

TITLE: CLAREMORE, OKLAHOMA 1949

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

A POLICE CAR hurtles its way through the countryside, passing farms, houses, pastures, and gas stations that double as general stores. As the car winds through the plush eastern Oklahoma foothills, we see that Oklahoma is neither a "dust bowl" nor as flat as a pancake.

At the wheel of the car is SHERIFF BOYD TURNER, aged 48, who is listening to the radio as he negotiates the narrow two lane highway. He brings a cigarette to his lips and inhales deeply, in the manner of a heavy smoker. Turning his worn features toward the passing landscape, his eyes squint in response to the ruthless sunlight.

Sheriff Turner yanks the vehicle onto a dirt access road that is fenced on either side with barbed wire. It is a long, straight road that divides two very large pieces of property. A perpetual breeze sweeps across the vast wheat fields, the gentle heaving of the stalks giving the impression of a great brown ocean.

In the distance stand TWO FARM HOUSES, one on either side of the "driveway", the faded yellow structures in stark contrast to the brilliant blue sky.

EXT. THE CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY

The Sheriff turns his car to the left, stopping in front of the less worn of the two dwellings. His car sits amongst other vehicles in an area of the yard that doubles as a parking lot.

He gets out of his black and white sedan and shuts the door, the sound exaggerated by the strangely quiet surroundings. Someone from the house opposite watches him as he mounts the stairs to the porch. He takes off his hat, wiping his brow as he knocks on the screen door.

SALLY, aged two, fingering the hem of her faded calico smock, comes to the door and looks at him through the wire mesh.

SHERIFF
(kneeling to her level)
Is your momma at home?

The little girl nods.

SHERIFF
Would you run and tell her Sheriff Turner
is here?

The little girl turns and runs down the hallway.

SALLY
Mom! A shairf is here!

After a moment, SARAH CHASE, Sally's mother, enters the hallway and walks toward the door. A slight woman in her late twenties, she is very attractive in a gentle and unstudied way. She lightly brushes an errant strand of blonde hair from her forehead, then focuses her blue eyes on the Sheriff. She is tired, and makes no attempt to hide her fatigue.

SARAH
Sheriff Turner.

SHERIFF
Yes, ma'am. You're Sarah Chase?

SARAH
Yes. Please come in.

INT. MILLER FARM HOUSE -- DAY

Sarah leads the Sheriff into the living room, which is furnished very modestly with articles that look worn but comfortable. An old upright piano dominates one corner of the room, its dark brown finish and yellowing keys adding a touch of meager sophistication to the unassuming decor.

SARAH
Would you like some coffee?

SHERIFF
No, thank you, ma'am.

SARAH

Please have a seat.

The Sheriff nods his thanks and eases himself onto the couch, setting his hat on the coffee table.

CAROLINE CHASE, aged twelve, enters the room and extricates Sally from her mother's side. She bears a striking resemblance to Sarah, both in look and demeanor. The Sheriff looks at Sarah earnestly, waiting for Caroline to leave the room. Sarah watches her daughters depart, then sits in a chair adjacent to the couch. Her manner is reserved, almost deliberate.

The Sheriff sighs, readying himself to speak.

SHERIFF

Now, Mrs. Chase, I've done some looking into this matter, as you know, and I'm hard put to figure out exactly what's what. I know there's been a lot of talk, but before I made any sort of move, I figured I'd better come and get the story from you.

Sarah nods.

SHERIFF

Now, I'm hoping this won't turn out to be a big fuss, that's why I came out to your house myself, to keep it informal like. But you're gonna have to tell me straight what's been going on, or this won't stay simple for very long.

SARAH

(nods again)

Fine.

Pleased, the Sheriff exhales and takes out a small notepad and pencil.

SHERIFF

Now, could you tell me some specific things about the marriage?

SARAH

Yes. David and I were married on March 12th,
1936. He was sixteen, I was a year younger.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY (THIRTEEN YEARS AGO)

In the small church, a fifteen-year-old Sarah Chase stands at the altar, looking angelic in a beautiful but dated white wedding gown. Beside her stands a sixteen-year-old DAVID ANDREW CHASE, looking sullen and withdrawn in his ill-fitting suit and brand new wing tipped shoes. David is also blonde, and very slender. He looks down most of the time.

Their respective families watch, looking quietly pleased. On David's side stand his MOTHER, FATHER, UNCLE DAN, and sisters CATHERINE and MARY. On Sarah's side are her MOTHER, sister ANN, and brother-in-law HARMON. Both sides have many cousins, some closely related, some not. Still in the throes of the Dust Bowl, these people have been seeing hard times, and it shows on their weathered faces and rumpled clothing.

SARAH

(voice over)

My father had just died, and it seemed like the thing to do, to kind of keep everything together. My uncle even performed the ceremony.

REVEREND CHARLES MILLER, a vaguely forbidding man, pronounces Sarah and David to be man and wife. David kisses her on the cheek.

INT. CITY HALL -- DAY

In the Clerk of Court's office, the two families have crowded around the CLERK OF COURT, a smallish man in his mid-forties with a penchant for bow ties. He sits at his desk fingering a rather large document, while David and Sarah sit opposite him. The air is becoming oppressive as the anxious assembly presses for a closer look.

CLERK

(brisk)

Now, according to this document, Sarah Miller Chase, formerly Sarah Jane Miller, brings forth, by marriage, 21 acres of property, 32 head of cattle, and one house, to be owned and maintained by David Andrew Chase and/or his heirs and relatives. Would the two of you sign here, please?

One at a time, David and Sarah reach over to sign, both in big, childlike block letters. The Clerk forces a smile.

CLERK

Ah, yes. And two witnesses? How about Sarah's mother and David's father?

Sarah's mother and David's father step forward and sign in a similar fashion. Uncle Dan gives a holler and the families laugh and clap their approval.

EXT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DUSK

The two families are gathered in back of the house, laughing and drinking glasses of lemonade. Difficult times have been forgotten for the moment, though the strain shows through some of the laughter. David and Sarah quietly accept the congratulations of well-wishers. COUSIN EARL, with lunatic glee, jumps on David's back and demands a ride.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

David and Sarah have just gotten into bed. David looks at the ceiling. Sarah looks at David. After a lengthy pause, Sarah reaches over to touch David on the cheek. He grunts and turns over on his side, so that he can sleep facing away from her.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY (THE PRESENT)

Sheriff Turner runs his hand through his thinning brown hair, shifting uneasily before speaking again.

SHERIFF

So--the marriage was never, uh, consummated?

SARAH

Not for quite some time.

The Sheriff nods.

SHERIFF

Did anyone else know this?

SARAH

I told my mother. I guess that was a mistake. She wanted the marriage annulled, but I didn't. He was my husband, no matter what anybody else said.

SHERIFF

And what did other people say?

SARAH

(sighs)

Oh, that he was--that he was afraid of women. There was a lot of that kind of talk. It was hard on both of us. But more on him, I guess.

SHERIFF

(hesitating)

Did you go and see anybody about the problem?

INT. MILLER HOUSE -- NIGHT (THIRTEEN YEARS AGO)

In a small room that serves as a study, David and Sarah sit in front of Sarah's uncle, Reverend Miller, who is apparently formulating his hypothesis. Grimly, he turns to scrutinize them.

REVEREND

My children. Obviously, God has seen fit to punish you. And we are not put on this Earth to question God's reasoning. He must have seen something in your past that is not yet forgiven. You must look into your past and find that which displeases God, and cast it out, so that you may be forgiven and then--

(CONT'D) be able to bring children into God's world. God wants you to bring children into His world. Pray for God's forgiveness.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY (THE PRESENT)

Sarah shifts slightly in her chair. The Sheriff takes a packet of Lucky Strikes from his shirt pocket.

SHERIFF

Do you mind...

SARAH

No, go right ahead.

He lights up, the influx of nicotine producing the desired soothing effect.

SHERIFF

(exhaling)

And you left it at that?

SARAH

Well, I wanted to go and see a doctor, but if we went to someone in town, everyone would know, and if we had to go to Tulsa and leave town, everyone would know, so David wouldn't have it. He just got worse. He would go out of his way not to touch me. He and his father argued a lot.

The Sheriff writes in his note pad.

SHERIFF

What about?

SARAH

Oh, anything.

(shrugs)

Or nothing.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY (THIRTEEN YEARS AGO)

On his way out the door, David Chase stops to tinkle the keys on the old upright piano.

EXT. THE FIELDS -- DAY

WORKERS dot the fields, harvesting the meager wheat crop. What the dust storms haven't destroyed the hail storms and floods will, so there is a definite feeling that no time should be wasted. Everything seems to be shades of brown, even the faces.

David approaches a small group of workers, one of which is his father, who are busy cutting the wheat down and bundling it into sheaves. David picks up a scythe and begins to work.

MR. CHASE

(insidiously)

Well, if it ain't the white nigger. Careful you don't tire yourself out. We eat lunch in ten minutes.

David shoots him a look, the wind ruffling his hair. His father stares him down. David goes back to work.

MR. CHASE

I guess it's only fair that you're lazy outdoors, since you're lazy indoors, too.

David stops for a moment. Then he walks toward his father, scythe in hand. His father looks him dead in the eyes. David drops the scythe at his father's feet and storms off toward the house.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY

David pounds up the stairs and enters his bedroom, wheat chaff and dust clinging to his sweaty skin.

Sarah gets up from the table near the window, where she has been busy sewing. His eyes are hard, and his gaze malevolent. Cautiously, she rises.

SARAH

(haltingly)

I made you a pair of long johns.

David moves toward her. She quickly picks up the long johns and extends them, effectively keeping him at a reasonably safe distance.

SARAH

(becoming afraid)

Why don't you try them on?

He looks at her for a moment, then down at the long johns. He takes them from her hands and lays them out against his body. The long johns are white, their seams are a little crooked, and a few stray threads are hanging loose, but Sarah has obviously put in a lot of time and effort, and she actually manages a grin as she watches David handle them.

DAVID

(disgusted)

They're too big. You wasted your time.

She is hurt, and grabbing the long johns from his hand, maneuvers around him to put them in the closet. He walks silently toward her. Just as she finishes putting the long johns on an uppermost shelf, he grabs her from behind, and begins to kiss her clumsily on the neck.

SARAH

Don't!

