

Ferus

By

Craig Cunningham

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAWN

Gray light in the windows falls on a simple kitchen table, with a plate of half-eaten toast and a glass jar of peach jelly.

A bundle of wildflowers in a vase.

A faded photo of LITA'S FATHER working the horses.

A dusty stack of books - Gibran's 'The Prophet', Rilke's 'Book of Hours', Jim Harrison's 'Songs of Unreason'.

A coffee pot still warm.

A shallow dish full of arrowheads.

A sepia photograph of a little girl on a horse for the first time . . .

INT. BATHROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

The door is halfway open to reveal LITA sitting on the tile floor with an unmarked bottle of liquid beside her. She sits in her underwear with a tank top. She wets a rag with the liquid and applies it to a massive bruise on her thigh.

She winces at the sting.

The bruise has the shape of a horseshoe.

She is in her early thirties, with a natural beauty and strength of someone who has lived beyond their years. Her curly hangs in a messy ponytail to one side.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAWN

Lita wears army green pants tucked into boots and a long jacket. She wears a felt worker's hat.

She walks towards a barn whistling her call for the horses to come in from the fields wet with dew. They are shadows against the dawn.

The horses scattered in the fields begin moving towards her. She pauses, admiring the beauty of the land. It is desolate, but stunning against the backdrop of desert and mountains.

A universe all her own.

(CONTINUED)

The horses brush past her, but one gray horse stands at a distance, pawing the ground in rebellion. Lita locks eyes with her.

LITA
You don't have a whole lot of
choices.

They continue staring at each other. The horse begins walking towards her.

LITA
That's what I figured.

Lita enters the barn, a slight limp.

EXT. ROUND PEN - MORNING

Lita works the gray horse in the round pen, attempting to break her habits. She wears a tank top, the jacket slung over the fence. She is sweaty, as is the horse.

She uses a long switch to direct her, lightly swatting her to go and stop.

LITA
Good girl.

She walks over to a fence where a saddle is resting.

Walking across the field is an old, hardened woman. She is in her 70s, tough as a boot, wearing a hat and boots walking towards the barn. This is JANIE. She lives in a small shed behind the main house - as she likes it.

LITA
Morning, Janie.

Janie glances over and keeps on walking. She isn't the friendly type.

LITA
(under her breath)
Old bitch.

Lita pulls the saddle off the fence and approaches the horse.

LITA
Do not kick me.

She lifts the saddle.

LITA

Easy.

She places the saddle on the horse's back and gently runs her hand down its neck.

She continues to saddle the horse, speaking softly.

LITA

Good girl.

With the saddle strapped on, Lita lifts a boot into the stirrup and raises herself up, sitting down.

LITA

There you go. Easy.

She leans down, resting her face against the horse's neck and mane. She pats her neck, looking out over the beautiful expanse of land.

EXT. FIELD - AFTERNOON

Lita closes the barn doors and begins walking back towards the house.

The horses are scattered in the fields.

As she walks back, the jacket resting on her shoulders, she pauses at the sight of something on the ground. She bends down and picks up a dusty arrowhead.

She brushes off the dirt and looks at the shape.

Faraway she hears the faint sound of horses running . . .
But it can't be real.

She moves towards the house.

INT. TRUCK - EVENING

With hair still slightly wet from a shower, Lita drives on a lonesome road, the windows down. The truck is a single cab tank from the early 90s, with a cloth bench seat the same red color as the accent on the side of the truck. It's been well-maintained.

She's changed into a blouse and clean jeans.

The arrowhead is on the dash, old country music playing softly.

(CONTINUED)

A car blazes around her.

She glances down at the dash. Her eyes go back to the arrowhead.

As she looks up, a car is coming around the bend. She swerves out of the way, barely missing the oncoming vehicle.

LITA

Shit!

Lita grips the wheel, her breath quickened. She clears the hair from her face and keeps driving.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

A country diner, with a dirt parking lot. Lita's truck is parked out front.

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Lita sits at the end of the counter.

Families and working men are scattered throughout the restaurant, and she seems to be the only one eating alone.

She reads through Jim Harrison's 'Songs of Unreason' while picking at her half-eaten chicken fried steak, green beans, and mashed potatoes.

She looks up as a middle-aged waitress crosses behind the counter.

LITA

Hey Dori. Do I have any mail?

DORI

I think so. Hang on.

Dori walks away. As she does, COLE sits down at the counter. He is in his thirties, and looks like any of the other working men in the restaurant.

He glances over and sees Lita reading the poetry.

COLE

I never liked his poetry all that much.

Lita continues reading.

(CONTINUED)

COLE

I thought he was better at telling stories.

Cole realizes she isn't going to respond. He begins looking at a menu, but can't help himself.

COLE

My favorite is about the guy who goes to Los Angeles for a bearskin rug . . .

Lita continues reading, a slight smile.

LITA

That's a good one.

Dori returns with the mail - a manila envelope and a few letters. Lita uses the mail as a bookmark and stands to leave.

COLE

Well can I buy you a beer or coffee or something?

LITA

I already had some. Thanks Dori.

Lita turns to leave. Cole looks back over his shoulder as she walks out the door and opens the truck door. She throws the mail inside then crosses the street towards the pharmacy.

Dori stands in front of him with a notepad.

DORI

Know what you want?

Cole turns around.

COLE

What's her name?

Dori stares at him, pen in hand, no nonsense.

COLE

#7. Extra pickles.

Dori walks away. Cole turns and looks to the window again.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Lita sits cross-legged on the couch in front of the coffee table where the letters she received are spread out. The manila folder is opened, and some legal documents are organized and paper-clipped together.

She talks on a land line telephone with a coiled cable. The base of the telephone is on the cushion next to her.

LITA

None of these are signed. That was the whole idea.

She listens.

LITA

No that's not what we said last time we talked.

A tea kettle begins to whistle.

LITA

Hang on, Paul. I know. Hang on one second.

She sets the phone on the couch and walks to the kitchen, where she turns off the burner.

On her way back she stops at the photograph of her on the horse from when she was a little girl. She takes it off the fridge, looking at it as she walks back to the phone.

She picks up the receiver.

LITA

I'm back.

She looks at the photo, then places it on top of the documents and letters.

LITA

I want this to go away. That's all I want. (Listens) No. Don't call this number. It's not where I live. It's a - uh - library in the town near where I'm staying. Hey I gotta go. I'll call you soon.

She hangs up the phone, then leans forward to go through the papers. She moves the photograph to the side.

EXT. FIELDS - AFTERNOON

Lita is mounted on the gray horse and rides towards the mountain trail. The horse has a leather saddle pack on each side.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - AFTERNOON

MONTAGE:

Lita rides up the mountain trail, deeper into the wilderness.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - AFTERNOON

While riding, Lita pulls from a canteen of water. She pauses, wiping her mouth.

She looks up on the ridge and notices a wild horse standing above watching her.

LITA
(softly)
Who are you?

She begins to ride up towards the horse, but it turns and sprints away, disappearing over the ridge.

EXT. GRAVESITE - EVENING

Lita ties the reins to a tree and opens the flap of the side pouch. She takes out a bundle of wildflowers.

She walks to an overlook where a small wooden cross marks a grave. In the far distance is a monastery.

She removes her hat and approaches. A bundle of dried old flowers is already on the ground, and she throws them aside. She replaces them with the fresher bunch. She looks up at the sky.

LITA
It's going to be a pretty night. I
forgot how many stars you can see
out here.

Lita stands and returns to her horse. She mounts and rides away towards the mountain trail.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

After a long ride, Lita is tired. She stops the horse outside the barn and dismounts.

She pulls the reins over the horse's head and starts to lead towards the gate.

But there is a banging noise inside. She pauses. It isn't a natural sound. A clinging of metal.

