

FADE IN:

INT. SMALL COUNTRY CHURCH - DAY

Subdued, muted color glows through a modest stained glass window onto a small wedding ceremony.

The MURMUR of the PASTOR can be heard as he reads Scripture, but the simple, country FOLKS dressed in their Sunday best cannot take their eyes off SAWYER and ELAINA FONTENOT.

The tall, handsome groom bends his head, gazes at his lovely bride...

The couple is beautiful. Healthy. Striking in their youth.

ELAINA (V.O.)

When we got married we got ourselves
lots of advice from everyone.
Lebeaux, Louisiana came out in record
numbers to get their two bits in...

A glimpse through the CROWD: A persnickety old LADY. A prim school TEACHER. An old MAN in overalls and a bow tie.

ELAINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We heard it all. The way to a man's
heart is through his stomach...Don't
go to bed angry...No matter what,
your wife is always right.

The pastor smiles down at the young couple:

PASTOR

I now pronounce you...*Man and Wife*...

ELAINA (V.O.)

But one wise woman told me, just
remember, above all else...

The MOTHER of the groom smiles sweetly at young Elaina...

ELAINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Always be kind to one another.

Sawyer and Elaina kiss. The crowd CLAPS. A few WOMEN blot their eyes.

ELAINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It seemed a ridiculous piece of
advice. Of course we would be kind.

The couple look adoringly at one another...

ELAINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
We were in love, happy, excited about
our lives together...

Happy wedding SOUNDS begin to grow MUFFLED...

ELAINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But she was a wise woman, because
she knew...being kind is often the
hardest thing to do...

Festive SOUNDS are now completely drowned out by the steady
GRIND of tractor gears...

ELAINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(somber)
Even when you love each other.

Gears GRIND louder...and louder...and louder.

Super: "Kindness"

INT. SAWYER & ELAINA'S HOUSE, LEBEAUX, LOUISIANA - MORNING

The loud RACKET of farm equipment penetrates a dark bedroom.

A bedroom made darker by heavy curtains plastered against
the window. Made darker still by duct tape binding the fabric
angrily to the wall.

In bed, a figure huddles, moves sluggishly, and then...a
muffled CURSE.

Elaina, 30ish now, throws off the covers, glares toward the
noise, and the offensive light that dared break through her
barrier.

Unsteady, she strides over, yanks at the material. Several
strips of duct tape come undone, and the room suddenly fills
with bright light. Elaina shields her eyes.

The change in her appearance is striking. Her hair has become
lifeless, her eyes dull, and a resigned weariness have
replaced the dewy optimism of times past.

The sudden SPATTER of a tractor evokes another feral reaction,
and Elaina stumbles toward the closet. Her hip BANGS against
her night table. A pill bottle topples.

An empty wine glass wobbles as well, but Elaina saves it. A
frayed stuffed cat remains steady on the table. Its green
eyes stare back at her.

She turns away, scrounges through the closet. A look of
satisfaction crosses her face as she pulls out a rifle.

Shaky, but quite methodically, Elaina loads shells into the gun. Wearing only her dingy nightgown, she cocks the weapon and heads out the door...

EXT. SAWYER AND ELAINA'S PASTURE - DAY

Sawyer (33), steers the tractor, sweats in the morning sun. Focused on the plow and the light soil of the rice field, he is oblivious to Elaina's fury as she approaches.

But the STACCATO RAP of a gunshot changes that...

Annoyance crosses his face as he watches his practically naked wife teeter unsteadily through the rice field. She carries a gun. Points it.

SAWYER

What are you--?

A SHOT CLANKS out! Sawyer stops the tractor, ducks.

SAWYER (CONT'D)

Are you nuts?

Elaina COCKS the gun again.

SAWYER (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Dumb question...

ELAINA

(raises the gun)

I told you I needed to sleep today.

Another SHOT! Dirt sprays around the plow.

SAWYER

Come on, Elaina. I have to make a living here. Somebody's gotta keep you in booze, after all.

ELAINA

(sarcastic)

Careful now, honey, I'm pretty sure I'm seeing double.

