

BLACK LUNG

written by

Marshall Knight

TEASER

A PIPE ORGAN plays OVER BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. UMBERLAND COUNTY - DAY

Coal country. Rugged Appalachian hills overgrown with birch, white ash and blackgum. A rare winding road leads to:

EXT. CROSS CORNERS - DAY

A HAMLET. Cottages speckle the hills and line the road. A flat, busy CHURCH building in need of overflow parking.

A sign reads: "4:30 1st Communion"

INT. CROSS CORNERS CHURCH - DAY

A dozen CHILDREN kneel at the front of the packed church, dressed in their ill-fitting finest. Among them is a pale, skinny thing called LAUREL BLACK (9).

A PREACHER (30s) gives each child the SACRAMENT:

PREACHER

Christ be with you... Christ be
with you... Christ be with you...

Laurel's brother, ROMAN BLACK (14), ugly and overweight, watches, flanked by their parents. He fidgets, bored.

Down the pew, he spots a girl, SANDRA (14), but looks away so as not to betray his infatuation with his only friend.

The congregation APPLAUDS as the Preacher sets a Christ wafer on the last outstretched tongue. Laurel turns and smiles.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

Now, if you'll join me in singing
number sixty-five.

A rustling of pages.

Roman reaches into the back of the pew, DISCOVERING A STRANGE BOOK behind his HYMNAL.

As the congregation sings "Keep Your Lamp Trimmed and Burning," Roman flips through the ancient text. His eyes light up with excitement.

He looks at Sandra again, catching her eye this time.

SANDRA
(silent)
What?

Roman smiles mischievously at her.

EXT. CHURCH GROUNDS - LATE AFTERNOON

Laurel runs through the grassy picnic area with SPARKLERS trailing smoke behind her, chased by other fresh Christians.

Adults and teenagers swill beer, laughing, fingers sticky with glistening pot luck barbecue.

BENEATH A PICNIC TABLE

Roman and Sandra huddle conspiratorially, flipping through the weird, old book. Adventure buddies.

ROMAN
Telling you, Sandy. Mister Scratch
is the baddest of the bad.

SANDRA
Was.

ROMAN
It says here he's still around.

SANDRA
And I thought you wun't supposed to
believe everything you read.

He makes a face at her. Suddenly they're interrupted with a flash of sparks as Laurel slips under the table.

LAUREL
Whatcha doing?

ROMAN
Grown up stuff. Get outta here
before you burn the place down.

SANDRA
But congratulations, Laurel. You
looked real pretty up there.

Laurel blushes and makes as if to retreat.

LAUREL
 Okay, well, Mama's lookin' for you,
 Roman. She'll be mad you're
 scuffing your suit.

Laurel exits. Roman looks at Sandra.

ROMAN
 Meet me at the crossroads in ten
 minutes.

SANDRA
 Why?

ROMAN
 'Cause if the devil is livin' up in
 them hills, I aim to find him.

He grins wide.

EXT. CROSSROADS - DAY

Young Roman leans against a signpost at the edge of Cross
 Corners, waiting. He flips through the book. On one page:

A LITHOGRAPH OF A MAN IN BLACK, WITH A CASE FULL OF INSECTS.

Impatient, Roman pockets the book and marches down the road.
 It's not long before he hears murmuring and a FEMININE
 GIGGLE. He peers:

BEHIND A HEDGE

Sandra is SITTING ON THE LAP of CAMERON DYER (15), a muscular
 Doberman of a boy.

Beside them stands PAUL PHILLIPS (13), one of the only black
 boys in town, and Cameron's best friend.

CAMERON
 ...Lord above'll just have to avert
 his eyes then, won't he?

Cameron moves in to kiss her neck. Sandra laughs, her eyes
 flutter.

She hasn't seen Roman, but Cameron and Paul both spot him.
 They remain silent, smiling at him, as Cameron creeps a hand
 up under Sandra's dress...

EXT. PEAT BOG - DUSK

Roman plods through the sticky marsh below Mount Hermon. Face red, salty tears on his cheeks, he strips off the noose of his necktie and chucks it into the wet muck.

The town is far behind him as the trees thicken and he reaches an incline. With furious purpose, he begins to CLIMB.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - DUSK

Roman passes through the fence around a half-constructed MINE. He follows the cart tracks, past the skeleton of the wash plant, towards the adit THRESHOLD.

He pauses at the lip of the dark cavern, only a moment, before entering.

INT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - CONTINUOUS

Darkness. Weird echoes of Roman's breathing. He pushes deeper until there is only the faintest light.

SCRATCH.

He ignites a ZIPPO, and begins to PUFF A CIGARETTE, coughing. It CASTS A LITTLE ORANGE LIGHT, pulsing with every inhale.

ROMAN

Son of a bitch.

He chucks a black STONE down the tunnel. It clatters once, twice and -- a sudden silence. The distant echo suggests the rock has fallen a long way.

Roman shuffles up to the bottomless black abyss, kicks some more stones in. He stands a while, CONTEMPLATING THE DROP.

When he inhales again, in the low orange light, REVEAL A MAN STANDING NEXT TO HIM, where there was no one before.

MAN

Long way down.

Roman yelps, darts away, coming perilously close to the edge. He pulls out the LIGHTER and ignites the little flame.

The Man is youngish, handsome, staring hungrily at the boy.

ROMAN

Who in the flipping fuck are you?

MAN

Sorry. I shouldn't have snuck up on you. I'm Sam. Lawyer by profession, entomologist by hobby.

SAM extends a business card. Roman doesn't take it.

ROMAN

Goddamn right you shouldn't've.
Give me an aneurism.
(then, apprehensive)
What do you want?

SAM

How do you mean?

ROMAN

What are you doing here, did you follow me?

SAM

Oh, no, no. I've been here a long while. Here, look.

Sam reaches into his coat and pulls out a jar. Inside is some fluttering CREEPER -- black, furry, and too many legs.

SAM (CONT'D)

Neat, huh? One of a kind, maybe.
(off Roman's silence)
What brings you down here? You weren't about to, you know... jump.

ROMAN

You're Mister Scratch.

SAM

Ahh. You found my book. I haven't gone by Scratch since the Second Party days. Sam is my Christian name. You ever going to give me yours?

ROMAN

I have to go.

SAM

Come on, son. Did you get to the part about what a man like me can do for a boy like you? Didn't you come up all this way just to see me?

ROMAN
Goodbye, I'm sorry.

Roman scrambles away into the darkness. Sam's voice ECHOES behind him.

SAM
I can change your life.

ROMAN
No, thank you!

Roman is starting to panic, doesn't know where to turn and the ghostly voice is all around him.

SAM (O.S.)
I can change the whole world for you. All you have to do is ask.

Finally, Roman finds a sliver of half-light and --

EXT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - NIGHT

Roman escapes, sprinting into the moonlight.

SAM (O.S.)
If you change your mind, you know where to find me.

Roman looks back, but he does not stop running.

FADE TO TITLE CARD: "**BLACK LUNG**"

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE**EXT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - DAY**

Establish a fully operational mine. A dozen MINE WORKERS hustle across the lifeless moonscape.

"SEVENTEEN YEARS LATER"**INT./EXT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY**

Inside, the dozen miners pack onto a cage-like ELEVATOR, which descends into darkness.

HEADLAMPS ignite, carving shafts through the THICKENING DUST.

At the bottom, they spill out into an already-packed tunnel. It's a hellish scene. Miners COMPETE FOR SPACE. Picks swing dangerously close to ill-protected skulls. FIGHTS break out.

The swirling, black dust permeates everything. One Miner crumples, coughing out a cloud of the stuff. A BROTHERLY HAND helps him up, sets him back to work.

The rhythmic clattering of picks and the guttural hum of a WORK SONG in discordant unison.

At an INCLINED TRACK, a pair of Miners push an OVERFULL CART up towards a distant speck of sunlight...

ROMAN (PRE-LAP)

"Progressive Massive Fibrosis is a preventable disease, but cureless."

INT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - PORTABLE OFFICE - DAY

A portable is packed with MINERS, faces filthy with dust.

Standing uncomfortably before them, we find an ADULT ROMAN, a little taller, a little wider and still a soft-handed toad. He's an office clerk, looking badly out of place.

He continues to read from a pamphlet.

ROMAN

"Long term exposure to a highly carboniferous environment may lead to a silica buildup in the lungs, which human tissue is not equipped to remove -- "

CAMERON DYER sits in the front. He's meatier now, handsome in a grisly way. He interrupts:

CAMERON

'scuse me, but what'n the fuck's the point of this? We're barely pulling up four tons per man, and that's without interruptions.

A wiry, ginger-colored counterpart, SUNSHINE, elbows him.