Lita takes a revolver out of the side pack. She approaches the door to the barn and pushes it open.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

A MAN is in the barn, pushing aside old tools and junk to get to a ladder leaned against the wall. He reaches the ladder and picks it up.

When he turns, Lita sees it is Cole.

Cole pauses.

COLE
Don't shoot.

LITA
Can I help you with something?

Cole sets the ladder down, his hands exposed.

COLE
We could have maybe talked about this if you weren't in such a hurry the other night.

LITA
I don't know you.

COLE
No. You don't. But I knew your dad. Real well, actually. I work up at the monastery.

LITA
You're a monk?

COLE
(amused)
No. No. Not really. But I do live there. Room and board only.

(CONTINUED)

Lita waits on further explanation, the gun at her side.

COLE

There's a few light bulbs that are out and our ladder grew some legs and walked away. I was hoping to borrow this one.

LITA

You didn't think to ask?

COLE

I knocked on Junie's door but she acted like she wasn't home. Even though I could see her clipping her fingernails at the table.

LITA

What are you -

COLE

I waited a while but figured you were sitting at that counter in town, reading your poetry.

Lita is protected, strong.

COLE

I'm Cole, by the way. That's . . . my name. You must be Lita.

LITA

Angelita.

COLE

Well your dad always called you Lita.

LITA

He never said anything about you.

COLE

Well, he didn't say much about anything. Except you.

Cole winks.

LITA

Just bring it back.

Cole picks up the ladder and heads towards her.

COLE

I left my keys inside the house.
Then I'll be on my way.

LITA

You went in the house too?

COLE

I thought maybe you were in town
and I needed a key to the barn. And
the back door happened to be
unlocked so I figured I'd just grab
it real quick.

LITA

Fine.

Cole carries the ladder past her through the doorway. She closes the door behind him, glancing at him as he moves towards the house.

EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

As they walk out they see Junie is working a horse in the pen.

COLE

(overly loud)

Hi Junie. Your hands look nice.

Junie ignores him.

Cole turns back to Lita.

COLE

She likes me. She's just the kind
of girl that plays hard to get.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Cole opens a cabinet and grabs a glass, filling it with water.

Lita sits at the kitchen table watching him.

LITA

Make yourself at home.

Cole drinks.

(CONTINUED)

COLE

I was glad to hear you were going to be the one to take over. You had any trouble getting going?

LITA

Not really. Just getting used to the horses again. One of them kicked me.

COLE

Oh man. I saw you limping I thought maybe you had a fake leg. A prosthetic.

LITA

No . . .

Cole strolls around the room, as if looking for any changes. He picks up the new arrowhead from the counter top.

COLE

They're funny. The horses. Hey you found a new one.

Cole walks over and puts it into the dish with the others.

COLE

He had a hell of a collection. But he gave them away as gifts to the monks when they came for a ride.

Lita listens. Cole reflects on the old man.

COLE

This house is built on top of an old indian camp. I can spell the name of the tribe but I can't say it.

Cole continues to wander through the living room, looking at photos on the walls.

COLE

This one is new. I like it.

Lita says nothing. She continues watching him with intrigue.

COLE

From what I understand they got run out of Mexico and pushed here. They tried to overrun the monastery so they could have a stronghold but

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

COLE (cont'd)
some cavalry came and held them
off, waiting on even more
reinforcements to come. And they
knew they were going to die.

Cole sees the documents and letters on the coffee table.

COLE
Here's your mail.

He picks up the photo, looks at it with a smile.

LITA
(uneasy)
That's . . .

COLE
Look at this. You look just the
same.

Cole sets the photo down and continues moving through the
house, drinking his water.

COLE
And they started to pray for God to
save them. When they couldn't fight
any more God came down here to this
camp and turned them all into
horses.

Cole walks back to the sink and refills his glass.

COLE
They ran off into the mountains and
left their stuff behind. God knew
that no one would kill a horse, and
they could still be free.

Cole drinks the water, leaned against the counter.

COLE
So every time you find an
arrowhead, it's a reminder that God
changes people so they can be free.

LITA
Or that some things just weren't
meant to be.

Cole shrugs, as if that might be just as true.

COLE

You ought to come up to the monastery sometime. It's peaceful up there.

LITA

It's peaceful down here, too.

COLE

You're not afraid of a few old monks, are you?

LITA

I don't think I'd fit in.

COLE

Is that right? You mean you're messed up like the rest of us?

LITA

Something like that.

COLE

And God still loves us anyways.

Cole considers the words . . .

COLE

Well I better get going.

Cole puts the glass in the sink.

COLE

You want me to wash this?

LITA

You can leave it there.

Cole heads for the door, grabbing his keys on the way.

COLE

Alright. Goodnight, Lita.

LITA

Goodnight.

He smiles and walks out the door.

Lita sits at the table in thought.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Lita sits on the floor in her underwear and tank top, applying the remedy to the bruise.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Lita sits at the same spot at the counter, reading her book. She is all alone.

Dori walks past, refilling her coffee.

LITA
Do I have any mail?

DORI
Not tonight, darlin.

LITA
Thanks.

Dori walks away.

Lita sets the book down and rests her head in her hands.

INT. BEDROOM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Lita sleeps, and a glass on the nightstand begins to rattle.

The whole house seems to shake.

Lita sits up, hearing what sounds like a stampede outside of her window. The glass on the nightstand rattles to the edge and falls to the floor, shattering.

Lita throws the covers off and stands, running to the door.

EXT. FIELD - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Lita walks out into the field, but it is perfectly still.

Almost like she was dreaming . . .

But in the distance a horse whinnies into the quiet.

In her night shorts and a t-shirt, Lita stands barefoot in the field, looking for arrowheads.

She bends down and finds something. She picks it up and holds it in the moonlight.

(CONTINUED)

It's just a rock.

She tosses it aside.

Junie watches from her own porch, smoking a pipe. A double-barrel shotgun is leaned against her chair.

FADE OUT

END ACT I

BEGINNING ACT II

INT. FARM HOUSE - MORNING

Lita is on the phone, sitting in a chair by the window. She is dressed for work.

LITA

You know how important this is to me, Paul. I don't think I'm being unreasonable.

She listens, twirling the cord in her hand. The documents are spread on the table next to her.

LITA

No. No. I want to be alive. Okay?

She looks out the window. A pair of matching minivans are approaching.

LITA

You're working for me. Not for him.

She continues listening.

LITA

You're acting like I'm lying to you.

She listens.

LITA

Paul. Paul. I have to go. (listens)
No, I have work to do. (listens)
I'm taking some people on a . . .
camping trip. It doesn't matter.
Look, the next time we talk I'm

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LITA (cont'd)
expecting you to tell me something
different.

She hangs up the phone and gathers herself. The vans have pulled to a stop. She goes to the front door and walks outside.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Cole gets out of the driver's seat of the first van wearing sunglasses, jeans and boots.

He looks at Lita with a smile.

COLE
I brought the whole soccer team.

Men, some monks, some teenagers, some visitors, get out of the vans with overnight bags.

Lita begins walking towards the barn.

Cole walks with her.

COLE
Thanks for taking us up. It's a
yearly tradition.

LITA
It will be fun.

COLE
I didn't think you knew how to have
fun.

LITA
There's a lot you don't know about
me. Listen, have them all take a
pack from the porch and put their
belongings in there. I'll bring the
horses around.

Cole smiles at her.

COLE
Alright.

He watches Lita walk away.

EXT. DESERT TRAIL - DAY

Lita leads ten men on horseback through the desert. They walk in a line, casually talking to one another.

Cole is in the back, and sees Lita way up front. He gallops ahead past all the others and comes up next to her.

They ride together in silence for a moment.

