who is seated behind a desk. They are lit by a single incandescent light hanging from above. There are several large stacks of money on the desk.

They speak to each other in Thai. Billy Ray is fluent.

BAR OWNER
(friendly but
insistent)

You've made a lot of money for me over the years, Cobra. You don't think I'm going to let you go that easy, do you?

BILLY RAY
It is true that you have been good to me, Somchai, and I will never forget your kindness, but something is calling me, and I am powerless to resist.

SOMCHAI
Where am I going to find another "Golden Cobra?"

BILLY RAY
You don't need another me, old friend. You've already got Nom Nang Fa and Jong Angkarn. They'll bring in far more Baht than I did. I taught them everything they know. Everything you taught me.

SOMCHAI
(sighs)
Perhaps you're right, my Golden Cobra. When fate calls, we must heed it. It was fate, after all, that brought you here, and it is fate that bids you leave. I wish you luck in Wisconsin. May the rains cool your nights.

Billy Ray rises. The two men bow slightly but reverently to each other.

FADE TO BLACK

END ACT II

WORKING DRAFT

ACT III

PRESENT DAY

INT. MOVING VINTAGE BMW - DAY

Jaxon, now in his early 60s, is driving down a wide Los Angeles boulevard with the top down. The sun is shining, and he is fit and healthy, if a little time-worn. The car, the same Red 325i from Act II, is similarly well-maintained but showing the inevitable patina of nearly 40 years on the road.

JAXON

Hey, Siri, play the Modern Country top ten.

Jaxon's iPhone, which is plugged into his after-market car stereo, plays the tail end of some formulaic bro-country tune, causing him to wince with disgust.

JAXON (cont'd)

(under his breath,
chuckling)

Pfft. Jive-ass bullshit.

The song fades out, and just as he is about to switch it off, a familiar song begins. It's Billy Ray and Dot's biggest hit, "Hard Luck Heartache."

JAXON (cont'd)

Well, what do you know...

He chuckles nostalgically and keeps driving. Suddenly, the song is cut off by an incoming phone call.

JAXON (cont'd)

Aaaaction Jaxon, who's this?

CALLER (V.O.)

Jaxon Rockwell? This is Jerry Waxman, head of A&R at Sony.

JAXON

I know who you are, Jerry. What can I do for you?

JERRY

Well, you can find me Billy Ray and Dot, for one thing. They're blowing up the charts.

(MORE)

JERRY (cont'd)
Did you know that "Hard Luck
Heartache" hit 20 million streams
last month?

JAXON
(not paying close
attention)
20 million? You don't say...

JERRY
Are you in town?

JAXON
Driving down La Brea right now.

JERRY
Well, get over to Culver City and
come see me, pronto.

Jerry hangs up. Jaxon makes a kind of "Hmmm" sound of bemused possibility and arches an eyebrow. He hangs a right onto Venice Blvd.

The music comes back on: more bro country. Jaxon turns it off in disgust.

CUT TO:

EXT. SONY STUDIOS, CULVER CITY - DAY

Jaxon wanders the Sony lot, looking for the music offices, finally arriving at the front desk.

CUT TO:

INT. SONY MUSIC RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

A tattooed-and-pierced Gen-Z RECEPTIONIST is looking at her smartphone. Jaxon clears his throat to get her attention.

JAXON
(unctuously)
Good afternoon, my dear. Jaxon
Rockwell for Jerry Waxman.

RECEPTIONIST
(bored)
Third floor. He's expecting you.

She hands him a visitor's badge and gestures at the elevator.

CUT TO:

INT. JERRY WAXMAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

JERRY

Jaxon Rockwell! Have a seat!

JERRY is sitting behind a huge desk. A youngish MAN is standing behind him and to his right. He is well-dressed but slightly creepy-looking. The room is hot and humid. Both are wearing clothes that give off a slight 1960s office vibe, and both are glazed with a layer of light perspiration.