SUNSHINE

Swallow it, Cam, it's two paid hours.

CAMERON

I don't swallow but the product of your ma's succulent tit, Sunshine.
(to Roman)
How come we're the only ones here?

ROMAN

The other crews will have their turn. Mr. Keck wants everyone up on the latest health and safety --

CAMERON

But why *now*?

PAUL PHILLIPS, now grown, the one man of color in the group, jumps in sarcastically.

PAUL

The order cometh from on high. Dare you question it?

ROMAN

Look. We've had equipment breaking down from overloading, fights, hospitalizations --

CAMERON

We're *fighting* for scraps. Not that you know what it's like down there.

SUNSHINE

Tell ya what I think: we ain't turned a profit in three years and Keck wants to gussy us up for a buyer.

Murmurs at that. Cameron and Paul exchange a meaningful look.

The man next to Sunshine, AUGERSMAN, heavily scarred across his muscular frame, chimes in.

AUGERSMAN

It'll take a lot more'n a safety course to gussy you up.

The others laugh uneasily. Cameron looks right at Roman.

CAMERON

There anything to that, Roman? Boss man gonna sell us off?

ROMAN

If I look into that, will you all focus long enough to take this test?

The miners grumble a reluctant affirmative.

INT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - PORTABLE OFFICE - DAY

Cameron is hunched over a SAFETY TEST. He follows along with a pencil, very slowly, mouth moving as he reads. He stops after a moment and looks around, embarrassed.

CAMERON

Paul.

Paul looks over. Cameron points with a pencil. Roman, who stands in the corner PROCTORING, hears, but doesn't speak up.

PAUL

That's "symptoms."

Cameron glares as someone snickers, indicates another word.

PAUL (CONT'D)

The thing he was just explaining.
"Symptoms. Of. Pneumoconiosis."

CAMERON

"Pneumo..." Why'n the fuck's it spelt with a P?

PAUL

It's silent.

Roman grins a little to himself.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Just put down the symptoms he was talking about, best you can.

Cameron tries his hand. Erases the first thing he writes. Eventually, he just DRAWS in the answer slot: A PAIR OF OBLONG BULBS on either side of a DARK TUBE.

He finishes COLORING IN THE LUNG-SHAPED DOODLE with dark lead. He tosses it down onto Paul's lap.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You drew a... black... penis?

A horrified look comes over Paul. He opens his waistband:

PAUL (CONT'D)
Oh my sweet Christ, look what this place has done to me!

He lets out a blood-curdling scream. The Miners nearly riot with laughter. Roman covers his face, frustrated.

EXT. CROSS CORNERS - ESTABLISHING - LATER THAT DAY

Cross Corners' quiet main street. A HIGH SCHOOL lies up the road, not far from a UNION LODGE. A GROCER sits across from the imposing, colonial-style MINING COMPANY OFFICES.

INT. KECK HOLDINGS - DAY

Roman follows in step behind ORSON KECK (65), a massive specimen of country gentility. He owns the Mount Hermon Mine.

ORSON KECK
How'd the mob do?

ROMAN
Passable.

ORSON KECK
Well, they're hardly rocket scientists, are they?
(then, confidentially)
Oh, uh. About the prospectus you've been working up, on the output of the new shaft? Do me a favor and make it extra rosy.

ROMAN
Um. Yessir. Only --

ORSON KECK
Rosy, Roman. Like a virgin's cheeks at an orgy.

ROMAN

But who exactly is it for?

Keck glares, daring him to ask again.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Sorry, sir, right away.

As they arrive at Keck's office...

ORSON KECK

And see what your fucking brother-in-law wants. Only, if he asks, I'm not here.

Orson closes the door. Roman makes his way down the hall to:

ROMAN'S DESK

TOMMY SADLER (35), Roman's brother-in-law, a rail-thin junkie with alopecia, fiddles with the nearby coffee pot.

ROMAN

Tommy. Why weren't you at the safety seminar?

TOMMY

Ah?

Tommy looks up, not recognizing Roman just a beat too long. Roman cringes worriedly as Tommy embraces him.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Roman! Hey, buddy, good to see you.

ROMAN

You feeling alright, Tom?

TOMMY

Oh, great, great, sure. Clean as a whistle, if -- you know, since you like to ask.

Tommy smiles. His coffee mug SHAKES AND RATTLES as he takes a sip.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Hey, I, uh, I'm supposed to ask. A key got lost. I gotta make a copy, you have the originals?

ROMAN

You know which one it is?

Tommy nods, yeah. Roman roots through his desk and pulls out a color-coded MASTER KEY RING -- but he's distracted as a FIGURE passes the window.

He hands the keys to Tommy.

ROMAN (CONT'D)
Excuse me a second.

TOMMY
Sure, sure, sure.

Roman leaves Tommy with the keys and exits to:

INT. KECK HOLDINGS - TINY BATHROOM - DAY

Roman leaves the lights off, but turns on the loud, rattling FAN. He puts up the toilet lid and moves to the SMALL WINDOW.

ROMAN'S POV: The figure from outside is at the grocer across the street -- a WOMAN, whose milky legs carry her gracefully from basket to basket.

Roman watches her... until we realize he's UNBUCKLING HIS BELT and OPENING HIS FLY. He starts to JERK OFF. Pathetic.

Suddenly, the Woman turns his way. He DUCKS out of sight. Did she see him? He peers meekly through the window... and sees the Woman crossing the street TOWARDS HIM.

ROMAN
Fuck, fuck, fuck.

He slumps his back against the wall, mortified.

INT. KECK HOLDINGS - ROMAN'S DESK - CONTINUOUS

The Woman enters, groceries under her arm. It's SANDRA, now 30 years old. She really did turn out.

TOMMY
Heya, Sandy. You're looking pretty.

SANDRA
Hi, Tommy. Have you seen -- ?

She spots Roman as he emerges, sheepish.

SANDRA (CONT'D)
Roman.

ROMAN
Sandy. Hello.

He braces himself. She makes as if to say something... but seems to divert, pasting on a smile:

SANDRA
Cameron asked me to cash out his scrip for the month.

ROMAN
Oh. Alright, sure.

Roman takes the forms. His hand is SHAKING. Papers flutter.

TOMMY
Shit, I thought I had the jitters.
That's what sitting across from the coffee pot'll do to you.
(then)
Anyway, this is the one.

Tommy holds out KEY WITH A RED BAND WRAPPED AROUND IT.

ROMAN
Okay, but bring that right back.
(then)
Wait, Tommy. You're not going home right now are you?

TOMMY
Nuh uh. To the key-cutter then back to work. Thanks, brother.

Tommy smiles shakily and exits, leaving Roman and Sandra alone for a moment. They meet one another's eyes.

Roman breaks away to inspect the voucher forms, peels some cash out of a lock box.

SANDRA
So, how have you been?

ROMAN
Can't complain. Or they shoot us.

SANDRA
Ha. You should hear the boys after a day at the mine, they don't do a thing but complain.
(then)
Why don't you come by Judgment after work, see everybody?

ROMAN

Not sure "everybody" cares much to see me.

She gives him a sarcastic "boo hoo" pout as he hands over the cash.

SANDRA

They all get off at eightish.

ROMAN

I know, I do their timecards.

She gives him a warm grin and exits. Roman turns to check the wall clock. It's 10 AM. He lets out a long sigh.

EXT. JUDGMENT - ESTABLISHING - THAT NIGHT

The church has been repurposed into something more universal.

The sign out front just reads: "JUDGMENT"

INT. JUDGMENT - NIGHT

HOLLY DYER (17), sets a beer down on the counter. She's Sandra's spitting image, and barely 14 years her junior.

Roman is the only patron sitting at the long counter. The one-time Preacher, called JUDGE, polishes glasses nearby.

HOLLY

Cheaper if you'd just bought a pitcher.

Roman just nods and takes a long draught. He's drunk as a skunk. He looks up at the clock: 9:40 PM.

The door cracks open. Sandra enters and walks to the bar.

JUDGE

Heya, Missus Dyer.

SANDRA

Evening, Judge.
(kissing Holly)
Hey, baby. Can we get three pitchers and a carton of eggs?

HOLLY

Sure, mom.

Sandra takes the seat next to Roman.

SANDRA

The others are right behind me.

ROMAN

What happened to eightish?

SANDRA

Oh God, you haven't been here since then...

Sandra notices Roman's drooping, drunken eyes. Yes, he has. Suddenly Judgment fills with a cacophony of dirty, already-DRUNK MINERS, including Cameron, Paul, Sunshine and Augersman.

Roman averts his eyes as Cameron slaps cash on the counter, snakes a coal-blackened hand around to Sandra's belly and kisses her.