COLE
Hey don't tell anybody but I
brought whiskey.

She glances over at him with a smile.

LITA
What are you, fifteen?

COLE
You can have some if you're nice to
me.

They continue riding.

Cole reaches into his saddlepack and takes out a bottle. He glances back at the monks riding behind them. He uses his teeth to pull out the stopper and offers the bottle to Lita.

LITA
Oh. Right now?

COLE
What'd you think I meant?

LITA
Like later on. When we aren't
riding.

COLE
Good idea.

He takes a pull and sneaks the bottle back into the pack. Lita smiles.

COLE
How much farther?

LITA
A few miles.

(CONTINUED)

COLE

In time.

LITA

Couple hours.

Cole nods.

COLE

That's the perfect amount of time
to get to know each other.

Lita smiles, flattered.

LITA

I think you better hold up the rear
in case something bad happens.

COLE

Alright then. Maybe I'll run into
you later.

Cole turns his horse and falls back.

Lita pulls her hat down. She's starting to like him . . .

EXT. CAMPSITE - EVENING

The group is centered around a campfire, with people
cooking, setting up tents and hammocks, and drinking beers.

The horses are tied to trees.

Lita lays in a hammock reading her book. She is a little
distant from the rest of the group.

Cole cooks in a dutch oven by the fire, the center of the
conversation.

She glances over at him, and his eyes raise to meet hers. He
lifts a plate to see if she wants any. She turns without
answering, continuing to read.

Cole ladles stew into the bowl and walks over to her. He
sets it on the ground.

COLE

The fellas are starting to get the
impression you don't like them.

(CONTINUED)

LITA
(reading)
They seem pretty happy to me.

COLE
Well you didn't hear them crying.

Lita continues reading.

COLE
You gonna lay here all night?

LITA
As long as that's I want to do,
that's what I'm going to do.

COLE
If you have to go to the bathroom,
go that way (points). I already
claimed the other side of the hill.

LITA
Thanks.

Cole turns to go back.

COLE
I'll try to keep the guys from
being too rowdy.

Lita smiles, still reading.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Lita is asleep in her hammock, the book on her chest and her hat pulled low.

She hears the faint whinny of a horse . . .

She wakes up and sits up, looking over at the fire.

Cole is the only one still awake. Everything else is silent. He stares into the flames in contemplation.

Lita takes a deep breath, looking at the stars spread out above her.

She rolls out of the hammock and approaches Cole, who looks up with a smile.

(CONTINUED)

COLE
(quietly)
I've always been a night owl.

Lita sits down beside him. Their shoulders are touching. She looks into the flames.

LITA
What was he like?

COLE
Your dad?

LITA
Yeah.

COLE
He was a . . . man among men. A giant. At least to me. He loved it out here. The stars and horses and open spaces. He was sort of like a dad to me too.

Lita nods.

LITA
I don't know why I ever left.

Cole takes out the bottle of whiskey from a blanket. He pulls the cork out with his teeth and offers it to her.

COLE
Don't tell anybody.

She laughs.

COLE
Shh.

She takes the bottle and takes a swig. She passes it back to him.

COLE
I got here just in time. I was this close to being dead when I walked through the doors.

LITA
Too much of this?

COLE
Ha. Maybe. But that's not what I mean. Before I came out here I was
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

COLE (cont'd)

a different man. Big time job in Santa Fe. Lots of money. Lots and lots of money and a great big house and never enough of anything. It was eating me up. My soul. I didn't recognize the man I set out to be when I was eighteen years old, swimming in creeks and chasing girls. I'd turned into something...else. These guys reminded me of everything I forgot. These guys and your dad.

Lita takes her turn with the bottle.

COLE

We'd stay up late at night like this around a fire and talk about books and God and all the pretty things we'd seen. Sometimes we'd talk about you.

LITA

I'm not much to talk about.

COLE

Where were you before this?

Lita looks into the fire.

LITA

I was . . . married. To a guy who I met after college up in Wyoming. And he was rough every once in a while but I didn't think it was serious. And then it got a little more serious. And I ran away, and I've been running ever since. That's . . . the short version.

COLE

I don't remember your dad telling me that.

LITA

That's because he didn't know. I left here when I was sixteen with . . . ideas that I was going to go live real life. Whatever that meant. I couldn't tell him I wasn't any good at it.

(CONTINUED)

COLE

Well luckily you're still in your forties so there's time.

She pushes him.

LITA

I'm not in my 40s!

COLE

Shh! I'm joking.

She smiles, pulling from the bottle.

COLE

I have an idea.

He takes a can of beans from one of the pouches and shows it to her.

COLE

Do you know what happens if you throw an unopened can into a campfire?

Lita shakes her head, no.

COLE

When I put this in, run over to your hammock and lay down like you're asleep.

LITA

Cole, what happens?

COLE

I'm going to run into my tent and lay down too. Don't tell a soul. You promise?

He shakes her hand, checking over both shoulders to make sure they aren't being watched.

He pushes the can into the coals.

LITA

Cole!

COLE

(hushed, playful)
Run! Run!

She laughs as she scrambles to her feet and goes towards her hammock.

(CONTINUED)

Cole sprints towards his tent, remembers his bottle of whiskey and runs back for it. Lita turns around and sees him. He lifts the bottle.

COLE
Hide the evidence . . .

She runs to her hammock and lays still, lowering the hat over her eyes. She rolls over and watches the unmanned fire.

Suddenly, the can blows up, shooting ash and coals and beans in every direction.

She laughs hysterically, covering her mouth and trying to mute the sound.

The sleepy monks slowly come out of their tents for an explanation of what happened. She watches as Cole unzips his tent and steps out in his white briefs, yawning and looking around confused.

COLE
What in the hell is going on
here?!?

Lita mutes her laughter, turning over to face the opposite direction.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

The monks load back into the van to return to the monastery. One of them waves at Lita in gratitude.

She waves back.

Cole walks over after shutting the back hatch of the van.

COLE
Thanks.

LITA
You bet.

COLE
They still don't know.

He winks and turns back to the driver's side door.

COLE
I'll see you soon.

He starts to get inside.

(CONTINUED)

LITA

Wait.

She walks over to him.

LITA

I'm planning to go into town later
if you need anything.

COLE

Sure. I'll drop the guys off and
head back over here.

LITA

I meant I could pick something up
if you need me to.

COLE

I might as well come along.

Cole gets into the driver's seat and shuts the door.

Lita watches them drive away.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Lita walks into the house and pauses.

The documents are scattered all over the floor and the
refrigerator door is open.

LITA

Hello?

She walks into the kitchen and finds a knife, shutting the
refrigerator door.

She walks through the house, pushing open doors, and
checking closets. Everything is clear.

She goes to where she was sitting earlier and closes the
window. She sets the knife down and begins to gather the
documents and put them into a stack.

EXT. JUNIE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Lita knocks on the door and waits.

Junie cracks it open.

(CONTINUED)

LITA

Did anybody come by here last night while I was gone?

JUNIE

Not from what I know.

LITA

Some of the things in my house were messed up. You didn't go in there did you? The fridge door was open.

JUNIE

I don't use a fridge. I got a ice chest.

LITA

Right. Alright. I thought I'd ask.

Lita turns and walks off the porch. She stops and turns.

LITA

I don't know anybody around here. I don't have any friends or family or guests or anybody. So anyone who shows up isn't supposed to be here.

Lita walks away, and Junie slowly closes the door.

EXT. PORCH - EVENING

Lita reads sitting on the steps of the porch.

EXT. ROUND PEN - EVENING

Lita works the wild gray horse. The horse trots in circles in the round pen.

She uses the switch to redirect and train her. She turns her, making her go the opposite direction. She slows the horse down, her arms outstretched. She approaches and strokes her neck gently, whispering in her ear.

