

RANSOM, TX
EPISODE ONE – HOMECOMING THROUGH ESCAPE
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Adapted from Ransom, TX series book one by EL DuBois

FADE IN:

INT. COWBOY'S TRUCK — NIGHT

JAMES "COWBOY" STONE, eighteen, sits behind the wheel of a battered old Ford pickup.

He's dressed for Homecoming. His tuxedo jacket is rumpled, his face pale and damp with sweat.

The driver's door hangs open.

Cowboy leans out and VOMITS onto the gravel.

He grips the steering wheel with one hand and the open door with the other, fighting to steady himself.

His breathing fogs the window.

He rests his forehead against the glass.

Once.

Twice.

His head begins tapping against it. Harder. Faster.

He catches himself.

Stops.

His eyes fill.

COWBOY

Please, please... please.

He closes his eyes.

His lips move in a silent prayer. Whether scripture or something older, only Cowboy knows.

He wipes his mouth with the sleeve of his tuxedo.

A bottle of cheap whiskey sits beside him.

He takes a mouthful, gargles, spits onto the gravel, then coughs until his eyes water again.

The TRUCK RADIO crackles.

RADIO (V.O.)

...And that was The Man in Black doin'
"Don't Take Your Guns to Town." It's
8:12 in the P.M. here in Ransom, with
the current temperature of boiling and
no rescue in sight.

Cowboy stares through the windshield.

Beyond the parking lot, the auditorium glows with
Homecoming lights.

RADIO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Speaking of heat, y'all kids down
there with that dirty dancing goin' on
at the high school better watch out on
the road. The powers that be seemingly
find nights like these to be darkly
amusing...

Cowboy's jaw tightens.

RADIO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Now, ZZ Top is just on the other side
of this commercial, so remember not to
touch that dial. Your only true choice
for outlaw radio, right here, K-REX.
The only radio station that, if played
ass backwards, would let you get your
truck back, your dog back, your wife
back... K-R-E-X.

Cowboy switches off the radio.

Silence.

He looks at himself in the rearview mirror.

An eighteen-year-old boy looks back.

Scared half to death.

He draws one ragged breath.

COWBOY
(barely audible) Goddammit.

He climbs out.

The heavy truck door closes with a long, rusty SHRIEK.

EXT. RANSOM HIGH SCHOOL — AUDITORIUM PARKING LOT — NIGHT
West Texas.

The parking lot is packed with pickups, dusty sedans, and vehicles that have survived more summers than anyone cares to count.

Music pulses from the auditorium.

Laughter carries across the gravel.

Cowboy walks toward the entrance.

Every step costs him something.

A group of students passes, laughing and shoving one another.

STUDENT

Cowboy!

Cowboy barely acknowledges them.

Then—

A SHARP PAIN behind his eyes.

He stops.

His hand flies to his temple.

FLASHES—

BLOOD.

A FACE CONTORTED IN TERROR.

SOMEONE SCREAMING.

DARKNESS.

Another flash.

Something moves in the darkness.

Something that shouldn't exist.

Cowboy doubles over.

His breathing turns shallow.

The visions strike again, faster.

He squeezes his eyes shut.

This has been happening for six weeks.

And it's getting worse.

A CAR BACKFIRES nearby.

BANG!

Cowboy jerks upright.

A pickup full of classmates rolls past. Someone laughs from the passenger window.

CLASSMATE
You comin', Stone?

Cowboy stares.

The pain vanishes.

Just like that.

He looks toward the auditorium doors.

The music swells.

He straightens his jacket.

Wipes the sweat from his face.

And walks inside.

INT. RANSOM HIGH AUDITORIUM – NIGHT

Homecoming in a West Texas football town.

Scarlet lights wash over a crowded auditorium.

Hand-painted banners hang from the walls.

STATE CHAMPIONS.

RANSOM PRIDE.

Several bear one name.

COWBOY STONE.

Teenagers dance beneath streamers. Parents mingle near the refreshments. Old men in Stetsons and belt buckles the size of dinner plates relive their own glory days.

In Ransom, oil and football are king.

And tonight, Cowboy is royalty.

An OL' TIMER spots him entering.

OL' TIMER

There's the boy that can part the Red
Sea!

The crowd ERUPTS.

Applause.

Whistles.

Shouts of congratulations.

Hands clap Cowboy's shoulders.

MAN

Hell of a season, son!

ANOTHER MAN

Made this whole damn town proud!

Cowboy forces his way through the congratulations.

He doesn't smile.

He doesn't celebrate.

He barely hears them.

His eyes search the crowd.

Face after face.

He passes the dancers.

The banners.

The people who love him.

Then—

He stops.

Across the auditorium stands PAUL JOSEPH "P'JO" STANFORD.

Eighteen.

Six-foot-five. Blond. Handsome. The kind of boy who has
never needed to announce his arrival.

Cowboy's closest friend.

His brother in every way that matters.

Normally, P'Jo would be holding court, cracking jokes,
raising hell, and enjoying every second of being the center
of attention.

But tonight—

Nothing.

P'Jo stands motionless.

His arms hang at his sides.

His expression is empty.

Beside him, BLUE and J.R. stand equally still.

No conversation.

No laughter.

No acknowledgment of the celebration around them.

Three boys who should be raising hell.

Three statues in the middle of Homecoming.

Cowboy sees only P'Jo.

COWBOY
(under his breath) The dark prince.

Cowboy approaches.

The crowd continues moving around them.

P'Jo does not turn.

Does not smile.

Does not blink in recognition.

Cowboy stops directly in front of him.

A beat.

COWBOY
(quietly) P'Jo.

Nothing.

Cowboy studies his face.

Those familiar features.

The same boy he's known for years.

The boy who has stood beside him through every victory,
every loss, every goddamn stupid decision.

Cowboy searches his eyes.

For anger.

Fear.

Recognition.

Anything.