A flash of fear as Sawyer jumps off the tractor, pulls off his raggedy brown work gloves. He gestures to a black and white dog who dozes in the shade.

SAWYER

Careful of Dudley.

ELAINA
(aims for the tire)
Move out of the way, Dudley.

SAWYER
Not the tire, Elaina--

SHOT! A FOOSH sounds as rubber rips, and the tire begins to deflate.

SAWYER (CONT'D)
Dammit to hell! Do you know how
much that's gonna cost?

Elaina steps back, admires her handiwork.

ELAINA
(matter-of-fact)
I'm going to bed now. Come on,
Dudley.

The dog glances between Sawyer and Elaina, seems torn. In the end, he follows Elaina...and Sawyer is left with his shattered tractor.

INT. SAWYER & ELAINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Out of breath, Elaina STOMPS back into the bedroom. She unloads the gun, puts it back into the closet. Dudley does not jump onto the bed until he sees her reach for the duct tape.

The SOUND of strips being torn. The BEAT of material being bound against the wall. As the light grows dim Elaina shakes a pill free, reaches for the stuffed cat.

In the shadows, her silhouette fades into oblivion, just as darkness overtakes the light completely.

EXT. LEBEAUX, LOUISIANA, TOWN CENTRE - DAY

The train WHIRLS past the small town intersection as Sawyer waits at the light. His arm rests against the open truck window. He gives the CONDUCTOR a little wave.

As rural traffic begins to move, Sawyer's truck SPUTTERS along at a slow pace. The flatbed trailer with the bullet ridden tire BOUNCES behind...

INT. ROXIE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

ROXIE GALLO serves lasagna to an appreciative lunch CROWD. Mid 30s, with pixie girl looks, and a bubbly smile to hide her fatigue.

Husband LUKE, also mid 30s, towers over her, and seems unruffled as he wipes his hands on his tomato stained apron.

When Sawyer's truck RUMBLES by, they both meander over and lean against the open patio doors. Luke grins, calls out...

LUKE

Was it something you said?

JEREMY GALLO (12), Luke and Roxie's son, juggles a tray of dirty dishes as he peers around his parents.

JEREMY

Whoa...

SAWYER

(waves as he passes)

Don't ask.

Roxie shakes her head in disapproval, then tries to catch Sawyer before his truck fades away.

ROXIE

Hey! You need to go check on Poppy!

JEREMY

(offers magnanimously)

I'll go.

Roxie sighs elaborately as she stacks a few more dirty dishes onto Jeremy's tray.

Before she turns to her CUSTOMERS, she works up a peppy smile.

LUKE

(to Jeremy)

Nice try.

INT. ANGUS FONTENOT'S HOUSE - EVENING

When Sawyer enters the old frame house, he struggles to see in the dark. He CURSES as he bumps into a chair.

He fumbles for a light switch. Illumination.

Candles, all burnt except for one, are elaborately arranged on the kitchen table. As are several framed photographs. Sawyer's eyes close briefly, and he reaches for one.

Familiar smiles gaze back at him. Sawyer grins at Angus's smiling mug, and then at the two...smaller faces. Each balances on one of Angus's knees, and their eyes are alight with joy.

Sawyer puts the picture down, turns away. That's when he sees the milk jugs on the bar. Nearly empty. He almost gags in disgust as he pours, and the remains DROP down the sink with a...THUMP.

SAWYER

Geez...

The SOUND of RETCHING. Violent, unmistakable, fierce.

SAWYER (CONT'D)

Pop? Where are you?

Sawyer makes his way down the hall, to the bathroom, and there he finds his father, ANGUS (60s), slumped on the floor, his head in the toilet.

ANGUS

Go away! I deserve this.

PUKE. RETCH.

Sawyer shakes his head. Runs warm water on a cloth.

SAWYER

What are you doing?

ANGUS

Doing myself in.

Angus manages to cut Sawyer a dramatic look between GAGS.

ANGUS (CONT'D)

Ending it all. Offing myself.

SAWYER

(deadpan)

With milk?

ANGUS

It was clabbered. Thought it would do me good to suffer before I go.

