

FADE IN:

EXT: BULL CHUTE 1974 -- DAY

A Crowd of people watch as ROPE MCCASLIN, mid-thirties, feeling the aches and pains of his sport lowers himself down on a bull in the chute. Nods his head. The bull's released. Two bucks and Rope hits the ground, hard. The RODEO CLOWNS come out to help Rope escape the bull.

EXT: RODEO -- DAY

Rope exits the rodeo while it's still in progress, walks over to his beat up Dodge pick-up, and wails into the driver's side door with lefts and rights, until he's wasted all of his energy.

He then, opens the door, grabs a bottle of Tequila, takes a big gulp, and climbs into the truck.

EXT: STREET -- NIGHT

Rope drives his truck in a drunken pattern down the street, pops up on the curve, stops, and passes out.

INT: BEARCREEK COUNTY JAIL MONTANA -- DAY

A doughnut heavy DEPUTY SHERIFF HENRY EGAN pours two cups of coffee and heads down a hall. He stops at a stall.

Rope, curled up on one of the cots, senses someone watching. He turns.

Slow talking Henry...

HENRY

'Bout time you start to move. I was beginning t' think ya was in one of them comas.

Rope tries to focus. Thundering headache.

Henry opens the unlocked cell.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Gotcha some coffee.

ROPE

Thanks.

(takes the cup)

Dead silence occurs as both men take a sip. Henry leans back on the interior bars.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
How did I get here?

HENRY  
Funny you should ask that. Ya don't  
remember too much do ya?

Rope gives Henry a look.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
We found ya early this morning, asleep,  
with your truck running. Hell we  
thought ya was dead. It took us about  
an hour to break into your truck.

ROPE  
Is there a law against sleepin'? Why  
didn't ya just leave me be?

HENRY  
We would've. 'Cept you was parked on  
the sidewalk. Right there in front of  
the Mayor's office. We figured it was  
best to get you outa there before the  
Mayor gets to work. He wouldn't be too  
happy 'bout that.

Rope finishes his coffee, grabs his cowboy hat. He hands  
the cup back to Henry...

ROPE  
Thanks Henry.

As he leaves the cell, walks...

HENRY  
No problem, Rope.

ROPE  
Where's my truck?

into the corridor,...

HENRY  
Just outside the station there. You  
can get ya keys from Mary at the front  
desk.

and down the hall.

EXT: JAIL -- DAY

Rope slowly gets into his Dodge pick-up. Heads out of  
town.

INT: THE MCCASLIN RANCH HOUSE BEDROOM -- DAY

Sun blasts through the bedroom window of a southwestern ranch house. Two bodies lay entangled on a bed.

LEANNE MCCASLIN wakes slowly. Beautiful woman in her late 20's. She is slightly startled by a visitor sitting in a chair at the end of the bed. Calmly she nudges a MAN next to her.

EDWARD KRAFT, banker, mid-thirties, receding hairline, snuggles closer to Leanne.

Leanne elbows him a little sharper.

EDWARD  
(rolling onto Leanne)  
Okay, okay give me a sec and  
(looks at Leanne)  
I'll be...

She interrupts him by pointing at the visitor. He looks. Focuses.

EDWARD (CONT'D)  
(shocked, frightened)  
Oh, shit!

Falls out of bed.

The man in the chair stands with a horse training cane. It's Rope. He doesn't say a word as he walks out of the room.

EXT: THE MCCASLIN RANCH HOUSE PORCH -- DAY

Rope leans on one of the columns, and looks over the ranch. Edward rushes out of the house tucking in his shirt tail.

Stuttering as he...

EDWARD  
Rope... I, I, I, I.

runs off the porch. Rope follows with cane in hand. As soon as Edward turns to face Rope. Rope hits him between the neck and the shoulder blade with the cane. Edward SCREAMS in pain. Rope hits him again, flush on the chest, and sends him flying to the ground.

LEANNE (O.S.)  
(strong, not too loud)  
ROPE!... enough.

Rope turns. Leanne is standing on the porch, draped in a shawl.

Edward scampers to his car. Tears out. Rope pays him no attention.

Leanne watches him leave.

LEANNE (CONT'D)  
That wasn't necessary.

ROPE  
Yes it was.

Leanne looks over Rope.

LEANNE  
You need a bath... Want some breakfast?

Rope thinks.

INT: THE MCCASLIN RANCH KITCHEN -- DAY

Leanne finishes up cooking steak and eggs, while Rope sips a cup of coffee. She puts the plate down in front of him and sits down. Tension's thick. Hugging her coffee, looking down.