There is nothing.

Cowboy's eyes fill with tears.

COWBOY
(almost pleading) Come on, brother.

No answer.

No movement.

P'Jo stands perfectly still.

A few nearby students notice the confrontation.

The music continues.

Cowboy's expression begins to break.

He knows what he came here to do.

But knowing hasn't made it any easier.

He reaches behind P'Jo's neck.

His hand trembles.

He grips his friend and pulls the much taller boy down toward him.

P'Jo offers no resistance.

No struggle.

No flinch.

Cowboy leans close to his ear.

COWBOY
(whispering) To whatever is left of
your merciful soul, may the heavens
accept you...

A tear slips down Cowboy's cheek.

COWBOY (CONT'D)
For what remains can go to hell.

Cowboy releases him.

One last look.

One final desperate search for the boy he loves like a brother.

Nothing.

Cowboy reaches beneath his tuxedo jacket.

He draws a CUSTOMIZED, SAWED-OFF DOUBLE-BARREL SHOTGUN.

A few students gasp.

Someone steps backward.

Cowboy raises the weapon.

Presses the cold steel beneath P'Jo's chin.

P'Jo does not move.

Cowboy's face crumples.

Then hardens.

He pulls the trigger.

BOOM.

CUT TO BLACK.

SCREAMS RIP THROUGH THE AUDITORIUM.

TITLE CARD:

RANSOM, TX

INT. SHERIFF'S PATROL CAR - NIGHT

SHERIFF JACKSON DANIELS, early 40s, lean and weathered, sits behind the auditorium.

A demolished plate of home-cooked barbecue occupies the passenger seat.

ZZ Top's "Mexican Blackbird" plays low on the radio.

Jackson works a toothpick between his teeth, enjoying what little peace the evening has afforded him.

He checks his reflection in the rearview mirror.

Satisfied, he tucks the toothpick into his breast pocket and reaches for a cigarette.

Just as he strikes his lighter—
The auditorium doors BURST OPEN.
Terrified students spill into the parking lot.

JACKSON

Goddamn!

The cigarette tumbles from his lips.

EXT. AUDITORIUM PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Jackson charges toward the building.

A boy and girl come tearing around the corner, nearly colliding with him.

Jackson's hand flies toward his holster.

He catches himself.

JACKSON

Hey! What the hell is goin' on?!

The girl doesn't stop.

GIRL

(screaming) HE FUCKIN' KILLED HIM!!

Jackson looks toward the open doors.

More screams.

He runs.

INT. RANSOM HIGH AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Jackson pushes through the rear entrance.

ALBERTO "BETO" REYES, 18, an athletic Ransom High football player and friend of Cowboy, stands near the exit.

Motionless.

His eyes remain fixed on what is left of the boy he knew as P'Jo.

He doesn't scream. Doesn't move. Doesn't seem to breathe.

His eyes widen. The words barely escape his lips.

BETO

(stunned, barely above a whisper) He shot him... Cowboy shot P'Jo.

SHERIFF JACKSON DANIELS rushes past him.

Beto barely registers his presence.

The world around him has erupted into chaos.

But Beto remains exactly where he stands.

Staring.

Jackson stops.

COWBOY stands in the middle of the dance floor.

Black, unnatural blood covers his tuxedo.

At his boots lies what remains of P'JO.

For one impossible second, Jackson cannot reconcile the boy he knows with the sight before him.

Then the crowd sees the open exit.

Panic erupts.

Students and townspeople stampede toward Jackson.

He presses against the wall, trying to stay upright.

An elbow catches him across the face.

He goes down hard.

The crowd surges over and around him.

INT. AUDITORIUM - COWBOY - CONTINUOUS

Cowboy hasn't moved.

His eyes remain fixed on the body.

He wipes his face with the cleanest part of his sleeve.

Then he reaches inside his jacket.

A cheap box of matches.

He strikes one.

For a heartbeat, the little flame illuminates his face.

COWBOY

Let the fires of hell consume this
demon. Let his forsaken life be no
more.

He drops the match.

The body ignites with unnatural speed.

Fire catches the edge of a nearby paper tablecloth.

Then another.

Smoke climbs toward the ceiling.

INT. AUDITORIUM - JACKSON - CONTINUOUS

Jackson struggles to his feet.

The room is disappearing behind smoke and frantic bodies.

JACKSON

What in the voodoo, hew-doo, who-da-fuck hell is goin' on?!

He stares at the flames.

JACKSON

I MEAN WHAT THE FUCKIN' HELL IS GOIN' ON?!?!

Something catches his eye.

His Stetson.

Lying halfway across the floor.

JACKSON

(under his breath) Son of a bitch.

He waits for a break in the fleeing crowd, snatches up his hat, and pushes toward the bleachers.

Smoke swallows him.

INT. AUDITORIUM - COWBOY - CONTINUOUS

The smoke thickens.

Cowboy coughs, struggling to draw breath.

He turns toward the exit.

Then stops.

Through the haze—

A silhouette.

A young woman standing perfectly still amid the fire.

The flames move around her.

She does not move away.

Cowboy knows that silhouette.

LEXI.

INT. RANSOM HIGH AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Smoke rolls across the dance floor.

Through it stands LEXI DANIELS, late teens.

Long dark hair cascades around her petite frame. Her pale-peach skin seems almost luminous in the firelight. Icy green eyes.

Beautiful.

And terribly wrong.

Flames lick at the decorations around her.

Lexi watches Cowboy.

Her movements are slow, fluid. Almost graceful enough to make him forget the horror surrounding them.

Almost.

A fresh wave of pain strikes behind Cowboy's eyes.

He staggers, catching himself against a table.

His stomach twists.

He looks at her again.

COWBOY

Lexi, girl... I know there's gotta be
some kinda good left.

He raises his weapon.

His hand trembles.

He cannot make himself pull the trigger.