He whips her around to face him and begins kissing her face roughly.

Repulsed, she struggles to break free, hitting him with her fists. He continues to force himself on her. With a sudden burst of energy, she pushes him back against the side of the doorway and rushes past. He quickly recovers and tackles her onto the bed. She falls face down, and he lands on top of her. He rights himself, then pulls her skirt up. She puts her hand behind her to pull the skirt back down, but he knocks her hand away. She tries to roll over, but he won't let her.

He pulls her skirt up further, then begins to unbuckle his pants. She struggles harder to get free, but he becomes more violent as he pulls her underwear down. His pants are now around his knees. She turns her head to try and look at him.

SARAH

Let me go!

He pushes her face back around.

DAVID

Pretend it's your wedding night.

She grimaces.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE --DAY (THE PRESENT)

Sheriff Turner furrows his brow and puts out his cigarette, then takes a sip of cold coffee, swallowing with difficulty.

SARAH

You said you wanted to hear everything.

SHERIFF

Yes, ma'am.

He scribbles briefly in his note pad and prepares to light another cigarette.

SHERIFF

So, he left shortly afterward?

SARAH

Yes, he left that very night, as a matter of fact. I remember clearly, because it was Halloween. Halloween night he left.

SHERIFF

(thinks)

Was there anything unusual about him leaving that night? I mean, other than what happened that day?

SARAH

It was kind of strange, in a way. We were out at Collin's ranch for the Halloween party, and everyone was dressed up with masks and what all. We went, even though I didn't want to, because David really wanted to go. He had gotten a hold of some whiskey, I don't know where from. But anyway, about the only good thing was that everyone was wearing these masks, and you couldn't tell who was who, and that was fine by me, 'cause I didn't want to talk to a soul.

INT. COLLIN'S BARN -- NIGHT

In and around Collin's barn, REVELERS dance and yell to the music of a four-piece band (banjo, fiddle, accordion, and string bass), which plays a coarse blend of country and bluegrass dance music. Sarah and David enter, both wearing cheap party masks and faded bib overalls. David immediately splits off to join the crowd, and Sarah moves over toward a corner where she can stand alone. Behind the mask, her red-rimmed eyes are a testament to the day's harsh events.

David is drunkenly dancing about, obviously enjoying the fact that nobody recognizes him. Periodically, he grabs the behind of a stray female dancer, then spins away before accusations can be made. Sarah watches him steadily from her corner. Encouraged by his successes in these petty indiscretions, he moves toward a SLENDER REVELER in the far corner of the barn. He dances closer, then aggressively grabs and kisses the unsuspecting recipient, who immediately decks David with a left hook. The reveler pulls off a mask to reveal the angry face of a teenage boy, not much younger than David. The music grinds to a halt, and a curious crowd begins to gather.

BOY

This queer tried to kiss me!

The crowd, not accustomed to such things, responds with contempt. David gets up awkwardly, dazed partly by alcohol and partly by a bruised jaw. He looks around at the crowd, most of whom have taken off their masks in order to see more clearly. One exception is Sarah, who hovers around the outer perimeter, not wanting David to see her or perhaps approach her. An OLDER MAN advances toward David and begins to take his arm.

MAN

Boy, I think maybe you'd better lea--

DAVID

Get away from me!

David pushes hurriedly through the crowd and runs out of the barn.

EXT. COLLIN'S RANCH -- NIGHT

David lunges into his pickup truck and spins out of the parking area, side-swiping someone's car as he leaves. Sarah watches him from the entrance of the barn, mask in hand.

EXT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

David pulls up to the house, skidding to a halt. He gets out of the truck and runs inside, leaving the motor running.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

In his bedroom, David hurriedly packs some clothes into a large pillow case. He then goes to the dresser and takes a few dollars from the upper drawer. In the hallway downstairs, he passes his mother, who has been awakened by his hasty preparations for departure.

DAVID'S MOTHER
(cheerfully inquisitive)
Goodness, David, what's all the racket?

He grunts and brushes past her, taking a swig of his whiskey.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- NIGHT

David is driving 75 miles per hour, his head cocked back, drinking from his whiskey jug. When he sets his eyes back onto the road, he sees that there is a TRAIN crossing on the tracks just ahead, and he frantically slams on the brakes. The truck careens to a halt six feet from the train. Cursing, he gets out of the truck and hurls his whiskey jug at the passing locomotive. The jug flies into an open boxcar, shattering with a loud reverberant crash. He thinks for a moment, watching the car move away. Suddenly, he moves. Excited, he grabs his makeshift duffle bag and shuts the door of the truck. Looking toward the train's origin point, he spots an open car heading his way. He takes off, running parallel with the train, and when the open car catches up to him, he leaps onto it and pulls himself up. He stands up in the car, brushes himself off, and looks back at the crossing. The truck sits there alone, idling,

(CONT'D) its lights exposing the sides of the boxcars that rumble past. David smiles for the first time.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY

Sheriff Turner is now up and pacing the room, which is now vaguely hazy from cigarette smoke.

SARAH

That was the last time anybody saw him.

SHERIFF

So, you were together--seven months?

SARAH

(thinks)

About that, yes...

(pauses) (CONT'D)

His father went into a deep depression. He blamed himself for David's leaving, I think. I don't know why, really, there was so much more involved, but he did. He got very sluggish, said he felt tired all the time. He got careless in his work.

EXT. THE FIELDS -- DAY

David's father, along with several others, is walking along side of a THRESHING MACHINE, throwing wheat stalks into the gaping, twisting teeth. Without thinking, he has been getting closer and closer to the mouth of the machine as he walks. As he throws his next batch of wheat into the machine, his arm is caught in the claws, and he is suddenly and violently pulled into the machine. The people erupt in a frenzy to try and shut the thresher down, but David's father is gruesomely mangled within a few seconds, blood spattering the nearby workers and freshly cut wheat.

EXT. GRAVESITE -- MORNING

The two families surround the open grave of David's father, where Reverend Miller says prayers over the roughly hewn pine coffin. David's mother cries, leaning on Uncle Dan's shoulder for support. Sarah watches impassively, the fabric of her dress stretched tight across her abdomen, now swollen with child.

SARAH

(voice over)

I had Caroline right around that time.
David's mother died two years later. She was
working in the fields in the dead of summer
one day, and just collapsed.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Reverend Miller is marrying Sarah's mother to Uncle Dan, as
their relatives watch silently. Though the ravages of the Dust
Bowl years have passed, and a new prosperity is reflected in
their manner of dress, the two families project a solemn and
joyless attitude.

SARAH

(voice over)

So, my mother married David's uncle.

SHERIFF

(voice over)

His father's brother? Why? To keep the
land together?

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY

Sarah is now standing near the window, while the Sheriff has
returned to his place on the couch. He adds another cigarette
butt to the ashtray.

SARAH

(shrugs, thinking)

I guess so. Maybe they were afraid the land
was going to go back to my mother and me.
Maybe they really loved each other. I don't
know.

SHERIFF

So, your mother moved into this house with
you and David's uncle?

SARAH

And with David's sisters, and Earl, yeah,
she moved in with us.

SHERIFF

Who was left at the Miller house?

SARAH

Oh, the Reverend, my aunt, my sisters, their husbands or whatever, and some cousins.

(pause)

It wasn't easy keeping this place together, I'll tell you that. I guess we had it better than some folks, though. Then the war came. I used to listen to the reports on the radio, trying to imagine where David might be fighting, if he was fighting. It seemed really far away from Claremore.

SHERIFF

(thinks)

It surely was.

She looks back at him and smiles lightly.

SHERIFF

So, you just kept going?

SARAH

Yes.

EXT. MILLER/CHASE FARM -- DAY

Montage of Sarah working around the farm, milking cows, carrying water to workers, making butter, baking bread, sewing torn clothes, etc.

EXT. CHASE BARN -- DAY

Sarah is en route to the house, carrying a basket of vegetables in each hand. Passing the barn, she stops momentarily, listening to the delighted bursts of giggling emanating from within. Recognizing the voice of her daughter Caroline, she wearily sets the baskets down and heads toward the barn door.

INT. CHASE BARN -- DAY

Sarah enters to see Caroline crouching near a hay bale. She watches the child repeatedly lean over the bale, then pull back quickly, convulsed with laughter. Amused by Caroline's unrestrained joy, Sarah smiles and approaches her casually. (CONT'D) Peering over her daughter's shoulder, she sees the source of her daughter's entertainment: a huge RATTLESNAKE, lying coiled on the ground beside the bale. Caroline pulls back reflexively each time the snake strikes, delighted with this strange playmate so eager for a game of tag.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

Sarah tucks Caroline into bed, then slowly makes her way to her own bedroom, where she sits on the edge of her bed, rubbing her eyes with the palms of her hands. Then she is still, looking out the window at the land she works on every day. Suddenly, a hand reaches out from under the bed and grabs her ankle. Sarah screams loudly and leaps across the room. Out from under the bed crawls a giggling cousin Earl, looking slightly crazed, but definitely harmless. Unhinged, Sarah struggles to regain her composure.

SARAH

(infuriated)

Earl, how dare you come into my room and scare me like that! Get out of here this minute!

Earl giggles. Sarah's mother and Uncle Dan come to the door, concerned and out of breath.

UNCLE DAN

What the hell's goin' on in here?

SARAH

Earl was hidin' underneath my bed and nearly scared me a heart attack!

UNCLE DAN

Earl, get the hell outta here and get to your room!

Earl scats through the doorway, avoiding a smack on the head from Uncle Dan. Sarah has finally caught her breath, and moves to sit back on the edge of the bed. She quickly looks underneath to see if perhaps another unexpected terror awaits her. Fortunately, there is nothing.

SARAH'S MOTHER
Sarah Jane, are you all right?

SARAH
(nodding, still a little shaken)
I'll be fine.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY

The Sheriff is writing in his note pad, a partially eaten sandwich on a plate near his hand. Sarah moves to sit in her chair.

SHERIFF
So, you never heard from David?

SARAH
No. Not a letter, not a picture postcard,
nothing.

SHERIFF
And how long was he gone?

SARAH
(remembering)
Almost nine years.

The Sheriff sets down his pencil and lights up another Lucky Strike. He looks at Sarah intently, admiring her calm inner strength.

SHERIFF
(cautiously, with a little difficulty)
Uh, during this time, I'm sure you had your
share of offers from the gentlemen in town.