LEANNE  
Rope. I'm leaving. I can't take this any longer.

Leanne gets up, and puts away her cup. Rope says nothing.

LEANNE (CONT'D)  
I'm moving back to Oklahoma City. My plane leaves in the morning. I would have told you sooner, but I haven't heard from you in weeks.

Rope takes a sip of coffee.

ROPE  
Where's Dad?

Rope's reserved behavior angers Leanne.

LEANNE  
He's hunting up on the reservation with Little Hawk. He should be back sometime today.

ROPE  
And Mom?

LEANNE  
(angry now)  
Visiting your brother up in Billings.  
Is that all you have to say?

Rope is silent.

LEANNE (CONT'D)  
God damn you! Rope McCaslin. God damn  
you!

Leanne storms out of the room.

EXT: THE MCCASLIN RANCH -- SAME DAY

Rope nonchalantly lassos a fence post, when

JAMES MCCASLIN, Rope's Dad, mountain man to the core, rides  
up on his horse.

JAMES  
Well I'll be a sonofabitch. Why didn't  
you let someone know'd you were coming  
to town?

ROPE  
I just kinda found my way here.

James gets off his horse, and ties him up to a fence post.

JAMES  
Uh huh. Cheyenne Rodeo?

ROPE  
Yep. How was the huntin'?

JAMES  
Elk ain't as thick as it used to be.  
What with city slickers comin' in and  
blastin' away everthing...  
(takes a closer look)  
You know, You don't look so damn good.  
You been eatin'?

Rope, dead tired look, continues to lasso the post.

ROPE  
Little bit. Here and there.

JAMES  
Momma comes back later today...  
visiting James Jr. She'll fatten you  
right up.

ROPE  
Leanne wants a divorce.

Catches James off guard.

JAMES  
You don't say... I kinda figured that was coming.

Rope cuts him a look.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
She was never really cut out for this kinda life. She's a city girl.

ROPE  
Can't blame it all on her.

JAMES  
Maybe. Maybe not... Why don't you saddle up ole' Brandy in there, and lets take a ride. Clear ya thoughts.

Rope thinks about it.

EXT: THE MCCASLIN RANCH BACK PASTURE -- DAY

Rope and James ride across the country side. Rope's been quiet. Thinking.

James looks at his son hard.

JAMES  
You know, a man can only waller in self pity for so long. A-for it starts gnawing at his insides.

Rope stops, and looks at his Dad.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
It's tuff to stay on one of them 2000 pound Brahmas when your mind is right. Much less after you just seen your partner get trampled... Things like that happens, and it's neither you nor his nor the bull's fault. It just happens, and you move on. I ain't saying forget, cause you'll ne'er do that. All I'm saying is if your gonna ride, ride. Cause anything less is gonna getcha killed... Course, you can always do somethin' else.

ROPE

I don't know what I would do, if I  
wasn't riding a bull.

JAMES  
(smiles)  
There's always ranching.

Rope looks at his Dad, and breaks a smile.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Ready?

ROPE  
Yeah.

JAMES  
(yells)  
Hey Ya!

James's horse explodes off across the meadow. Rope trails  
right on his hind quarter, stride for stride.

Rope catches up, and runs neck and neck with James across  
the prairie.

EXT / INT: ROPE'S TRUCK -- DAY

Rope drives Leanne to the airport. Uncomfortable ride.

LEANNE  
I'll be at mom's if you need me.

Rope's silent. Leanne tries to pour her heart out.

LEANNE (CONT'D)  
I got lonely, Rope. I can compete with  
a lot of things but I can't compete  
with a damn rodeo. I'm not making  
excuses for what I did. I...

Rope interjects.

ROPE  
I know... You don't have to explain.

LEANNE  
Hope everything turns out for you,  
Rope. I really mean that. I don't  
want you to hate me... I don't think I  
can live with that.

ROPE  
I don't hate you, Leanne. I could  
never hate you. I'm just as much to

blame as you.

LEANNE

(crying)

I...

Rope looks at her as if it's for the last time.

Leanne's tears are pouring as they pull up to the curve of the airport.

EXT: AIRPORT BILLINGS MONTANA -- DAY

Rope gets out, and helps Leanne with her luggage. A SKYCAP loads the baggage on to a cart.

Leanne and Rope just stare at each other. Both of them want to give the other a hug, but neither wants to initiate. Leanne walks away.

Rope gets in his truck, and drives off.

EXT / INT: ROPE'S TRUCK -- DAY

Rope's listening to the radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

In other news today, President Nixon announced in a television address that he is releasing edited transcripts of 31 taped Watergate-related conversations. He declares he "Had nothing to hide".