A GUNSHOT cracks through the auditorium.

Glass shatters overhead.

Cowboy flinches as fragments and sparks rain down.

His enhanced vision fractures into painful flashes.

When he can see again—

Lexi is beside him.

Too close.

Her fingertips brush his cheek.

Cowboy goes rigid.

Not fear.

Something has taken hold of his body.

Lexi studies him with the affectionate curiosity of a lover.

For one fleeting instant, something familiar flickers behind

her eyes.

The girl he knows.

Then it's gone.

LEXI

(whispering) Why my love... Oh, my lovely. I can hear the blood coursing through your veins.

She leans closer.

LEXI

Your heartbeat. It is almost as if it was a rhythm made just for me.

She guides his face toward hers.

A gentle kiss.

For one impossible second, it feels like Lexi.

Then—

PAIN.

Cowboy tries to pull away.

He can't.

Lexi withdraws.

Blood glistens on her lips.

The faintest suggestion of fangs.

She has bitten him.

His blood runs down his chin.

LEXI

Your blood tasted better than
expected, sweetie.

Cowboy fights against the invisible hold.

His fingers twitch.

Nothing more.

Lexi catches his jaw in the same hand that caressed him.

LEXI

Now hear me, know and hold my words
true.

While this time may not be your time,
you will without a doubt die.

She smiles.

LEXI

I will enjoy every moment of taking
the last bit of lifeblood.

No matter how special that blood may
be.

No matter the spirit, wilted warrior.

She circles him slowly.

LEXI

I will not let a mere human force me
to feel conquered again.

Too many years in prisons. Bowels of
Hell, for Christ's sake!

Her smile fades.

Something ancient looks out through Lexi's eyes.

LEXI

Honey, you're handsome, but you're not
freedom.

So when I finally call upon you to be
deemed earnest...

She leans toward his ear.

LEXI

Just remember to keep that rhythm.

Cowboy's thumb moves.

Then his index finger.

He looks down.

The pressure releases.

He spins toward her—

She's gone.

Across the smoke-filled room, a fleeting movement.

Then nothing.

Cowboy drops to one knee, coughing.

The fire is spreading.

He wipes the blood from his mouth.

COWBOY

(shouting) You damn... demon bitch!

A sudden impact—

SHERIFF JACKSON DANIELS slams into him.

Both men crash to the dance floor.

Jackson jams his gun against Cowboy's ribs, wrenching his right arm behind his back.

Cowboy cries out as his injured shoulder gives.

The handcuffs SNAP shut.

Jackson rolls off him, gasping for breath.

JACKSON

That outta cool your ass... You looney
toon sum bitch.

Cowboy stares into the smoke.

Lexi is gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST TEXAS COUNTRYSIDE - SUMMER EVENING
MEMORY.

The last golden light of summer stretches across the Texas countryside.

An old pickup sits beneath a wide, endless sky.

In the truck bed, COWBOY and LEXI lie together beneath a blanket.

Her head rests against his chest.

He watches her.

LEXI

Dang it, you never let me sleep.

COWBOY

Can't help it, beautiful. Your baby snores are just so cute.

Besides, why are you sleeping the day away?

LEXI

Just tired. You tired me out.

And, for the record, I do not snore.

COWBOY

Umm... yeah ya do.

And it's adorable.

LEXI

Shut up, get over here and wrap me in those big strong arms. It's chilly.

COWBOY

Only because we're naked.

LEXI

Thank you, Captain Obvious. Now do as I say.

COWBOY

Yes, ma'am.

He pulls her closer.

LEXI

Mmm. That's nice.

COWBOY

Agreed, darlin'.

A quiet moment.

Cowboy looks toward the horizon.

COWBOY

Can you believe it? We made it. Our last year.

We just gotta get through this year, and then we can go anywhere we want, baby girl.

LEXI

Mm-hmm.

COWBOY

Don't you go back to sleep.

LEXI

I'm not. I promise. Jeez, cranky.

Continue. I'm listening. Future plans.

COWBOY

I'll get a full ride to the school of our choice. Then the world's ours.

LEXI

Sounds like you've got it all figured out.

COWBOY

Don't I always?

LEXI

I beg to differ... but continue. I'm curious to see where this future of ours goes.

COWBOY

I play college ball. Win the Heisman. First-round draft pick.

We are set for life. Easy peasy.

LEXI

And what am I doing during all this?

Cowboy looks at her.

COWBOY

Whatever you want, baby girl.

As long as we're together, I'm good.

A noise interrupts them.

COWBOY

Was that your stomach?

LEXI

Maybe.

What do you expect? You bring me to
the middle of nowhere. Ravish me.
Provide no sustenance.

COWBOY

For shame. For shame.

I guess we better get back. Gotta feed
my girl.

HEADLIGHTS appear in the distance.

An approaching vehicle rattles across the dirt.

Cowboy raises his head.

COWBOY

Oh, you've gotta be shittin' me.

P'JO, J.R., and BLUE emerge from the vehicle.

P'JO

Get dressed, heathens! The party has
arrived.

COWBOY

Damn it. How the fuck did you find us?

P'JO

You are nothing if not a creature of
habit, brother.

Now get dressed. We're
having a cookout.

BLUE

Bonfire too. Let's do the damn thing.

J.R.

I told these two to leave y'all be.

But you know they never listen to me.
Sorry, man.

COWBOY

It's cool, bro. Don't apologize for
these knuckleheads.

Lexi was starting to get hungry
anyway. Perfect timing.

P'JO
Isn't my timing always perfect?

COWBOY
If you say so...

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - LATER

The boys unload food and supplies.

Cowboy tends to the grill.

BLUE
Who's cookin'? We got burgers, brats,
and beer.

COWBOY
On it.

BLUE
Glad to see you're finally decent. I
see enough of your ass in the locker
room.

COWBOY
Why are you lookin'?