CAMERON

Thanks for playing Shepherd.

(to Holly)

Holly, ya learn anything at school?

Holly shakes her head, no, as she distributes beer pitchers and glasses. Judge sets a CARTON OF EGGS on the counter.

Cameron sits, fills his glass and takes an egg. He only just notices Roman. Doesn't love to see him.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

Roman. See you again. What brings you out on this hot autumn's eve?

ROMAN

Just... hanging out.

CAMERON

Well, here.

Cameron puts an egg in Roman's hand. The miners CRACK THEIR EGGS on the rims of their glasses. Yolks plop into beers. Roman follows along clumsily. It's a mess.

Cameron raises a toast.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

Fuck the future, fuck the boss,
fuck the fickle fucker's hoss.

A cheer goes up, the miners drains their drinks. Roman chokes his back, then notices the others looking at him.

PAUL

So, Roman. You seen anything to back up our hunch that Keck's trying to sell us off?

ROMAN

I... might've seen one or two things.

CAMERON

Well, what then, you spineless office twat. D'you think we're gonna tell on you? This ain't grade school.

SUNSHINE

Surely, it isn't.

CAMERON

But we're barely scraping by and this affects us, goddammit!

Sandra tries to keep everyone on an even keel.

SANDRA

Come on, maybe we can discuss this over a hot meal, some sober night. Roman, you haven't even been to mine and Cameron's house...

ROMAN

That actually sounds like the last thing I'd like to do.

He's too drunk to stop the words coming out. Sandra stiffens.

SANDRA

Alright. I tried. Excuse me.

She moves off to make conversation with her daughter. Roman is left alone with Cameron, Sunshine and Augersman.

AUGERSMAN

Well, that was damned rude.

CAMERON

No wonder y'all ain't friends. She's been kinder'n you deserve.

SUNSHINE

Even when you're jerkin' it to her. Ya filthy faggot.

Roman simply stares into his drink, wishing he was dead.

INT. LAUREL'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Roman's extremely thin, pale niece, GINNY SADLER (13), sits on the floor of a dingy cottage, doodling in pencil.

Roman sits nearby, still drunk, staring into space. Tommy Sadler sleeps on the couch, TV dinner on his lap.

ROMAN

What're you drawing, Ginny?

GINNY

Baby fawn.

ROMAN

I think you can just say "fawn."

GINNY

(duh)

I know.

He gets on the floor next to her. He takes his thumb and starts to smear the pencil lead.

GINNY (CONT'D)

Hey! Stop!

LAUREL enters. Though she's grown up, Roman's sister is still as sickly and small as on Communion day.

LAUREL

Everything alright, Ginners?

GINNY

Uncle Roman ruined my picture.

ROMAN

No, look.

He smears the lead, SHADING under the doodled fawn's belly, giving it new depth. Ginny stares, and then tries it herself.

GINNY

Oh. That's pretty cool. Do another.

ROMAN

Okay, okay.

Roman smiles. At least one person's impressed with him today. He scrounges for a pencil and paper, opens a promising leather case on the side table --

Revealing a SYRINGE AND SET OF NEEDLES. Roman looks up at the sleeping Tommy, knowingly, and then at Laurel.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Don't seem to be any pencils. Hang on while your mom shows me where I can get some.

Ginny just nods and keeps on keeping on.

INT. LAUREL'S COTTAGE - PANTRY - MOMENTS LATER

Roman and Laurel pile into the tiny pantry, their voices low.

LAUREL

You don't understand. Tommy's better when he's... I mean, it's a painkiller, you know?

ROMAN

Laurel.

LAUREL

What do you want me to do? He's out fourteen hours a day.

Roman steels himself, then launches into a rehearsed pitch:

ROMAN

Let's go away. We'll get Ginny out of here, give her a fresh start --

LAUREL

Roman, not this again, don't make it about her. Tommy is not a danger to my daughter.

(off his incredulous look)

I am not leaving. You are free to go whenever you like.

Roman looks at her pleadingly, as if to say, "Am I really?"

ROMAN

Look, at least...

He produces an envelope stuffed with crumpled tender.

LAUREL

No, I can't --

ROMAN

Yes you can.

LAUREL

(ashamed to admit)

He'll take it, like the last time.

ROMAN

Well, it's just for you, so you'll
have to do a better job hiding it.

Finally, Laurel takes the envelope and tucks it away. She wraps her arms around her brother's neck, kissing him.

EXT. ROMAN'S HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

Establish Roman's own crappy little cottage.

INT. ROMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Roman sits alone, half-empty glass dangling from his hand. He's DOZED OFF, bathed in the glow of the TV as...

INT. UNCERTAIN SPACE - PREMONITION - CONTINUOUS

In a weird DREAM SPACE, Tommy grabs little Ginny by the arm, PULLING HER INTO A BEDROOM.

TOMMY

Would you give us a little
goddamned privacy?

Tommy slams the door, locking himself inside with Ginny. Troubled voices slither out from behind the door.

In what seems to be a continuation of the same premonition, Laurel sits with her arms wrapped around herself. Tears stream down her face, saliva dangles from her lips. A total wreck. She sounds heartbroken as she screams:

LAUREL

Tommy! TOMMY, how could you??

BACK TO:

INT. ROMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Roman SNAPS TO in a cold sweat.

He cradles his head in his hands for a moment, before sitting upright, a new look of determination on his face. Then, he grabs his CAR KEYS and is gone.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT./EXT. ROMAN'S CAR - MOUNT HERMON MINE - NIGHT (MOVING)**

Roman's car speeds drunkenly up a windy access road and pulls into the darkened mine site.

Roman climbs out. What the hell is he doing?

INT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - UPPER SHAFT - NIGHT

HUMMMM. The emergency halogens fire up. Roman casts a long shadow at the end of the upper tunnel.

His KEYS tinkle eerily as -- CA-THUNK -- he lets himself through the first gate.

Fighting to keep his breath under control, he pads quietly along the disorienting, forking tunnel. He finds a NEARLY HIDDEN GATE behind a stack of crates. Looking around to get his bearings, he tries a key.

One. Two. Three. He goes through them all and NONE OF THEM WORK. Is a key missing?

ROMAN

Dammit, Tommy.

He tries to peer inside, sees nothing. He wheels back around, eventually finding:

THE TOP OF THE ELEVATOR SHAFT

The once-empty drop is now fenced off. He fiddles with the controls and the elevator COMES TO LIFE.

INT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Roman's breath shallows and quickens as the walls of the shaft swim upwards around him. He fidgets badly. His hand hovers over the switch that will send the elevator rising again...

When four long SPIDER LEGS CURL AROUND THE CROOK OF HIS NECK.

SANDRA (O.S.)

What are you so afraid of, Roman?

Roman turns to look. SANDRA is, impossibly, standing next to him. Her pale FINGERS caress his shoulder.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

Take a breath. You're not alone.

She puts a hand on his, moving it away from the switch. There's something empty about her stare.

ROMAN

No, this was a mistake.

He makes another move for the controls and she **SHOVES** him down into the corner. She crouches over him, her face inches from his. The lift continues to rumble downward.

SANDRA

Stop.

ROMAN

But if I could just --

SANDRA

Roman, if you want off, you'll have to go through me.

She flattens herself against the panel, blocking his way. Roman crawls forward, steadies himself with a hand on the backs of Sandra's thighs.

ROMAN

If that's what it takes. I'm hopelessly claustrophobic if you didn't know.

He begins kissing Sandra's belly, runs his fingers up her thighs and finally pushes his head up under her dress.

As she begins to moan --

INT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - LOWER SHAFT

THUNK.

The elevator arrives. Roman is splayed on the floor. Alone, no sign of the apparition. He breathes deep, coughs. What the fuck was that?

ROMAN

Okay...

He stands, pushes forward into the gloom.

And not far down the tunnel... he finds SAM, sitting on the edge of a coal cart. Mister Scratch has NOT AGED A DAY.

SAM

Been a while, Roman. I was worried you weren't going to make it.

A beat, Roman's unsure of himself.

ROMAN

...when we met before, you talked about... changing things.

SAM

That's right. Sort of my specialty.

ROMAN

Well I need to get away, with my sister and my niece. Somewhere we won't be found.

SAM

And you need my help for that?

ROMAN

I need to convince her. Laurel doesn't know what's good for her.

SAM

You are quite an altruist.

Roman nods. Sam smiles disarmingly, flits his eyes in the direction of the elevator.

SAM (CONT'D)

And you're sure it's nothing to do with the girl?

ROMAN

(getting his meaning)
No. It's just --

SAM

You don't have to lie to me. I can help you run off with your kin, put this place behind you, if it's what you're really after.