SARAH
(evenly)
I had my share.

SHERIFF
Did you -- accept any of those offers?

SARAH
No.

SHERIFF
(slightly incredulous)
So, you were faithful to your deserted
husband for nine years?

SARAH
(looks at him penetratingly)
You can ask anyone, if don't believe me.

SHERIFF
Oh, I'm not doubting your word, Mrs. Chase.
On the contrary, I think it's right
admirable.
(laughs)
I don't think I coulda done it!

She smiles. He takes another drag on his cigarette.

SHERIFF
But nine years is a pretty hefty piece of
time, Mrs. Chase. How did you keep your wits
about you?

SARAH
(plainly)
I prayed. I think I prayed more than any
human being ever prayed.
(pauses, smiles)
And my prayers were answered.

INT. BUS -- DAY

David Chase, now nine years older than we have ever seen him, rides a bus into Claremore. He has filled out considerably, and become a very handsome man. He wears the uniform and stripes of an army lieutenant, the khaki complimenting his sandy blonde hair. Seeming more relaxed and at ease with himself, he smiles as he studies a small family photo taken on his wedding day. He puts the picture in the front pocket of his uniform.

EXT. BUS STOP -- DAY

David steps off the bus and takes a look at the town he hasn't seen in almost a decade. The main street, which used to resemble a dusty trail, is now paved. New businesses stand next to old and familiar establishments, catering to the needs of the burgeoning population. David smiles and begins walking away from town, throwing the duffle bag over his shoulder.

EXT. CHASE/MILLER ACCESS ROAD -- DAY

David is walking up the road that leads to the Chase and Miller houses. He looks over at the FIELD HANDS working the land, and stops for a moment, then walks slowly over to the fence. He puts one foot on the low rung of barbed wire. He shouts to the workers.

DAVID

Hey! Hey, over there!!

Two of the field hands stop what they are doing and look over at him, shading their eyes against the sun with their hands.

DAVID

Could you come over here for a minute?

The field hands look at him for a moment, then look at each other. Finally, one of them speaks.

FIELD HAND #1

We workin', mister.

DAVID

Really, I just need to talk to you for a second. Give a veteran a break, huh?

Slowly they set their tools down and walk toward David. As they approach, their features register confusion, David's dashing appearance incongruous with the rustic surroundings.

DAVID

(amused at their bewilderment)

Could one of you gents direct me to the house of Sarah Chase?

FIELD HAND#1

(suspicious)

You got business with her?

DAVID

(smiles)

You might say that.

The second field hand begins to recognize him.

FIELD HAND #1

And what might your name be?

DAVID

I don't know, Curt, you tell me.

FIELD HAND #1

How do you kn--

FIELD HAND #2

(grabs Field Hand #1)

It's David Chase. It's David Chase!!

David smiles broadly as a look of astonished recognition transforms the face of Field Hand #1.

FIELD HAND #1

(starts to smile, also)

Well, I'll be a bitch in heat, it is you!
Lord, wait'll Sarah sees this!

Field Hand #2 has already started to sprint toward the other WORKERS.

FIELD HAND #2
(shouting excitedly)
He's come back!! David Chase has come back!!

Immediately, all the workers start to gather around Field Hand #2, who points back to David, now ambling toward the house with his arm around Field Hand #1. Recognizing David, the workers drop their tools and rush to greet him. He smiles, accepting handshakes, hugs, kisses, and pats on the back. Meanwhile, one of the workers has run toward the Chase house with the news.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY

In the kitchen, several WOMEN, Sarah included, are involved with various cooking chores. The Worker rushes in, panting. The women stop their work, turning their worried faces to the frantic messenger.

WORKER
Come quick!! Mr. David Chase, he's come
back!! He's outside!!

For a brief moment, the ladies stand staring and incredulous, before rushing excitedly out of the kitchen. Sarah slowly stops kneading her bread and moves methodically to the sink, where she begins washing her hands.

EXT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY

Everyone crowds around David, talking excitedly as he slowly makes his way to the house. Earl jumps on his back.

EARL
You got big!

DAVID
(laughs)
War'll do that to you.

FIELD HAND #2
We thought you were dead!

David smiles, shaking his head. His older sister Catherine pushes her way through the crowd.

DAVID
(sees her)
Catherine...

She hugs him tightly, tears in her eyes. He pulls back from the hug to look at her, wiping the tears from her cheeks.

DAVID
(smiles)
Don't cry. Where's my other sister?

His younger sister, Mary, now pushes her way through the crowd and hugs him also. He laughs.

MARY
Uncle Dan married Sarah's mom!

DAVID
(smiles)
I know, sweet roll, I heard about it.

Uncle Dan approaches from the barn, and the gathering parts to let his large frame pass through to David. David sets his younger sister down as Uncle Dan takes off his work gloves and wipes his brow.

UNCLE DAN
(evenly)
Your mother and father died.

DAVID
Yes.

UNCLE DAN
Your wife has suffered, David.

David looks down for a moment.

DAVID
I know, I--I'm sorry.
(looks up)
I want to start over again, all over again.
I want to make it up to all of you. Please,
you've got to forgive me.

Uncle Dan regards David coolly. Undaunted, David moves and embraces his uncle. Uncle Dan remains unresponsive for a moment, his hands at his side, but then he suddenly grasps David firmly, overcome by emotion. Finally, Uncle Dan pulls back from the hug to look at David.

UNCLE DAN

It's good to see you.

DAVID

(smiles, relieved)

You don't know how much it means to hear you say that.

Scanning the radiant faces and patting his uncle on the back, David searches for the one face he has yet to greet.

DAVID

(puzzled)

Where's my wife? Where's Sarah?

David looks at the house and begins to move toward it slowly. He breaks into sprint, stopping abruptly as he reaches the front door.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY

Sarah hears David enter the front door, and listens as his steps come down the hallway toward the kitchen. She slowly backs up against the sink. He enters the kitchen cautiously, his head slightly bowed, so that it almost seems he is looking up at her. He moves close to her, his eyes filled with emotion. She is breathing heavily.

DAVID

My wife is beautiful.

They look deeply into each other's eyes, then David falls to his knees, embracing her around the waist. He presses his face against the front of her dress. Sarah begins to cry as she gently tousles his hair.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

In the dining room, every member of both families is present and eating with enthusiasm. Those who can't get a seat at the table simply stand with their plates in hand. The talk is loud and happy.

UNCLE DAN

Bet you don't get meals like this in the Army!

DAVID

You can't get a meal like this anywhere in Europe! Really! But if you could just see some of those cities! I wish I could see the looks on your faces if I took you to Paris or London, cities where millions of people live! You couldn't imagine! Churches as big as this town! Trains that run all through the city, underground! It's incredible. I mean, all the cities had been occupied by the Germans and bombed pretty badly, but!

He reaches into a bag by his feet and pulls out a small vial.

DAVID

That didn't keep me from getting a bottle of the finest, most expensive French perfume for my lovely wife!

Sarah takes the vial, smiling quietly, as the family crowds in for a closer look at the imported gift.

DAVID

No one will ever confuse you with the livestock again!

Everyone laughs. Sarah puts her hand over his.

CATHERINE

You were so young when you left.

DAVID

(shrugs)

Now I'm old and I've come back.

Laughter again. Earl raises a glass of milk.

EARL

A toast! To the return of David Chase!!

Everybody toasts and cheers.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

Most of the family members are now reclining in the living room, digesting their food and talking animatedly. David's exploits having been exhausted for the moment, most of the conversation revolves around what shocking dress someone wore to church, who so and so is seeing, and how deplorable black people are. The only two people not involved in this gossip fest are David and Sarah, albeit for different reasons. David is sitting at the old upright piano, playing the first of the Trois Gymnopedies, by Erik Satie, and Sarah is watching him intently. The piano has probably not been tuned since just before the turn of the century, but somehow, David has used that fact to his advantage, and the piece sounds even more mournful than perhaps was intended.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

The house is now silent, save for the noises of its occupants preparing for bed. David is rummaging about the downstairs as Sarah's mother descends the steps to the living room. She watches him a moment before speaking.

SARAH'S MOTHER

David, are you looking for something?

David looks up, smiling.

DAVID

Yes, where are you hiding the blankets these days?

SARAH'S MOTHER

Why, they're up in the linen chest, where they've always been.

DAVID
(shakes his head)
I could've sworn they were down here!
(laughs)
Shell shocked, I guess.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

David enters the bedroom carrying blankets and extra pillow. Sarah sits on the edge of the bed, tired from the day's excitement. Shutting the door, David grins, then deposits the blankets and pillow on the bed. He turns to Sarah and slowly takes her into his arms. He looks at her closely and carefully.

DAVID
(smiling)
Family hasn't changed.

He puts his hand up to her face, lightly tracing the contours of her cheek with his finger. Continuing down, he traces the line of her neck, then brings his other hand up and begins to unfasten her dress.

SARAH
(timidly)
Can we turn the lights off?

DAVID
(smiles)
Sure.

He moves to the door, turning off the overhead light, while she moves to the side of the bed by the window. The room is now illuminated solely by the bluish cast of the moonlight, which spills through the open window. Now on opposite sides of the room, they begin to undress, looking into each other's eyes, anticipating what will be revealed. They stand for a moment, naked. David smiles, then goes to the closet. Sarah slips into bed. From the closet he takes the long johns Sarah had made for him nine years earlier. He moves to the foot of the bed, laying them out against his body.

DAVID
Perfect.

SARAH

(smiles)

You're not going to wear them tonight, are you?

DAVID

(smiles back)

Well, I don't know...

He crosses to his side of the bed and slips under the covers. The long johns drop to the floor. As he snuggles up next to her, they look at each other for a moment, then, leaning forward, he kisses her on the lips for the first time. She responds eagerly, as though making up for lost time. He kisses her face, neck, shoulders, and breasts, then lets his hand reach down between her thighs, where he begins to massage her under the covers. Unsure of her desires, she tenses momentarily, but as David strokes her gently, she closes her eyes, surrendering to the feelings of warmth and excitement. Inadvertently, she cries out. They both stop for a moment, and Sarah looks at David, smiling guiltily. With his free hand, he grabs the extra pillow and hands it to her. Puzzled, she looks at it, and he motions for her to put the pillow over her mouth. She looks at him, places the pillow over her face, and immediately bursts into a fit of laughter. David smiles and moves under the covers in order to give more personal attention to her lower abdomen. Sarah lies back, continuing to laugh.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

In the next room, Sarah's mother lies awake listening to the noise generated by David and Sarah. Uncle Dan is fast asleep.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY

Sheriff Turner and Sarah have moved to the kitchen, where Sarah is making more coffee, and the Sheriff continues to deplete his package of Lucky Strikes.

