

WHISPERING SPIRITS
EPISODE 1: THE BRIDE

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5 **THE OPEN DESERT - CONTINUOUS**

5

As Sally approaches the dead tree, her feet walk across the cracked desert floor surrounding it.

She stands underneath the noose, hanging from the tree branch.

The ground below Sally cracks faintly, but she is too focused on the noose to notice.

Sally reaches high to touch the noose with her finger. It swings slightly away, and then back to her finger.

SALLY

Hm.

CRACK!

A thundering crack from the ground below draws her attention.

BOOM!

The floor of the desert gives way, shattering like a broken mirror -- with Sally falling into a black void. Away she tumbles from the desert sky above, deeper and deeper into darkness, screaming.

A woman's voice mutters to Sally, speaking frantically.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

I'm so sorry. It's better this way.
It will be over in a second.

As Sally falls, a rope slithers around her neck like a snake, tying itself into a noose.

The voice gets closer to Sally, and becomes a spirit's body, blurry and faded. Its hands cup Sally's face. The spirit is THE BRIDE, a 30-ish blonde woman, with glowing blue eyes, and a veil obscuring her face.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

I WON'T LET THEM HURT YOU!

The noose becomes taut, and in an instant, Sally is hanging from the tree in the open desert again, grasping at the rope around her neck.

6 **KITCHEN**

6

Rufus scratches at the door and barks.

PAUL JENKINS, 38, walks into the room. A faded photograph of a once lively man.

PAUL
Stop scratching the door!
(pause)
Where's Sally?

Paul opens the door, and sees his daughter hanging from the tree in the distance. Rufus bolts out the door immediately.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Oh my god...oh MY GOD!

Paul runs out the door, as his wife DARLENE JENKINS, 36, comes downstairs and looks outside. Darlene is a tired, but faintly optimistic figurehead.

She lets out a blood-chilling scream.

7

THE OPEN DESERT - CONTINUOUS

7

Paul runs through the extended shadow of the tree, as his daughter's shadow convulses and struggles.

Rufus reaches the tree, and begins scratching at it, yelping.

The Bride appears next to Sally. She looks sad as Sally grasps at the rope. Rufus yelps louder.

THE BRIDE
I'm so sorry, dear. But it's better
this way. We will be together soon.

As Paul gets near, he just faintly sees the Bride -- and she sees him.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)
NO!

The Bride disappears, but her voice remains, terrified.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)
No please! Don't take her away from
me!

Paul lifts his daughter up.

PAUL
Honey, hold onto me!

Sally is injured and weak, but manages to hold onto Paul, as he unties the rope and gets her down. Paul holds her fractured neck and head in place, and runs back.

As Paul runs past the cracked ground, it fractures further towards him -- as if the Bride is reaching out for Sally.

8

KITCHEN

8

Paul lies Sally on the kitchen floor, and Darlene supports her head with a cushion. She leans over Sally.

DARLENE

Oh Jesus -- It's gonna be okay, I promise, honey.

Sally's neck is purple, and scratched from her clawing at the rope. Her eyes are bloodshot. She can only barely whisper.

SALLY

Mom, there was a--
(gurgles)
--a woman, in a wedding dress.

DARLENE

Okay, honey. Try not to talk.

Darlene sniffs -- then looks puzzled. She turns to Paul.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

What the hell was that?? And why does she smell like death?

Paul dials on the phone.

PAUL

I don't know. I wasn't sure of what I was seeing.

DARLENE

Look, carry her upstairs to her bed. I'll call Doctor Thomas.

She grabs the phone, and Paul lifts Sally gently to take her upstairs. Rufus follows behind him, frantic and worried.

DOCTOR THOMAS (V.O.)

Hello?

DARLENE

Yes, hello -- my husband and I just found my daughter hanging from a noose on a tree outside! She's alive, but needs medical attention!

DOCTOR THOMAS (V.O.)

I'm on my way now. Did she hang herself?

DARLENE

I...I don't think so? I don't know what it was, but all three of us saw some kind of... oh gosh, it sounds crazy, doctor. It was almost like a ghost of some kind...?

The phone makes the "call disconnected" sound.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

...hello?

A man's voice speaks.

A VOICE (V.O.)

Darlene Jenkins?

DARLENE

Doctor Thomas...?

A VOICE (V.O.)

--is on his way. My team will send him over.

DARLENE

Wha... your team?

A VOICE (V.O.)

You can call me the Operator. I am a representative of the United States Federal Government. Listen to me very carefully -- tell *nobody* else of what you saw today. I'm sending a specialist of mine to meet you.

DARLENE

Wait, you're sending *who*?

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE:

9

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

9

FRANK RHODES, 35, tall with dirty blonde hair. He's the archetypical "American Dream" -- self made, handsome, fulfilled. He lies in bed, facing away from the dimly lit window behind.

A HAND reaches out -- it's a woman's hand. Her third finger hosts a diamond ring. As she touches Frank's face tenderly, the window fades slightly into warmer light.

The sunlight illuminates pictures of a Frank and the woman on the wall.

Frank smiles, and wakes up to see the woman in the photos, his wife, lying next to him -- JULIA RHODES, 33, a woman with bright blue eyes that flicker with energy and life. Julia pulls her hand back, but Frank grabs it, holding it against his face.

JULIA

Honey...

FRANK

Just let me stay here for a moment.

Julia has a bittersweet smile, masking mixed emotions.

JULIA

You can't let your mind linger here forever.

FRANK

There's nowhere else I'd rather be.

JULIA

That's the problem...

She gently pulls her hand away.

FRANK

Julia... nothing feels more real than this.

JULIA

Then why won't you ever come home?

Frank shakes his head, pushing away her question.

FRANK

Please. Let's get out of this room
and live, just for a moment.

He takes Julia's hand, leading her to the door. She looks disappointed.

Frank, hopeful, reaches for the door handle.

And his hand passes right through it.

FRANK (CONT'D)

No...

Frank turns around to see Julia gone. The sunlight fades in the room, the pictures disappear -- as he notices a MAN, lying on the bed, facing up, hands clasped together, like a corpse in a coffin.

The man's face is unshaven, and his hair messy. He is fully dressed in a black sweater and pants, lying on top of the covers. His skin is pale, and he is cold to the touch. The man is a body with no soul.

He is the real Frank Rhodes.

Julia's voice echoes faintly from wall to wall.

JULIA (V.O.)

Why won't you ever come home?

RING! RING!

10

MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

10

The ringing of the phone shocks Frank awake, like a bolt of lightning. We find him in a seedy motel in the empty desert, a far cry from the bedroom in his dream.

He sits up, the smile having faded from his face, and answers.

FRANK

Hello, Operator?

THE OPERATOR (V.O.)

I have a job for you.

Frank groans and rubs his eyes.