(then)

But I can't promise they won't hate you for it. And I have to wonder if things will be any different for you, wherever it is you wind up.

Roman shifts uncomfortably. Sam steps off of the mine cart, approaches him.

SAM (CONT'D)
I think you and I can do better.

ROMAN
"You and I?"

A beat as Sam grins, excited.

SAM
What do you actually know about coal?

ROMAN
Plenty. It comes from the peat --

SAM
And that bog out there'll do you a lot of good, in a hundred million years. But do you know how to sniff out a seam a mile deep? I suppose if you could, you wouldn't be here.

Roman stays silent, unsure where this is going...

SAM (CONT'D)
What if I told you that this mine is only scratching the surface? That there was a bottomless vein of anthracite directly beneath us, enough coal to fire the hearths of a hundred generations.

ROMAN
What are you saying?

SAM
I'm saying, you can be the one tap it. To make old Mount Hermon hum and bring the life back to this God-forsaken place.

ROMAN
Me? But --

SAM
On top of the unimaginable wealth, you'd be the savior of Umberland. A hero can take care of his kin without turning tail. And a hero can trample underfoot those who once made him small.
(then, the kicker)
And let's not forget, the hero always gets the girl.

Roman can't hide the way this gets to him.

ROMAN

That's obviously too good to be true.

SAM

Roman, look at me, look where I come from. I am a man of the earth, the stones speak and I listen.

ROMAN

Then let's say I believe you. What are you after?

SAM

If I had my way, I'd head upstairs and buy out that girthy slob Keck myself. But even if I did, the people of UMBERLAND won't work for me. I need a partner -- someone with guts, gumption, a face these people can trust. I need you, Roman.

Roman goes quiet, deep in thought.

SAM (CONT'D)

Fifty-fifty partners.

Sam produces a parchment, unfolds it, revealing a dense, lengthy CONTRACT. Sam illuminates it with a ZIPPO as Roman reads in the half-light.

ROMAN

"...should the union be dissolved, all mutual holdings will be liquidated, and any services rendered will be revoked."

(to Sam)

In other words, we're stuck with one another.

SAM

I'm not so bad, Roman.

Sam produces an INK WELL, takes Roman's hand and dips his thumb. Roman holds his thumb over his name at the bottom of the contract.

SAM (CONT'D)

If you need more convincing --

But Roman grabs the parchment, leaving behind a signatory thumbprint. THE DEAL IS DONE.

Roman collects his breath. Did he just do that? Hurriedly, he turns to go. He boards the elevator -- only to find Sam already sidled up next to him.

SAM (CONT'D)

Of course, I'll be coming with you.

Roman nods uneasily. Of course.

SAM (CONT'D)

It's been too long since I had any fresh air. This is going to be fun.

Sam claps him on the shoulder. OFF the new partners as the cage begins to rise.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KECK HOLDINGS - ORSON'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

Orson Keck pushes inside and sets his belongings down.

He hasn't noticed Cameron Dyer and Paul Phillips flanking the door. They close it behind him.

PAUL

Orson --

ORSON KECK

Oh, holy shit!

He spins on them, shuddering like he might have a heart attack.

ORSON KECK (CONT'D)

Jesus. You two.

PAUL

We need to talk.

CAMERON

You're trying to sell. We have an arrangement.

PAUL

Can't afford to be kept in the dark on a thing like that.

Orson finds his seat, takes a moment, adjusting his tie uncomfortably.

ORSON KECK

Boys, now listen. There's no way I wasn't going to tell you.

CAMERON

You cannot sell.

ORSON KECK

Well, yes, I can! Whose name is carved into the goddamned rock up there?

(sucking wind)

I can't stay in this game. You boys are making hay --

CAMERON

"Hay?" I certainly ain't.

ORSON KECK

Well, my company's in the red. And my cut doesn't hardly make up for the fact the coal seam's tapped out. I mean to cash out while I can still send my grandkids to school.

PAUL

And what do we tell the new boss about the hundred cartons of oxy we got stashed down there?

CAMERON

And don't you dare say "chuck it." We went through too much to get it.

Keck rubs his neck, trying to think of something.

ORSON KECK

Maybe. Maybe you could be the ones to buy me out.

Paul and Cameron both sit back. That's something to consider.

INT. KECK HOLDINGS - ROMAN'S DESK - DAY

Paul and Cameron exit Orson's office. Roman's lying on a bench, looking like hell: red eyes, massive hangover.

Sam flips through union literature at Roman's desk, feet kicked up like he owns the place. Paul and Cameron DO NOT SEEM TO NOTICE HIM.

A big, black TRAVELING CASE is parked in front of Sam.

CAMERON
What's in the case?

ROMAN
I surely don't know.

He practically moans it, not looking up. Paul and Cameron exit.

INT. CAMERON'S PONTIAC - DAY

Paul and Cameron sit, windows up, talking business.

PAUL
What are you thinking?

CAMERON
That we ought to fry the old fuck
in his own fat.

PAUL
Yeah. Well. You can't blame him,
though, can you. And he ain't ever
wronged us before today.

Cameron looks off, nodding.

CAMERON
Ownership...

PAUL
It might work. There are definite
advantages: built-in distribution,
security.

CAMERON
We may still have to let people go,
if it's as bad as he says.

PAUL
You're right, there. Even a front
has to be solvent.

Cameron grimaces. A pause while he thinks.

CAMERON
My papa's bills ain't shrinking.
Oxycontin's paid enough to stem the
tide, but no oxy, no Donnie fuckin'
Dyer.

PAUL
 (nodding)
 See what we kind of support we can
 raise at the hall tonight?

Cameron nods. They clasp hands in a familiar handshake.

INT. KECK HOLDINGS - ROMAN'S DESK - SAME

Sam leans over Roman, smiling at the hurting man.

SAM
 So, what do you figure we can
 muster, you and I?

ROMAN
 Why don't you muster me some
 goddamned aspirin?

Before he's even finished saying it, Roman notices a glass of water and two white tablets laid out neatly on a napkin.

ROMAN (CONT'D)
 Oh. Thanks.

He takes them, swallows both pills quickly.

SAM
 I'll match your contribution, so we
 maintain a fifty-fifty split --

ROMAN
 Look, would you just keep your
 voice down?

Roman gets up and peers around the corner. Orson Keck's office door is firmly shut.

ROMAN (CONT'D)
 Maybe I'll tell him I'm sick.

SAM
 I'm just assessing where we stand.

ROMAN
 I don't know. I've got, I think
 eight grand put away. A box full of
 bonds somewhere, that's another two
 or three...

SAM
 Do you know how much a coal mine,
 even a floundering one, is worth?

ROMAN

Obviously, I'm an accounts clerk.

SAM

We have to bring a competitive offer before other motivated parties beat us to it.

ROMAN

You know, you made this sound awfully simple last night.

SAM

And last night I didn't know you were basically destitute.

ROMAN

I will think of something. But at this moment, my head is literally splitting open --

Before he can finish saying it, Sam has more aspirin.

SAM

Figuratively.

Roman shoots him a look. He knocks the pills back, slaps his face and gets up, ready to do work.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**EXT. DYER HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - THAT NIGHT**

A one-story cottage in a ramshackle row.

INT. DYER HOUSE - NIGHT

Cameron sits at the dinner table beside Sandra, Holly, and Holly's ex of a boyfriend, GAVIN (19).

Their heads are bowed in prayer, hands held in a ring.

SANDRA

We offer our thanks for the bounty
of the land laid before us. Our
thanks for the work of good men to
put a roof overhead. Our thanks for
our continued health and, when it
pleases You, our happiness.

Sandra winks an eye open, noticing Cameron's fingers RAPPING
anxiously on the table, a broken link.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

In gratitude for Your infinite
thoughtfulness, we have gathered
together to enjoy a nice, tasty
meal and a civil sort of
conversation, the likes of which
this house has never seen. Amen.

ALL

Amen.

They eat.

INT. DYER HOUSE - LATER

Cameron plays with his food, forking it from side to side.

HOLLY

Daddy, how's grandpa?

CAMERON

Well he can't choke out a whole
sentence without a phlemball comin'
up. And a'course he swallows 'em
back outta pride, so he got sick in
a bucket. And that came out black.

(MORE)

CAMERON (CONT'D)
 (off Holly's look)
 Ah, he's peaceful anyway.

SANDRA
 (shifting the subject)
 So, Gavin, you have a match against
 Whiteglen next week, don't you?

HOLLY
 A recruiter from Morgantown came
 down to see him wrestle.

Sandra nods at him, looking impressed on Cameron's behalf.

GAVIN
 Yeah, he was awright.

CAMERON
 You leaving on scholarship, then?

GAVIN
 Maybe. We was just talking.