SHERIFF

So, everybody recognized him?

SARAH

Everybody.

SHERIFF

And you? What did you think?

SARAH

I recognized him as soon as I saw him.

SHERIFF

And he recognized everybody?

SARAH

(sitting down)

Everyone that he would have known, I mean, there were some people that were just toddlers when he left, but everybody else, he recognized. He just settled right in.

EXT. THE FIELDS -- DAY

David is hustling about the farm, seeming to do the work of three men, always jovial, always courteous. His Uncle Dan and the other workers have obviously taken to him.

SARAH

(voice over)

He worked so hard. We did better the following two years than ever before. We had a baby daughter the following summer, in '47. Sally. It was perfect.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

David tucks his daughters into bed, then goes to his own bedroom, where Sarah is waiting for him. They begin to kiss passionately.

EXT. THE FIELDS -- DAY

It is late in the day, and Earl is repairing a piece of downed fence along the outermost edge of the farm. TWO BUMS approach along the road. They stop about fifteen yards away from Earl, and talk amongst themselves, as David comes up to Earl with a tall glass of water.

DAVID

There you go, Earl. Don't wanna dry yourself out.

EARL

(smiles)

Thanks.

David pats Earl on the back. The two bums advance as David starts to walk away. Earl looks at them while he sips his water, and David looks back over his shoulder for a moment, the continues toward the house. One of the bums comes up to the fence.

BUM #1

Say, buddy, you couldn't share a little of that water, could you?

Earl shakes his head, no.

BUM #1

You sure? 'Cause me and my pal, we're headin' for Tulsa, and we ain't had a drop of water all day.

EARL

There's a public fountain in town.

BUM #1

How far is that?

EARL

(thinks)

About two miles.

Earl takes another sip of water, some of it running down his chin. The bum looks a little miffed.

BUM #1

Say, who was that fella that give you that water?

EARL

He's the owner. He owns this land.

BUM #1

He owns it!?

The two bums look at each other, Bum # 1 shaking his head.

BUM #1

(musing)

Boy, I'll tell you what. He's come a long way from bein' a St. Louis punk, that's for sure.

EARL

Mr. Chase ain't from St. Louis, he's from right here in Claremore.

BUM #1

Mr. Chase? Him?

EARL

(nods)

Yeah! Mr. David Chase! I knowed him all my my life, he was born right here.

BUM #1

Well, I hate to be the one to set you straight, friend, but Mr. David Chase got his leg blown off in Normandy, and I know what I'm talking about, because I was in his company.

Earl shakes his head.

EARL

That ain't right.

BUM #1

(vehement)

That there is Richie Robertson, from St. Louis.

EARL

Isn't.

BUM #1

How would you know? You couldn't count to five if I spotted you four.

Earl throws the rest of his water into the bum's face. Bum #2 starts to make a move toward Earl, who quickly brandishes his big pair of wire cutters. Bum #1 puts a hand on his friend's

(CONT'D) shoulder, silently restraining him. Bum #2 backs down. Earl continues to hold the wire cutters in a cocked position.

EARL
Maybe you oughta be goin', mister.

BUM #1
Yeah, maybe.

The two bums begin to move away slowly.

BUM #1
Thanks for the water, friend.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

David and Sarah are in the hallway upstairs, having just tucked their daughters in bed. Sarah heads for the bedroom, but David grabs her arm, and, indicating for her to be quiet, leads her down the stairs.

EXT. THE FIELDS -- NIGHT

David runs, leading Sarah to the pond that lies near the edge of the property.

DAVID
Full moon tonight, anything can happen!

David takes off his clothes and dives into the water, Sarah following. As they swim playfully in the water, someone watches from the brush surrounding the pond.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

In the living room, Uncle Dan is sitting in the arm chair, looking very impatient, while a nervous Earl stands in front of him. The elder Mrs. Chase (Sarah's mother) sits on the couch, wearing her bathrobe.

UNCLE DAN
(exasperated)
Earl, when is this gonna get interesting?

EARL

(very excited)

That's what I'm gettin' to! Then he said, he said that wasn't David, that was some Robertson guy, some guy from St. Louis, not David, and that David had got his leg blowed off in the war, and that he knew because he was in the same company as David was. But he said that David wasn't David, but some Robertson guy!

UNCLE DAN

Earl, now settle down. What did these men look like?

EARL

(hesitates)

Well...

UNCLE DAN

Did they ask you for anything?

Earl nods.

UNCLE DAN

What did they ask you for?

EARL

(embarrassed)

They wanted some of the water I was drinkin'. That David brought me.

UNCLE DAN

That David brought you, exactly. Earl, these men were just two common bums, lookin' for a free ride. When you didn't give 'em one, they decided to try and get your goat. And it looks like they did.

Earl silently nods.

UNCLE DAN

This is just like that time you bought "powdered water" from that man downtown and spent six months' allowance. I swear, Earl, I think your head's made out of solid wood sometimes. You don't go believin' some story from a stranger, especially from a bum, especially when it's about kin. Now, you hear me?

EARL

(dejected)

Yes, sir.

UNCLE DAN

All right. Now get on to bed.

EXT. THE POND -- NIGHT

David, having just gotten out of the water, is starting to put his pants back on. Sarah continues to swim.

SARAH

Are you through already?

DAVID

(laughs)

Boy, there's no satisfying you, is there?

SARAH

(smiling)

No.

David looks down for his shirt, but can't find it. Then somebody hands it to him. It's one of the bums Earl encountered earlier in the day. Sarah, unaware of the bum's presence, prepares to get out of the water.

BUM #1

(looking out at Sarah)

Done pretty well for yourself, eh, Rich?

DAVID

(to Sarah)

Don't get out! Stay in the water!

SARAH
(scared)
What's wrong?

DAVID
(turns to the bum)
Get off my land before I break your neck.

BUM #1
(putting out his hands)
Sure, Rich, anything you say. I was
thinkin', though, maybe it's worth somethin'
to keep this quiet. You know, just enough
for a coupla beers.

DAVID
(extremely upset)
Maybe you didn't hear me. If you don't turn
around and march off this property right
now, I'm gonna tear you a new asshole.

The bum shrugs, turning to leave, then looks back toward Sarah.

BUM #1
(calling out to her)
Lot nicer than David, isn't he?

David leaps on him and immediately pins him to the ground. He
raises his fist, preparing to punch the bum in the jaw.

DAVID
(trying to control himself)
Look, I don't know who you are, or what
you're talking about, but you're gonna be
swallowing teeth in a minute if you don't
get your ass outta here.

The bum, realizing the intensity of David's anger, backs down.
He nods his head quickly. David lets him up, and the bum starts
moving away.

BUM# 1
(from a safe distance)
See ya, Rich!

David makes a motion like he's going to chase him, and the bum immediately breaks into a run, tripping over a branch. He gets up quickly and stumbles away into the darkness as Sarah gets out of the water and grabs her clothes.

SARAH
(frightened)
Who was that?

David shakes his head.

DAVID
I don't know.

EXT. THE FIELDS -- DAY

The Harvest. The harvest is a time that requires both immense effort and immense cooperation. Work starts at dawn and ends at last light. In order to cover the amount of work to be done, farms must share labor with neighboring farms, and on a given day, a farm may have well over a hundred people working to harvest the wheat, oats, and corn. Today is the day for the Chase/Miller farm to harvest, and WORKERS dot the countryside, along with THRESHING MACHINES, TRACTORS, and HAY BAILERS. Men with scythes follow along behind the heavy equipment, cutting manually the crops the machines have missed. It is a truly massive operation, and the size of the harvest grows steadily as the sun makes its way across the sky. David has been working at full tilt all day, prompting one worker to comment, "Ain't no flies on that boy!" The sun soon begins to set, as David stands with his Uncle Dan, looking at the land that has yielded its crop today.

EXT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DUSK

After thanking the workers, David and Uncle Dan turn and head toward the house. They look tired, but satisfied, having done a fruitful day's labor. Uncle Dan has his arm around David's shoulders.

DAVID
You know, someday we'll have to sit down and figure out how much money my land made while I was gone.

His Uncle laughs, and looks at David, who is smiling, but definitely serious. Uncle Dan's hand slides off David's shoulder.

UNCLE DAN

Are you serious?

DAVID

This is my land. It generated a profit while I was gone. That money belongs to me. I figure it's around seven thousand dollars.

UNCLE DAN

(angered)

You son of a bitch.

DAVID

(surprised)

What's wrong? Legally, this land belongs to me.

UNCLE DAN

(barely restrained)

Who protected this land of yours while you were gone? Who protected your wife and child while you were gone? I did! You've got some balls bringin' this up, David.

DAVID

(coolly)

You know I've got the law on my side. I need that money. This is rich oil country, there might be oil on this land. And I want to find out.

UNCLE DAN

(moves closer)

You wanna tear up your father's land to look for oil? Well, you go get the law that's "on your side", 'cause that's the only way you'll get any money out of me.

DAVID

I don't think you're being very reasonab--

Uncle Dan attacks David and pushes him to the ground, preparing to fight. A couple of WORKERS see the commotion and run over to restrain Uncle Dan, whose rage is becoming uncontrollable. David is too stunned by his uncle's behavior to do anything. Uncle Dan fights clear to throw one punch, knocking David down. After a brief struggle, the workers manage a stronger hold on Uncle Dan, who, still straining to break free, points a finger at David.

UNCLE DAN
(screams)
You son of a bitch!

David looks up at him, bruised and bewildered.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY

Sarah, Sarah's mother, and David's sisters are in the kitchen, doing their baking chores. Uncle Dan has apparently come in for a glass of water, since his clothes are soaked and dirty from working. He stands in the midst of the four women, who feign a profound interest in their tasks.

UNCLE DAN
(continuing)
Yeah, everybody recognized him, sure.
Everybody always talkin' about how they
recognized him right off. Even Sarah!