THE OPERATOR (V.O.)

Well...? You alive?

Frank grabs his notepad and pen off the nightstand.

FRANK
 ...I'm awake.

THE OPERATOR (V.O.)
 Good. It's time to go to work.

11 **EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - MORNING**

11

Frank tightens his tie, and is now wearing a brown overcoat as he gets into his 1964 Black Mustang. The phone call between him and the Operator is treated as narration.

THE OPERATOR (V.O.)
 You're heading for a small town known as Downey, Utah. Very few people live there these days. It's closer to a ghost town than anything.

12 **DESERT ROAD**

12

Frank drives through the open desert.

THE OPERATOR (V.O.)
 It's in the middle of nowhere. Hardly anybody passes through, and hardly anybody leaves.

A road sign says *"Downey: 50 Miles Ahead"*

13 **DOWNEY**

13

Frank enters the town. Many of the buildings have collapsed roofs, but even the standing structures have chipped paint and broken windows.

THE OPERATOR (V.O.)
 20 years ago, an earthquake hit the region, and destroyed a lot of the town's buildings. Local government officials abandoned the region, along with most of the residents. Meanwhile, other departments in our government have been trying to buy this place out, so they can construct a testing facility of some kind. Top secret stuff.

Frank passes by a church, with new wooden beams and panels having been added. The building is still destroyed, but a reconstruction effort is clearly in progress.

THE OPERATOR (V.O.)
 But according to city documents,
 the town is trying to rebuild -- or
 really, one man is trying. A
 carpenter named Paul Jenkins -- the
 father of the girl who was attacked
 by a ghost in the town.

Frank continues on the road, seeing a two story house in the distance.

FRANK (V.O.)
 What do we know about the ghost?

THE OPERATOR (V.O.)
 Just that it was a woman in a
 bride's dress, who hanged a girl
 named Sally by a noose, over a tree
 in the desert behind their house.

Frank's car arrives outside of the house.

FRANK (V.O.)
 And who is the family?

THE OPERATOR (V.O.)
 Nothing much on file for them. Paul
 is married to Darlene, daughter of
 Sarah Parker... annnd that's about
 it. You'll have to gather the rest
 of your intel.

Paul looks down from the upstairs window, frowning.

THE OPERATOR (V.O.)
 It's a town just barely clinging to
 life. And they don't trust the
 government -- meaning they won't
 trust you. This isn't going to be
 easy.

16

FRANK'S CAR

16

As he sits outside of the Jenkins's house. Frank lowers his car's blinder, revealing a picture of Julia.

His eyes glimmer with life, and his stoic expression cracks with a slight smile, only for a moment. Then he closes the blinder, and the life fades.

He's still wearing his wedding ring.

17

EXT. JENKINS HOUSE

17

Frank knocks on the door, and Darlene meets him. She is slightly taken aback by his cold demeanor -- somehow, he looks almost as dead as the ghost she saw outside.

DARLENE

Y-you're the man they sent?

Frank glances at what he wrote on his notepad.

FRANK

Darlene Jenkins? Daughter of Sarah Parker?

DARLENE

...that's me?

FRANK

My name is Frank Rhodes. I was sent to deal with the situation. May I come in?

Darlene hesitantly lets Frank in, and he walks past her.

Rufus stands guard at the bottom of the stairway, and Frank approaches, while calling back to Darlene.

FRANK (CONT'D)

The girl is upstairs?

DARLENE

Yes-- OH! Wait, Rufus is going to attack you--

She turns to find Rufus sniffing at Frank. Rufus licks Frank's hand, barks once, and leads him up the stairs.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Oh. He usually... okay.

Darlene follows behind.

18

SALLY'S BEDROOM

18

Sally lies in her bed, shallowly breathing. A brace has been secured around her neck.

DOCTOR THOMAS, 45, holds a stethoscope to her chest. He's a weathered soul, his glasses only magnifying the tired color left in his eyes.

Paul stands to the side, holding his fist to his mouth, watching intently, anxiously. Suddenly, they both turn to see Frank standing in the doorway.

DR THOMAS

I... I have to go now.

PAUL

What??

DR THOMAS

There's nothing more I can do today anyway. I'll come by tomorrow--

Paul stands in his way.

PAUL

I need you to watch her. I can pay.

Dr. Thomas glances at Frank nervously.

DR THOMAS

No, it's not money. They, um...
(quietly)
They told me to leave once *he*
arrived.

Dr. Thomas leaves swiftly, walking past Frank and Darlene, in the doorway.

PAUL

Hang on a minute!

Paul stops at the doorway. Then, he faces Frank, preventing him from entering.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hm. I suppose *they* sent you?

FRANK

Yes. You're Paul Jenkins?

Paul stares at Frank silently.

FRANK (CONT'D)

My name is Frank Rhodes. I was sent by the federal government. I specialize in making contact with aggressive spirits, and helping them move on from our plane of existence.

Frank offers a lifeless handshake. Paul ignores it.

PAUL
Aggressive spirits?

FRANK
Ghosts. Like the one you saw
outside.

PAUL
I'm not sure *what* I saw outside.
And I'm not clear on how exactly
you can help my daughter.

FRANK
I have experience in dealing with
specters... With beings that don't
belong in this world anymore.

Paul looks up and down at Frank.

PAUL
From the looks of you, I'm not sure
you belong in this world anymore.

DARLENE
Paul!

Darlene steps in front of Frank and leads Paul to the side.

DARLENE (CONT'D)
Let the man speak with Sally. It's
not like we have any better ideas.

Frank walks past, apathetic to Paul's insult. Paul leads Darlene just outside of the doorway, and they look in on Frank.

Frank approaches Sally. He leans down on one knee, and pulls a notepad and pen out of his jacket.

Sally shivers. Her neck is purple and scarred. She looks mere moments away from death, if not for the life in her eyes, which dart nervously in Frank's direction.

Frank sniffs. He speaks aloud as he writes in his notepad.

FRANK
"Faint scent of dead body on the
victim... a clear indication... of
a paranormal encounter."

Paul scoffs.

PAUL

Oh, what, you're gonna sniff out
the ghosts??

DARLENE

Hush, Paul! Let him work.

Frank glances up to Sally.

FRANK

Hi there. I need you to tell me
every detail about what you
experienced out there, so that I
may be able to...

He glances up, and sees that Sally is scared.

FRANK (CONT'D)

...uh...hm.

(a beat)

Let's start over. Hi, Sally. My
name is Frank. And the reason I am
here, is to make sure that you're
safe. I promise, whoever got you
before -- I'm not going to let that
happen again, okay?

Sally slowly relaxes. She manages to whisper back.

SALLY

O-okay.

FRANK

I know it's hard to talk right now.
I already know what your parents
saw... I just need to know what you
saw.

SALLY

C-cl...