BLUE
Don't flatter yourself. I like my men
with a bit more meat on their bones.

P'Jo turns toward Lexi with an exaggerated bow.

P'JO
My lady. Looking as lovely as ever.

LEXI
Always the Southern gentleman, Mr.
Stanford.

P'JO
For you, yes.

COWBOY
Watch it, man.

P'JO
Please. We both know I don't stand a
chance with you in the picture.

But glad to see I can still get under
your skin.

COWBOY

Sun's going down. Gonna get cold
quick.

Y'all start the fire. I'll get the
food goin'.

P'JO

Yes, sir, Captain.

COWBOY

Glad to see you aren't at all salty
about me getting captain.

P'JO

Never. It's my year.

Finally gonna grab that crown from
you.

Prom king, here I come. Already
started my campaign.

LEXI

I didn't know sleeping your way
through every available female was a
viable campaign method.

P'JO

You wound me.

And it hasn't been every available
female.

Some were wholly unavailable.

Shhh. It's really just the ones that fall for this smile.

LEXI

Oh, okay. Then two-thirds
of the female population.

P'JO

More like three-fourths.

LEXI

Paul Joseph Stanford, you are
unbelievable.

Is there a single bone in your body
with a standard?

COWBOY

P'JO, I'm warning you.

Don't you dare answer that.

Their laughter carries across the countryside.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

A bonfire crackles beneath the Texas stars.

Lexi, P'Jo, J.R., and Blue sit together, eating.

Cowboy stands at the grill.

For a moment, he simply watches them.

His girl.

His brothers.

His whole damn world, gathered around a fire.

The laughter softens.

The flames shift.

Their shadows stretch across the ground.

Something about them is wrong.

Cowboy blinks.

Across the fire, his friends become silhouettes.

The darkness seems to swallow their faces.

DEMON VOICES (V.O.)

(overlapping) We are coming for you,
warrior.

Cowboy stiffens.

The fire POPS.

The familiar sounds of the summer night return.

But Cowboy keeps watching the place where his friends were.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Cowboy jolts awake in the back seat.

His wrists are cuffed behind him.

Beyond the windows, Ransom passes in streaks of streetlight and darkness.

Jackson watches him in the rearview mirror.

JACKSON
Rise and shine, cupcake.

Cowboy raises his head.

For a moment, he looks disoriented.

Then he remembers.

COWBOY
Fuck you, old man.

JACKSON
Not the one that's fucked, kid.

COWBOY
I beg to differ, ya ol' bastard.

JACKSON
How you reckon that? I'm not the one
in the back of the car.
An' watch your mouth.

COWBOY
Yeah, but you should be.

Jackson's eyes return to the mirror.

JACKSON
What the fuck is that supposed to
mean?

Cowboy looks away.

COWBOY
Not a shit fuckin' thing.

JACKSON
And crazy as a shithouse rat to boot.

Cowboy leans forward against the restraints.

COWBOY
How 'bout you uncuff me and I show you
crazy.

JACKSON
You want another go? After what you
did, I might oblige you.

COWBOY
You got lucky.

JACKSON
Whatever you need to
tell yourself.

Cowboy drives his boot into the back of Jackson's seat.
Jackson grips the steering wheel.

JACKSON
BOY! You better calm down.
Kick my fuckin' seat one more time,
see where it gets ya.

COWBOY
Empty threats from a piece of shit.

JACKSON
You're seriously cruisin' for an ass-
whoppin', boy.
Show some respect.

Cowboy's anger finally breaks through.

COWBOY
Bring it, old man.
You lost my respect when you cost me
my family.

Jackson's expression changes.

JACKSON
What the fuck are you yappin' about?
You ain't makin' no sense.

Cowboy sits back.

His jaw tightens.

COWBOY
Convo's over. SHERIFF!
Jackson watches him in the mirror.

For the first time, his anger gives way to concern.

JACKSON
Son, I can't help you if you don't
talk to me.

COWBOY

Help?

That's rich comin' from you.

JACKSON

Damn it, you're one stubborn sum
bitch.

I don't know how Lexi puts up with
you.

Cowboy snaps forward.

COWBOY

Don't.

Jackson looks back.

COWBOY

Don't fuckin' say her name.

You lost that right.

JACKSON

What?

I'll say my daughter's name any time I
damn well please.

Cowboy turns toward the window.

The town is almost asleep.

Normal.

As if nothing has happened.

JACKSON

I hope you're plannin' on utilizing an
insanity plea.

Damn sure seems like you won't have
any problems pullin' it off.

Cowboy gives a bitter scoff.

COWBOY

I won't make it that far.

None of us will at the rate I'm goin'.

Jackson studies him.

JACKSON

What the hell does that mean?

Cowboy sees the police station ahead.

COWBOY

Nuthin', old man. Nuthin' at all.

Oh, look. There's the station.

Finally, this conversation can be over.

Jackson turns into the station lot.

Cowboy stares through the windshield.

Something in his expression changes.

Not relief.

Recognition.

CUT TO:

EXT. RANSOM POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Jackson pulls open the patrol car's rear door.

Cowboy climbs out, hands cuffed behind his back.

He stops.

Across the parking lot stands LEXI.

Her long dark hair moves in the warm night breeze.

No blood on her lips. No trace of the fire.

Just Jackson's little girl, standing beneath a streetlight.

LEXI

Daddy...

Jackson turns.

JACKSON

Shit, LEXI? You startled me.

Where'd you come from and what are you doin' here?

Lexi approaches.

LEXI

Please let him go, Daddy.

JACKSON

LEXI, you know I can't do that.

Now go on home. We'll talk about this when I get there.

LEXI

But...

JACKSON

No arguments, suga. Go on and get.

LEXI

I at least need to say a proper goodbye.

JACKSON

No, darlin'—

Lexi looks directly at him.

The warmth vanishes from her face.

LEXI

I wasn't asking, human.