Uncle Dan walks over toward Sarah.

UNCLE DAN
(to Sarah)
Well, what if we were wrong!
(to everyone)
He's changed! He's changed a lot!
(pause)
And do you think he'll stop if he gets
something out of me? Hell no. It'll be you
next, then you, then you, until he's stolen
everything off your back. And left your eyes
for you to cry with.

Sarah looks at the rest of the women, her mother in particular, but they remain silent. She looks at Uncle Dan, her eyes ablaze.

SARAH

Haven't you got any decency left?

She leaves the room, fighting back tears.

INT. MAIL ORDER HOUSE AND STORE -- DAY

Dressed in his Sunday Best, David enters the cluttered and dusty store, heading directly for the salesperson, MR. HOBBS, a very old man with an unfailingly pleasant demeanor.

DAVID

(smiling)

Mr. Hobbs, how are you today?

MR. HOBBS

(smiling back)

Well, David, I'm doin' just fine! Just fine!
How are you? How's that darling Sally?
Oh, she's a picture, that one!

DAVID

She's doing very well, thanks. How's Mrs.
Hobbs?

MR. HOBBS

Oh, she's fine, David, just fine. So, what
can I do you for?

DAVID

Well, I'll tell you, I think I'm about due
for a new pair of dress shoes.

David and Mr. Hobbs look down at David's black wing tips, which are badly scuffed and tattered.

MR. HOBBS

Boy, I'll say. What kind you interested in?

DAVID

Oh, same kind, same color. The style is
fine, I just want a pair with a little less
character.

MR. HOBBS

Gotcha. Well, let me write you out an order
form here.

Mr. Hobbs takes out his booklet of Sears and Roebuck order forms. Thumbing through a catalog, he gets the product number and color of the shoe, then skips over to the informational section of the order form and begins to write.

MR. HOBBS

Let's see -- Chase, David. Gosh, you know, I remember the day you ordered that pair.

DAVID

(surprised)

Really?

MR. HOBBS

(nods)

Yep. It was the day after New Year's, 1936. Your Daddy wanted to make sure they were here in time for your wedding. Spilled ink on your Daddy's check, you were so nervous.

David smiles as Mr. Hobbs looks back down at his order form.

MR. HOBBS

Let's see. Black, twelve and a half, wasn't it?

DAVID

No, it's nine.

MR. HOBBS

(puzzled)

You sure? 'Coulda sworn it was twelve and a half.

DAVID

(laughs, looking down)

Well, these are nines, and they fit me like a glove.

MR. HOBBS

Well, how about that.

(laughs)

You would know, I guess! All righty, well, that comes to \$10.96, total.

David writes out the check and hands it to Mr. Hobbs.

DAVID

There you go.

MR. HOBBS

Okay, David, thank you, and you take care, now. Say hi to that pretty wife of yours for me! I'll get this right out!

DAVID

(smiles)

Okay. 'Preciate it.

EXT. MAIN STREET IN CLAREMORE -- DAY

David walks down the street, errand list in hand, trying to keep his hat from being blown off by a strong wind. Seeing that the feed store is first on the list, he begins to cross the street en route to Barney's Feed Store. As he steps off the curb, however, a pickup truck honks and pulls up next to him. Uncle Dan and Earl sit in the cab.

UNCLE DAN

(smiles)

David, you got a minute?

DAVID

(suspicious)

Maybe.

UNCLE DAN

(sincere)

I just wanted to apologize for the other day. I really lost my head. Pressure of the harvest, you know. I didn't mean it, really. I'm sorry.

DAVID

(evenly)

All right.

UNCLE DAN

So, I got to thinkin', maybe you were right about the land and all, and I'd better give you what I owed you, 'cause it would look bad, kin takin' kin to court.

DAVID

That's good, Dan. I'm glad to hear it.

UNCLE DAN

Did your Daddy ever tell you where he used to hide money?

DAVID

(thinks)

No, he didn't.

UNCLE DAN

Well, he used to hide it in the upper corner of the hay loft in a sealed Mason jar. Thousands of dollars!

DAVID

You're kidding!

UNCLE DAN

No! So, look, I figured we'd meet there, just the two of us, before dawn tomorrow morning, and I'd pay up.

DAVID

(nods, thinking)

Sounds good to me.

UNCLE DAN

Great. You need a lift back?

DAVID

No, thanks, I've got the truck. Got some errands to run.

UNCLE DAN

(smiles)

Okay. See you tomorrow.

DAVID

Okay.

EARL

Bye Dave!

David gives a small wave as the pickup pulls away.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

David and Sarah are preparing for bed, Sarah visibly upset.

SARAH

They don't have anything better to do than sit around and tell tales all day.

DAVID

Well, hon, now, you know if gossip lowered the temperature this whole town would be living in igloos. Just don't pay any attention.

SARAH

(still upset)

It's hard not to pay attention when it's about us.

DAVID

Don't worry. Uncle Dan will straighten everything out.

SARAH

How do you figure that?

DAVID

We had a talk, and he's gonna take care of everything, you'll see.

SARAH

(skeptical)

When?

DAVID

Soon, soon, now come on, it's time for your lesson.

SARAH

(moans)

Oh, David, it's past nine o'clock, can't we just go to bed?

David puts his hands on her shoulders and leads her over to the table by the window.

DAVID

We'll just do a little tonight. This is important. You're a lady, and ladies should write with a lady's hand.

She sighs, smiling, and sits down at the desk, David hovering over her shoulder. She begins to write the letters of the alphabet on a sheet of paper, and indeed, her cursive handwriting is quite impressive, a far cry from the scrawl she learned and used as a youth. Continuing, she writes out her signature several times. David beams, kissing her on the cheek.

INT. CHASE BARN -- BEFORE DAWN

David walks into the barn, where his Uncle Dan is already waiting for him.

UNCLE DAN

(smiles)

So, you made it.

DAVID

(nods, smiling in return)

I made it.

UNCLE DAN

Come to get what's yours, eh?

Puzzled by the strange choice of words, David looks around, but sees nobody.

UNCLE DAN

Oh, it's all yours.

(looks upward)

Right where I said it would be.

David hesitates before approaching the ladder that leads to the loft. He climbs slowly toward the top. Once near the top, however, he feels moisture with his hands, and notices bits of dewy grass clinging to the rungs, as though someone had very recently climbed the ladder. He turns back to look at Uncle Dan.

DAVID

Hey, these rungs are--

Just then, Earl jumps out of the hay in front of David, yelling and brandishing a large wooden stick. David turns around just in time to get hit full in the face with the swinging lumber. There is a brutal crack, and the force of the blow knocks David backwards, bringing the ladder over with him. He hits the barn floor with a sickening thud. Silence. David doesn't move or open his eyes. Earl looks over the edge of the loft.

EARL

Is he dead?

Uncle Dan slowly circles David's body.

UNCLE DAN

I don't know.

He kneels and puts his ear to David's chest for a moment, then stands up.

UNCLE DAN

No, he's not dead. Not yet.

He walks over to a tool rack and pulls down a scythe. Sarah enters the barn in time to see Uncle Dan moving toward David with the scythe in his hand. Too frightened even to scream, she makes a mad dash for David as Uncle Dan raises the scythe above his head.

EARL

Hey!

Sarah dives on top of David, covering his body, just as the scythe starts its downward motion. Checking his swing at the last possible moment, he barely avoids killing Sarah.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY

Sheriff Turner looks up from his note pad at Sarah, still in the throes of remembering the event.

SHERIFF

You were ready to die for him?

SARAH

Yes.

SHERIFF

Why didn't you go for help?

SARAH

(snapping out of the memory)

Oh, I was scared. And I knew it was David.
I didn't think I needed to go to anybody.
I thought that would be the end of it.

SHERIFF

You never doubted that he was David?

She thinks for a moment, her eyes beginning to water.

SARAH

(struggles)

There was a time, about a month ago, when
people were talking so much, I thought about
it. I thought maybe he fooled me, too. Then
my child would be a bastard and I would go
to hell.

She pauses, not wanting to burst into tears.

SARAH

But then I thought, it just couldn't be
possible. He couldn't fool me. I was just
letting the gossip upset me. I have no
doubts. He is my husband.

Closing his note pad, the Sheriff looks at her for a moment,
then gets up to leave. After a brief period of contemplation, he
crosses the living room, saying nothing.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- DAY

David sits in a chair in the Sheriff's office, looking fairly
worn, the reminders of the beating still evident. The Sheriff
enters.

SHERIFF

I'm takin' you home.

David, sighing, gets up from the chair.

EXT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- DAY

Sheriff Turner pulls up in the police car with David. Sarah emerges from the Chase house, and within minutes, almost everyone from both houses, including Uncle Dan and Earl, have gathered around David and the Sheriff. Sarah moves forward to David and hugs him.

SHERIFF

While you're all here, let me clear this thing up. I have found no reason to believe that this man is not David Chase. Now, I'm not a lawyer, I'm just the Sheriff, but I know there's been a lot more than just talkin' goin' on out here, and I'd say Mr. Chase is owed money for his land, and is within his rights to charge a couple of you with assault.

The Sheriff shifts his gaze to Uncle Dan, who stares icily back at the Sheriff.

But that's his affair. Like I said, I'm not a lawyer. But, as Sheriff of Claremore, I consider this matter officially closed. Now if you fellas want to take this thing up in court, you're gonna have to go to Tulsa anyway, so hear this: I don't want any more disturbance from anybody in my town. You got me? You get yourself some lawyers and settle it where they handle this kind of thing, if you have a mind to. Am I understood?

There are silent nods from most of the people present. A skeptical Uncle Dan subtly shakes his head and smiles.

SHERIFF

All right, then.

The Sheriff tips his hat and gets into the police car. David and Sarah head toward the house while the people disperse quietly. Uncle Dan and Earl remain in the yard, watching the others leave.

UNCLE DAN

(to Earl)

We're gonna take a little trip.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

In the bathroom, Sarah bathes David in a tubful of hot water. He shuts his eyes as she gently cleans his bruised body with a wash cloth.

INT. CHASE FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

David and Sarah are lying in their bed. Sarah watches David as he looks at the ceiling. Quietly, she moves over to lie on top of him. She begins to kiss him, slowly at first, then more passionately. He responds, caressing her back and neck. Sarah moves to a more upright position, and as David enters her, she writhes her hips in time with his movement.