Cole leans on the fence watching her work.

He is impressed, a slight smile on his face.

INT. TRUCK - EVENING

Lita and Cole ride together on the winding road.

She is laughing at something he just said. The windows are rolled down.

COLE
I'm serious. That wasn't supposed
to be funny.

LITA
You thought of becoming a rodeo
clown?

COLE
Why not?

LITA
It's just different than living in
a monastery.

COLE
Nah. The only difference is I don't
have to paint my face here. That's
why I chose this over that.

LITA
Stop.

Cole shrugs.

They drive in silence. Lita glances over at him.

COLE
Go easy on this turn.

The road narrows around the bend in the same place where she almost wrecked earlier.

COLE
Slow down here. Pull over. This is
where it happened.

Lita takes a deep breath. She becomes more somber. She pulls the truck safely to the side of the road, the headlights beaming ahead.

COLE
He was coming this way, and the
lady was coming this way. And this
is where they met. I figured . . .
you'd want to know, even if we
never talk about it again.

(CONTINUED)

LITA

I'm glad you showed me.

COLE

I've talked to the mayor about widening the road, but it's not on the agenda for this year.

A car passes to their left, honking at them.

COLE

I can't believe that horse is letting you on him already. When they wedged that trailer door open he bolted. I mean bolted right through there (points). It took us all night to bring him in.

LITA

No reason to give up on him.

COLE

I guess not.

Lita puts the car in drive and merges back onto the road.

EXT. FEED STORE - NIGHT

The truck is backed up to an open bay door, and an employee loads a pallet of feed sacks into the bed of the truck. Cole helps the man load the feed.

Meanwhile Lita signs a purchase sheet.

When the truck is loaded, Cole slams the tailgate shut. Lita hands him the keys.

LITA

I don't feel like driving.

Cole takes the keys and heads to the driver's seat, with her going to the opposite side.

COLE

Then I'm taking us for ice cream

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Cole drives the two lane road, a gallon of ice cream in his lap . . .

COLE

I was under the impression you wanted to share.

LITA

Usually when you take someone for ice cream you get your own.

COLE

They don't give you enough. There's more bang for your buck here.

Lita sits in the passenger seat. Cars blur past them. She unhooks her seat belt, moves to the center seat, and buckles herself in without a word.

She digs in with her spoon.

She continues looking straight ahead, each of them with a slight smile.

EXT. ROMANCE MONTAGE - GOLDEN HOURS

Cole and Lita sit on the top deck of the barn, their legs hanging off and the horses milling about below. They read together. Cole finishes a passage, and passes it back to her.

Cole and Lita ride next to one another talking. They aren't in a hurry. They slowly walk through the golden horses with the sun fading away.

Lita holds up her hands, warning Cole to stop. He chases her with a piece of spear grass, and she runs away from him through the field. He throws the grass and it hits her. She stops, angrily, and chases him back the other way.

They sit next to one another at a campfire, looking into the flames and discussing the big questions of life and death.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

They sit on the bed of the pickup truck on a few blankets, staring up at the stars. They are parked in front of the house.

(CONTINUED)

COLE
Which one's your favorite?

LITA
I guess all of them.

COLE
Pick one.

She picks a random star.

LITA
That one.

COLE
Ah. Borealis montopolis.

LITA
Stop.

Cole grins. He takes a deep breath.

COLE
I'm glad it all brought us here.

LITA
Me too.

COLE
I left myself so I could have
moments like this one. I paid the
price but it's . . . it's worth it.

He leans in to kiss her. He touches her lips, but she gently
moves him away.

LITA
I don't want to hurt you.

Cole nods in understanding.

COLE
I'd be happy for you to hurt me.
I'll take anything I can get.

He stands off the tailgate, with no hard feelings, and walks
out under the stars, looking up.

COLE
That one's my favorite. Right
there.

He looks back at Lita with a boyish wonder.

LITA
When did you decide that?

COLE
(considers it)
Just now.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lita lays in bed wide awake, staring up at the ceiling in thought.

A rumbling of horse hooves begins to shake the earth.

She throws off the covers, grabs a spotlight on the dresser, and goes to the door.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Lita goes outside and into the field.

She turns on the spotlight, scanning the quiet fields.

There is no sign of horses . . .

INT. BATHROOM - DAWN

Lita sits on the bathroom floor in her underwear and tank top, treating the bruise. It has healed significantly.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - MORNING

Lita rides up the mountain trail.

She spots a horse up on the ridge and turns to make her way towards it.

She makes a call up to the horse, but it doesn't come down to her.

As she gets closer, the horse turns and leaves . . .

She begins to run her own horse up the trail after it.

They arrive at an overlook, but the horse is gone.

EXT. GRAVESITE - DAY

Lita gets off the horse and takes the fresh bundle of flowers from the saddle pack.

She walks over to her dad's grave and removes the old flowers, replacing them with the new.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

MONTAGE:

Lita sits in front of a vanity mirror. She begins to put on a very small amount of makeup.

Lita sorts through her closet and finds a dress.

She puts on the dress and looks in the mirror. She is transformed. Beautiful.

EXT. MONASTERY - DAY

Lita drives up to the monastery - an adobe building nestled into the mountainside. There are gardens, great windows, a few cars scattered in the parking lot.

Lita parks and looks into the rearview mirror, checking her appearance.

She gets out of the truck and walks towards the entrance. Just before she enters, she hears Cole's voice around the corner.

Lita walks through the gardens outside the main entrance and pauses at the corner. She turns and glances around to see Cole sitting with VALERIE. A little girl named CHEYENNE is also with them, entertaining the two parents.

Cole reaches out and picks her up, pulling her to him and tickling her. He sits her on his lap. Valerie smiles at the sight of a father and daughter.

Lita backs away from the corner. She presses her back against the wall for a moment before heading back towards the truck.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - EVENING

Lita walks through the fields looking for arrowheads . . .

Junie is on her porch smoking a pipe.

Lita finally notices her.

JUNIE

You ain't going to find anything.

LITA

Who says I'm looking.

JUNIE

Well. You ain't going to find anything. Not the way you are.

LITA

What's that mean?

Junie keeps smoking.

LITA

I don't know who you think you are or who you think I am, but it doesn't matter to me. What do you do all day that makes you so much better than me?

Junie acts like she's not listening.

LITA

I've tried to be friendly with you.

JUNIE

I never said I was looking for a friend.

LITA

Got too many as it is, huh?

JUNIE

I got what I need. I make sure of that.

Lita nods, walking back towards the house. She stops, frustrated.

LITA

What is it, exactly, that you want to say to me? Because this is as good a chance as you're going to get.

(CONTINUED)

JUNIE
You aren't him.

LITA
I didn't know I was supposed to be.

Lita walks to the house.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Lita sits at her normal spot at the diner, a half-eaten plate of food sitting in front of her.

She reads THE PROPHET by Kahlil Gibran.

Dori walks in front of her and fills her coffee.

LITA
Do I have any mail?

DORI
I didn't see any.

Lita nods.

LITA
Thanks.

Lita continues to read. She glances down the counter at the place where she first met Cole, then continues reading.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Lita walks out of the diner and goes to the truck. She gets inside, fires it up, and backs out of her space.

NEW PERSPECTIVE:

Someone is watching the truck from inside another vehicle. He watches Lita's truck back out and enter the road.

He fires up his own vehicle, and begins to follow her.

INT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Lita pours a hefty glass of vodka. It's not her first. She is a little drunk already.

She opens the fridge and finds the rest of a bottle of tonic and pours it into the glass, along with a lemon already cut.

(CONTINUED)

She looks out the window to see Junie's lights are all out.

Lita is already ready for bed.