Jackson reaches for his weapon.

His hand stops halfway there.

His body locks.

His knees buckle.

He collapses against the patrol car.

COWBOY

SHIT... Daniels, you okay?

LEXI

He'll be fine for now.

Cowboy turns on her.

COWBOY

What the fuck do you want now? This is getting old, demon.

LEXI

Ahhh... no more begging for your human's life?

COWBOY

What do you want?

Lexi studies the handcuffs.

LEXI

I want to know why you are going along with the charade of letting this human...

What do you call them? Ah, yes, lawman... "arrest" you.

We both know you could break those manacles and overpower that human.

COWBOY

Now what kind of chess game would this be if I gave away my next moves?

That is what your kind enjoys most, right?

The game.

LEXI

That's where you are wrong, Warrior.

We enjoy the kill most.

COWBOY

Then do it. Or try to.

But stop wasting my time.

Either tell me where the others are, or get on with it.

LEXI

Typical human. Loves the rush.

Doesn't have the patience to savor the anticipation.

COWBOY

Not this again.

For a creature that claims to love the kill, you sure enjoy toying with your prey.

Lexi smiles.

Cowboy takes a step toward her.

COWBOY

Look, demon, I know LEXI is still in there.

I can sense it.

Your mind... it's different from the others.

LEXI

Humans... so predictable and irritating.

Grasping at hope like a youngling.

COWBOY

I know she's still in there somewhere.

Fight against it, Lexi.

I'm going to save you.

If it's the last thing I do.

For a moment, Lexi's smile falters.

Her eyes search his.

LEXI

(barely audible) Cowboy...

He stops breathing.

COWBOY

Baby?

Her expression softens.

LEXI

Oh, Cowboy. I'm here.

I'm fighting.

Save me, please...

Cowboy moves toward her.

The handcuffs bite into his wrists.

Lexi's face twists into delight.

LEXI

HA... HA... HA!

Oh, your face.

Priceless.

Cowboy recoils.

COWBOY

Fucking demon bitch.

Let her go.

LEXI

But I'm quite fond of this shell.

COWBOY

Drop whatever hold you have on me and
I'll

exorcise you from her myself.

LEXI

Tsk, tsk...

Another human trait. Lies.

We both know you will do no such
thing.

COWBOY

Let me go and find out if I'm lying.

Lexi steps closer.

LEXI

Do not threaten me, Warrior.

COWBOY

Ouch. Did I strike a nerve?

Aren't you supposed to be above human
emotions like anger?

LEXI

That was not anger.

COWBOY

Right...

Just do us both a favor. Shut up.

Put me out of my misery or fuck off.

LEXI

Now who is angry, lover?

She glances at Jackson, still helpless beside the car.

LEXI

I have no plans of killing you... yet.

Much to do before I take that
pleasure.

Cowboy looks toward Jackson.

COWBOY

SHERIFF!

YO, DANIELS!

Jackson gasps.

His hand strikes the pavement as he struggles to rise.

Lexi is gone.

JACKSON

WHA... What happened?

Cowboy looks at the empty parking lot.

COWBOY

Get up and book me.

I'm already way behind schedule.

Jackson stares at him.

Cowboy turns toward the station entrance.

CUT TO:

INT. RANSOM POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The station's fluorescent lights HUM overhead.

SHERIFF JACKSON DANIELS escorts COWBOY through the door.

Cowboy looks pale. Sweat beads along his hairline.

Behind the booking desk stands DEPUTY JOHNSON, early twenties.

Johnson takes one look at Cowboy and grins.

JOHNSON

Well, well, well. If I wasn't
witnessing this with my own two eyes,
I don't think I would believe it.

COWBOY

Fuck my life...

Johnson, always such a pleasure.

JOHNSON

You fucked it up pretty good all on
your own, Cowboy.

Didn't need no help from me.

Cowboy turns toward Jackson.

COWBOY

Daniels, we done?

I'm ready to go to a cell. I'm
suddenly feeling like I might be sick.

JACKSON

Oh, it's Daniels now that you want
something?

Johnson, escort the prisoner to a
cell.

JOHNSON

Gladly, boss.

INT. RANSOM JAIL - CELL BLOCK - NIGHT

Johnson leads Cowboy down the narrow corridor.

Keys JANGLE against his belt.

JOHNSON

I been hopin' this day would come
since your cocky ass started acting
like your shit don't stink.

COWBOY

That so?

Didn't know you thought about me that
much.

JOHNSON

I don't.

Just knew this day would come.

Trash stays trash.

Luck had to run out sometime.

Johnson unlocks a cell.

Cowboy walks inside without resisting.

The door CLANGS shut.

From the neighboring cell—

PUDGE (O.S.)

Oh, hey, Cowboy!

PUDGE, late fifties or early sixties, the town drunk, peers through the bars.

PUDGE

Whatcha do to end up here?

Too much partying after the dance?

Johnson laughs.

JOHNSON

Naw, Pudge.

Cowboy here killed P'Jo in cold blood.

You're bunkin' next to a bona fide murderer.

Pudge's smile disappears.

PUDGE

That's not a funny joke.

I told you 'bout them cruel jokes.

JOHNSON

No joke.

Pudge looks at Cowboy.

PUDGE

Is that true, Cowboy?

You kill P'Jo?

Cowboy doesn't answer.

JOHNSON

He sure did.

PUDGE

Why would ya do something like that?

JOHNSON

That's the million-dollar question on everyone's mind.

My guess is P'Jo finally got a piece of that pretty lil thing Lexi.

Cowboy lunges toward the bars.

COWBOY

Shut your fuckin' mouth, Johnson, or I'll shut it for you.

Johnson doesn't flinch.

JOHNSON

Tough words comin' from a punk with
bars separatin' us.

COWBOY

Why don't you come on in here then,
mutha fucka?

Quit your yappin' and put your money
where your mouth is.