INT. MILLER FARMHOUSE -- MORNING

A DEPUTY from the Tulsa City Police stands at the front door, asking Caroline if she would go get her parents. David and Sarah come to the door.

DEPUTY

Excuse me, I'm from the Tulsa City Police, and I have a warrant for the arrest of a Mr. David Andrew Chase, who is supposed to live at this address.

DAVID

(calmly)

I'm David Chase.

DEPUTY

Sir, I have to place you under arrest.

DAVID

What are the charges?

The Deputy looks down at his warrant.

DEPUTY

Uh, personation, public fraud, adultery, and intent to fraud.

David doesn't like the sound of this any more.

DAVID

Who is charging me?

DEPUTY

Mr. Daniel James Chase. I've got an affidavit here signed by you, Mrs. Chase, saying the charges are true.

David literally can't believe it. He grabs the affidavit out of the Deputy's hands. Her name is signed in block letters. He looks at her, totally confused.

DAVID

Did you sign this?

Sarah says nothing, choosing instead to stare at the floor. David looks at the Deputy.

DAVID

This is a forgery.

DEPUTY

Mr. Chase, I'm sorry, but I'm just here to place you under arrest and escort you to Tulsa. I also have subpoenas here for your -
- wife and, uh --

The Deputy briefly looks through a handful of subpoenas.

DEPUTY

Several other members of the household, in fact.

David looks at Sarah again.

DAVID

(pleading)

Did you sign this?

EXT. MILLER FARMHOUSE -- MORNING

The police car pulls away from the house. David rides in the rear. He turns around behind him and sees most of the family standing on the porch. Caroline and Sally wave to him. David turns back around angrily to look at the road before him.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS IN TULSA -- DAY

David sits in the judge's chambers with THE JUDGE. The Judge is probably in his late fifties, a little heavy set, with wire-rimmed glasses. Although he talks in a drawl, it's obvious he's a smart cookie, content to let the "good 'ol boy" exterior fool most folks. He also has a weary air about him, and a feeling of tremendous integrity. At the moment, he is glancing at David's case file. He sets it down, glancing at David over his glasses.

JUDGE

Well, this is definitely the most unusual case I've had in quite a while. Papers like it, too.

He directs David's attention to the most recent newspaper, which has a front-page article about the upcoming trial.

JUDGE

Admittedly, it's a little unorthodox for us to have this little meeting, but I don't mind telling you, if we could make an out of court settlement, I'd be very pleased.

DAVID

(unmoved)

I want this case to go to trial in public.

JUDGE

(sighs, rising)

You've been accused of the same crime that you were unofficially accused of just a week ago. There's an affidavit signed by your wife--

DAVID

It's a forgery.

JUDGE

Then why did she let them arrest you?

DAVID

She was scared. They might hurt her.

JUDGE
(interested)
She's been threatened, in your opinion?

DAVID
Several times.

JUDGE
(pointing)
But here she says that you are not David Chase!

DAVID
They forced her! If you can guarantee her safety, she'll tell you!

JUDGE
She'll be in a court of law, Mr. Chase, on public trial, under oath. You'd better hope she feels safe there.
(pause)
There is a large amount of testimony against you. I think you should reconsider about getting a lawyer.

DAVID
I don't need a lawyer to prove who I am.

The Judge walks back over to his desk and flips through David's file again.

JUDGE
When were you married?

DAVID
March 12th, 1936. Sarah's uncle, Reverend Miller, married us.

JUDGE
What was the Clerk of Court's name, the one that wrote up the dowry?

DAVID
Bickley.

The Judge closes the file and sits down.

JUDGE

You've turned into a loving husband. That's quite a turnaround, if I understand correctly.

DAVID

(looks down)

If I had known my wife better, I would never have left.

JUDGE

These are serious charges, Mr. Chase. You could face a substantial jail term. Especially in this part of the country.

DAVID

(suddenly angered)

It's my uncle! He's doing this! I was perfectly legal until I wanted my money! Before that, there was no problem, everybody knew me and recognized me!

JUDGE

And now the same people say you are an impostor.

DAVID

My uncle will do anything not to hand over money.

The Judge stands and motions David to the door.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

The Judge leads David over to two WORMY GUYS, who are seated on a bench. They seem to recognize David. Despite their seedy appearance, they look reasonably sincere, as though they've just had some bad luck. The Judge directs their attention to David.

JUDGE

Do you know this man?

They both nod.

JUDGE

What is his name?

WORMY GUY #1

Robertson.

DAVID

(incredulous)

These men are paid liars! Why would I lie about who I am?

JUDGE

To have a house and a wife?

DAVID

But they are already mine!

(sighs, exasperated)

I've been in the war, I've lived through worse than this. I want to work my land and live with my family.

(pause)

We'll go into the court and settle this once and for all, with everyone present.

INT. HOTEL IN TULSA -- NIGHT

Sarah sits on the edge of her bed in her hotel room. Caroline and Sally are asleep beside her. A radio plays outside, and Artie Shaw's "September Song" drifts in through the window.

INT. JAIL CELL IN TULSA -- NIGHT

David sits in his cell, writing furiously. The same music Sarah is hearing can be heard from a radio in the jailhouse.

INT. TULSA COURTROOM -- DAY

And as David foretold, everyone is present, seemingly. The place is packed with people, most of them with copies of the latest newspaper on their laps. Light streams through the large bank of windows that line one side of the courtroom. There are two tables that sit in front of the judge's bench. At left sits Uncle Dan and his LAWYER, a young, professional-looking, and very serious man, and at right sits David, alone.

(CONT'D) The stenographer is typing methodically as Uncle Dan's lawyer questions the witness, the Reverend Charles Miller. With few exceptions, questions are asked from a seated position.

LAWYER

And how long have you been involved in the church, Reverend?

REVEREND

23 years.

LAWYER

And you married Sarah Jane Miller, your niece, to David Andrew Chase?

REVEREND

Yes, that's correct.

LAWYER

And you have reason to believe that the accused is not David Chase?

REVEREND

Yes.

LAWYER

Will you tell us on what grounds?

REVEREND

Simply on physical appearance. When David was a boy, he had drooping eyes, a slightly cleft chin, and he had a sort of stooped walk. That's just a few things. This man has none of those characteristics.

LAWYER

So, in your opinion, this gentleman is not the same David Andrew Chase that you have known since birth, that you personally married to your niece, Sarah Jane Miller?

REVEREND

No, it is not.

LAWYER

Thank you, Reverend.

INT. TULSA COURTROOM -- DAY

Uncle Dan's lawyer now has Mr. Hobbs on the stand.

LAWYER

Mr. Hobbs, when David Chase ordered a pair of black wing tipped shoes as a sixteen-year-old boy, what size did he order?

MR. HOBBS

(a bit nervous)

Size twelve and a half.

LAWYER

And two months ago, at age 29, a fully grown "David Chase" orders an identical pair of shoes for himself. What size did he order?

MR. HOBBS

Size nine.

The crowd responds with a low murmur.

LAWYER

I see. Mr. Hobbs, in your 42 years of handling almost all of the shoe business in Claremore, have you ever seen a boy's foot shrink as he grew into manhood?

MR. HOBBS

No sir, I haven't.

The lawyer picks up two Sears and Roebuck order slips, one very old, one brand new.

LAWYER

Your honor, I would like these two order slips entered into the record as evidence. Thank you, Mr. Hobbs.

Again, a low rumble from the crowd as Mr. Hobbs steps down. David shows no emotion.

INT. TULSA COURTROOM -- DAY

An old MATRONLY WOMAN that we have seen around the Chase/Miller farm is on the stand. David questions her.

DAVID

Miss Miller, are you related to the Reverend Charles Miller?

MISS MILLER

Yes, I am, I'm his sister.

DAVID

How long have you known me?

MISS MILLER

Since you were born.

DAVID

Do you agree with what your brother said about my not looking like the "young David Chase"?

She looks over to her brother for a moment, who does not look pleased.

MISS MILLER

No, I don't.

A wave of response from the crowd.

DAVID

Why don't you agree with your brother?

MISS MILLER

I never knowed you to have any kind of cleft in your chin, I don't remember your eyes droopin' none, and I don't recall you walkin' stooped over, neither.

DAVID

Are there any marks you can identify?

MISS MILLER

Well, I know when you were eight years old you busted your head on a fence post and gave yourself a scar right up on the top of your forehead.

DAVID

Is the scar still there?

MISS MILLER

Well, I don't know. Let me check.

David gets up from his seat and goes to stand in front of Miss Miller and the Judge. The crowd is dying with anticipation as she searches David's hairline. Indeed, there is a scar.

JUDGE

(to stenographer)

Record will show the defendant has the scar described by the witness.

Another wave of response from the crowd.

DAVID

Miss Miller, do you think the Reverend would remember that incident?

MISS MILLER

(light chuckle)

Well, he should. He carried you to the house!

The Reverend tries his best to keep cool while the crowd responds to this piece of news. David turns back to Miss Miller.

DAVID

Miss Miller, while I'm standing, are there any other marks you might be able to identify?

MISS MILLER

(thinks)

Well, I know that when you were thirteen, you got hit with an axe handle, and broke two of your back teeth.

David opens his mouth for Miss Miller, then the Judge.

JUDGE

(to stenographer)

Record will show the defendant has two cracked rear teeth as described by the witness.

The crowd has almost been shocked into silence.

DAVID

Miss Miller, do you remember the shoes I wore on my wedding day?

MISS MILLER

Yes, I do.

DAVID

What do you remember about them?

MISS MILLER

(thinks)

Well, they were black, and you know-- whatchamacallit, wing tipped, that's it.

DAVID

Miss Miller, considering that we lived in separate houses, why do you think you remember the shoes I wore on my wedding day thirteen years ago?

MISS MILLER

Well, I 'spect 'cause on the way to the ceremony you asked to borrow my handkerchief and then split it in two.

DAVID

Why did I do that?

MISS MILLER

To put one piece in each shoe. Your shoes were too big.

The crowd virtually roars, and the judge bangs his gavel.

INT. TULSA COURTROOM -- DAY

Much later. Uncle Dan's lawyer is standing, addressing the judge.

LAWYER

Before calling the next witness, I would like to remind the court that the military induction materials of David Andrew Chase, including fingerprints and photographs, have apparently been stolen from the St. Louis Military Records Office.