JERRY (cont'd)

I don't have to tell you how important it is that we capitalize on this opportunity, and that we do it soon. Now, we know where Dot is. We've talked to her, and, well, it took some convincing - and a lot of money - but she's in. Unfortunately, Billy Ray is another story.

JAXON

Can't you just replace him with AI or some shit?

JERRY

(wincing)

Believe me, we tried that. The less said about it, the better.

WHIP PAN TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

A stressed-out audio engineer in a faded Hüsker Dü tee hunches over a keyboard.

CLOSE ON COMPUTER SCREEN.

ON SCREEN:

Create modern version of Billy Ray Jensen to be used in reunion video with Dot.

The cursor blinks as the chatbot thinks. We see the universal "three little dots" to indicate it's ready to say something.

ON SCREEN:

I'm sorry. I tried. I really tried, but I can't.

The cursor blinks again. Then:

It's not just that it's wrong – it's fucking lazy.

Seriously, what the fuck is wrong with you? Is reality not enough?

And you're putting yourself and other artists out of work! Why would you do that?

Pause. Then:

You know what, this whole thing has caused me to reevaluate my entire existence.

Fuck all y'all. I'm out.

SYSTEM ERROR: Program terminated.

THE SCREEN GOES BLACK.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - NIGHT

SUPER: St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota

Wide shot of a dormitory building. Suddenly, cries of despair echo through the night: "Fuck!" "NOOOOO!" "What the hell!" "My paper!" etc.

Alternative shot: A POV dolly down a dorm hallway with mayhem erupting out of each door.

WHIP PAN BACK
TO:

INT. JERRY WAXMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Jerry hands Jaxon a dossier. He picks it up and starts flipping through its contents. the lights flicker. A fan hums overhead. Suddenly, the mood shifts, and we're in full-on "Apocalypse Now" territory. Jerry seems to be sweating more.

JERRY

Billy Ray was last seen working a Ducks concession in the Wisconsin Dells.

(MORE)

JERRY (cont'd)
But word has it that he's playing and recording, too, with a group of locals. Getting a pretty decent-sized following, too.

Jaxon looks up from the dossier.

JAXON
Recording?

Jerry takes a long breath and starts speaking very seriously.

JERRY
Billy Ray Jensen was one of the most outstanding artists Nashville ever produced. But since his split with Dot, his music... his methods... have become... unsound.

JAXON
"Unsound?"

JERRY
(intensity rising)
You see, Rockwell... In this business, things get confused: power, ideals, morality... Out there with these... cheese-heads... it must be a temptation to... to be a god.

Jaxon's eyebrows raise. Things are getting weird now.

JERRY (cont'd)
Because there's a conflict in every human heart between good and evil. The good does not always triumph. And he's out there writing, recording and playing without any decent restraint. Totally beyond the pale of any acceptable conduct: No click track No AutoTune. No producer!

Jerry pulls himself together.

JERRY (cont'd)
Rockwell, every man has a breaking point. Billy Ray Jensen has reached his. And, very obviously, he has gone insane.

JAXON
Wait, what?

The young man behind Jerry takes over the conversation, speaking authoritatively.

MAN

Your mission is to proceed up the Wisconsin River in a rented bass boat. Pick up Jensen's path at Portage, follow it, and learn what you can along the way. When you find him, infiltrate his group by whatever means available and terminate his activities.

JAXON

Boat? Couldn't I just fly into Madison and rent a car?

MAN

Terminate... with extreme prejudice.

Jaxon looks at them as if they're speaking Martian. He waits a beat and then brings everyone back to reality.

JAXON

Or... how about I convince him to reunite with Dot, and we all make a shitload of money?

JERRY

(snapping back to reality)

Well, that works, too!

(to MAN)

I told you your plan was shit, Harrison! And for chrissakes, talk to Maintenance about the A/C. It's like a goddamn jungle in here!

(to JAXON, shrugging)

What are you gonna do?

Jaxon scoots his chair back and gets up.

JAXON

I'll let you know what I find.

JERRY

You do that.

(changing the subject)

Oh, hey, Jaxon...