CAMERON
 'Cause there's, y'know, interesting
 things are afoot around here.

Oh yeah?

GAVIN

Oh yeah...?

SANDRA

CAMERON
 Nothing's decided, but, some of us
 at the mine are thinking of buying
 Orson Keck out. Think we can maybe
 squeeze some more life out of it.

GAVIN
 Power to the working man. Good
 shit, Mister Dyer.

HOLLY
 Yeah, my dad knows what's up.

Sandra gives a little "hmmm" of interest, and forces a smile.

INT. DYER HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sandra scrubs dishes in the sink, as Cameron rinses, a well-oiled domestic assembly line. She notices dark dirt dribbling off his hands and onto the dishes.

SANDRA

Oh, Cam, you're just making them dirty again.

(takes the dishes)

Why don't you go on up to bed?

CAMERON

Gotta head to the union hall. Put this buy-out to the group. But, thanks.

He gives her a peck, starts out of the room. She stops him by the arm.

SANDRA

Cam.

She lifts his wet, dirty hands to her lips to kiss them.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

Just think about what you're investing in. Our little girl don't belong in a town with its own two feet in the grave.

CAMERON

"Don't belong?" Holly's as Umberlander as they come.

SANDRA

And we're saying that's a good thing?

A beat. Cameron wraps his head around this.

CAMERON

Aw, Jesus, Sandy, what would I do anywhere else?

(beat, then)

Look, if this deal doesn't pan out, I can start looking. Fucked if I know what for, but I'll look all the same. Okay?

Sandra nods, okay. Cameron kisses her and is gone. Through thin walls, Holly's voice reverberates:

INT. DYER HOUSE - HOLLY'S ROOM - SAME

Holly's lying back on a narrow cot in what looks more like a man's office than a girl's bedroom. A PHONE CORD has wound its way around her neck.

HOLLY

"Power to the working man." God
you're retarded sometimes.

GAVIN (ON PHONE)

(with humor)

*Fuck you, I'm not the one repeating
my senior year.*

HOLLY

'cause you already redone fifth,
seventh and ninth. What were we
even talking about anyway?

GAVIN (ON PHONE)

Head.

HOLLY

Hah. Right. Well, go on, make your
genius point already.

GAVIN (ON PHONE)

*Just, a guy has a special bond with
a girl who swallows. His protein
turns to muscle, a little part of
him becomes a little part of you.*

HOLLY

The other boys teach you this at
pre-season camp?

GAVIN (ON PHONE)

*Shit, I've got to hang up the phone
before I come out all gay to you.*

HOLLY

No, you don't want to do that...

GAVIN (ON PHONE)

Good night, Holly.

Click, and he's hung up.

INT. ROMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Roman and Sam sit over microwave dinners. Roman has a phone
to his ear, and is jotting notes down.

On Roman's the table sits the DEED TO HIS HOUSE and a BOX
FULL OF SAVINGS BONDS. On Sam's side sit neat STACKS OF CASH.

ROMAN

So in total, after your, ah, "fee,"
we're talking twenty-six thousand.

(pause)

It'll have to do. Okay, thank you.

He hangs up.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Goodbye house.

SAM

It's just a mortgage. You're not
going to lose your house. And I
have to say, we're looking pretty
respectable.

Roman nods. Not looking confident in the least.

EXT. UNION LODGE - ESTABLISHING - LATER THAT NIGHT

Establish the union lodge. Male voices echo out into the
night. A banner reads:

"Confederated Coal Miners of America, Local 1112"

INT. UNION LODGE - NIGHT

Cameron slips inside. It's more tavern atmosphere than
orderly proceeding. Paul stands at the head of the hall,
waving for the MINERS' attention.

PAUL

All right, sooner we get on to
business, sooner you can stumble
back to Judgment.

(nothing)

Ey! Buy you a round then, if you
cunts shut up.

This gets their attention. Dirty faces turn to meet him.

SUNSHINE

How'na hell could you afford forty-
four shots on four tons a day?

PAUL

Call it an investment.

(motioning to Cameron)

Now that I've bent your ears, our
brother Cameron and I have a
proposition for you.

Cameron joins Paul at the front, nods.

CAMERON

Everybody. Looks like the word about Keck sellin' is true. Which puts us at a crossroads.

PAUL

Right. Now, say Keck sells to a conglomerate. Day one, we're gonna get some Yankee lawyer in here, trying to squeeze us into a new bargaining agreement.

CAMERON

Keck is Umberlander. He's been fair to us, but there's no guarantee 'bout the next man.

PAUL

But say that we, the Eleven-Twelve, all pitched in... and bought the mine ourselves.

CAMERON

We'd have the run of the place. Make our own rules, set our own wages.

The miners murmur, intrigued. But one SKEPTICAL MINER speaks:

SKEPTICAL MINER

This is overlookin' the simple fact that the seam just ain't producing.

CAMERON

Well, maybe we can do better. No, I'll guarantee we do better!

SKEPTICAL MINER

And just how the hell are you gonna do that?

Cameron has no answer. The Skeptical Miner waves him off. As MURMURS TURN TO SCOFFS and miners start to exit, Cameron sees that there isn't going to be a groundswell of support. OFF his opportunity slipping away...

EXT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - THE NEXT DAY

Cameron treks across the hardpack, DISGRUNTLED and DISTANT from the other miners. But he stops when he hears an odd SQUEAKING...

ANGLE ON: A bent BICYCLE wheel churns through the muck of the access road. It's Tommy Sadler, weaving, pale and strung out.

Cameron skids down the embankment, intercepts Tommy. He LIFTS the bicycle by the front fork and starts turning it back down the hill with Tommy still aboard.

TOMMY

Ey ey ey! 'the fuck are you doing??

CAMERON

Turnin' this wreck around, Tommy.
You picked a bad day to show up in
this shape.

TOMMY

But, Cam --

CAMERON

I don't wanna see you here again.
You're done. Fired!

Tommy cringes in disbelief. Cameron marches off, practically steaming with his vented frustration.

INT. KECK HOLDINGS - ORSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Orson Keck is LAUGHING hysterically. Roman and Sam sit opposite, Roman's head ducked in embarrassment.

ROMAN

Are you finished -- ?

Another outburst from Keck.

SAM

Does not seem to be.

ORSON KECK

I'm sorry, I just. I thought you'd
taken out some major bonds or
something. I mean --

He cracks up once more, unable to keep it together.

ROMAN

74,000 dollars isn't nothing.

ORSON KECK

74,000 dollars wouldn't cover
shipping costs for half my
machinery! It's just insane.

Roman, red-faced, looks to Sam for more support. Sam seems to be deep in thought. Roman turns back to Orson one more time.

ROMAN

There's nothing to, you know...
keeping it in the family?

ORSON KECK

Roman, you're not a bad kid, but
you're embarrassing yourself.
There's a better use for your mail-
order geology degree than trying to
run my mine.

Orson breaks into one last giggling fit.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - A LITTLE LATER

Sam watches Roman pacing, miserable, in an alley.

SAM

I could put up more money. There's
always more money on my end.

ROMAN

What, in exchange for a bigger
share?

Sam shrugs.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Considering who I'm partnered with,
I'm not about to hand over a
controlling interest.

SAM

You talk like I'm not even here.
(off Roman's dismissal)
It's no wonder you are where you
are. You're so concerned with
keeping things above-board.

ROMAN

I do not always play by the rules.

SAM

What're you, some kinda badass all
of a sudden? Don't insult my
intelligence --

ROMAN

Jesus, would you shut up already!

A pause between them.

SAM

Oh I'm sorry, I thought you had something constructive to say. But if you're going to be stubborn, then I'm going to go look for a creative solution.

ROMAN

What are you going to do?

SAM

If you're worried about me coloring outside the lines... Reach me any time, any where.

Same hands Roman his BUSINESS CARD; Roman takes it this time. Not like any phone number he's ever seen.

SAM (CONT'D)

But don't waste the day moping. That's the old you, buddy.

Sam peels off. Roman huffs. His gaze lands upon the Holding Company office. He flips the bird, starts to walk away.

Then he stops, looks back. An idea dawning...

INT. JUDGMENT - DUSK

Cameron sits with Sunshine and Augersman in the empty bar.

CAMERON

I need your word to keep this dead quiet. Paul and I are making this offer to a select few, circle of trust 'n all.

SUNSHINE

Why us? Do we reek the most of criminality?

CAMERON

Actually you do, you deviant pricks.

They laugh. Sunshine rubs his HAND ON AUGERSMAN'S THIGH.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

Now each of you'd get a one-eighths share --

AUGERSMAN

You're talking about emptying the bank on this thing.

CAMERON

And filling it twice over. Our product hooks 'em so bad they might as well sign their paychecks over to us.