JOHNSON

Naw, you ain't worth it.

Watchin' you suffer and knowin' what's
comin' is satisfaction enough for me.

Johnson turns to Pudge.

JOHNSON

If I were you, Pudge, I'd keep to
myself.

This un here is dangerous.

Don't be hollerin' for me.

I got my stories to watch.

Johnson walks away.

His keys JANGLE down the corridor.

A door closes.

Silence.

Cowboy grips the bars.

His anger drains away.

COWBOY

(under his breath) Come on, Joseph.

You should have done been here.

PUDGE

You talkin' to me?

COWBOY

Nah, Pudge.

Just talkin' to myself.

PUDGE
You do that a lot?

COWBOY
These days...
More than I'd like to.

Cowboy turns toward him.

COWBOY
Pudge... look at me.
You know I would never hurt you,
right?
Johnson was just being an asshole.

PUDGE
Yeah, he's an asshole.

A pause.

PUDGE
But... is it true?
Did you kill P'Jo?

Cowboy looks at him.

COWBOY
Yes.

Pudge struggles to understand.

PUDGE
Why?
Y'all were thick as thieves.

Cowboy opens his mouth.

Nothing comes.

He lowers his eyes.

Outside, distant voices begin to gather.

CUT TO:

EXT. RANSOM POLICE STATION - NIGHT

A crowd has gathered beneath the station lights.

Neighbors. Parents. People who watched Cowboy grow up.

Angry voices overlap.

RESIDENT
We want answers!

RESIDENT 2
Bring him out!

SHERIFF JACKSON DANIELS steps through the station doors.
He takes in the crowd.

JACKSON
Alright, people, calm down.
I need y'all to go on home and let me
do my job.

RESIDENT
No! We want to see justice.
The Texas way!

RESIDENT 2
Yeah! Bring that sum bitch out here!
Jackson plants himself on the steps.

JACKSON
NO!
Y'all go on home.
I promise there will be justice.
But it'll be done through the courts.
The right way.
A man pushes forward.

RESIDENT
P'Jo didn't get justice the right way.
No sir, he did not.
He was killed in cold blood.
Now bring him out!

RESIDENT 2
THAT'S RIGHT!
EYE FOR AN EYE!
BRING HIM OUT!

CROWD
BRING HIM OUT! BRING HIM OUT!

The chant grows.

Jackson looks across the faces.

Some of these people have known him his entire life.

Tonight, they don't look like neighbors.

JACKSON
(under his breath) Got damn fools.
Son of a bitch.

He keys his radio.

JACKSON
LORETTA, get on the horn and get the
troopers out here.

LORETTA (V.O.)
(over radio) Already on it.

Jackson steps forward.

JACKSON
TROOPERS ARE COMING!

I SUGGEST IF YOU DON'T
WANT TO END UP IN COUNTY LOCKUP, Y'ALL
GET ON OUT OF HERE!

The crowd murmurs.

A few people retreat.

Others remain.

Then—

SIRENS in the distance.

The chant falters.

Reluctantly, the crowd begins to disperse.

Jackson watches them go.

He doesn't look relieved.

CUT TO:

INT. RANSOM JAIL - CELL BLOCK - NIGHT

Cowboy sits on the edge of his bunk.

Pudge listens to the commotion outside.

The sirens grow louder.

Cowboy suddenly lifts his head.

Something has changed.

COWBOY
Something's coming...

PUDGE
I hear the crowd and the sirens.

Cowboy stands.

His attention is fixed on the far end of the corridor.

COWBOY
No, Pudge.
Something else...

PUDGE
Else?
Whatcha mean, else?

A familiar voice answers from the darkness.

BLUE (O.S.)
He means me.

BLUE steps into the fluorescent light.

The same boy who laughed around the bonfire that summer.

Cowboy moves immediately toward the bars.

COWBOY
Step away from the bars, Pudge.
Back as far away from Blue as you can.

Blue smiles.

BLUE
Now, that ain't nice.
Makin' old Pudge here scared of me.

COWBOY
Pudge, back up.
Damn it.

Blue looks toward Pudge.

His smile doesn't change.

CUT TO:

INT. RANSOM JAIL - CELL BLOCK - NIGHT

BLUE stands outside Pudge's cell.

Cowboy grips the bars of his own.

BLUE

Don't listen to him, Pudge.

Haven't you heard?

Cowboy here is plum crazy. A real
killer.

COWBOY

Pudge, get away from him.

Blue ignores Cowboy.

BLUE

I thought I'd come by and offer you a
ride home.

Seein' as you spend most nights here.

Pudge looks between the two boys.

PUDGE

Blue, what are you doin' down here?

BLUE

Done been by to see your wife and
kids.

Pudge goes still.

BLUE

They were real anxious for you to get
home.

But kind enough to offer dinner before
I headed this way.

COWBOY

BLUE!

Blue turns his head slightly.

Smiles.

BLUE

Real nice family you got there, Pudge.
Nice.

Accommodating.

Helpless...

Blue moves closer to Pudge.

BLUE

Juicy.

PUDGE

Wha... what?

Before he can finish—

BLUE RIPS OUT PUDGE'S THROAT.

Pudge collapses.

For a moment, Cowboy doesn't move.

The image is horribly familiar.

P'Jo.

The auditorium.

Blood on the floor.

Now Pudge.

COWBOY

Got damn it, Pudge...

Got fucking damn it...

Blue sneers at him.

BLUE

What's a matter, Warrior?

Never seen a throat ripped out?

Blue spits.

Wipes his mouth on his jacket sleeve.

BLUE

Yuck. Fucker tasted awful.

What is it with some humans? Ruining
perfectly acceptable vessels?

A complete waste of good meat.

Cowboy's hands tighten around the bars.

COWBOY

I'm going to fuckin' kill you, demon.
END YOUR ENTIRE SPECIES!