(a beat)

...closer...

Frank leans over near her mouth, so he can hear her whispers.

SALLY (CONT'D)

The cracks...

(gasps)

...the ground swallowed me.

Frank leans back up, puzzled. He looks out the window, and
sees the cracks surrounding the tree.

Knowingly, he darts out of the room, between Paul and Darlene.

PAUL

Damnit, why did you let him in the house?

DARLENE

He's here to help. We should at least let him try.

PAUL

He's a Fed. They didn't help us before, and you think they'll help us now?

DARLENE

Why shouldn't we believe him?

PAUL

Because the government wouldn't help our town recover from the quake -- but suddenly, out of nowhere, they're so concerned with our family's safety, that they sent a "specialist" to deal with it? It doesn't make any sense. I don't think he's here to help -- I think he's trying to get us to leave, so the feds can finally take our land.

DARLENE

You saw what happened out there! We need help.

PAUL

I don't know *what* I saw out there. But I do know this -- just when we thought we got the government off our backs, our daughter is mysteriously hurt.

DARLENE

You think... how could they have done this?

PAUL

I don't know. But it's more likely than it being an actual ghost.

DARLENE

Let's see what he can do -- Sally needs help, any way she can get it.

PAUL
 We don't know anything about him.
 And I'm uncomfortable with him
 being in the house -- who knows
 what his motives really are?

Darlene pauses.

DARLENE
 Okay... you're right. We don't know
 anything about him.

PAUL
 Thank you!

DARLENE
 So, I'll go talk to him, and find
 out who he is!

PAUL
 Wait-- no, that's not what I--

But Darlene is already down the stairs after Frank.

19

EXT. JENKINS HOUSE

19

Frank is lying with his ear to the ground.

Darlene comes out of the back door. Behind her is Rufus, and he quickly walks in front of her, standing guard against the danger he senses out near the tree. Darlene mutters to herself.

DARLENE
What is he doing?

Frank notices her.

FRANK
 Your house -- who owned it
 previously?

Darlene is surprised at his interest in the house.

DARLENE
 My mom... uh, she gave it to me.

FRANK
 Interesting. Were there any family
 members that you know of, who have
 died, that would have wanted to
 hurt your daughter?

DARLENE

No, of course not. My family always got along with each other well.

Frank leans his ear to the ground again. Rufus approaches Frank, and sniffs at him.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Um, Mr. Rhodes, which government agency sent you, if you don't mind me asking?

FRANK

Can't tell you that, I'm afraid.

DARLENE

Oh, I see.

(pause)

And what sort of job experience prepares you for ghost hunting?

FRANK

I'm a psychiatrist.

DARLENE

And why does a psychiatrist hunt ghosts better than someone else?

Frank stands up, and dusts himself off.

FRANK

Because ghosts are people too. Or at least, they were.

DARLENE

What causes a ghost to, uh, not go to the afterlife?

FRANK

Trauma. They have one moment in their lives, that tethers them to this reality. And so I specialize in helping them move past that trauma. I did it with soldiers during the war, and now I do it with troubled spirits.

DARLENE

You're with the military?

FRANK

Not anymore, no. Like I said, I can't tell you who I work for.

DARLENE

Mr. Rhodes... is there any information you can give us, that might help us trust you?

FRANK

Well, I don't know what more I can tell you. Our government--

DARLENE

Your government left this town to die, sir. And I want to trust that something has changed, and that you're here to help, but quite frankly -- I don't. I don't trust you, yet.

FRANK

I... understand. But what could I say to put you at ease?

DARLENE

Maybe provide some ID or credentials?

FRANK

I don't have any. I'm meant to work off the books.

DARLENE

Sigh...Why should we believe that the government cares enough about our family to send you?

FRANK

It's in the government's best interest to contain these threats, before people learn too much about the existence of ghosts.

Darlene is not satisfied with this answer.

DARLENE

Mm. So, it's less about helping people, and more about keeping things like this quiet?

FRANK

I... that's why the government does it. I do it, because I want to help people like yourself -- and help the spirits I find be at ease.

DARLENE

Look, sir. My husband wants you to leave -- but I see how Sally opened up to you -- and how even my dog trusts you. I want to trust you too, but I don't get it. I don't get how someone who behaves so coldly is capable of empathizing with the "dead". So if I'm meant to convince Paul that you should stay, I need to know -- what makes you capable of doing that?

Frank hesitates. He knows why, but it is painful to admit.

FRANK

Because...uh...

CRACK!

Frank spins around to see the cracks in the distance.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Hold that thought.

CR-R-R-RACK!

The ground fractures a few steps closer.

BARK! BARK! BARK!

DARLENE

Quiet, Rufus!

FRANK

I thought so.

Paul walks through the back door.

PAUL

Thought what?

FRANK

Sir, your family needs to leave here.

Paul laughs.

PAUL

I knew it.

DARLENE

Leave? Just like that? You're supposed to help us, not send us out of our home!

Frank points at the cracked desert floor in the distance.

FRANK

The cracks in the desert are growing. I believe that is the spirit, making its way towards your house -- and towards your daughter, to finish what it started. It's chasing you, and you need to run -- now.

DARLENE

And if the spirit is pursuing our Sally, how far would we have to go until she's safe? Even if we had the means to leave, wouldn't it just follow?

FRANK

As long as you leave Downey, I should have enough time to deal with the situation -- but this whole town is a danger zone.

PAUL

AH! So you'll clear everybody out of this town, so the government can finally get the land they want!

FRANK

Wha--No! You need to leave, for your own safety--

PAUL

I bet there was never a ghost to begin with. You people set this up somehow -- it's all to get us to leave, I knew it!

FRANK

Mr. Jenkins, please, I need you to understand--

But Paul cuts him off.

PAUL

No -- We won't leave this town, Mr. Rhodes.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

My wife's family has lived in this house for three generations, and we will not leave it. We will do whatever it takes to protect our daughter, but we **will not** be intimidated by "ghosts", or by agents of the government into leaving our home and this town behind. So, we'd like you to leave our property. Now.

A moment passes.

FRANK

Alright.

And he walks towards the tree.

The two stand stunned at the cryptic nature of this man.

PAUL

HEY! THAT'S NOT... our property...

DARLENE

I guess technically... the open desert isn't really our property...

PAUL

Well, he can look for whatever he wants out there, long as he stays away from here.

DARLENE

He claims he's a psychiatrist, who helps ghosts.

PAUL

The strangest shrink I've ever met, I'll tell you that.

DARLENE

More importantly though -- he works for the government.

PAUL

So it wasn't a "ghost". It was another attempt to get us to leave after all.

DARLENE

Strange man. I wanted to believe he was here to help...

(MORE)

DARLENE (CONT'D)
 but it's hard to think a man like
 that would really want to do good
 for people like us.