SUNSHINE

Do you tell your wife about this?

CAMERON

Would you tell yours?

Sunshine laughs, no. Sunshine and Augersman look at each other. After a moment:

SUNSHINE

Who writes the policy on workplace relationships?

Cameron smirks at them. They're totally in.

INT. KECK HOLDINGS - HALLWAY/ORSON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

It's late. The office is empty. Roman stands before Keck's closed door in DARK CLOTHES, looking like a low-rent crook. Armed with a flashlight, SCREWDRIVER and bobby pins, he's trying to PICK ORSON'S LOCK.

ROMAN

Come on, Roman, it's only been twenty years --

The lock gives and the door SLAMS open! He freezes, covers the light. Did anyone hear?

No sound save for a passing truck.

He exhales. Begins his search. Rooting through Orson's files and personal affects, his eyes LIGHT UP when he finally finds what he's looking for.

INT. KECK HOLDINGS - ORSON'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Roman opens a huge LEDGER on the desk.

Illuminated by flashlight, Roman flips through, line by line. The desktop CALCULATOR whirs as it spools through hundreds of numbers.

Finally, he stops. Double checks. He tears off the calculator roll, pockets it, picks up the phone and DIALS.

SAM (ON PHONE)

Yes?

ROMAN

I found something. A discrepancy.

SAM (ON PHONE)

You mean monetary.

ROMAN

Right. A bunch of my tallies have been written over. There's more coming in than we're putting away, sometimes a lot more.

SAM (ON PHONE)

Now that sounds worth looking into.

ROMAN

Sam. I think we may have him.

SAM (ON PHONE)

Well lookit you, and you didn't even get your feet wet. I'm proud of you, Roman.

Roman can't help but grin. Then he hears artifacts of a VOICE on the other end.

ROMAN

Where are you?

CUT TO:

EXT. CROSS CORNERS - BEHIND THE GROCERY - SAME

Sam is standing at a PAYPHONE, receiver to his ear.

SAM

Around.

He hangs up. At his feet, in the GUTTER, lies Tommy Sadler, badly intoxicated, muttering incoherently.

SAM (CONT'D)

It's going to be alright, brother.

Sam smiles and goes to him.

EXT. CROSS CORNERS - MAIN STREET - A LITTLE LATER

Roman speeds away from the Keck office. He's amped from his break-in, going over his stolen tally a mile a minute as he turns a corner --

SKREEEEEEEE!!

An old PONTIAC skids just short of flattening Roman. Cameron Dyer is behind the wheel.

CAMERON

Roman! Goddammit, ain'tchu supposed to be educated? How you gonna run across the street in your all-blacks at midnight.

Roman stands in the glow of the headlights.

Emboldened, he STARES CAMERON DOWN.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

Well *move* already, ya ugly fuck. Other people's wives ain't gonna peep on them-fuckin'-selves.

Roman doesn't budge.

With a sudden ROAAAR, Cameron revs the engine. Roman staggers reflexively, but he holds his ground.

ROMAN

Cameron Dyer. You aren't gonna talk to me like that anymore, you hear?

Cameron doesn't blink. But he throws the Pontiac in reverse, giving Roman a berth, then pulls forward beside him.

Cameron leans out the window:

CAMERON

Roman, we cross paths like this again, I ain't even touchin' the brakes.

He pulls away. Roman watches the tail lights disappear into the night.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR**EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT**

An abandoned slaughterhouse on a wooded hillside.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - NIGHT

Little Ginny Sadler wanders through the creepy, abandoned space. Chains over the killing floor. What sounds like FOOTSTEPS above in the foreman's booth, but the staircase leading there is rotted out -- no way up.

HOLLY (O.S.)

Hey!

Ginny squeaks in fright, caught off guard by Holly Dyer.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

What are you doing here?

GINNY

Nothing!

HOLLY

You a narco?

GINNY

I -- what?

Holly stares severely... then cracks a smile.

HOLLY

You hear the foreman's ghost? Been trapped up there for thirty years.

GINNY

(re: broken staircase)

Then I guess the cows had their revenge.

HOLLY

Hah, good one. You know, you seem alright.

Affirmation from a peer. Ginny lights up.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - GRAIN SILO - MOMENTS LATER

VOICES ECHO out of a tall GRAIN SILO. Holly and Ginny approach a dark hatchway...

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - GRAIN SILO - NIGHT

Holly pulls back a curtain. Reveal a lamp-lit interior FILLED WITH SMOKE. Holly's boyfriend Gavin and nine or ten other teenagers are HOTBOXING the silo, sipping Pabst on ice.

HOLLY

You were right, we do have company.

GAVIN

C'mon, you're letting out the heat.

Holly ushers Ginny inside. Ginny coughs as she squeezes next to a cute boy, LEN (16).

LEN

You're Ginny, right? Tommy Sadler's kid?

GINNY

Huh? Oh, yeah!

Ginny's surprised by the recognition -- but deflates when she sees the others' REACTIONS. An awkward beat.

LEN

So... I suppose you'll want a hit.

GINNY

Oh. No. I'm good.

HOLLY

Leonard. You know that thing they say about assumptions, and you being a complete asshole?

(to the group)

Now y'all had better behave around my guest of honor. Understood?

Holly surprises Ginny with a hand around her shoulder. Len smirks, chastened.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Now let's set this place on fire.

MUSIC UP as we CUT TO:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - KILLING FLOOR - A LITTLE LATER

A huge BACKBEAT (the sleazy blues-hop of Blakroc's "What You Do To Me") rattles the building through large speakers. The kids are dancing. Gavin and Holly grind as only drunk teenagers can.

Ginny sips her beer, wallflowering... when Len surprises her by grabbing her hand.

LEN

Okay Guest of Honor. I'm not great at apologies, so lemme show you something.

He leads her to the turntable, a makeshift DJ stand. A headphone over her ear, he places her hand on a SLIDER.

LEN (CONT'D)

I'm gonna put you in control.

Together they adjust the slider: the beat slows, the bass thumps heavier, more guttural. The other kids get into it, Holly and Gavin start making out...

GINNY

That's fucking hot.

As Ginny and Len start to dance, she catches Holly's eye. It's the first fun she's had in a long time.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF LAUREL'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Roman approaches Laurel's porch. Sam comes from the other direction, supporting Tommy, who mutters incoherently.

ROMAN

What did you do?

SAM

Found your brother-in-law is what. Help me get him inside.

INT. LAUREL'S COTTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Sam tips water back into Tommy's mouth, but it just dribbles out onto his shirt. He's fucked up.

TOMMY

Sonofabitches. All of them.

ROMAN
Shh-shh, drink up.

TOMMY
I should kill 'em.

SAM
(to Roman)
He was saying on the way, that he
got the axe. Fired.

ROMAN
If he was anything like this,
that's not hard to believe.

SAM
(to Tommy)
Why don't you tell Roman the other
stuff you were telling me? It
didn't mean much to me...

ROMAN
No, he should rest --

TOMMY
It's that dog, Cameron! Him, and
the Eleven-Twelve, and that two-
faced nigger who runs it.

Roman tries to lay Tommy down, but he struggles, half-awake
and agitated.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
They bleed me dry for a little high
and they still got the nerve to cut
me loose??

ROMAN
Wait, Tommy, what are you talking
about?

TOMMY
Good thing I stole as much as I
did. I'll run my own game. Don't
need Cameron or Paul or fat fucking
Orson Keck.

He collapses back into the couch.

SAM
He had this on him.

Sam produces the RED KEY that Tommy borrowed from Roman. He
hands it to Roman, who examines it.

Roman looks down at Tommy, who's passed out. Surely he won't remember anything he's said.

INT./EXT. SANDRA'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Holly drives the family Pinto, taps along on the steering wheel to Lana Del Rey's "Kinda Outta Luck." Len and Gavin lie passed out in the back.

GINNY

God. I feel like a stray damn dog.

HOLLY

I know. But strays in a pack ain't ever really alone.

Holly smiles, sincerely. They drive on.

EXT. DYER HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

KNOCK. KNOCK.

Sandra comes to the door. Roman is on her porch.

SANDRA

Oh, hi.

ROMAN

Hey. Laurel had to look after Tommy so she sent me --

SANDRA

Sure, of course. Sorry to hear he got let go. Come in.

INT. DYER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Roman looks around. He's never been here before.

SANDRA

She's just in the bathroom getting cleaned up.

ROMAN

That's real kind of you. My sister about lost her shit when we realized we'd misplaced her.

(then, a little nervous)

Uh, where's Cameron?

SANDRA

I surely do not know. Speaking of misplaced loved ones.

She looks away. He tries to keep a smile on.