BLUE

Ah, threats...

Heard it all before, Warrior.

A thousand years of evolution, and yet
the most trivial instincts stay the
same.

If you manage to kill this vessel, I
will just return.

You know this.

Yet you still have hope.

I have never understood human
optimism.

COWBOY

Jesus, you fuckers love to talk.

BLUE

Conversation is one of the few worthy
human traits.

Lust. Carnal cravings.

They are the others.

But conversation...

It is one of my favorites.

Heightens the game.

Cowboy moves closer to the bars.

COWBOY

Well, then why don't you mosey on over
here and let me whisper in your ear?

BLUE

Tsk... tsk... tsk...

If I could, I would.

COWBOY

Why can't you?

I took out the dark prince.

No one giving you orders
until he returns...
If he returns.

For the first time, Blue's smile doesn't quite reach his eyes.

BLUE
There's that optimism.
I'll be seeing you, Warrior.
Sooner than you think.

Blue turns and walks away.

Cowboy watches him disappear into the corridor.

INT. RANSOM JAIL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS
Blue slips through the lingering chaos unnoticed.

INT. RANSOM JAIL - CELL BLOCK - CONTINUOUS
Cowboy stands alone.

Pudge lies motionless in the neighboring cell.

Cowboy stares at him.

COWBOY
(quietly) I'm sorry, Pudge.
He looks toward the corridor
where Blue disappeared.
The waiting is over.
Cowboy grips the bars.
Metal GROANS.
He pulls.
The bars bend outward.
With one final wrench, the cell gives way.
Cowboy steps into the corridor.
He approaches Pudge's cell.
There is nothing he can do.

COWBOY
Fuck waiting on Joseph.

New plan.

Cowboy turns and heads toward the lobby.

CUT TO:

INT. RANSOM POLICE STATION - LOBBY - NIGHT

The crowd outside has finally dispersed.

SHERIFF JACKSON DANIELS pushes through the lobby doors.

He stops.

PAUL JOSEPH STANFORD SR. — BOSS —

stands between him and the cell block.

A powerful man in his fifties.

Tonight, grief has stripped every bit of authority from his face.

BOSS
GET OUT OF MY WAY, JACKSON.
I'M GOING TO KILL THAT
UNGRATEFUL PIECE OF SHIT MYSELF.

Jackson moves in front of him.

JACKSON
CALM DOWN.
You know I can't let
you do that.
Let me do my job, Boss.
We'll get justice the right way.

BOSS
He killed my boy.

Jackson has no answer for that.

BOSS
There is no justice.
There's only vengeance.
GET THE FUCK OUTTA MY WAY!

Boss tries to push past him.

Jackson holds his ground.

JACKSON
DAMN IT, BOSS!

You're not going back there.

Boss suddenly grips his chest.

His breath catches.

JACKSON
Boss?

Hey. Look at me.

Boss staggers.

Jackson catches him before he falls.

JACKSON
Shit.

LORETTA! CALL EMS!

He lowers Boss to the floor.

JACKSON
You're gonna be okay.

Just breathe.

Stay with me.

Boss clutches Jackson's sleeve.

BOSS
He took my boy.
My legacy.
Nothin' will ever be okay again.

His grip loosens.

JACKSON
Boss?
BOSS!

Jackson checks for a response.

Nothing.

JACKSON
DAMN IT!

He begins CPR.

JACKSON
Come on, you stubborn son of a bitch.
Stay with me.

He continues compressions.

JACKSON
LORETTA!
WHERE THE HELL
IS THAT AMBULANCE?

No answer.

Jackson looks toward the dispatch desk.

A pair of feet is visible behind the counter.

Motionless.

JACKSON
Loretta?
The overhead lights FLICKER.
A siren grows louder outside.
Jackson keeps working on Boss.

JACKSON
LORETTA!
DON'T YOU HEAR ME?
HELP ME!
The dispatch radio CRACKLES.
A familiar young voice comes through.

J.R. (V.O.)
Almost there, Sheriff...
Keep that fat old bastard warm for me.
I don't like my meat cold.
Jackson stares at the radio.

JACKSON
What the fuck?
COWBOY (O.S.)
Time to go, Daniels.

Jackson spins.

COWBOY stands in the lobby.

No handcuffs.

No deputy escorting him.

JACKSON

Cowboy...

How the—

What the fuck are you doing out?

COWBOY

I said, time to go.

JACKSON

I'm not goin' anywhere with you.

Get your ass back in that cell.

I'll deal with you later.

A terrible CRASH from outside.

Jackson turns.

THROUGH THE FRONT WINDOWS—

An ambulance has jumped the station steps.

Its lights wash the lobby red.

J.R. climbs out from behind the wheel.

BLUE appears beside him.

Both boys look toward the station.

They smile.

Then their mouths change.

Fangs.

Jackson takes an involuntary step back.

JACKSON

WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT?

COWBOY

My worst got damn nightmare.

Now, are you stayin' or goin'?

Jackson looks down at Boss.

Then toward Loretta's desk.

Then at the two figures approaching the station.

JACKSON
I can't just leave—

COWBOY
You stay, you die.
And you ain't helping either one of
'em dead.

A beat.

JACKSON
Goin'.

COWBOY
Good choice.
Another way outta here?

Jackson nods toward the rear hallway.

JACKSON
Yeah.
Follow me.

COWBOY
Lead the way.
Preferably quickly.

Jackson takes one last look at Boss.

Then he and Cowboy hurry toward the rear exit.

CUT TO:

EXT. RANSOM POLICE STATION - REAR - NIGHT

The rear door opens a fraction.

SHERIFF JACKSON DANIELS peers out.

Darkness.

He steps into the alley behind the station.

COWBOY follows.

They move along the building, keeping low beneath the
windows.

Jackson's patrol cruiser waits at the far end of the lot.

COWBOY

You better have the fuckin' keys.