Sawyer appears resigned. He makes a path to his father, and then gently blots the old man's mouth with the damp cloth.

ANGUS (CONT'D)

This day is hard on me, you know?

Sawyer nods.

SAWYER

I know, Pop. This day is hard on all of us.

After a beat, Sawyer looks around, reaches for a larger towel.

SAWYER (CONT'D)
Alright, let's get you cleaned up.
You look kinda green around the gills.

ANGUS
I feel like shit.

Sawyer shakes his head. Begins to tidy up...

SAWYER
I came to invite you for dinner.

Angus's eyes widen.

ANGUS
No kidding? You finally gonna let
her do it, huh? Poison me?

Sawyer rolls his eyes, while Angus is suddenly thoughtful.

ANGUS (CONT'D)
Course, come to think on it, might
be a good way to go--

SAWYER
Pop, I'm cooking. Not Elaina.

EXT. SAWYER & ELAINA'S YARD - NIGHT

Dudley trails behind Sawyer, sniffs a flower that falls from the bundle in Sawyer's hand. The dog wags its body, heads for the barbed wire fence.

SAWYER
No, these are for dinner tonight,
Dudley. We'll go tomorrow.

The black and white dog cocks its head, follows Sawyer into the house.

INT. SAWYER & ELAINA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

While the table is nicely set for three, complete with a lovely bunch of orange and white flowers in the center, dinner preparation doesn't seem to be going as well.

A CURSE flies as the scalding skillet shatters in the sink. Sawyer looks at the blackened remnants of chicken.

Glances at Elaina's closed door. Sighs.

Hesitantly, he goes over, KNOCKS. He glances at Dudley, as if for commiseration. KNOCKS again. Nothing.

SAWYER

Elaina, I know you're up. I just need to know how much oil I'm supposed to use for--

The door swings open, and Elaina, puffy eyed and rumped, glares at him.

SAWYER (CONT'D)

Mornin' sunshine.

She brushes him aside, moves to the kitchen.

ELAINA

What's that burnt smell? It literally woke me up.

She freezes when she sees the table setting. Turns to Sawyer in question. Practically dares him to answer.

SAWYER

I invited Pop over. For dinner.

For a moment, Elaina says nothing. And then...

ELAINA

Why can't you go to his house?

Sawyer looks away.

ELAINA (CONT'D)

(annoyed)

Fine then. I'll stay in my room.

Elaina pours herself a glass of orange juice, scrounges in the refrigerator, comes away with an apple.

SAWYER

I was gonna make that chicken you like, you know with the artichokes and the red potatoes?

A brief flash of emotion crosses Elaina's face as she passes the table, looks at the flowers.

ELAINA

I have a headache.

With her apple and juice she moves past Sawyer.

SAWYER

So...I'm gonna start over. How much oil?

The door shuts with a THUMP. Sawyer sighs, looks at Dudley, who lowers his head onto his paws.

SAWYER (CONT'D)
Guess I'll call Roxie's...

INT. ANGUS'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Angus, who looks slightly less green, waits along with a few other vehicles as the train gets closer. He glances at the nicely packaged flowers beside him.

Startled unexpectedly by a CACOPHONY of abrupt HONKS, he watches as a shaggy haired KID on a bike whizzes across the tracks, just in time to beat the train.

An irate MAN in the truck behind Angus HONKS.

MAN IN TRUCK
Dumb punk! Gonna get your ass killed!

More HONKS. Bike Kid flips them off, rides on his merry way.

As the train WHIRLS by, a look comes over Angus's face...as if he's suddenly inspired...

INT. SAWYER & ELAINA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sawyer and Angus sit beside each other at the table. In front of them are Elaina's empty place setting and the take out bag from Roxie's.

ANGUS
Never was much on this here...*Italian*
food.

Angus pronounces Italian with exaggerated vowels.

ANGUS (CONT'D)
I keep telling Luke that.

SAWYER
I'm sure you do, Pop.

ANGUS
Nobody listens.

Sawyer takes a large swig of milk. He winks at Angus as he puts his glass down. Angus shudders, looks away.