Old country music plays on a record player from the corner.

She sings along, sort of dancing.

Lita bumps into a table, knocking over a picture frame and spilling her drink.

LITA

Sheeeet.

She sets the drink down and goes into the kitchen for a towel.

As she is in the kitchen, she hears the door open.

She stands up straight without turning around.

The front door closes.

She turns around slowly to see WILL. Will is around her age, wearing a ball cap and Carhart jacket with jeans and working boots. Lita is stern. Strong. Suddenly sobered.

WILL

Hey darlin.

Lita looks at him for a moment.

LITA

You shouldn't be here.

WILL

I thought I had the right to see my wife any time I pleased.

LITA

I'm not your wife anymore.

Will takes off his hat and looks around.

WILL

So this is your dad's place. I never got a chance to say I was sorry about the accident and all.

LITA

What do you want?

WILL

What do you think I want, Lita?

LITA

Nevermind. It doesn't matter.

Will looks at her, and slowly moves towards her. He walks into the kitchen, and puts his hands on each side of the counter by her hips, trapping her in his arms.

WILL

I miss you baby. I came to bring you home.

LITA

We aren't married anymore.

WILL

That's not how I see it.

Will leans in and tries to kiss her. Lita ducks away and under his arms to escape.

LITA

I think I want you to leave, Will.

Lita backs towards the exit, and Will moves towards her.

WILL

I just got here.

LITA

We can talk tomorrow. In town somewhere.

Lita continues moving away from him, even though he moves towards her.

WILL

I'm here right now. What are we doing if we aren't talking.

LITA

Will . . .

Will corners her against the wall. He kisses her neck.

WILL

I miss us. I want us back.

LITA

What we had wasn't good for me. It wasn't good for you.

(CONTINUED)

WILL
You're everything.

LITA
Will. You're making me
uncomfortable.

WILL
My Angelita. You know I came here
after he died? I came here and they
said you didn't show up to the
funeral. I thought this was the
first place you'd come. And then I
went out to Oakland and then back
to Boise and then I was all out of
ideas until I figured you'd wind up
here eventually. And here we are.

He kisses her but she turns away. He turns her face back
towards him.

LITA
Will . . . slow down.

WILL
And here God is giving us another
chance to make it right.

Lita finds a lamp and throws it at Will. As he ducks for
protection, she runs through the front door and towards the
barn.

Will runs after her.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Will runs her down from behind and pushes her to the ground.
She scrambles to her feet but he pushes her against a wall.

LITA
(screams)
Junie!

Will covers her mouth with his hand.

WILL
(furious)
What are you doing? Huh? What are
you even doing way the hell out
here?

(CONTINUED)

LITA
Will please.

WILL
Please what? I am your damned
husband Lita, in case you forgot.

LITA
No. You are not my husband anymore.

WILL
Like hell I'm not.

Lita tries to escape but he slams her against the wall.

WILL
You're going to get in that truck
with me, and we're going to start
all over. I need this, darlin. You
don't know. I'm no good without
you. We both need this. Please. You
know how much I love you. You know.
You've always known. Now you tell
me how you love me too.

He waits, desperately.

WILL
Please, Lita . . .

LITA
But I don't love you.

Will glares at her.

WILL
I guess you're still a bitch.

He reaches back to strike her.

COLE O.S.
Hey.

Will turns as Cole hits him in the face, knocking him out.

EXT. DREAMY MONTAGE - DUSK

Horses run wild through a field.

Junie walks along the ridge loading her rifle.

Timelapse of a sunrise and sunset.

(CONTINUED)

The glass rattles on the nightstand and falls to the floor.

Will sits on the ground of a holding cell, shirtless. The door is opened by a guard, and he turns his head.

A hand washes dusty arrowheads under the faucet.

LITA'S FATHER walks on the hill.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

A little girl's laughter. . .

Lita is slow to wake up. Her eyes flutter open. She thinks about the previous night.

She pulls the curtain aside and looks out the window.

Cheyenne and Cole are playing chase in the field.

Lita lets the curtain fall.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - MORNING

Lita walks out onto the back porch, a blanket tightly pulled around her shoulders.

She watches Cole and Cheyenne play together.

Cole finally notices her.

COLE
Hey Sleeping Beauty.

Lita squints her eyes in the sun. Cheyenne looks at her.

CHEYENNE
Hi.

LITA
Hi.

CHEYENNE
I'm Cheyenne.

LITA
I'm Lita.

CHEYENNE
I like your horses.

(CONTINUED)

LITA

Thanks. I like them too.

Cheyenne looks to her dad with a smile.

COLE

Ask her. What we talked about.
Remember. The pan . . .

CHEYENNE

Oh yeah. Do you like to eat
pancakes?

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Cole cooks up some pancakes in a pan while Lita and Cheyenne work on a puzzle in the living room. Old country music plays on the record player.

Lita and Cheyenne are laughing together. Cheyenne touches her hair.

CHEYENNE

You're pretty.

LITA

Well thank you.

CHEYENNE

My mom is pretty too.

LITA

I bet she is. I bet you look like
her.

CHEYENNE

Yeah. But I got my dad's eyes.

LITA

Do you live with her?

CHEYENNE

Uh huh. My dad says you work on
horses for the monks.

LITA

I train the horses and that way the
monks can ride them without getting
bucked off.

Cheyenne laughs.

(CONTINUED)

CHEYENNE

That's funny.

Cole glances over his shoulder, amused.

LITA

What else did your dad say?

CHEYENNE

He said you put a can in a fire and it blew up real big and all the monks got covered in beans.

LITA

Oh I did that?

COLE

Alright that's enough.

LITA

I think you need to get him to tell you the story again. That's not how I remember it happening.

Cole walks over to the kitchen table with a stack of pancakes.

COLE

Let's eat!

Cheyenne runs over to the table as Cole fills her plate.

COLE

Easy on the syrup you rascal.

CHEYENNE

I'm not a rascal.

COLE

Well that's what your doctor told me. He called me yesterday and said the results came back and you were a rascal all the way through. 100%. They've never seen anything like it so they may have to call in some specialists.

CHEYENNE

I don't believe you.

COLE

Suit yourself.

(CONTINUED)

Lita sits down at the table next to Cole. She takes a few pancakes.

They begin to eat.

CHEYENNE

Is that you?

Cheyenne points to the old photo on the table.

LITA

It is. I was just about your age.

CHEYENNE

Can I ride a horse?

COLE

You bet you can. As long as Lita says it's okay.

LITA

(winks)

Yeah.

EXT. PORCH - LATER

Cheyenne plays out in the field looking for arrowheads while Lita and Cole sit on the porch.

COLE

There's not a whole lot they can do. Unless you had some kind of restraining order or something in place. He didn't hit you, so they can't hold him long.

LITA

I've been trying.

COLE

Well I'm guessing the police coming here scared him enough to stay gone for a while.

LITA

A while, maybe. Not forever.

COLE

I don't like you being out here alone.

Cheyenne holds up a stone.

(CONTINUED)

CHEYENNE
(calls out)
Is this one?

COLE
(calls out)
Put it in your pocket.

Cheyenne does so, and keeps searching the ground.

LITA
He's done this before. He's a . . .
ghost. That comes around every once
in a while. Except I can't get a
lawyer or a judge to believe in
ghosts. He may be back today or in
a year. He's an idiot . . . drunk.

They sit in silence drinking their coffee.

COLE
Well he knows where to find you.

LITA
I'm not leaving if that's what
you're afraid of.

COLE
I am afraid of that.

LITA
Don't be.

Cheyenne approaches the horses, then playfully runs away.

LITA
Most of the time he's harmless. And
if he's not, Junie has a rifle.

They laugh, lightening the mood. Cheyenne continues to play.
She puts another rock in her pocket.