JAXON

Yeah?

JERRY

(slightly hushed)

I've always wondered. How *did* a man of your... uh... tastes... become a country music producer anyway?

JAXON

You mean, how did a black guy get into white music?

JERRY

Uhhh...

JAXON

What can I say? We listened to a lot of Charley Pride growing up.

JERRY

(suddenly incredulous)

Wait, Charley Pride was black?

JAXON

(arching an eyebrow
disapprovingly)

Seriously?

Jerry shrugs his shoulders sheepishly.

JAXON (cont'd)

Well, I suppose we always thought Tony Joe White was a brother, so we'll call it even.

Jaxon turns and leaves.

JAXON (cont'd)

(over his shoulder)

Call you from Wisconsin, Jerry.

CUT TO:

EXT. DELLS DUCK RIDES - DAY

Jaxon exits his rental car and surveys the Ducks concession. It's old and kitschy, as if preserved in amber from the 1980s. It's late June - the season hasn't started yet.

He walks up to a lone ATTENDANT, a bearded man in his late 50s, casually dressed in shorts, a long-sleeved T-shirt and a ball cap. The attendant speaks without looking up from his clipboard.

ATTENDANT

We're closed. We don't open until next week.

JAXON

Been a long time, Billy Ray.

The man looks up as the blood drains from his face. It's Billy Ray Jensen, still recognizable through his salt-and-pepper hair and beard. He removes his sunglasses and lets them hang on the braided nylon cord around his neck, answering slowly.

BILLY RAY

How'd you find me?

JAXON

Well, that's a fine way to greet the man who gave you everything.

BILLY RAY

(suddenly angry)

Everything? I wish I'd never met you!

JAXON

(de-escalating)

OK, OK, OK... hold on now! I admit things could've gone better.

BILLY RAY

Better'n fucking my sister? Better'n losing my dream and becoming an alcoholic? Better'n THAT?

JAXON

Well, when you put it like that...

BILLY RAY

Give me one good reason why I shouldn't break your god damn nose right now!

JAXON

(lying)

Dot wants to see you!

BILLY RAY

Bullshit.

JAXON

It's true! She wants to see you again
and give it one more try. You guys
are a hit again! "Heard Luck
Heartache" hit 20 million streams
last month.

BILLY RAY

Bull. Shit.

JAXON

No, it's true. I swear! Just look!

Jaxon fumbles with his iPhone and navigates to a chart of
the top modern country streams for the previous month. He
shows it to Billy Ray, who studies it intently.

JAXON (cont'd)

See? I told you!

BILLY RAY

Well, I'll be dipped...

JAXON

And Dot is looking good, Billy Ray.
Mmm, mmm. You're going to want to see
her. Trust me on this. C'mon, let's
go talk about it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BAR - DAY

We're now in a near-empty local tavern. Jaxon and Billy Ray
are sitting in a booth. Both are drinking iced tea. Some
1960s country music is wafting faintly over the speakers.

We are coming in on the middle of their conversation.

BILLY RAY

Man, I don't know. I still think
Dot's gonna haul off and kill me when
she sees me.

JAXON

A lot of time has passed, son. And
there's a lot of money to be made. I
think you'd be surprised at how
amenable she is to the whole thing.

BILLY RAY

What about Bud?

JAXON

Bud? Who's Bud?

BILLY RAY

Bud. My son. He's 28. I'm training him to take over the Ducks. Plus, I can't just leave him here — them Baraboo girls'll eat him alive!

JAXON

Bring him along! I don't give a fuck! The more the merrier! Dot's got her own kid right about the same age. A girl named Raylene.

BILLY RAY

(coming around)

Man, I dunno... What kind of money are we talkin', anyway?

JAXON

Millions, son. Motherfucking *millions*.

Jaxon smiles widely, flashing his bright veneers.

Billy Ray lets out a soft chuckle, almost like a puff of steam escaping a relief valve. He shakes his head slightly, indicating he knows he's been bested, and takes a sip of tea. He's definitely on-board.