INT. DYER HOUSE - BATHROOM - SAME

Ginny sits wrapped in a towel, wads of toilet paper between her toes, fresh nail polish drying. Holly runs a brush through Ginny's hair -- she's actually very pretty.

INT. DYER HOUSE - SAME

Roman tries to keep the awkwardness at bay.

ROMAN

I, uh, wanna apologize for the other night. This is good, hanging out like we used to.

SANDRA

Back in the day. Oh, what mischief you and I got up to.

ROMAN

Well. I'm happy for you. Or, at least I'm making an honest effort to be.

It's about as close to a confession of love as Roman is ever likely to make. He covers quickly.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Anyway. Sure you heard about the sale. I'm actually working on an offer.

SANDRA

An offer?

ROMAN

For the mine. To buy it up.

He smiles, not a little boastfully. But rather than impressed, she gets flustered.

SANDRA

Can you even do that?

ROMAN

My money's as good as anybody's
isn't it? Long as I can pull enough
together.

Sandra lets that sit with her for a long time. Finally:

SANDRA

Then you'd better pull it together
quick. My husband and the rest,
they have a mind to buy it up, too.
And those boys have Mister Keck's
ear.

ROMAN

(weighty pause)
Oh. I see.

His boastful grin has melted into a mask of worry.

INT. LAUREL'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Roman enters with little Ginny in tow. Tommy is awake now,
and crosses rapidly to them.

ROMAN

She's okay, she was with friends --

TOMMY

What the hell're you thinking?
C'mere!

Tommy grabs Ginny, just like in Roman's premonition. Tommy
drags Ginny into a bedroom, stops when he notices Roman
STARING from the front room.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Would you give us a little
goddamned privacy?

Tommy slams the door, locking himself inside with Ginny.
Troubled voices slither out from behind the door.

The *deja vu* is intense. And yet -- there's no sign of Laurel,
let alone her crying and screaming at Tommy.

Roman sidles up to the door, listening.

TOMMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(muffled)
Baby, you scared me, running off
like that. You have to let me or
your mom know where you're at...

No sounds of violence or other wrongdoing. Roman's bemusement is overpowered by his relief.

Roman suddenly catches eyes with SAM, who's out on the porch.

EXT. LAUREL'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sam sits on the bannister as Roman closes the door.

SAM
Everything okay?

ROMAN
Yeah...

But, just then remembers --

ROMAN (CONT'D)
Wait, no. Cam Dyer and a group of miners are putting together their own offer. We have to act now.

SAM
Well, pardon me for presuming, but didn't your brother-in-law already give us what we need?

He nods into the house, indicating Tommy.

ROMAN
You mean --
(a thoughtful pause)
I don't want to put Tommy in danger. Shit, I doubt he even remembers telling us anything.

SAM
I get it. Well, he's your kin, so it's your decision.

ROMAN
He's not my...

Roman pauses as he realizes what he's saying.

ROMAN (CONT'D)
...kin.

He too looks back into the house, a decision to make.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KECK'S HOUSE - EARLY THE NEXT MORNING

Day is breaking as Cameron, Paul, Sunshine and Augersman pull up to Orson Keck's COUNTRY ESTATE.

They knock on the door. An ATTENDANT answers.

ATTENDANT

Yes?

PAUL

We need to speak with Mister Keck right away.

ATTENDANT

Mister Keck has already taken one meeting at this ungodly hour. You'll have to wait.

Cameron and Paul look at each other, worried.

INT. KECK'S HOUSE - INNER SANCTUM - SAME

Orson is barely awake. He sits across from Roman and Sam in a dim study. He notices their dual smirks.

ORSON KECK

The fuck are you smiling about?

ROMAN

This new proposal. It's good.

ORSON KECK

Well, could you at least put on some coffee so I can --

ROMAN

No, I won't be putting the coffee on anymore.

Orson looks at his employee disdainfully.

ORSON KECK

Well, alright, fuck, let's hear it.

ROMAN

For the deed and total control of all assets associated with the Mount Hermon mine -- \$74,000, and not a penny more.

Orson blinks hard at them.

ORSON KECK

Is this one of those memory dreams,
or didn't I already tell you to
shove that deal up your tailpipe?

ROMAN

Do you know what this is?

Sam hands the RED KEY to Roman, who sets it on the table.

ORSON KECK

I -- no. What is it?

ROMAN

That's an un-logged key from your
master set...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - HIDDEN CAVERN - PREVIOUS NIGHT

Roman inserts the red key into the lock of the HIDDEN GATE.
CA-CHUNK, the lock comes readily undone.

ROMAN (V.O.)

...which opens a gate, to an un-
mapped part of your mine...

He presses into the dim space with a flashlight. Sam follows
close behind.

ROMAN (V.O.)

...behind which sits a stockpile of
hillbilly heroin up to my eyeballs.

Sure enough, there are mountainous stacks of cardboard
cartons. He opens one, revealing ROWS OF PILL BOTTLES.

RESUME:

INT. KECK'S HOUSE - INNER SANCTUM - EARLY MORNING

Roman grins like a motherfucker at Orson.

ROMAN

You're a businessman, so I don't
have to explain the concept of
leverage.

Roman hands the key back to Sam, who pockets it.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Take the deal. Or, you *could* spend your gray years in Eddyville. I hear a man of your size is prized for his friction.

Keck shakes with rage. If looks could kill.

EXT. KECK'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The front door bursts open. Sam and Roman trot victoriously down the front steps.

Behind them, the four Miners step out and watch them go. They're joined shortly by Orson Keck.

PAUL

What the hell just happened?

ORSON KECK

Roman Black knew enough to fuck me three ways and still demand dinner.
(then)
Someone talked.

Up ahead, Roman turns over his shoulder and shoots them a dirty grin.

Cameron furrows his brow in thought. He exchanges a glance with Paul, who nods.

INT. ROMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

CLINK. Roman and Sam share a bourbon, reclining in silent, victorious satisfaction. Roman is actually smiling.

Sam produces a CIGAR, deftly lopping off the head.

SAM

Victory smoke?

ROMAN

Nah. I quit.

SAM

Sure thing, pardner.

But as Sam LIGHTS UP and inhales, Roman begins to COUGH, SMOKE COMING OUT OF HIS OWN MOUTH. He looks at Sam, who puffs away without a care in the world.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE**EXT. DONNIE DYER'S HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY**

Cameron arrives at a modest two-story house in the North county, "Dyer" written on the door.

INT. DONNIE DYER'S HOUSE - DAY

A televised baseball game echoes through the house.

In an upstairs bedroom, Cameron sits beside his ailing father, DONNIE DYER, an IV drip in his arm, looking older than his 59 years. MEDICAL EQUIPMENT chirps nearby.

CAMERON

Heya, dad. I'm afraid that'll all hafta go back to the hospice.

Donnie is racked with a full-bodied cough whenever he speaks.

DONNIE

Nothin' doin'. That foxy nurse said I can keep this stuff long as I need.

CAMERON

Well, y'see, no you can't. I had a deal with them, but the money's dried up. You can maybe go back...

DONNIE

There's no way I'm going back there, that's decided.
(off Cameron's look)
Don't gimme that look, son, this was always going to be a short-term arrangement.

CAMERON

Fuck me, dad, don't hafta say it like that.

DONNIE

You knew like I did, from the first day, that job meant to kill us.
(then)
Say, crank up the ballgame.

CAMERON

Why don't I bring the T.V. up?

DONNIE

Ah, hell, I'll climb down --

He makes as if to get up and Cameron tries to hold him back.

CAMERON

Come on, don't be foolish now. You need your rest.

DONNIE

I'ma rest eternal any day and I'll spend my energy how I please. Now stop fighting, ya whelp!

CAMERON

Awright, awright.

Donnie is overcome with FITFUL COUGHING. Cameron slips out, leaving Donnie to ramble on...

DONNIE

Things're different to how they used to be. People always pussyfootin' around what's coming. Running from their just reward.

Donnie lays back. The sound of cracking bats and home crowd jeers echoes loudly up the stairs.

EXT. JUDGMENT - THAT NIGHT

Tommy bikes up to the one-time church, edgy and sober.

INT. JUDGMENT - NIGHT

A patron hammers out a blues tune on the pipe organ. Holly drops beers at a packed table.

HOLLY

Fellas.

SUNSHINE

(with cash)

Where can I stuff this, darlin'?

HOLLY

I would tell you "up yer ass" if it weren't spoken for.

She snatches the bills as the others (even Augersman) howl at Sunshine's expense. A SICKLY MINER lolls his head to the side, watching as Holly swings across the bar.

SICKLY MINER

We might go broke, suffer famine
and die, but please Lord, dun' take
away Holly Dyer.

THE REST

Hear, hear.