LITA
You didn't mention you had a
family.

COLE
I guess I didn't.

Cole turns to Lita.

COLE

We aren't married. Her mom and me. Never were. I tried, don't get me wrong. But she thought marriage was sort of silly.

LITA

Maybe she was right.

COLE

Maybe. But when I started talking about slowing down, finding myself, simplifying, quitting my job and doing something else her mom didn't like that very much. I quit, and took a construction job. That was it, I guess. She packed up the BMW and took Cheyenne with her. Now it's twice a month for three days at a time.

Cole pours out the remainder of his coffee.

COLE

You probably picked up on this, but I don't exactly have it all figured out. I'm not real good at it, either. Life. And where I'm heading . . . I'm 34 years old living in a monastery for God's sakes.

LITA

What does that make me?

Cole considers it.

COLE

That makes you the most interesting thing in my life.

Lita tries to hide how flattered she is.

COLE

You don't have to say anything back.

LITA

Good because I'm not going to.

COLE

Alright. We better hit it. Those slavedriver monks have a whole list of projects for me to do.

(CONTINUED)

LITA
What's she going to do?

COLE
She's got some coloring books
and . . . a whole bag of crap
Valerie sent her with. I don't
know.

Cole gets an idea and immediately turns to Cheyenne.

COLE
Hey Cheyenne! What do you think
about staying here today with Lita?

CHEYENNE
Ok!

Cole turns back to Lita.

COLE
You sure about this?

INT. BARN - DAY

Lita and Cheyenne fill the feed troughs with oats.

Cheyenne carries a big scoop from a barrel to the trough.

CHEYENNE
What is this stuff?

LITA
It's oats that are kind of sweet.

CHEYENNE
Like oatmeal.

LITA
(daring her)
Try it.

Cheyenne smiles. She picks up a piece and holds it up to her mouth, then won't follow through. She drops it.

LITA
If I try it will you help me brush
the horses?

Cheyenne nods.

Lita eats a few of the oats, and Cheyenne laughs.

LITA

Yeah. Why don't I let her sleep here? You can come get her in the morning.

Cole nods. He follows Lita to the front door and they go inside.

INT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lita walks Cheyenne back to the bedroom, and Cole removes his hat as he slowly follows.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lita spreads open the covers and puts Cheyenne down. She covers her up and turns to see Cole standing in the doorway.

LITA

She's beautiful.

Cole watches Lita bend down and give Cheyenne a gentle kiss on the side of the head.

Lita stands and goes to the doorway, brushing past Cole.

He looks at his daughter sleeping, then follows Lita.

INT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He sees Lita walk through the living room and out the front door, leaving it open, glancing back at him.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lita stops outside, looking up at the stars.

Cole approaches her from behind.

She turns suddenly and kisses him with passion.

LITA

(breathless)

See you in the morning.

COLE

Ok.

Cole gets in the van and drives away. Lita watches him go.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Lita sits on the porch reading by lamplight.

She sets the book down and blows out the lamp, sitting in the darkness.

She listens . . .

Faraway she hears gunfire and horses running.

EXT. FIELDS - NIGHT

Lita is in her night shorts and tank top, walking barefoot through the field. She looks for arrowheads . . .

She looks over to Junie's porch. She's gone but the gun is leaned against her chair.

INT. BATHROOM - DAWN

Lita sits on the floor of the bathroom treating the bruise.

It is beginning to heal.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Lita sits on the couch with the documents and new mail spread out before her. She twirls the phone cord in her hand.

LITA

Yeah we made a report. (Listens) Me and this . . . friend of mine. He helped me.

She listens.

LITA

It's pending. Everything is always pending.

She listens.

LITA

I want to stay, Paul. It turns out there's a lot here for me. But I need to be safe.

(CONTINUED)

LITA
I understand. How long?

LITA
And if he comes back. Then what?

Lita picks up the photo of herself as the little girl.

LITA
(sighs)
I'm tired of running. Tired of . .
. talking to you. Tired of all
this.

She sets the photo down.

EXT. ROUND PEN - MORNING

Lita works the horse in the round pen.

She is frustrated. Losing patience.

LITA
Hey! What's wrong with you?

The horse rears back away from her. Lita challenges the horse.

LITA
Fine. Go crazy.

She calms down, breathing easy. She slowly approaches and places her hands on the animal.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Lita is riding the gray horse in the open field, doing rein-work to get her to obey commands.

She hears a car drive up, and rides over towards the house.

She walks the horse around the corner of the house to see it is Cole and Cheyenne.

CHEYENNE
Hey Lita!

LITA
Hey beautiful.

(CONTINUED)

COLE

You can just call me Cole if that's easier.

LITA

I wasn't talking to you.

Cheyenne looks up.

CHEYENNE

Can I get in that horse with you?

Cole picks her up and sets her in the saddle in front of Lita.

COLE

I need a picture of this.

He takes out his camera and snaps a photo.

Lita turns the reins and trots off the opposite direction.

Cole watches the two girls ride away. He begins to walk towards the porch until . . .

A scream.

From Cheyenne.

Cole turns and runs as fast as he can around the back side of the barn.

The horse runs past him without riders.

Cole goes around the back of the barn to find Cheyenne crying and Lita holding her.

LITA

(to Cole)

Pull the car around.

CHEYENNE

(sobbing)

Daddy!

She holds her wrist.

LITA

It's going to be ok. It's going to be ok . . .

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Lita sits alone in the simple emergency waiting room of the local clinic. She is drained. She sits with her knees tucked against her chest, her chin resting on her knees. She stares ahead.

The doors finally swing open and Cheyenne walks out followed by Cole. Cheyenne wears a cast and carries an x-ray.

CHEYENNE

Look at this.

Cheyenne hands Lita the x-ray, which shows her wrist bones broken.

CHEYENNE

And I got a cast.

LITA

I see that. Cheyenne, darling, I am so sorry.

Lita looks up at Cole.

LITA

Really. I'm embarrassed. I thought she was ready.

CHEYENNE

It's ok.

COLE

Her mom's not going to be real happy but who cares am I right?

CHEYENNE

Yeah.

LITA

Yeah.

COLE

Ok. Ice cream it is. Cheyenne said she's paying.

CHEYENNE

I didn't say that!

COLE

Well it's your turn.

(CONTINUED)

CHEYENNE

Can I borrow some money?

COLE

I guess.

Cole leads Cheyenne towards the door. Lita grabs his arm to slow him down.

LITA

I feel terrible. I really do.

Cole takes her hand. He breathes heavily, as if he is really concerned.

He walks her over to the check in window and rings the bell.

A NURSE looks up from her work.

COLE

I'm sorry to bother you again but
my friend is feeling terrible.

Lita turns away with a smile.

LITA

Quit.

Cole calls out to her as she and Cheyenne walk out the door.

COLE

They're willing to see you, Lita.
What are your symptoms?

Turns to the nurse.

COLE

She's feeling better.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Cole drops off Lita to the house. She stands at the open passenger side door. Cheyenne holds a gallon of ice cream, with three spoons inside.

LITA

Feel better.

CHEYENNE

I will.

(CONTINUED)

LITA

I'll see you next time you come to visit. And maybe we'll put you on a different horse.

CHEYENNE

Ok.

Lita looks over to Cole.

LITA

Goodnight.

COLE

Goodnight.

She closes the door, and watches him drive away. She stands under the stars, all alone. She smiles to herself, breathing in the crisp air.

Lita approaches the front door and reaches for the handle.

The door is already ajar, but the lights in the house are off. She glances back towards the road, where the taillights are tiny red lights fading away.

Lita pushes open the door and walks inside.

EXT. DREAMY MONTAGE - DUSK

Lita's father walks through the mountains.