Rufus runs out towards Frank.

PAUL
 Rufus! Get back here!

DARLENE
 Why does that dog like that man?

20

THE OPEN DESERT

20

Frank walks up to the cracks in the ground, stopping just short. He taps his foot on them, testing to see if the ground is safe.

Four paws walk right past Frank, onto the cracks and turn to face him.

Frank looks up at Rufus, stunned.

FRANK
 Hey, go back to the house.

Rufus snorts his nose, turns towards the tree, and walks towards it, sniffing the ground.

Frank walks forward.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 No--hey! Dog! Go back home!

Rufus reaches the tree, and looks up at the noose, growling.

BARK! BARK!

FRANK (CONT'D)
 Quiet!

Rufus immediately stops barking, which surprises Frank.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 Oh, well alright.

Frank smells the air.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 I smell death... She's here...

He looks around at the tree, and at the noose. It's too quiet.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Hello? Is the Bride here?

Silence.

FRANK (CONT'D)
My name is Frank. I'm not here to
hurt you -- I would just like to
talk. Can we talk?

A single shard of the ground gives way, revealing the endless
black underneath.

Frank looks down.

BOOM!

The ground gives way underneath Frank -- but he jumps at the
last second, grasping the noose, now dangling above the
chasm.

BARK! BARK!

FRANK (CONT'D)
It's okay.

Frank looks into the open pit, into the void of the spirit's
dwelling.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Wait here.

And with that, Frank falls into the endless night, ready to
face the soul lost within.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO21 **THE ENDLESS DARKNESS**

21

Frank descends through the cold and endless night, the light from above fading quickly. Any other person would be horrified -- but to Frank, it somehow feels familiar.

Dark clouds are waiting for Frank in the distance below. They rumble with thunder, and the crackle of lightning underneath can be heard. The puffy clouds jump and shiver in pain -- the spirit lives within them.

Frank shoots down through them...

CRACK-KOW!

22 **EXT. OLD DOWNEY - DAY**

22

...and with a flash of lightning, lands on his feet in the town square of Downey once again.

Only, this isn't the Downey Frank arrived in this morning. Before, the city was atrophied, abandoned, and fading away -- this is a Downey that is bustling with life. Citizens walk through the town -- men in button downs, pants, and boots, and women in bonnets and long, conservative dresses.

Clearly this is not the Downey of 1975. It seems to be about 70 years prior. The townsfolk run excitedly towards the church, seemingly unphased by the dark clouds looming above.

Frank follows the people.

23 **THE CHURCHYARD**

23

The people line up in rows on each side of the church steps, clearly waiting for something.

One of them, a MAN, 40s, wearing a bowler hat and black suit, waits at the end of the left row, smiling.

FRANK

Excuse me, sir?

Nothing. Franks lightly taps his shoulder, prompting the man to turn, revealing...

...His eyes are completely white! His smile from before remains, but the man is lifeless.

The house is unlike it was before -- the paint is fresh, the wood isn't chipped, and the place is ready to inhabit its happy family.

The family begins to enter the house. But as they walk up the front steps--

BANG!

A bullet courses through the Husband's stomach, and he hits the ground, writhing in pain.

THE BRIDE
NO! OH GOD!!

The daughter screams, and clings to her mother as she looks up at...

THE CRIMINAL, 30s, with a black hat and scar down his cheek. He smells of cigar smoke, and his smile is like a snake with teeth.

Behind him are members of his gang, who grab the Bride and the Daughter.

THE CRIMINAL
You made a big mistake trying to take me down, Sherriff. If the Pinkerton's couldn't get me, why did you think you and your small town had what it took?

The Husband glares at the Criminal.

THE CRIMINAL (CONT'D)
Well, now it's not just you who's gonna pay. It's your family too.

Frank bolts towards the men, when suddenly...

THE BRIDE (V.O.)
NO!

The ghostly voice of the Bride echoes through the skies, knocking Frank down. It is not the voice of the woman standing in front of him, who is a memory of who she used to be -- It is the voice of that broken woman, as she is now, who is showing Frank this memory.

THE BRIDE (V.O.)
WATCH.

The Criminal notices the Bride's wedding dress, and turns to the Husband.

THE CRIMINAL
 Wedding day, huh?
 (pause)
 Congratulations!

BANG!

A bullet through the skull finishes the Husband off.

THE DAUGHTER
 DADDY!!

THE BRIDE (O.S.)
NO!! Oh GOD!

The Criminal points to the Bride, and the men drag her inside, as she screams.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)
 Leave me alone!

The Daughter tries to run in after her mother, but the Criminal holds her back.

THE CRIMINAL
 No no... best you wait out here,
 trust me.

Blue sparks on the ground grow into blue flames, which grow into a blaze that crawls onto the house, overtaking it. The flames do not consume the house -- but they flicker with rage, fueled by the pain of the Bride.

CR-R-R-RACK!

The ground shakes violently, and cracks begin reaching out from where the Criminal and Daughter stand. The two of them disappear, while the cracks crawl towards the back of the house.

Frank realizes where this is going. He runs around the house, and finds the Criminal holding the Daughter's shoulder in one hand, and a rope in the other.

The door opens, with the Bride stumbling out, disheveled, her dress torn, bruised, and sobbing. The gang members follow behind.

The ground continues to sway, as the Bride's world falls to pieces in front of her.

THE DAUGHTER
 MOMMY!

She tries to run to her mom, but the Criminal holds her back.

THE CRIMINAL

(to his men)

You had your fun, now bring her here!

They drag the Bride to the tree, and throw her on the ground. The Criminal tosses the rope to the men. They tie a noose and fasten it around her neck. The Criminal speaks to the Bride.

THE CRIMINAL (CONT'D)

Your husband was gonna have me hanged for my crimes. So, I'm gonna use you two to send a message.

And with that, the men yank her up, and she dangles above the ground, gasping for air.

The rumbling below the ground ceases at once. For a moment, the world is quiet, holding its breath.

The Criminal holds the daughter's shoulder, and looks up at the Bride, smiling. The sound of his voice slices through the silence, and booms in Frank's ear.

THE CRIMINAL (CONT'D)

And in case you were wondering, your daughter is next up to swing.

The Daughter, knowing she has to escape, bites the Criminal's hand, and makes a run for it.

THE CRIMINAL (CONT'D)

ARGH! DAMN IT!

He pulls his gun out to shoot the girl, but misses, struggling with his bloodied hand.

THE CRIMINAL (CONT'D)

That's okay. After this -- we're gonna find her. And we'll butcher her into pieces, nice and slow...

The Bride murmurs in fear, clawing at her neck, trying to loosen the rope -- trying to stop them from getting her daughter.

THE CRIMINAL (CONT'D)

We'll use her to send a little message, to Pinkerton's -- and to would-be heroes like your husband, that we can't be stopped. So think about that, while you fade away.