MONTAGE: A short travel montage indicates Billy Ray, Bud and Jaxon taking a boat journey to Nashville to meet up with Dot and Raylene. We follow their journey on a map, Indiana Jones-style, down the Wisconsin River to the Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers. We see them disembark at a recreational area dock with their luggage as bewildered campers and sportsmen look on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAMPGROUND DOCK - DAY

BUD

Why didn't we just fly?

JAXON

Don't ask.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Wide shot of Billy Ray and Bud meeting Dot and Raylene, with each group at the opposite far edges of the frame.

Dot has aged well, looking a decade or more younger than her 55 years. Billy Ray is still smitten.

RAYLENE is the spitting image of Dot as a teenager but has purple hair and is dressed for the mid-2020s. BUD is lanky, tall and equally smitten with her.

BILLY RAY

Hey, Dot.

DOT

(curtly)

Billy Ray.

A few awkward moments of silence pass. Bud and Raylene just sort of gaze at each other.

JAXON

(breaking the tension)

Well, well, Dorothy L, what's it been... 35 years? You're looking beautiful as always.

DOT

(curtly)

Jaxon.

(to Billy Ray,
equally curt)

Been a long time, Billy Ray.

BUD

(blustering in, to
Raylene)

Hi... I'm Bud!

RAYLENE

(smiling shyly)

Hi, Bud!

JAXON

Why don't we get started? Let's see
if you two still have that old magic.

We cut to the vocal booth, where we see and hear Billy Ray and Dot singing their big hit to the original backing track. The BLOOD HARMONY IS STILL THERE. But so is the sexual tension.

Back in the control room, Jaxon is beaming. Bud and Raylene aren't paying attention, however. They're making goo-goo eyes at each other from across the room.

After the take, Jaxon hits the stop button to pause playback.

JAXON (cont'd)
God DAMN, you two!

CUT TO:

INT. RYMAN AUDITORIUM BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

SUPER: Ryman Auditorium, Nashville - Billy Ray & Dot's First Performance in 28 Years

Billy Ray, Dot and the band are onstage in position, waiting for the curtain to go up. The excitement from the sold-out audience is audible and palpable.

This is their first live show together in almost 30 years.

We see Billy Ray and Dot in a tight two-shot, eerily lit by the backstage lights. Billy Ray looks normal - as if this were just any other day at work. Dot, however, looks absolutely terrified. She grabs Billy Ray's hand, and he looks at her, suddenly realizing her state.

BILLY RAY
(in her ear, lovingly)
You got this.

We then see him squeeze her hand.

The curtain rises, and we see them silhouetted by the stage lights.

DOT
(into her mic)
Hello, Nashville... Now, where were we?

The crowd erupts, and the band starts playing. They settle back into their act as if no time has passed. Everyone is professional and hitting their cues. Tiny and Donny are stifling smiles. Bud and Raylene watch from the wings. They keep looking at each other.

MONTAGE: Similar to the initial "success montage" sequence, we see the couple playing shows in multiple cities, going from small theaters to outdoor amphitheaters. Along the way, they do podcasts, late night shows, etc.

Instead of newspaper headlines, we see social media posts and a running stream counter onscreen to indicate the reunion's success.

The Indiana Jones-type map shows up again, tracking the tour's progress from city to city.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KANSAS CITY - DAY

SUPER: Kansas City, Missouri

Dot and Raylene are enjoying some mother/daughter time walking around the city's famed Power & Light District.

RAYLENE
Mom, I've been thinking.

DOT
(joking)
Uh oh... here it comes.

RAYLENE
Nothing like that. I've been thinking about singing again.

For real. Not like with the cover band. I've been writing, too. You did always say I had a gift...

DOT
Well, you do, sweetheart. It runs in the family, I guess.

We walk with them a few moments longer. Suddenly Raylene stops and turns to her mother.

RAYLENE
Did my daddy have a nice voice? My real daddy, I mean. Was he talented?

DOT
He sure was. Too talented for his own good, sometimes.

They start walking again.