Holly finds Cameron at the bar, wraps an arm around her
father's neck.

HOLLY

Get this man another, Judge.

Cameron smiles at his daughter when --

SUNSHINE (O.S.)

Ey, Tommay!

Cameron looks up. Tommy has crept in, very aware of his self
and surroundings. The organ music halts with a calamitous
thud as everyone turns towards him.

Tommy waves meekly.

TOMMY

Guys.

PAUL

Glad you came, Tommy.

SUNSHINE

Even if it's nearly midnight. We
been marinating six hours waitin'
on you.

TOMMY

Sorry.
(encouraging)
I slept.

That's a good thing, but no one seems to notice. Cameron
pulls Holly aside and hands her some QUARTERS.

CAMERON

Hey, why don't you call your
grandpa 'fore it gets too late? He
was askin' after you today.

HOLLY

Um. Sure...

Judge nods, go ahead. Holly moves OUT THROUGH THE DOOR.

EXT. JUDGMENT - PAYPHONE - CONTINUOUS

Holly finds the PHONE out front, fiddling with her coins.

SUNSHINE (O.S.)
Siddown, Tom! Take. Yourself. A
seat.

Holly sees a VANTAGE POINT through a missing bit of stained glass window. Curiosity gets the best of her and SHE WATCHES:

INT. JUDGMENT - CONTINUOUS

Tommy sits, the group forming a circle around him. Everyone is good and drunk.

CAMERON
We're gonna have a hard talk, Tom.

TOMMY
Okay.

PAUL
Cameron may have flown off the handle, but as the rest of us see it, he did right by us to let you go. You see that, right Tom?

CAMERON
You're a danger.

TOMMY
Wait a minute. I been strung out at work once or twice, sure, but I never came close to hurtin' nobody.

Paul sits next to him, brotherly.

PAUL
Tommy, we need you to get clean. For us, for your kin, for yourself.

AUGERSMAN
They're talkin' about a second chance.

CAMERON
Yeah, Tommy. A second chance.

PAUL
We're gonna send you away for a while.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

Next time you come to work --
whatever work looks like -- you'll
be right as rain, and we can all be
brothers again. Now, that'll be
good, won't it?

Paul extends a hand. Tommy looks at it, apprehensively.
Finally, he shakes.

TOMMY

Yeah. Yeah, clean sounds good.

CAMERON

Good.

Tommy starts to tear up, overcome with relief.

TOMMY

Jesus. Paul, Cam. Thank you. Fuck,
I thought for sure I was done.

CAMERON

Shh-shh-shh.

PAUL

It's OK. Augersman's gonna give you
a lift; pick up your things then
off to the clinic, alright?

Tommy nods. Augersman leads him out as he babbles his thanks.
After they're gone:

JUDGE

Y'all aren't any kind of friends.

Cameron looks at Paul. Ain't that right.

EXT. JUDGMENT - PAYPHONE - SAME

Holly PICKS UP THE PAYPHONE as Tommy climbs into a pickup
truck. Augersman throws Tommy's bike into the bed.

HOLLY

(covering, to no one)
I'll give them my love...

She watches as the truck DISAPPEARS into the night.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - THE NEXT MORNING

Roman and Sam stand before the collected crews, dozens of
miners awaiting his word. Roman speaks into a MEGAPHONE:

ROMAN

Thank you all for being here. I'm -- well, you know me. Things haven't exactly been chummy between me and you all. But I want to assure you that, under my...

He notices Sam mouthing a correction to him:

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Our directorship, things are going to change for the better.

Roman looks past the miners. TOWNSPEOPLE have gathered at the edge of the site. Roman and Sandra catch eyes.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

We're going to dig a new shaft, deeper than any that's been dug before, to tap an unprecedented seam of anthracite.

The miners murmur amongst themselves.

A VOICE FROM THE CROWD

Which is where, exactly?

Roman's beaming expression falters for a moment. He looks back at Sam, upon whose word his promises hinge.

ROMAN

That's going to require a small act of faith. But I give you my personal guarantee that that faith will be rewarded. Thank you.

He hangs up the megaphone. Sam gives him the O-K sign, and Roman puts his smile back on, waving to the crowd.

INT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - PORTABLE OFFICE - DAY

Roman and Sam sit across a table from Cameron and Paul. Roman tries not to gloat with every inch of his body.

ROMAN

So.

CAMERON

So.

ROMAN

The management would like to just... lay down some ground rules.

Cameron doesn't respond. Roman is loving this.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

We know what you two, and I hear now a couple others, have been getting up to. *Vis a vis* the oxycontin.

(then)

And, look, we want to keep the peace. So, I'm going to allow you to keep your business running.

Neither Cameron nor Paul can mask their surprise at that.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

With the following provisos: One. You are not to sell within the County limits. I won't have that shit tainting my workforce.

PAUL AND CAMERON

Okay.

ROMAN

Second. Tommy Sadler gets his job back. You'll treat him as an equal from here on out.

Cameron's eyes narrow when he hears that. A thin grin forms on his lips.

PAUL

Oh. You haven't heard about Tommy yet?

CAMERON

That'd explain why you're so fucking chipper.

The blood rushes out of Roman's face. He looks to Sam, who shrugs, like he doesn't know what they mean.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. COPPERHEAD CREEK - INTERCUT - DAY

POLICE TAPE stretches from tree-to-tree along a mostly dry creek. The SHERIFF crouches at the edge, taking notes and photographs.

PAUL

They found him this morning in Copperhead Creek.

TOMMY'S BODY lies face down in the shallow water, lifeless.

The SHERIFF fishes a SEALED ENVELOPE out of Tommy's pocket, tries to read the name written on it in RUNNY INK.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - INTERCUT - SAME

Holly pads through the breezeway of the high school.

CAMERON

Drowned in three inches of water.
'parently, that's all you need.

Holly reaches a parking lot where many SCHOOLMATES are huddled around little GINNY. She's an inconsolable mess.

Holly nods at Gavin, who draws his finger across his neck in the universal sign for "dead."

GAVIN

(sotto)
Ginny's dad. Matter of time, way he carried on. Don't say so too loud, though.

The students follow Ginny as she moves away, but Holly stays behind.

She turns her attention to the side of the building. It's covered in a huge MURAL -- Miners, Trappers, Traders and Medicine Men converge on a pristine UMBERLAND COUNTY. At the top of the mural is a painted banner:

"A GIFT OF THE C.C.M.A., LOCAL 1112"

OFF Holly's dawning suspicion...

LOSE INTERCUT AND RETURN TO:

INT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - PORTABLE OFFICE - DAY

Roman sits, stunned. Message received.

Only now, Cameron, Paul and Sam are not in the room with him. He's alone with his sister Laurel, who sits squeezing his hand, bawling, totally crushed.

LAUREL

He's gone! What am I going to do,
Roman? What am I going to do?

Tears stream down her face, saliva dangles from her lips. A total wreck. She sounds heartbroken as she screams:

LAUREL (CONT'D)
Tommy! TOMMY, how could you??

It's the rest of Roman's premonition, flooding back, now a horrible reality.

He tries to comfort her from a million miles away:

ROMAN
Laurel. Sweet sister. It's going to be okay. I --
(after a beat)
Maybe. Maybe there's some good to come of it. I mean, of course it's too soon to see a silver lining...

Laurel looks up, anticipating what he's about to say.

ROMAN (CONT'D)
But. Ginny -- at least she's safer than she was. Right?

A beat. Then Laurel EXPLODES at Roman:

LAUREL
Jesus, Roman, fuck you! You want to know something? That money Tommy'd been "taking?" Sheriff found four thousand dollars on his body with Ginny's name on it. He was stashing it somewhere none of us could get at it. He was about to give it to her, like he knew something was coming. He was a good fucking father, and now he's a dead one!

She descends back into sobs.

OFF Roman, understanding the cost of what he's done:

INT. FORMER KECK HOLDINGS BUILDING - DAY

Sam is alone in the company office. He peels the last bit of backing off of a new sign in the front window:

"BLACK & WHITTIER HOLDINGS"

His TRAVELING CASE lies open on a nearby desk. He reaches inside, pulling out:

An ornamental RIKER MOUNT. He hangs it on the wall. It's FILLED WITH HUNDREDS OF METICULOUSLY LABELED, MOUNTED INSECTS.

Pinned in the center is a gigantic, once-fluttering critter -- black, furry and too many legs. Its label reads:

"R. Black."

OFF Sam's impish grin...

INT./EXT. MOUNT HERMON MINE - SAME

Crews of miners work feverishly, singing Lee Dorsey's "Workin' in a Coal Mine."

Picks swing, mountains move. They're boring a new shaft down, down, down into the dark.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF SHOW