The tree turns grey and old, dying in seconds. And in her final moments, the Bride's eyes ignite with fire.

AHHHHHHH!

And with a final scream, she falls limp with the rope.

The gang members all disappear, and the fires go out. Now, only Frank and the Bride's lifeless body remain.

The desert falls quiet, and the dark clouds become still.

FRANK

I understand now.

No response, but Frank continues.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You'd rather she died quickly.
Swinging is quick, but suffering is
much slower.

Nothing.

FRANK (CONT'D)

But the girl you took up there
wasn't your daughter. Your soul has
been lingering here for decades,
and I'm here to help you move on.

He looks up at her face.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I'd like to help ease your pain.
Will you let me do that?

FWOOSH!

The rope burns, and the fire in her eyes returns, as the Bride convulses and screams.

She falls to the ground, as the knot securing the rope snaps. Standing once again, the rope remains on fire, dangling from her neck. Her skin is pale, her neck scarred, and her eyes burn blue.

THE BRIDE

You saw it all. So, what...

The ground crackles as she takes a step forward.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)

...makes you think...

She grabs Frank's shoulders.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)

**YOU.
CAN.
HELP.
ME?**

A shot of fear rises through Frank's body. He can't help but see it...

27 **QUICK FLASH TO JULIA'S FACE** 27

He can't keep the memory away.

28 **BACK TO SCENE** 28

Frank mutters to himself.

FRANK

You look just like her.

The Bride's hands heat up in a blue blaze, burning through the fabric on Frank's shoulders.

FRANK (CONT'D)

AGH!! Because... Because I'M LIKE YOU.

The Bride is surprised, and releases him. She gazes at him warily, waiting for an explanation.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I've lost things too. I...

Frank winces with pain; a pain that he has tried his hardest to turn his back on.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I understand what it's like. I understand that there are moments in a person's life, defining moments, that can break us completely. That happened to me, and I'll never move past it. But the least I can do, is help people like you move past it.

The Bride stares coldly, unconvinced.

THE BRIDE

You can't help me.

FRANK

I can--

THE BRIDE

YOU CAN'T.

(pause)

Not unless you can keep those men from hurting my daughter.

FRANK

No, you don't understand. It's been years. You've been reliving this moment over and over -- but it's been decades since all of this.

THE BRIDE

No. They're going to get her. I know it, **I know it--**

The Bride is spiraling again.

FRANK

Listen to me. I need to know your name. I can go back up, and find out what happened to your daughter.

THE BRIDE

I have to take her before they can. I have to spare her the pain. I have to do it, **DON'T YOU GET IT?!**

She grabs Frank by the collar and shakes him.

CLING-CLING!

The Bride hears a dog-tag jingling inside of Frank's shirt. She thrusts her hand through the shirt...

FWOOM!

...And pulls the chain out. She is mystified by it.

FRANK

Listen! I can help you find peace--

THE BRIDE

I can see... what this has been through...

The Bride places her hand onto his forehead.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)

...What you **HAVE DONE**.

FRANK
What are you doing?

THE BRIDE
You got to see what's in my head...
let's see **what's in yours...**

FRANK
No--**NO WAIT!**

FWOOSH!

Fire pours from her fingertips across Frank's face.

FADE TO WHITE.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

9

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

9

Frank sits up from his bed, like a bolt of lightning.

But gone is his weathered appearance. His skin is warm, his eyes are bright, his hair is picturesque.

Frank feels alive -- then wonders why he feels this way. It is a foreign sense of contentment, not felt since...

JULIA

You slept a long time!

Frank turns slowly. Can it be?

FRANK

Julia?

She stands in the open bedroom doorway.

JULIA

...are you okay?

Frank throws the bed covers away, and starts towards her -- only to stumble and hit the ground.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Oh! My God, are you okay?

She runs up and takes Frank's hand, helping him up. His legs are shaking.

FRANK

It feels like I haven't walked in so long.

JULIA

I told you -- you slept a while. Did your legs fall asleep?

Frank stands, and looks at her hand in his. It hosts a diamond ring.

Frank places her hand onto his face tenderly. Her skin warms him, kindles the fire of life he has discovered once again. He opens his eyes, and looks at her.

FRANK

It feels different this time.

(pause)

Is it real? Am I finally awake?

JULIA

...Honey?

Frank smiles. Then, he looks past her, seeing that...

FRANK

The door. It's open!

JULIA

...yes. Shall we?

They hold hands, as Frank leads the way to the bedroom door. The doorway he could never cross before. The difference between reality, and a memory he lived in all this time. His foot finally, just barely crosses the threshold--

And his hand is caught. She's pulling him back?

He turns, confused.

And Julia is on fire.

FRANK

Oh...OH GOD! OH NO! PLEASE NO!

Her entire body is engulfed in flames, but they do little to dry the blackened tears streaming down her face. Her hair floats above.

JULIA

FRANK.

FRANK

PLEASE NOT AGAIN!

JULIA

WHY DON'T YOU COME HOME, FRANK?

FRANK

I'M SORRY -- I'M SO SORRY--

JULIA

TELL ME.

Frank's hand simmers in the flames. They slowly crawl up his arm.

FRANK

Because...I'm afraid your spirit will still be there. I'm afraid I'll have to face you again.

JULIA

OR MAYBE...

Her face cracks, and the pieces fall to the ground.
Underneath is the Bride.

THE BRIDE

**...maybe she'll have left you
behind.**

Frank's face sinks back into the pain, and the life in his
eyes fades again.

FRANK

This was all I had left with her.

THE BRIDE

**You say you're just like me. But
you remind me of my husband, whose
choices killed me -- whose choices
are forcing me to kill my daughter.**

FRANK

This WAS ALL I HAD LEFT OF HER! YOU
CAN'T BE HERE!

THE BRIDE

**All that was left of her? This is
just one happy memory set before
your demons caught up with you. But
you still hurt her, even if you
didn't mean to.**

FRANK

GET OUT OF MY HEAD!!

She pulls his face closer.

THE BRIDE

**I've seen what goes on in your
head. And a man like you has
NOTHING to offer me.**

The Bride dangles Frank's dog tag's in his face.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)

**I know what you did, Frank. I can
see the regret that this holds. And
I can see that you hurt many more
people than her. One in
particular...**

BANG-BANG-BANG!

Gunfire in the distance. Frank turns. In the doorway is a
jungle, at night.

BANG-BANG-BANG!

It's getting closer. The bright colors of the gunfire ring out in the distance.

And *HE* is getting closer too, his shadow growing.

BANG-BANG-BANG--BOOM!

A helicopter spins to the ground.

The flames crawl further up Frank's arm.

KA-BOOM!

Fire envelops the ground, and consumes *HIM*.