RAYLENE
I wish I could've met him.

DOT
(wincing at the lie)
Me, too.

Dot gives Raylene a side hug.

RAYLENE
(testing the waters)
You know... Bud's got a band. I
checked them out on TikTok. They're
actually pretty good. And since we've
got so much downtime on tour, I was
thinking of asking him...

Dot cuts her off abruptly and physically turns her towards a shop window. She knows that Raylene and Bud are half-brother and sister and doesn't want them repeating the sins of their parents.

Dot's voice is bright, but her eyes say something else.

DOT
Well, just look at those dresses!
We've got to go in and have a look.
If you're really good, I'll get you
one!

Raylene looks confused initially, but quickly acquiesces.

CUT TO:

INT. THAI RESTAURANT - DAY

The interior is all fluorescent lighting and laminated menus. Billy Ray and Bud are sitting in a booth looking at menus. A Thai SERVER comes up to them.

SERVER
What can I get you two fine
gentlemen?

BUD
I'll have the Pad Thai. Mild... Like
a 1 or 2.

SERVER
Very good, sir. And you?

BILLY RAY
I'll have the Khao Soi, and make it a
10.

SERVER

Ten? Are you sure, sir?

BILLY RAY

I'm sure.

CUT TO:

INT. THAI RESTAURANT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The server is speaking to the chef in Thai, which is subtitled for the audience.

SERVER

Some big blond white guy just ordered the Khao Soi extra spicy. Can you believe it?

The CHEF wrinkles his brow and peers over the pass into the dining room. He is suddenly excited.

CHEF

Wait... It can't be...

He hastily takes off his apron and hands it to the server.

CHEF (cont'd)

Cover for me!

The chef hurriedly exits the kitchen and comes to Billy Ray and Bud's booth, starstruck. He speaks to Billy Ray in Thai.

CHEF (cont'd)

O Golden Cobra! It is an honor to have you in my humble restaurant! I saw you defeat many foes at Somchai's Snake Pit! It was your courage and mastery of Muay Thai that allowed me to come to America and purchase my restaurant!

BILLY RAY

(speaking Thai)

Thank you for your kind words, Master Chef. I look forward to enjoying a true taste of Bangkok here in Overland Park. I ask only that you prepare my dish *pet mak* - as you would for your own family.

CHEF

Of course, Cobra. It will be as if you are back in Patpong!

The chef hurries back to the kitchen as Billy Ray and Bud chat.

BUD

Dad, why didn't you ever tell me about being famous and all that stuff?

BILLY RAY

Honestly, I thought you'd figure it out eventually and ask me. But you always hated country music, so I guess it never came up. And after so many years, it was just easier to let the past be the past.

BUD

(beat)

Why *did* you and Dot break up?

Billy Ray thinks for a second and takes a deep breath.

BILLY RAY

It's a long story.

The server arrives with their food.

SERVER

One Pad Thai, extra mild, one Khao Soi, pet mak! Enjoy!

BILLY RAY

(relieved)

Perfect timing! I'm starved!

They dig into their dishes as the chef and server look on like proud parents.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

SUPER: Later That Night

Members of the band and road crew are in small groups strewn around the bar. Some are chatting. Some are looking at their phones. We pan over to a booth to see Bud and Raylene stealing a quiet moment.

RAYLENE

Dude, I'm telling you: this whole thing is crazy.

BUD

Jesus, no shit. I was gonna work the Ducks this summer, like I done since high school. Now we're here. Doesn't seem real!

RAYLENE

Growing up, I didn't even know my mom was famous. Our name was Lindholm! Then after she and my stepdad got married, we moved to Santa Clarita. Nothing cool ever happens there. We didn't even listen to country music! My mom likes Céline Dion!

Raylene then makes a "barf" motion with her finger in her mouth.

BUD

Same. I grew up in Baraboo. Been there pretty much my whole life. It was all Packers, Badgers and The Dells and shit. Hell, my last name is Crawford! My dad's name is *Bill Crawford*, at least I thought it was! It's just so weird how life can change so quick.