SAWYER
What's wrong? You still feel bad?

Angus shrugs.

SAWYER (CONT'D)

Could be that after shave you're wearing. I know it's making me sick.

Angus looks indignant, picks at his pasta. He slips a grateful Dudley a penne noodle under the table.

ANGUS

(points to the flowers)
Nice flowers there. They smell better than the ones I brought.

Sawyer looks at the flowers with a wistful expression.

Angus nudges him, tries a laugh:

ANGUS (CONT'D)

Good ole orange bottoms, eh?

When Sawyer doesn't respond, Angus pushes his plate away.

ANGUS (CONT'D)

That's enough girly food for me. A shame Roxie didn't marry a nice Cajun boy, or at least learn to cook like your Mama.

Conversation stops as the bedroom door opens and a disheveled Elaina appears. Dudley lifts his head in anticipation.

Angus makes a half hearted attempt at standing, while Sawyer anxiously studies his wife.

ANGUS (CONT'D)

Howdy Elaina, you're lookin'...good.

SAWYER

Luke brought some left overs from the restaurant...if you're hungry.

Elaina ignores them both, pours herself a glass of wine.

ANGUS

(uncomfortable)
I..uh...was just telling Sawyer here how I miss Rose's rice and gravy, and gumbo. You know, real food?

Elaina takes a healthy sip of wine. Her eyes are blank as she looks at Angus. An awkward beat passes...

ELAINA

I miss things too, Angus. The thing is though, Rose was old.

(MORE)

ELAINA (CONT'D)

Old people die. That's the natural
way of things.

Angus's face goes white. He looks down at his plate.

ANGUS

(softly)

I...guess you're right about that.

Sawyer's head dips. Silence envelops them...even after Elaina leaves the room.

INT. ELAINA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Elaina shakily sets the wine on her night table, then clasps her hands tightly together in an attempt to still them.

FLASHBACK - ELAINA

INT. SAWYER & ELAINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Elaina, beautiful and radiant, stirs a pot on the stove as the door flies open. Two smiling children, MARK (8) and MABLE (6), rush her.

MABLE

Mommie! Look! I picked some orange
bottoms from the tree!

The little girl's hair swings as her small body thrusts the flowers into Elaina's nose.

MARK

(rolls his eyes)

Doofus. You're not saying it right.
And they're not even orange.

Elaina leans down, while Mable puts one of the white flowers into her hair, concentrates as she adjusts it just so.

Sawyer comes in carrying a bucket filled with oranges, as well as Mable's stuffed cat. Mark grabs an orange, tears into it with delight.

MABLE

Look Daddy. Pretty, huh?

Sawyer smiles at the flower in Elaina's hair, moves closer and nibbles her ear.

SAWYER

I'll say. Smells good too...

ELAINA

What? The gumbo or the flower?

SAWYER

(grins)

Both.

MABLE

So what are they called again, Daddy?

SAWYER

They're called blossoms, pumpkin.
Orange blossoms.

Mable frowns, unconvinced. But then she grins as she tugs Sawyer lower so she can put an orange blossom in his hair...

BACK TO PRESENT

Tears stream down Elaina's face. She slides deeper into bed, and pulls the covers tightly over her head.

EXT. TOWN CENTRE - NIGHT

The dull HUM of the train in the distance.

Angus sits in his truck with the window open. He glances at his watch. As the HUM becomes louder, he turns the ignition. His old truck sputters a bit as he slowly steers up to the tracks. Waits.

An OLD MAN watches from his front porch. He smokes a pipe, leans forward, curious as to Angus's latest antics.

The HUM of the train is now a ROAR, and Angus gears himself. Red flashing lights reflect on his face as he hits the accelerator.

And then, a SPUTTER. Angus bends his brows.

ANGLE ON A PUFF OF EXHAUST AS THE OLD TRUCK BACKFIRES...

ANGUS

(pissed)

What the hell? Come on!

Angus FLOORS the accelerator, but the only movement is a feeble MISFIRE, just before the old truck falters, STALLS completely.

The train ROLLS on past. The conductor waves at Angus.

The old man on the porch chuckles...