THE SOLDIER emerges from the flames with long hair, and a long beard, his face scorched, his eyes bloodshot. He walks forward. His soul has been consumed by the flames -- by the hunger for revenge, for Frank.

He grabs Frank by the neck, holding him in the air.

FRANK

AGH!

The Bride stands behind, watching, laughing.

THE BRIDE

And who is this, Frank?

Frank looks fearful for a moment -- but it fades quickly. His breaths become shorter.

He's giving up immediately. He wants it to end.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)

What did you do to him?

The Bride smiles eagerly, but the energy begins to fade, as she remembers...

QUICK FLASH TO HER HUSBAND

Dead on the ground.

BACK TO SCENE

As the Bride tries to shake the pain away -- but it lingers plainly across her face.

THE BRIDE

No. No -- **STOP.**

And with that, the Soldier fades into smoke, and Frank hits the ground.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)

I can't... I can't do what they did to me. Even if you deserve it.

The Bride leans down to Frank.

You remind me of my husband. And I... hate him. Because of him, I have to kill my daughter, to spare her. I hate him... and I hate you too.

She turns to the bedroom doorway, only to notice a picture on the wall of Julia and Frank.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)

I don't know her, Frank. But this room you live in, in your head? It's a lie. It doesn't change the fact that you killed her, with the choices you made.

Frank mutters faintly.

FRANK

I won't leave her behind.

The Bride glances back at him with disdain.

THE BRIDE

Well, if I was her? I'd have left you behind.

Frank's arm is enveloped in blue flames. But instead of crying out in pain, he lies still, an utterly broken man.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)

I will find my daughter again, and I will spare her the pain I suffered. Do not try to stop me.

And just like that, she walks out of the bedroom door, closing it once again.

A single tear streams down the side of Frank's face.

JULIA

F--Frank.

Frank sits up, but knowing it is another lie, does so slowly. When he turns, he finds Julia lying on the bed, facing him.

Only she flickers in and out of existence. Her appearance is reminiscent of a skipping record. She's not really there -- just a memory.

Frank looks at her, a bit longingly, but mostly apathetic.

JULIA (CONT'D)
You--you have to move on.

Frank gets in the bed, and lies across from his wife. His right hand still enveloped in flames, he attempts to reach out to her, to hold her again.

But she fades away before he can, and his hand hits the empty space of the bed.

The fire spreads across the bed. Then, across the walls. Picture frames crack and fall to the ground. Memories with different meanings now. All seen through the painful context of hindsight.

Frank lies in his burning memory, as it fades away, leaving only him...

EXT. THE OPEN DESERT - DAY

...Lying on the empty desert floor, next to the tree.

Rufus sniffs at the roots of the tree -- he's caught something. He sees Frank is awake, and gets excited.

RUFUS
RUFF!

Rufus runs out towards the house.

CRUNCH! CRUNCH! CRUNCH! CRUNCH!

The sound of his paws grazing over the broken ground fades, as disappears in the distance.

Frank gets up and slowly walks back to the house. The giant open desert makes him incredibly small in comparison.

The sound of the fragmented ground rings in his ears with every step -- the sound of his failure.

CRUNCH! CRUNCH! CRUNCH!

Frank stops as he reaches the edge of the cracks. He looks down, then up again.

He is mere feet from the house. The Bride has nearly reached Sally.

SALLY'S BEDROOM

Paul watches over Sally as she sleeps. She lies still -- bruised and paralyzed. She's practically dead already, and he can hardly look at her in this state.

He braces against the tears flooding his eyes. But when he looks out the window...

Frank. Standing at the back door.

Paul looks down into his hands -- revealing a revolver, as he confirms six bullets are in the chamber. He's ready, if Frank crosses the line in any way. Paul looks out the window again.

EXT. THE LONE DESERT HOUSE

Frank looks up, seeing Paul in the upstairs window. His expression says one thing: *Frank is not welcome.*

Regardless, Frank approaches the door, and is about to knock.

But the door opens a crack, held back by a deadbolt. Darlene is standing there.

DARLENE

I'm sorry, Mr. Rhodes. I can't let you in.

FRANK

Ma'am, listen, what I saw out there... the spirit is coming for her again. You need to leave.

Hearing this sends a visible shot of fear into Darlene. She wants his help... but why should they trust Frank?

DARLENE

I... I can't. I wanted to trust that you could help--

FRANK

The spirit -- she lived in this house. I'm so close to figuring out who she is, and then I may be able to help her. I just need more information--

DARLENE

Mr. Rhodes--no. I'm sorry, but I see no reason to believe you.

FRANK

Look at the cracks in the ground.
Look how close she is to Sally.
Please...

Frank's eyes are filled with pain -- life pours out of them like Darlene has never seen before. She can feel that he seems genuine... but there is no reason for her to trust him.

DARLENE

I...we can't. Please leave.

CLICK!

And so, standing in the face of another closed door, Frank finds himself stuck yet again.

INT. FRANK'S CAR

Frank stares left, up into the open road facing the front of the house. He is compelled to help Sally, to help this family, and to help the woman who reminds him of the one he lost. But he cannot.

He looks at the picture under his car's blinder again. Julia smiles at him -- but the memory feels faded this time, as if the picture belonged in a chapter of his life closed long ago.

CH-CH-CH-VROOOM!

Frank pushes the blinder back up and puts his car in Drive, pulling forward once again on the road to nowhere--

FRANK

WOAH!

Frank slams on his brakes!

HONK! HOOONK!

FRANK (CONT'D)

Get out of the ROAD!

Rufus stands directly in front of the car. He tilts his head, confused at Frank's anger.

Frank turns off the car and walks out next to Rufus.

FRANK (CONT'D)

What do you want??

RUFUS

RUFF!

And Rufus walks to the right, sniffing the ground as he walks towards the town.

Then, he turns his head, looking back at Frank.

RUFUS (CONT'D)

RUFF!

And walks away again, expecting him to follow.

FRANK

...what??

And so, Frank follows Rufus down the road, back into the desolate town.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR:**EXT. THE LONE ROAD INTO DOWNEY - DAY**

SNIFF-SNIFF!

Rufus follows the trail down the center road, into the empty town. Behind him -- Frank, wondering what the dog might have found.

Frank sees the dusty buildings to his left and right -- their chipped paint and boarded windows whisper of times passed. He saw it before, in the Bride's mind.

But nothing is the same anymore. Not for the town -- and not for Frank. Usually, he'd have driven away by now -- but Rufus is allowing him to hope, just a bit, that perhaps he can save the little girl.

BARK!

Rufus has led Frank to the old church.

Rufus turns to Frank, excited. Frank scans the building -- partially collapsed, but held up by a new center beam. A small wooden sign stands in front of the stone wall surrounding the yard, reading:

"Currently Under Reconstruction by Paul Jenkins."