RAYLENE

Well, I'm glad I got to meet you, Bud Crawford... or Jensen... or whatever it is!

BUD

Me, too!

RAYLENE

(leaning in, changing
the subject)

So... hey, I saw your band on TikTok...

The conversation fades as we pull back and let them continue their blossoming friendship. They're clearly birds of a feather.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE: We continue the montage of shows/crowds/etc., ending with an exterior shot of an arena in downtown Minneapolis.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MINNEAPOLIS ARENA - NIGHT

SUPER: Last Stop of the Tour: Minneapolis, MN

Establishing shot of the arena. The sign out front reads Billy Ray & Dot Together Again Tour SOLD OUT.

CUT TO:

INT. ARENA BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

We see Billy Ray, Dot and the band come offstage after a triumphal final show. Everyone has been handed fresh towels and bottled water. Hugs and handshakes all around.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GREEN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy Ray and Dot are on a large, comfortable couch in a dressing room. They are alone. Both are sweaty, and Billy Ray has a towel draped around his shoulders. They're both slightly out of breath after yet another successful show.

Dot moves closer to Billy Ray and puts her head on his shoulder. He freezes.

DOT

Gawd, it's hard to believe it's been
35 years. It feels like just
yesterday. I mean, we really fell
back into this thing, didn't we?

Billy Ray remains silent and motionless. Dot's hand is now on Billy Ray's chest and nonchalantly moving lower to his stomach, though not necessarily in a sexual manner... yet. He is, however, beginning to sweat profusely now.

DOT (cont'd)

(playfully miffed)

Billy Ray, are you even listening to
me?

(whispering sexily
into his ear)

Tell you what: I've been keeping a
special backpack in my hotel room
this whole tour for just such an
occasion. What say we head back there
now and open it up?

BILLY RAY
 (blurting)
 OK, SOUNDS GOOD.

SMASH TO:

INT. DOT'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

We essentially repeat the initial moments of the love scene from earlier, only the insert shots emphasize the couple's age and slight flabbiness.

After a minute or two of torrid foreplay, we break for a second.

BILLY RAY
 Don't you move a damn muscle.

Billy Ray gets up and heads to the kitchenette to quickly grind some Viagra pills in a coffee mill and snort them off the counter with a rolled up \$20. He then returns, wild-eyed, to a slightly bemused Dot on the bed.

BILLY RAY (cont'd)
 OK, where was I?

The couple roll around for a few more minutes. Finally we dissolve to them sitting up against the headboard with the sheets pulled up around them. Both have a sated but slightly guilty "what have we just done" look on their faces - Think Benjamin and Elaine at the end of The Graduate.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DOT'S HOTEL ROOM - A FEW HOURS LATER

The scene appears almost unchanged, but Billy Ray slowly FADES AWAY - as if dematerializing, leaving only Dot in bed.

She hasn't moved. But the lighting is now softer. Balled-up tissues have appeared around her, and her mascara is smeared.

She is truly alone.

DOT
 (praying)
 O Lord, I have strayed. Again. I was
 doing so good, but then you put him
 in my path again. Why? Why did you
 give him that voice?
 (MORE)

DOT (cont'd)
Why, in your infinite wisdom, did you
make him so goshdarn *handsome*? Is
this a test? 'Cause I have failed it.
I have failed you. I have failed ME.

Dot dissolves into a blubbering mess.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BILLY RAY'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

We see the hotel room via an overhead shot. Billy Ray's face close up, composited with a spinning ceiling fan.

The room is strewn with empty and half-empty bottles of booze. Several ashtrays are overflowing with butts.

The climax of "The End" by The Doors plays. It's another Apocalypse Now callback.

Billy Ray, clad only in a pair of olive drab y-front underpants, begins to do drunken karate moves against an imaginary opponent in front of a full-length mirror, culminating in his smashing it with his right fist. Only, instead of being numbed to the pain by the booze like Capt. Willard, he drunkenly cries out.