JACKSON

No shit, Sherlock. I got 'em.

COWBOY

Well, open the damn doors.

Jackson unlocks the cruiser.

Cowboy reaches for the front passenger door.

Jackson blocks him.

COWBOY

You're out your got damn mind if you think I'm sitting in the back.

JACKSON

And we have already established you're out your got damn mind.

I don't know what kind of unholy fuckery is happening, but if you want to ride with this hoss, you're gonna ride in the back.

So you ridin' or dyin'?

Cowboy looks toward the station.

The front entrance is just around the corner.

COWBOY

Fine. Fuck it.

You stubborn old bastard.

He climbs into the back.

Jackson gets behind the wheel.

The engine ROARS to life.

EXT. RANSOM POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

J.R. and BLUE round the corner

as the cruiser pulls away.

Blue lunges forward.

The cruiser fishtails, then tears onto the road.

For a moment, Blue looks ready to follow.

BLUE
We should go after them.
I want a chase.

J.R.
NO!

Blue stops.

BLUE
But—
J.R. grabs Blue by the throat and pulls him close.

J.R.
I said no.
There's a plan.
We failed once before.
I will not fail again and have to wait
a thousand years for retribution just
because you have no patience.

Blue's smile disappears.

J.R. releases him.

J.R.
Now get up.
I'm hungry.

Blue straightens his jacket.

He looks down the empty road.

The cruiser is gone.

He turns back toward the station.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S PATROL CRUISER - MOVING - NIGHT

Jackson grips the wheel.

His eyes dart between the road and the rearview mirror.

Cowboy sits behind the divider.

Neither speaks.

Not yet.

COWBOY

For the record, old man...

I ain't crazy.

Jackson catches his eyes in the mirror.

COWBOY

And if I wanted to be in the front
seat, I would be.

This metal grate between us is child's
play.

JACKSON

That right, kid?

You a superhero now?

Cowboy reaches forward.

His fingers close around the metal divider.

COWBOY

Somethin' like that, old man.

The metal begins to BEND.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S PATROL CRUISER - MOVING - NIGHT

The metal divider GROANS.

COWBOY pulls.

With a violent wrench, the entire grate tears loose from
its mounts.

JACKSON jerks the steering wheel.

The cruiser swerves across the road.

JACKSON

WHAT THE FUCK?!

He fights the wheel.

The cruiser rights itself.

Cowboy leans forward through the opening.

COWBOY

Somethin' like that, old man.

Jackson glances at the twisted metal.

Then at Cowboy.

COWBOY

Might as well get used to sayin' that.

It's gonna be your mantra for the rest
of the night.

Hell, probably the rest of your life,
if you make it through the night.

JACKSON

Are you threatenin' me?

Cowboy sits back.

He folds the torn metal inward.

Again.

Again.

Until the divider is a crumpled mass in his hands.

COWBOY

Nope.

Statin' a fact.

Jackson stares into the rearview mirror.

JACKSON

It would be real got damn nice if you
would stop talkin' in ominous riddles
and just tell me what

the fuck is goin' on.

Cowboy looks out at the dark West Texas highway.

COWBOY

Well, let's see...

Where to begin?

Should I start with what the hell
we're dealin' with?

Or why the hell I'm no longer human?

Maybe I tell you why your ass is still alive.

Because Lord knows, at this point, you're at the top of my
shit list.

Jackson's eyes find him in the mirror.

JACKSON

What do you mean, no longer human?

COWBOY

Like I said.

Gonna be the mantra of the night.

JACKSON

Just get to the got damn point, boy.

Cowboy leans forward.

COWBOY

I'll tell what I want to tell, how I
damn well want to tell it.

JACKSON

Why are you so got damn mad at me?

Cowboy stares at him.

The question seems almost impossible to comprehend.

COWBOY

Mad?

No, I'm not mad.

I'm fuckin' furious.

And if I didn't need you alive, I'd
have left you for demon bait.

Jackson looks toward the road.

His knuckles whiten around the steering wheel.

JACKSON

Demon bait?

What the hell are you talkin' about?

COWBOY

Don't even start.

Just listen.

JACKSON

Your attitude needs to be checked.

Cowboy laughs once.

There is no humor in it.

COWBOY

CHECKED?

HELL NO.

My attitude is wholly justifiable.

JACKSON

If you'd stop talkin' in riddles and explain something, maybe I'd cut you some slack.

Cowboy looks at the metal in his hands.

COWBOY

Oh, well, excuse me.

Alright then.

How 'bout this FOR STARTERS...

He leans forward.

COWBOY

Let's talk about the fuckin' fact that you had a hand in startin' the apocalypse.

Jackson turns toward him.

JACKSON

I did WHAT?!

Cowboy pulls a jagged piece of metal from the wreckage.

COWBOY

Eyes on the road, Sheriff.

Jackson faces forward.

Cowboy opens his hand.

He presses the sharp metal against his palm.

And pulls.

A deep cut opens.

Jackson watches in the mirror.

There is no blood.

Instead—

Fine, pale DUST spills from the wound.

Like sand falling
through an hourglass.
The wound closes.
The skin becomes whole.
Jackson's face drains of color.
He can barely speak.

JACKSON

Jesus Christ...

Cowboy lets the remaining dust fall from his palm.

COWBOY

And because of you...

I'm not human anymore.

Jackson looks at Cowboy's hand.

Then back at the road.

He says nothing.

For once, he has no profanity, no argument, no explanation.

Cowboy sits back.

The jagged piece of metal rests between his fingers.

Outside, the highway stretches into the West Texas
darkness.

COWBOY

We come from dust...

And return to dust.

A long silence.

Jackson's eyes find Cowboy in the mirror.

COWBOY

Head toward the res.

You keep drivin'...

I'll keep talkin'.

Jackson looks toward the highway ahead.

He keeps driving.

FADE TO BLACK.