Rufus walks around the building, and Frank follows him to the back.

CRE-E-EAAAK...

Rufus pushes the old metal gate open -- leading into a small graveyard.

THE CHURCHYARD

As Frank crosses into the yard, he sniffs the air again.

FRANK

There's that smell. Is she here...?

The small tombstones lay crooked in the ground, misplaced by the town's earthquake. But one stands straight -- a pale stone with sharp corners, and a familiar last name.

Rufus sniffs around, finally landing at this stone. He props his paw on it triumphantly.

BARK!

The stone reads:

Agnes Parker

Loving Mother

1877-1912

Frank remembers the "Parker" name. He whips the notebook out of his pocket, flipping until he finds:

"Darlene Jenkins, formerly Parker. Daughter of Sarah Parker."

FRANK (CONT'D)

The Bride... this is her. Agnes
Parker...

He looks next to Agnes's tombstone, to find exactly what he's been looking for.

Sarah Parker

Loved Daughter, Loving Mother

1900-1960

1900 to 1960.

FRANK (CONT'D)

60 years... she lived a life.

He turns to Rufus.

FRANK (CONT'D)

If she was the daughter... then she
didn't die. She got away. SHE
LIVED!

Rufus jumps up to Frank, and Frank pats his neck, laughing ecstatically.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Of course a dog could track the
scent-- Good boy, Rufus! You did
it! You gave me exactly what I
needed!

RUFUS

RUFF!

FRANK

You're such a smart boy! Yeah!
(pause)
Why am I talking to a dog...

Frank starts to realize the scope of the situation.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 This is exactly what the Bride...
 what Agnes will need to hear to be
 able to move on... but...

CUT TO:

THE LONE DESERT HOUSE

CRACK!

The fractures in the ground are mere inches away from the back door.

BACK TO SCENE

Frank realizes how little time is left.

FRANK
 But I need... oh god, we need to
 get back there NOW.

CUT TO:

THE LONE DESERT HOUSE

CRACK! CRACK! CRAAAAA--

The Bride has reached the threshold of the door.

CLICK!

The deadbolt on the door unlocks itself.

Cree-e-e-aaaaak...

The door opens softly. She cannot be seen -- but is heard.

step. step.

THE LONG ROAD BACK

Frank bolts out of the churchyard, with Rufus close behind, towards the house in the distance.

INT. THE STAIRS LEADING TO SALLY'S ROOM

step. step. step. step.

The Bride reaches the top of the stairs, turning down the hallway towards Sarah.

SALLY'S BEDROOM

Darlene sits bedside next to Sally, who is resting. Paul watches over them both.

The couple both turn to the closed door, hearing the steps outside.

THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE

The Bride's hand appears visible, as she runs her nails on the wall leading to the door.

skkkkkrrrrrrrr...

The scraping nails leave black marks of soot behind.

SALLY'S BEDROOM

Paul listens at the doorway. He turns to Darlene, who mouths the words to him:

DARLENE

Is it Frank?

PAUL

I don't know.

Paul holds the gun beside himself, ready, just in case.

Darlene moves closer to Sally and grasps her hand protectively.

Paul touches the door handle, ready to open it.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR

The Bride's hand ignites into a modest blue fire, as she touches the door handle.

SALLY'S BEDROOM

Paul takes a breath. He turns the handle halfway--

SLAM!

The Bride, burning with blinding blue flames, stands above Paul, who is terrified.

BANG!

The gunshot phases through her body. Sally snaps awake.

SALLY
Nah! NO-AHH!

BANG!

The Bride grabs Paul by the collar.

THE BRIDE
NO MORE.

She throws him against the wall. He slumps to the floor in a daze.

DARLENE
 NO! I WON'T LET YOU TAKE HER!

The Bride grabs Darlene by the arm, and ragdolls her overhead, smashing her into the floor.

THE BRIDE
**I WON'T LET YOU HURT MY GIRL
 ANYMORE.**

The Bride turns to Sally. To her, this is the moment where she will spare her daughter -- spare her of suffering, with a quick death.

But to Sally -- this is where she stares her own death in the face, petrified.

The Bride holds back the blackened tears pooling in her eyes.

SALLY
 PL-pl-ESE... n-N-NO...

THE BRIDE
**I know you're frightened,
 sweetheart. I know.**

She smiles at Sally, trying to comfort her.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)
**But it will be better this way.
 Come with mommy.**

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LONE DESERT HOUSE - EVENING

Frank runs as fast as he possibly can towards the house. He knows he can get through to The Bride this time -- but fears he is too late.

He reaches the back door, and sees the cracks across the threshold. He sees an open door -- but for once, an open door is the last thing he would have hoped to find. Rufus runs in the door--

CRASH!

The wall of Sally's upstairs bedroom smashes open above Frank's head, and he dives out of the way from all the falling debris.

He looks up to see his worst fears realized...

The Bride, holding Sally in her arms, levitating from the bedroom, out into the direction of the tree.

Paul and Darlene snap back to reality, and look on in horror.

	PAUL	DARLENE
SALLY!!		NOOOO!!

Frank stumbles to his feet, and makes a run for it towards the tree. He glances behind him to find...

crack. crack. crack-CRACK-CRACK-CRACK--

The ground outside of the threshold gives way into the endless darkness below, growing out towards the tree.

The chasm separates Paul and Darlene from their daughter. Rufus stands at the back door, barking in terror.

Frank faces forward as the desert collapses behind him.

THE OPEN DESERT

The Bride lands a few feet from the tree, and looks to Sally in her arms.

The young girl is shaking in fear, looking back at her family in the distance.

THE BRIDE
**Oh, no honey, don't look to them.
 It's okay. Mommy is going to make
 sure...**

A tear streams down The Bride's face. It pains her to do what she is about to do -- but believes it is the right choice.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)
**...Mommy won't let them hurt you
 anymore. I promise.**

The Bride grasps the broken noose hanging from her neck, and takes it off. She fastens the rope around Sally's neck, as Sally, muttering and gasping, tries to plead for her to stop.

The Bride gets onto her knees, and lies the girl sitting up against her. She takes the broken end of the rope, and motions upwards, causing the fibers of the rope to grow longer, reaching up over the tree branch, and back down to the other side. Next to the new rope hangs the noose that killed the Bride.

The Bride grasps the end of the rope. Sally is terrified -- but so is the Bride. She wants a reason, any reason to not pull the rope...

FRANK
AGNES! WAIT!

The Bride's head turns, and her fear turns to a bitter scowl.

THE BRIDE
How do you know my name?

FRANK
I found your grave -- and I found more exactly what you needed to hear. You don't have to do this--

THE BRIDE
YES I DO.

She goes to pull the rope--

FRANK
YOU DON'T! Because your daughter lives. She--she lived. A full life.