The wild horses sprint through the fields.

Timelapse of sunrise and sunset.

Someone cleans arrowheads in the sink.

Junie fires her shotgun into the air.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAWN

Gray light in the windows falls on a simple kitchen table, with a plate of half-eaten toast and a glass jar of jam.

A bundle of wildflowers in a vase.

A dusty stack of books - Gibran's 'The Prophet', Rilke's 'Book of Hours', Jim Harrison's 'Songs of Unreason'.

A coffee pot still warm.

(CONTINUED)

A shallow dish full of arrowheads.

A sepia photograph of a little girl on a horse for the first time . . .

INT. BATHROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

The door is halfway open to reveal Lita sitting in the bathtub, resting her chin on her folded arms.

She has been beaten.

Her face is bruised. Her back is welted.

Through the window she sees the gray horse standing in the field.

EXT. FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Lita walks through the field still wet from the bath towards the horse.

She screams at her, lifting her arms for the horse to run away.

The horse bucks back, turning from her and galloping away.

Lita continues to scream at the horse to go away.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Lita moves through the house gathering her documents.

She picks up the stack of books.

She carries the documents and the books to the back bedroom where she puts them in the side pouch of a duffel bag. Her clothes are already packed.

She hears the front door open, and looks back through the living room to see Cole.

COLE
(playful)
Hey woman!

Lita says nothing. She shoves her bag under the bed. She crosses the room and looks at her face in the mirror. There's no way to hide the bruising.

(CONTINUED)

COLE O.S.

Lita?

LITA

I'm back here.

She stands against the door and he walks to the entrance. They are separated by the door, unable to see each other.

LITA

I'm not feeling good.

COLE

Uh oh. Need me to bring you some Pepto Bismol? Or is it the monthly thing?

LITA

No. It's . . . I think I want to be alone. That's all.

COLE

Ok. Are you alright?

LITA

Yeah. Yeah definitely. I'm just not myself today. I don't know what to tell you.

COLE

Well can I at least look you in the eyes and say goodbye?

LITA

(gently)

I really just want you to go.

Cole steps back, and Lita closes the bedroom door. Cole stands at the door, unsure if he should say anything else.

COLE

Ok. I'll be here when you need me.

She listens at the door until she hears him walk away and out the front.

She goes to the dresser and finds her work hat.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - AFTERNOON

Lita takes a horse up the trail towards her father's grave. She looks up on the ridge but doesn't see the wild horse.

A bundle of flowers are kept in the saddle pack.

She arrives at the gravesite and dismounts, tying the reins to a tree branch. She takes the bundle of flowers and approaches the grave.

She throws the old ones aside, and replaces them with the fresh bundle.

She sits on her knees and removes her hat.

LITA
I'll come back when I can.

She fights to hold back tears.

LITA
I never saw it going like this. Not
for either one of us.

She looks at the cross.

LITA
But this is what we got.

She nods, wiping away a tear. She stands up, puts on her hat, and goes back towards her horse.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Cole pulls up to find the gray horse standing in the middle of the road.

The house is dark. The horse turns and runs away.

Cole knocks on the door.

COLE
Lita?

Cole tries the door but it's locked.

He walks around the porch to the back door and tries that as well. It is unlocked and he goes inside.

INT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Cole walks through the dark house and flips on a light. He goes back to the bedroom and turns on the light. Some clothes are scattered on the floor and her drawers are open.

Cole turns off the light.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

He crosses the field to Junie's house and knocks on her door.

COLE
Miss Junie? Junie!

Her lights are out.

Cole walks out into the open field.

He sees headlights coming up the road . . .

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Lita sits at the diner, dressed for leaving. She picks at a plate of chicken fried steak and mashed potatoes, reading a book.

Dori walks past.

LITA
Would you check the mail for me?

DORI
You bet.

Dori walks off leaving Lita alone.

Someone whistles to get her attention.

Lita turns and sees Junie is sitting at a booth in the corner watching her. Junie motions for her to come over.

Lita reluctantly puts her book down and walks over.

JUNIE
Will you sit down?

LITA
I'm in the middle of reading something.

(CONTINUED)

JUNIE

That book's not going anywhere.

Lita sits down. Junie pushes a piece of chocolate pie towards her.

JUNIE

I don't know why I ordered it.

The pie is untouched. They sit quietly across from one another.

JUNIE

Have you heard of Hank Williams?

LITA

Everyone has heard of Hank Williams.

JUNIE

Well I don't know how young you are.

LITA

There's still some records in the house.

JUNIE

That's right. Your dad was good to me. Not everybody has been.

LITA

Well you're not exactly a cheery woman.

Junie is amused.

JUNIE

I'll give you that. I'll just cut right to it. I don't like seeing your face.

LITA

Well.

JUNIE

I don't mean it against you. Your daddy was like a brother to me. And when I see you I see him and I don't like the way it feels. So you can take that as an apology or you can leave it. One way or the other.

Lita nods. Junie reaches across the table and takes her hand, then regrets it. Almost like she hasn't touched someone in a long time.

LITA

I'm leaving. For good, I mean.

JUNIE

I know. I know the look of someone who's leaving. You got it.

Lita takes a bite of the pie.

JUNIE

I don't think you should.

LITA

You don't know much about me, either.

JUNIE

What's there to know? I know there's a man and a little girl who want you. Might just do anything for you.

LITA

It ain't that easy.

JUNIE

It ain't that complicated. Whatever it is.

Junie takes a bite of the pie, too.

JUNIE

I fell in love one time. A monk. He'd come out to ride and your dad would look the other way when he started to stay the night. We'd stay up late listening to Hank records and dancing in that little room. That's why I was asking. And all that went on for two years. Two years. And then one day he said it was too complicated. The vows and me and the lies and all that. Too complicated. They woke up one morning at the monastery, went to his room, and found him gone gone gone. All his things. Like he was never there. No one could get in touch with him. And I kept thinking

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JUNIE (cont'd)
he was coming for me. That he
picked me. That one night I'd hear
a knock on the door. I'm still
waiting. And life has all but
passed me by.

LITA
I'm sorry.

JUNIE
To this day I don't know whatever
happened to him.

LITA
If it was just me and Cole and
Cheyenne, that'd be one thing. But
everything I ran away from I wound
up running right into.

Junie nods.

JUNIE
You know God made those Indians
into horses? The ones who used to
live on the land. When they didn't
have anywhere else to go, God made
them into horses and they ran up
into the mountains. Left all their
things behind. When the cavalry
came they didn't know what to make
of it.

LITA
I heard about that.

JUNIE
It's true, if you believe it.

Dori comes by and puts the book down next to Lita along with
a few letters and a manila folder.

Lita picks it up.

LITA
I better get going.

Junie nods, understanding. Lita stands.

LITA
Take care.

JUNIE

You too.

LITA

And there's some Hank records in the house if you ever want to hear them. Or dance.

Junie smiles at the gesture.

JUNIE

When you find something good, you gotta be severe. You gotta fight like it's the only thing there is. Because it is.

Lita turns and walks out the door.

Junie sits in deep contemplation.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Cole walks around the house as the headlights approach. It's a truck he hasn't seen before. It stops and WILL gets out.

Cole stands in the headlights, with the dust of the road rising around him. Will walks around to the front of the truck drinking a beer.

WILL

Well if it isn't Rocky Balboa. You got a helluva right hook, I'll give you that.

Will glances around looking for Lita. He finishes the beer and tosses the can onto the ground.

COLE

She isn't here.

WILL

Where is she then?

COLE

I don't know.

WILL

Bullshit.

COLE

No. I mean it. She's gone. Packed up her things this afternoon and left.

(CONTINUED)

Will looks at the front door. He walks over and tries the handle. It's locked. He bangs on the door.