There is a slight murmur from the crowd.

JUDGE

The court is aware of this, Mr. Carver.

Not to be outdone, David also stands up.

DAVID

I would like to remind the court that the induction materials of Mr. Richard James Robertson have also been stolen from the Military Records Office, materials that would have proven my true identity, beyond the shadow of a doubt, and--

JUDGE

The court is aware of this also, Mr. Chase. The prosecution will call its witness.

LAWYER

The prosecution calls Mrs. David Chase.

David hears her name just as he was about to sit down. He now does so, slowly, watching her along with everyone else in the courtroom. She approaches the stand to be sworn in.

DAVID

Your honor, if this woman says I am an impostor, I will accept it as the truth and bear the consequences!

LAWYER

Objection!

The judge bangs his gavel to quiet the crowd, which is getting a bit noisy.

JUDGE

Sustained. Mr. Chase, you're speaking out of turn. Your comment will be stricken from the record. If this happens again I'll find you in contempt of court.

But David isn't listening. He is watching the BAILIFF swear in Sarah. She looks as pretty as ever, but around the eyes one can tell that the proceedings have taken their toll on her. The lawyer moves toward her, three pieces of paper in his hand. He stops just a few inches from the witness stand.

LAWYER

(points to David)

Mrs. Chase, is that your husband?

SARAH

(quietly)

Yes.

LAWYER

Mrs. Chase, are you aware of the penalty for perjury?

SARAH

No, I'm not.

LAWYER

Well, perhaps you should be, Mrs. Chase, because I have in my hand a document, signed by you, witnessed by two of your cousins, that states unequivocally that this man is not David Chase!

The crowd is definitely getting interested in this development. The lawyer is really starting to hit his stride now.

LAWYER

The signature on this document, analyzed by a handwriting expert, matches exactly the signature on both your marriage certificate and your wedding dowry! Do you have an explanation for this?

Sarah pauses, the entire courtroom hanging on her response.

SARAH
(quietly)
I didn't sign it.

The crowd murmurs, unable to hear her.

LAWYER
Excuse me, Mrs. Chase, but could you repeat that?

SARAH
(louder)
I didn't sign it. It's a forgery.

The lawyer extends the wedding certificate.

LAWYER
Is this your signature?

SARAH
(looks)
Yes.

The lawyer extends the wedding dowry.

LAWYER
Is this your signature?

SARAH
(looks again)
Yes.

The lawyer extends the affidavit. Uncle Dan leans forward.

LAWYER
Is this your signature?

SARAH
(looks a third time)
No.

The crowd responds as Uncle Dan furrows his brow. The lawyer walks back to his table and picks up a pencil and paper. He brings it over to Sarah.

LAWYER

Mrs. Chase, will you put your signature on this piece of paper for me? And I'm sure you don't need to be reminded that you're under oath.

She nods and takes the materials from him. She signs her name in the fluid cursive style that David has taught her. She hands the paper back to the lawyer. He looks at it, all the color draining from his face. He looks back at Uncle Dan. He slowly hands the paper to the Judge.

SARAH

(to the lawyer)

I've improved my handwriting. I guess I should've told my stepfather earlier.

JUDGE

(hands paper to the bailiff)

Enter this into the record.

David stands up.

DAVID

Your honor, I would like to press charges against Daniel Chase for forgery.

The crowd responds in David's favor.

JUDGE

Mr. Chase, when this trial is over, you may press any charges you wish. Right now, however, you are on trial, and will continue to be until I reach a decision.

DAVID

(disbelieving)

I have to defend myself against someone who forges documents? What kind of justice is that?

The crowd again responds in David's favor. The judge bangs his gavel.

JUDGE

Mr. Chase, there remains other evidence that is neither forged nor perjurious. You are facing charges, serious charges, and I am very close to finding you in contempt, now please sit down!

INT. VACANT OFFICE IN TULSA COURTHOUSE -- DAY

Uncle Dan and his lawyer have just entered. The lawyer shuts the door while Uncle Dan sits down in a chair, tired and hot. The lawyer sets his briefcase down and tries to remain calm.

LAWYER

It is my professional opinion that you have jeopardized the outcome of this case to such an extent that I can no longer represent you.

UNCLE DAN

(wiping his brow)

What are you talking about?

LAWYER

(visibly upset)

Where did you get the idea to falsify that document? He's right, you know, you'll be up for forgery, and you'll lose!

UNCLE DAN

So, we made a mistake.

LAWYER

No, you made a mistake. I don't want to handle this case anymore. I had a bad feeling about it all along, and today you confirmed it.

Uncle Dan rises and walks over to the lawyer.

UNCLE DAN

(evenly)

Listen, I tell you that man is an impostor.

(CONT'D) And I don't care how long, or how much money it takes to prove it, I'm not gonna rest until I see some justice done around here. So, you'd better get your act in gear, 'cause we got a couple more acts to go in this thing.

The lawyer is convinced to go on, partially by the convincing delivery, and partially by the fact he is markedly smaller than Uncle Dan.

INT. TULSA COURTHOUSE LADIES ROOM

Sarah sits in a bathroom stall with the door locked. It looks as though she is praying.

INT. TULSA COURTROOM -- DAY

On the stand right now is Field Hand #2, who was first to recognize David. The late afternoon sun spills into the courtroom as David questions him.

DAVID

Were you offered money to kill me?

FIELD HAND #2

(looking down)

Yes.

DAVID

Who offered you the money? Could you point to him?

He points to Uncle Dan. The crowd gasps in surprise. The lawyer shakes his head.

LAWYER

Objection. This is irrelevant, your honor. Daniel Chase is not on trial here.

DAVID

Your honor, I am trying to show that my uncle's reasons for accusing me have mostly to do with greed, not justice.

The Judge thinks for a moment.

JUDGE

I think the questioning has relevance.
Objection overruled.

The crowd gives a quiet response of support in David's favor.
He turns back to the witness.

DAVID

What did my uncle say, exactly?

FIELD HAND #2

He said he wanted me to get rid of you,
to make it look like a farm accident.

(pause)

But you're a second cousin, and I told him
I wouldn't kill a relative. Even for
money.

A GUY in the second row stands up.

GUY

It's true, that's what he said!

The crowd laughs.

INT. TULSA COURTROOM -- DAY

A FEMALE COUSIN OF SARAH'S is on the stand, and being questioned
by David. We have seen her around the house many times.

DAVID

Did my uncle tell my wife to accuse me?

SARAH'S COUSIN

(a bit frightened)

Yes.

DAVID

What did he say?

She looks at Uncle Dan, then looks away quickly, not wanting to
be scared by him.

SARAH'S COUSIN

He was in the kitchen, and she was in the kitchen, and I heard him say he would kick her out of the house if she didn't accuse you, that you were a thief and a crook. And I peeked in the kitchen and he had his hand raised like he was gonna hit her.

INT. TULSA COURTROOM -- DAY

David's brother-in-law Harmon is on the stand, being questioned by David.

DAVID

Do you remember warning me about my uncle?

HARMON

Yes.

DAVID

The last time we talked, what did you say to me?

HARMON

(thinks)

Uh, I think--boy, where was that?

DAVID

By the silo.

LAWYER

Objection!

JUDGE

Sustained. Witness will answer without assistance.

DAVID

What did you tell me?

HARMON

Well, I told you to be careful because your uncle was out to get you. He had people after you.

David points at Uncle Dan.

DAVID

Yes! He should be on trial here! Not me!
Who cares if Richard Robertson is a St.
Louis thief? I'm not Richard Robertson!

The crowd responds, the Judge once again bangs his gavel.

INT. TULSA COURTROOM -- DAY

Sarah's mother is on the stand, being questioned by Uncle Dan's lawyer. She looks very reserved and austere.

LAWYER

Do you believe that the accused is David Chase?

MRS. CHASE

(firmly)

No sir, I do not.

LAWYER

Could you tell the court why?

MRS. CHASE

I think he's evil. I think he's a Godless creature, and I've thought so since the day he arrived. I think he's got the Devil in him, and he's using the Devil's power to make us believe he's David, but he's not.

The crowd murmurs, considering the comment. The lawyer smiles and hands the witness over to David. David thinks for a moment, then speaks.

DAVID

Now Mrs. Chase, if I am using the Devil's power, why am I here? Why wouldn't I just make all of you believe? Why would I let myself be put on trial, if all I had to do was use the Devil's power to put you under a spell?

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS -- DUSK

The Judge is being helped out of his robes by the bailiff.

BAILIFF

He's clever.

JUDGE

(sighs)

Yeah. They didn't teach me to be that smart when I was in the military, I'll tell you that.

The bailiff hangs up the robes. The Judge sits down for a moment.

JUDGE

(thinking)

I don't know, Doug. My father was a judge, and he told me once that lies have a thousand faces, but the truth has one face. And justice is there to determine the truth.

(pause)

Well, I'd better sleep on it, it any case.

INT. TULSA COURTROOM -- DAY

The judge is cleaning his glasses.

JUDGE

Gentlemen, before I make a ruling, I would like to call one witness to the stand for a second time. Mrs. David Chase.

The crowd is excitedly anticipating the end of the case. David watches as Sarah takes the oath again. The Judge looks at her.

JUDGE

Mrs. Chase, it seems to me that you, more than anyone, would know who your husband is. Is the defendant David Chase?

SARAH

(looks at David)

Yes.

David sends her a private smile with his eyes.

JUDGE

Are you absolutely sure, beyond the shadow of a doubt?

SARAH

(still looking at David)

Yes.

JUDGE

Why are you absolutely sure, Mrs. Chase?

SARAH

(lowers her eyes, pauses)

He knew all about me.

JUDGE

Intimate things only a husband could know?

SARAH

Yes.

JUDGE

For instance?

SARAH

(looks up at David again)

He knew--when I wanted him--where to touch me--and what to say. Before, during, and after.

The crowd is delightfully scandalized. The judge seems satisfied.

JUDGE

Thank you, Mrs. Chase. You may step down.

David watches her return to her seat. The crowd quiets in the anticipation of the Judge's ruling.

JUDGE

It is my opinion that the prosecution has failed to provide proof positive that the defendant is not David Chase. They have not produced one irrefutable piece of physical evidence for their case.