The Bride turns, confused.

FRANK (CONT'D)
You can't see it clearly. You're confused. But in your arms -- her name is Sally. She's your great-granddaughter.

The Bride cradles Sally in her arms, and looks at her face.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Your daughter, Sarah, had her own family -- Darlene. And Darlene had Sally.

THE BRIDE
I don't... this can't be.

FRANK

Time has passed on. And people like
you and I... we can't live in the
past forever.

The Bride looks at Frank, but without hatred. He's getting
through to her.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You can see into people's hearts by
touching them. So look at Sally.
Look into her heart.

The Bride tenderly holds Sally out. Sally shakes her head,
fearful of the Bride's touch.

THE BRIDE

It's okay...

The Bride touches Sally's forehead... and she sees Sally's
life. She sees the child has a future, one that she wanted
for her own daughter.

FRANK

And look past her, Agnes. Your
daughter lives on, through Sally.
Find her.

Tears stream down The Bride's face. Her eyes glow blue -- but
no longer with fire. They beam with life, just as Sally's
did.

Just as Julia's did.

THE BRIDE

I see her...oh my god...I see her.
She got away, Frank. She lived.
It's... all I ever wanted for her.

The Bride snaps out of her trance. She's fully lucid, for the
first time -- and she sees all of the pain she brought upon
Sally, who quivers in agony and fear.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)

I'm so, so sorry. I... I can't take
away how this hurt your heart...
but I think...I can heal everything
else.

The Bride lays Sally on the ground. Then, she places both
hands on the ground, as they glow with blue light.

R-R-R-RUUMMBLE....

The chasm in the ground shrinks, and the desert heals.

Frank looks out to the house, as the pieces of the broken wall on the house fly back into place, reforming into the way they were before. Paul and Darlene jump back in surprise, as they watch the house repair itself.

Frank looks back to Sally, seeing her wounds have healed. Sally breathes clearly, and sits up to see...

The Bride... only she has transformed. She pulls off her veil, and her golden hair flows in the desert wind. Her skin glows radiantly, and her eyes teem with life. Her wedding dress is a blinding white tone, and the noose is no longer hanging from her neck.

She looks down to Sally, now seeing a bright future, instead of a tortured past.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)
Go to your family... and live.

Rufus arrives, and calls to Sally.

RUFUS
RUFF!

The Bride smiles at Sally. Sally is unsure of the woman, but somehow, despite everything, she feels a sense of calm.

THE BRIDE
Goodbye, Sally.

SALLY
...g-goodbye.

Sally gets up and walks quickly towards the house, looking back to be sure the Bride isn't pursuing her. Then, she runs back to her family, with Rufus following.

Frank watches her run off in the distance, then turns back to see the Bride watching the sun set. He walks up beside her.

THE BRIDE
Thank you, Frank. I... I suppose I can finally be free now.

FRANK
Yes, I think so.

Frank looks to the setting sun in the distance.

THE BRIDE

I saw your heart, Frank. I think she would want you to move forward.

FRANK

I... I don't know that I can move on. Not after what I did.

THE BRIDE

You can. You took one step forward with me... and each day, I think, you can take another.

FRANK

...maybe so.

The Bride's eyes glow in the sunlight.

THE BRIDE

I see them, Frank. My daughter... my husband. They're waiting for me, past the sun. I'm... going to go to them. Finally...

He looks at the Bride. She's fading slowly from sight, as the sunlight cuts through her.

FRANK

You really do remind me of her.

THE BRIDE

Maybe she's waiting for you too.

FRANK

I don't know. I don't know how she could even look me in the eye, after everything.

She holds Frank's hand tenderly.

THE BRIDE

Oh, Frank. She'll forgive you... I know she will. But you have to forgive yourself first.

And as the sun sets over the mountains, and the peace of night falls upon the desert, the noose quietly falls to the ground, and the Bride fades away.

THE BRIDE (CONT'D)

Every day. Keep moving on.

END OF ACT FOUR

EPILOGUE:**EXT. THE OPEN DESERT - SUNRISE**

The next day, the sun casts light into the desert. The lone tree stands tall, and overnight, it's regained some of its color.

INT. KITCHEN

Frank is on the phone in the Jenkins home.

THE OPERATOR (V.O.)
Good work, Frank. We'll be in touch
with another job soon.

FRANK
Thank you, Operator.

Frank hangs up, as Darlene walks in.

DARLENE
Well, good morning! Did you sleep
well?

FRANK
I did -- but I'm afraid I'll be
leaving now.

DARLENE
Oh! Well, before you go...
(off screen)
Sally! He's leaving!

Sally runs towards Frank.

FRANK
Well, how are you fe--OOF!

She jumps up to hug Frank. Clearly, Frank has not had a hug in a long time, but he settles in after a moment.

SALLY
Thank you so much, Mr. Rhodes.

FRANK
...you're welcome, Sally.

FRANK'S CAR

Frank gets into his car, and pulls his blinder down again, to take one more look at Julia's photo.

Somehow, it doesn't feel like a faded memory anymore -- he feels like she's really watching over him. That she's proud of him.

KNOCK-KNOCK.

Frank turns to see Paul standing at his car window.

EXT. THE LONE DESERT HOUSE

Frank gets out to speak with Paul.

PAUL

Frank... I don't know what to say.

FRANK

There's nothing to say, sir. I was just doing my job, and you were just protecting your family. I understand.

Frank goes to shake his hand, and this time, Paul shakes back.

PAUL

Call me Paul. And thank you.

FRANK

Well, Paul, I guess I should let you know that I spoke with "the government" about this town of yours this morning.

Paul is surprised, but less wary than before.

PAUL

Oh?

FRANK

Yes. I told them about your Downey reconstruction project. And you'll be happy to know that they'll be providing the money you'll need to get this town running again.

PAUL

Oh. My god, wow. Thank you.

FRANK

Of course. Take care of your family. You're lucky to have each other.

Frank starts to get back into his car.

PAUL
One other thing...

FRANK
Oh?

PAUL
Well, it's Rufus.

Frank notices Rufus standing on the porch.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You see, we love him... but he's pretty bored living in the desert like this. He'd be much happier living a more exciting life. We've been looking for a better home for him... and after what you told us, about how he can "sense spirits"... well...

Frank accidentally manages to crack a smile.

CUT TO:

FRANK'S CAR

Frank takes one last look at Julia's photo, before pushing the blinder back up, and starting the car.

CH-CH-CH-VROOOOOM!

RUFUS
RUFF!

Rufus sits in the passenger seat, and Frank looks over at him. An unlikely, and yet soon-to-be inseparable pair.

FRANK
Alright, buddy. Let's get moving.

EEERRRRRTT!

The tires spin out as Frank propels the duo onto the long, open road.

THE END