WILL
Lita! Baby!

COLE
She's not here.

Will turns to Cole.

WILL
Who the hell are you exactly?

COLE
I live up at the monastery.

WILL
Oh Christ I got knocked out by a monk. That's a first.

Will mumbles and laughs to himself.

COLE
No. I just live up there.

WILL
Then what are you always doing poking your ugly face around down here?

Will walks towards him.

COLE
She's my friend. And I came to check on her.

WILL
Well she's my wife.

Will presses up against Cole, almost daring him to hit him.

COLE
I think you need to go.

WILL
You going to sucker punch me again if I don't?

COLE
No. I'm just going to ask.

Will backs up a few steps, then takes out a gun. He lets it hang by his side. He raises it up at Cole's chest and cocks the trigger.

WILL

Just tell me where she went.

COLE

I don't know. And even if I did, I still wouldn't tell you.

WILL

It wouldn't mean all that for me to shoot you. Really and truly.

COLE

I don't know how that would help you any.

Will smiles.

WILL

Oh I see. Now I see it. You fell in love with her.

Cole says nothing. Will nods. He's too lazy to hold the gun up and lets it fall to his side. He seems tired.

WILL

This is just like her, you know.
Pack up and run. Fall in love with somebody new. Pack up and run.
Doesn't know what's best for her.
Never has. She'll turn up somewhere.

Will puts the gun away. He turns and goes towards the truck.

WILL

I'll see you soon, monk.

Will slams the door and backs the truck up.

Cole watches as he drives away.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Lita sits in her truck going through the mail. A packed bag is on the seat next to her.

She opens the manila envelope.

(CONTINUED)

Instead of legal documents, it is a photograph of Cheyenne and her sitting on the horse on the day Cheyenne fell and broke her wrist. Lita covers her mouth, fighting the tears. She takes out the note. The only words on the page are 'And still he loves us.' - Cole'

Lita looks at the photograph.

She puts it on top of the bag, gathers herself, and starts the car, backing out.

INT. ROAD - NIGHT

Lita drives with the windows down, tears streaming down her face.

She picks up the photo and looks at it.

As she continues driving, she approaches the bend.

A second car appears at the last second in her lane. They crash, spinning each other onto opposite sides of the road, the headlights turning and tires screeching as the vehicles slide to a stop, smoking.

Lita tries to find her breath. She's okay. Her hands grip the steering wheel.

She pushes open the truck door and steps out onto the lonesome road. She approaches the other truck and opens the door.

WILL is inside. His forehead is bleeding. He may be dead.

LITA

Will . . .

He slowly opens his eyes, and looks to her. She backs away.

He unbuckles his belt and moves to get out of the truck as she continues to back away. Cole looks at the damage done to his truck.

WILL

What in the hell did you do this time, Lita?

He looks back at her.

WILL

Where you gonna go in the middle of nowhere?

(CONTINUED)

Lita turns and runs for her truck, but Will catches her by the back of the neck before she can get inside. He slams her door shut.

WILL
Stop running, darling. For once.
Listen to me.

He corners her against the truck. She reaches into the bed to try and find anything to hit him with. He grips her wrist so she can't.

WILL
Look at this. Look at us. Brought
back together like this? Lita we
are meant to be together. I mean
for God's sakes we run right into
each other.

LITA
I don't want to be with you.

WILL
Don't say that.

LITA
I want you to die.

WILL
Quit.

LITA
If I knew it was you I would've hit
you square on.

WILL
Shutup.

LITA
I would've sped up. Anything to get
you away from me forever.

Will shakes her.

WILL
Stop it!

He pulls her towards his truck. Despite her fighting he gets her to the open door.

But just before he gets her inside ANOTHER CAR pulls up, shining their brights onto the scene.

Will shields his eyes.

He can't tell who it is.

WILL

Everything is alright. Just mind
your own business.

The silhouetted figure says nothing.

WILL

We got it all worked out. Called
the police and everything. Go on
around us.

He stands looking at the strange figure for a moment longer.

A gunshot rings out.

Will looks down at the blood running from his chest. He
falls to his knees, and then onto his side, dead.

Lita is terrified. Overwhelmed. She ducks into the truck and
looks through the window as Junie steps into the light . . .

Junie walks into the middle of the wreckage and stands over
Will. She pokes him with the gun to make sure he is dead.

She turns and looks up at Lita.

JUNIE

All you have to do is tell the
truth.

Junie walks through the cars and enters the woods in the
same place Cole said the horse ran after her father's
accident.

EXT. ROAD - LATER

Lita sits on the bed of her pickup, wrapped in a blanket.
Police lights flash faintly on her face.

Two cruisers and an ambulance are on the scene.

Will has been zipped into a body bag. They carry him towards
the back of the ambulance. Lita is in shock.

A man in white gloves conducts a gunshot residue test on
Lita's hands. She stares ahead blankly. He takes the sample
and leaves as a DETECTIVE sits next to her.

(CONTINUED)

DETECTIVE

Did she know the victim?

LITA

No. She maybe saw him once around the house . . . but no.

DETECTIVE

Any reason you can think of that she would do this? Outside of just protecting you? Did she mention any kind of reason at the diner?

LITA

No.

DETECTIVE

Did she say anything to you?

LITA

She said to tell the truth. And then she walked into the woods. I already told you that.

DETECTIVE

You did . . .

LITA

I know this doesn't make any sense to me either.

DETECTIVE

I saw his record. I don't want you to think I'm saying you're at fault for this, but it's . . . unusual.

LITA

Ask Junie.

DETECTIVE

When we find her we certainly will.

LITA

That's where she went.

DETECTIVE

Well innocent people don't normally run off and hide. That's why I'm asking.

LITA

I don't know what to say.

(CONTINUED)

DETECTIVE

Well. When you do, we're going to talk again.

LITA

Fine.

The detective stands.

DETECTIVE

I was here on the scene the night of his accident. He was a good man. That goes a long way.

The detective walks away.

Cole moves through the crowd and sees Lita. She turns to see him, stands and embraces him. She cries onto his shoulder.

EXT. DREAMY MONTAGE - DUSK

The wild horses run through the fields.

A man washes arrowheads in the sink.

A timelapse of sunrise and sunset.

The bell rings in the monastery.

Lita's Father walks the mountain path.

A glass rattles off the edge of the table and falls to pieces.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Lita awakes on the couch, covered in a blanket.

Cole is asleep next to her, his arm draped around her.

She quietly sits up, keeping the blanket pulled around her shoulders. Lita stands and walks to the back door. She goes outside.

EXT. FIELDS - CONTINUOUS

Lita walks out into the dawn fields and sees a gathering of wild horses.

The horse she has seen on the mountain is among them.

(CONTINUED)

Lita crouches down and watches them, her feet bare, her hair a mess, her breath funneling into the cool air of autumn...

She stands and slowly walks into their midst. They graze around her.

Lita pulls her hair down and lets it fall.

She is wild because she is free.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAWN

Gray light in the windows falls on a simple kitchen table, with a plate of half-eaten toast and a glass jar of peach jelly.

A bundle of wildflowers in a vase.

A faded photo of LITA'S FATHER working the horses.

A dusty stack of books - Gibran's 'The Prophet', Rilke's 'Book of Hours', Jim Harrison's 'Songs of Unreason'.

A coffee pot still warm.

A shallow dish full of arrowheads.

A sepia photograph of a little girl on a horse for the first time . . .

A breeze blows through the open windows, and the curtains flutter.

Outside, Cheyenne walks into view. She is in the field, and notices something on the ground. She bends down and picks it up, inspecting it.

CUT TO TITLES

Through the titles will be beautiful, aged photographs of Lita and Cole together over the next few years.