(CONT'D) That is not to say that the testimony of their numerous witnesses was perjurious, just that apparently, these witnesses have false impressions. The defendant, on the other hand, has provided some very convincing physical evidence, has also provided witnesses, and appears to have a clearer memory of his own life than I do of my own.

The crowd chuckles. David and Sarah look at each other, relief in their eyes.

JUDGE

Therefore, it is my ruling at this time that the defendant is innocent of all charges, and should be cleared of all charges, that he is owed a specified sum of money, to be--

The bailiff interrupts the Judge, whispering into his ear. The Judge looks irritated, but the bailiff continues for a few more seconds before stepping down and heading toward the rear of the courtroom. The Judge sighs.

JUDGE

We have one final witness that demands to be heard.

The crowd talks among themselves while the bailiff prepares to open the double doors at the rear of the courtroom. He opens the doors to reveal a STRANGER on crutches. With one leg missing. The stranger slowly makes his way toward the front of the courtroom, while the crowd speculates on who he is. He is blonde, of slender build, and has a very solemn expression on his face. He walks to the front of the courtroom and looks at the Judge.

STRANGER

I am David Chase.

The courtroom erupts. David is shocked, Sarah is concerned, Uncle Dan is smiling, and the Judge is banging his gavel predictably, trying to get quiet. Eventually, the noise lowers.

JUDGE

Will you take the stand, please?

The stranger walks over to the witness stand, and takes the oath from the bailiff. He sits down, holding his crutches beside him. The judge sighs, readying himself to ask more questions.

JUDGE

You are David Chase?

STRANGER

Yes.

JUDGE

(a bit condescending)

Could you give us some background on yourself? In particular, how this situation came about, in your opinion?

STRANGER

I left as a boy, went to St. Louis. I joined up and was in the First Army, D Company. I lost my leg at Normandy. After the war, I went back to St. Louis. I read about this trial in the paper yesterday, thought I'd better come down here.

JUDGE

(pointing at David)

And do you know this man?

STRANGER

Yes, sir. We met in St. Louis, joined up together. Was in the same company. His name's Richard Robertson.

The crowd erupts again. David jumps to his feet.

DAVID

This is absurd!! This is their last chance to try and frame me!!

(points at the stranger)

He's been in St. Louis destroying records, that's where he's been!!

The judge bangs his gavel, calling for order.

JUDGE

Mr. Chase, you will control your outbursts.

(to the stranger) (CONT'D)
Will you identify your wife?

The stranger points to Sarah. David can't believe it.

DAVID
This is an insult!! I've never seen this man before in my life!! Why don't you arrest this hired liar?

JUDGE
Daniel Chase, in your opinion, is the gentleman on the stand David Chase?

UNCLE DAN
Yes, you honor.

JUDGE
You are absolutely sure?

UNCLE DAN
Yes, your honor.

David is apoplectic, to say the least.

DAVID
This is outrageous!! It's perfect timing!! He was hired to come in at the last minute and--

REVEREND
It's the hand of God manifesting itself! I knew the Lord would provide us with th--

DAVID
This is a conspiracy against me by my own family!!

The slowly rising hysteria in the courtroom reaches its peak. The judge bangs his gavel and yells, quieting the unruly crowd.

JUDGE
I will not preside over a debate!

David comes forward, pleading.

DAVID

Your honor, please listen: there are two people in this courtroom who know positively who the real David Chase is. Me--

(points to the stranger)

--and him. If you'll just give me the opportunity to question this man, I will prove he is the impostor.

The Judge thinks for a moment. He looks over to the prosecution.

JUDGE

Does the prosecution object?

Uncle Dan shakes his head. The lawyer shrugs, exasperated.

JUDGE

You may proceed.

It feels like the crowd, as a whole, has stopped breathing, for fear of missing something. David paces a bit, looking at the stranger.

DAVID

Who were the bridesmaids at the wedding?

STRANGER

Catherine and Mary.

DAVID

After the wedding, we drove to City Hall in whose car?

STRANGER

(thinking, straining)

I--I just got off the bus, it was a long trip--

JUDGE

You will answer the question.

STRANGER

Ted Collin's.

DAVID

Wrong!! It was Bart's!! You should be better informed!

David looks over at his Uncle Dan. The stranger frowns, sweating a bit. David turns to question him again.

DAVID

What did Reverend Miller say when we went to see him?

STRANGER

That God was punishing us for something in our past. And we had to find out what it was, and be forgiven.

DAVID

Who saw me in the house the night I left?

STRANGER

Sarah's mother.

David is getting a little tense. He paces a bit more.

DAVID

What did Sarah make for me and leave in the closet?

The stranger furrows his brow. He thinks and thinks. The crowd waits for his answer. But he's having trouble. He shakes his head.

DAVID

Long johns!!

STRANGER

(erupts suddenly)

I told you about those!!

DAVID

No!! I told you about them, don't twist things around!! Arrest this man! I'm David Chase, and he's committing perjury!!

There is a hush in the courtroom.

JUDGE
(to David)
Just a moment. You say you told him?

DAVID
Yes! And now he turns it around!!

JUDGE
But earlier you said you'd never seen him
before.

Sarah shuts her eyes and bows her head slightly. Then she looks up at David, who is looking at her with a strange mixture of fear and relief.

JUDGE
Would the sisters of David Chase come
forward?

David's two sisters approach the bench.

JUDGE
(points to the stranger)
Is this your brother?

The eldest sister looks at him and nods. The youngest says nothing, tears running down her face. The Judge looks at her.

JUDGE
And you?

MARY
(hesitating)
I was too young. I can't tell.

JUDGE
You can both sit down.

They return to their seats.

JUDGE
Mrs. Chase, will you step forward and
identify your husband?

After a moment, Sarah lifts her head, eyes watering. Slowly, she walks past David to the stranger on the witness stand. She kneels before him, sobbing. He is the real David Chase. He looks down at Sarah.

DAVID CHASE

Don't cry. A woman should know her husband. Our house has been dishonored. It's your fault.

ROBERTSON

You shouldn't have neglected her.

DAVID CHASE

(angry)

You betrayed my friendship! You don't deserve any pity!!

ROBERTSON

(appealing to anyone)

What's the harm in caring for a deserted wife?

JUDGE

We await your confession, Mr. Robertson.

Richard Robertson moves back to the defendant's table and sits down.

ROBERTSON

It's true. We met in St. Louis, joined up. Soldiered together. He talked about his wife, his house. One day on the road, two officers mistook me for him. They called me Chase. It gave me an idea. I thought why not try taking his place? He had given me a family snapshot, saying he was never going back. So, I learned all I could. I was right next to him when he got his leg blown off. He was unconscious. I took his dog tags. I went back to Claremore, and I was taken for him.

(pause)

I almost told them "I fooled you!" I'm not David!" I almost said it!!

(pause, looks at Sarah) (CONT'D)
Then I saw you. And I touched you. The next day, it was too late. After that, I learned what I didn't know. From my sisters, uncle, wife. And I remembered it. After a year or so, I realized that someone could check our fingerprints from when we enlisted. So, I went to St. Louis and got into the files.

(half laughs)

I thought I was being too careful.

(looks at David Chase)

You don't deserve her. I know her better than you do.

(looks around)

I ask you all to forgive me.

(looks at Sarah)

And you, who were my wife.

INT. TULSA COURTHOUSE -- DAY

Weeks later. Richard Robertson is standing, about to be sentenced. All the same faces are present, including Sarah, David Chase, and Uncle Dan. The judge looks at his papers, avoiding Robertson's eyes.

JUDGE

Richard Robertson, you have been found guilty on charges of Personation, Public Fraud, Intent to Fraud, Forgery, Perjury, and Adultery. It is my duty to sentence you to not more than thirty years hard labor, to be served at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary commencing immediately.

FADE OUT

EXT. THE FIELDS -- DAY

Weeks later, in Claremore, Sarah is walking toward the mailbox that stands on the corner of the access road that leads to the farmhouses.

As she takes the mail from the box, a car that was apparently parked nearby pulls forward slowly and stops a few feet from her.

(CONT'D) The Judge gets out of the front seat. She looks at him, surprised that he is in this part of the country, and unaccustomed to seeing him in civilian clothes. He smiles lightly as he moves toward her.

JUDGE

(conversational)

I have a sister that lives in town.

Sarah nods. She looks a bit haggard.

JUDGE

(serious)

I need to talk to you for just a moment.

She looks back at the house, sees that nobody is watching, then turns back to the Judge.

SARAH

All right.

The Judge takes his hat off, fingering it in his hands.

JUDGE

(hesitates)

It was my doing that you weren't tried along with Richard. Women are often the victims of men's wickedness. That's why you weren't tried, and your child declared legitimate.

She nods her silent appreciation.

JUDGE

(with difficulty)

But tell me, so I'll understand. Before Richard appeared, you--needed a man?

Sarah nods.

JUDGE

And he satisfied you?

She nods again.

JUDGE

You loved each other?

SARAH
(barely audible)

Yes.

A pause.

JUDGE
You knew from the start? You can tell me.
It won't go any further.

She thinks for a moment, then clears her throat.

SARAH
(slowly)
We were good together. David had neglected me. Richard respected me like a real husband. I trusted him completely. We thought of asking to be judged. We would have won. If David hadn't turned up, we'd be man and wife now. No one could have denied it.

Sarah now has a few tears trickling down her cheek.

JUDGE
(gently)
Then why did you choose David?

SARAH
I could see it in his eyes, he wanted me to pick David. It was hopeless. He wanted me to live outside, me and the children. Not in prison. So, I did.

The Judge looks at her. She has forced herself to stop crying. He looks up at the farmhouses and sees that David Chase is standing on one of the porches, looking at them.

JUDGE
I think you should go.

Sarah looks back and sees David, then turns back around.

SARAH
Yes.

The judge puts on his hat.

SARAH

How long does he have, really?

JUDGE

Hard to tell. Could be thirty. Could be fifteen. You never know.

She nods and begins to head toward the house. The Judge gets into his car and pulls away.

INT. OKLAHOMA STATE PENITENTIARY -- DAY

Richard is lead down a long corridor and put into his cell. The door slams shut behind him.

EXT. MILLER FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Sarah walks up the steps of the porch, mail in hand. David Chase watches her, saying nothing. She goes in the front door, and he follows, closing the door behind him.

THE END