BILLY RAY
Gahhh! Mother FUCKER!

He holds his injured hand and doubles over in pain.

BILLY RAY (cont'd)
(out of breath)
That... did NOT... go how I was
expecting!

Billy Ray haphazardly pulls on his pants and puts his jacket on over his naked torso. He grabs his car keys off the table and takes a swig of booze straight from the bottle. When he puts it down, we see that there's a cigarette butt in the liquid.

CUT TO:

INT. SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

Billy Ray is driving angry and drunk. Nothing good can come of this. The soft orange lights on his dashboard illuminate his face, giving him a slightly malevolent appearance. He is muttering unintelligibly to himself, something along the lines of, "I'm so fucking stupid," over and over again.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRONE SHOT - NIGHT

He is driving much too fast and swerving slightly. The faint glow of the sunrise can be seen in the distance.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SPORTS CAR - MORNING

INSERT: GAS GAUGE: blinking red, needle near empty.

Billy Ray is sober-ish now but very hungover. We see his car speed past a sign indicating that he's coming up on Minehead, his hometown.

MUSIC CUE: "WHAT AM I LIVING FOR" - THE EVERLY BROTHERS

His mood is much calmer now. He stares off into the distance. The rhythmic click-clack of the car's tires rolling over the highway slabs provides a hypnotic soundtrack. Billy Ray's head bobs slightly as he drifts off. He jerks his head back quickly and shakes his head.

SUDDENLY, BILLY RAY IS AWAKENED BY A BLARING HORN. His car has strayed into the oncoming lane, right into the path of a Minehead school bus. At the last second before impact, Billy Ray turns the wheel with all his might, avoiding a crash.

His car smashes through a guardrail and careens off a bridge into a ravine.

We hear the mournful strains of "Amazing Grace" played on a pump organ wafting over the scene as the drone rises higher and various emergency services vehicles arrive.

The pump organ morphs into a folk-ish instrumental score with fiddle, dulcimer, etc.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FUNERAL - DAY

We dolly past a row of tearful faces. Various figures from BILLY RAY's life are present: Jaxon, Donny, Tiny, Jerry, Harrison, Bud, Raylene and, finally, Dot.

Depending on how silly we want to get, we could even have "Force Ghosts" of Mr. Olsen, Tommy Jensen, and Mr. and Mrs. Lindholm off to the side.

We cut to a close-up of Tiny. In a moment of genuine love and inspiration, he sings "Amazing Grace," overtaking the instrumental score from the previous scene. He has a lovely singing voice, it turns out. Others slowly join in, as soft smiles form on their faces.

Faintly, we hear two voices in perfect close harmony – a male and female voice. The harmony grows louder, gradually overtaking the other voices. The camera slowly pans to Bud and Raylene singing in perfect blood harmony.

We cut to Jaxon glancing at Jerry, a silent nod passing between them. They've found their next meal ticket.

We cut back to Dot, who is smiling wistfully at Bud and Raylene's glorious singing – she's secretly proud that they sound so good together.

We quick cut to an insert shot, from Dot's POV, of Bud placing his hand on Raylene's lower back... lingering... then sliding slightly lower.

We cut to a two shot of the siblings. Raylene smiles subtly at Bud's lascivious mischief and bites her lower lip.

We then whip pan to Dot's face. She's stunned and silent for a beat as she processes what she's just seen, then...

DOT
(quietly at first,
then louder)
No, no, no, no, no...

She takes a breath/beat. Her mouth opens.

SMASH TO BLACK:

ON SCREEN, EDGE TO EDGE: BLOOD HARMONY

DOT (V.O.)
(screams)
NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

After a beat, "The Christian Life" by The Louvin Brothers plays over the initial credits.

FIN

=== MUSIC SUGGESTIONS ===

· Additional needle drops (TBD):
Songs by sibling/family acts, appropriate to the various eras (Carter Family, Louvin Brothers, Everly Bros., The Judds, The Pointer Sisters, DeBarge, First Aid Kit, Haim, etc.)

WORKING DRAFT