Rope changes the station. Hank Williams Jr.'s "I'll think of something".

Rope reflects, while listening to the words of this song.

Scenery passes.

EXT: CHEYENNE FRONTIER DAYS RODEO -- DAY

Rope settles down on a bull in a chute. Secures his hand. Nods. Chute opens. The bull darts out. Four seconds, and Rope crashes to the ground.

The RODEO CLOWNS draw the bull away.

Rope scampers over to the fence. Up and over. Leaning against the fence, he takes off his glove.

ROPE

(to himself)

Shit.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)  
Mr. McCaslin.

A long neck Budweiser appears before Rope's face. He takes it. Looks up to see a young cowboy in his early 20's, named TUCKER PRICE.

TUCKER  
Thought you might need this.

ROPE  
Thanks.

TUCKER  
My name's Tucker Price... My friends call me Tuck for short.

ROPE  
Well Tuck, thanks for the beer.

Rope starts to walk away. Tucker stops him.

TUCKER  
I was hopin' you could watch me ride, and maybe give me a few pointers.

ROPE  
Sorry, I don't watch riders.

Rope walks off. Disappointed, Tucker heads to the chute.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
Our next contestant in the bull riding competition is Duke Lambeth, riding Tequila Storm.

This gets Rope's attention.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
This bull is as mean as they come, cowboys and cowgirls. He has never been rode, and 156 cowboys have tried. Let's give a good hand for this cowboy out of Amarillo Texas.

CROWD CHEERS and CLAPS.

THE ANNOUNCER CONTINUES...

DUKE LAMBETH secures himself onto the bull. The Bull goes crazy in the chute.

Rope climbs back up on the fence to watch.

Duke secures his hand. Nods. Chute opens. The bull crushes out of the gate. No way can Duke hang on. He falls underneath the bull.

The CLOWNS rush out to help. Duke barely escapes with his life.

The bull chases one of the clowns. He jumps in a barrel. The bull goes mad and starts tearing up the barrel.

Duke climbs over the fence not far from Rope, hobbling.

The clowns get the bull out of the arena.

The MEDIC rushes over to Duke.

Rope watches, hears...

DUKE

Some damn bulls ain't for ridin'.

Rope steps away from the fence.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Give another hand for this cowboy. That makes 157 cowboys that bull has thrown. Hell, he's meaner than a stepped on rattle snake.

Crowd CHEERS and CLAPS.

INT: COYOTE JOE'S -- NIGHT

Rope strolls into a packed bar, full of rodeo contestants. A band finishes a country song. A MAN steps up to the mike.

MAN AT THE MIKE

We'd like to welcome everyone here tonight who sweated like hell at the rodeo this afternoon.

Crowd goes wild.

MAN AT THE MIKE (CONT'D)

And we have a guest here with us, two time world champion and winner of the Cheyenne Frontier Days Rodeo Bull Riding Competition, Mr. Roy Terry.

Crowd goes wild again.

The spot light hits Rope in the face, then he realizes he is standing next to ROY TERRY, who tips his hat to the crowd. The band kicks in.

Roy spots Rope.

ROY  
Rope. How the hell are ya?

ROPE  
Could be better. Congratulations.

They shake.

ROY  
Thanks. Have a shot of Mez with me.  
(to bartender)  
Hey bartender load me up another...  
make that two.

Bartender sets up the round. Roy grabs them, gives one to Rope.

ROY (CONT'D)  
To Oklahoma City.

ROPE  
Oklahoma City.

They both down the shot, and slam the shot glasses on the bar.

ROY  
Looks like you're having a little  
trouble out there these days.

ROPE  
Nothin' I can't handle.

ROY  
I hated what happened Cody. It's a  
damn shame. He was a good cowboy.

ROPE  
Yes, he was.

ROY  
That's the same bull that fucked me up  
in the finals last year. I would have  
taken Cody, and went home with the Gold  
if'n it weren't for that God damn bull.

ROPE  
Yep... That is one mean son-of-a-bitch.

ROY  
Some bulls just ain't meant for ridin'.

ROPE  
I have to agree with you there.

ROY  
I don't understand why they keep that bastard around.

ROPE  
Money. He draws the crowd. Hell, I think half the people are pulling for that damn bull.

ROY  
(chuckles)  
Yeah... I believe you're right about that one... I hear Duke's gonna be all right... just a fracture. He should be up and riding again 'fore long.

ROPE  
That's what they say.

ROY  
Didn't Cody have a kid?

ROPE  
Yeah.

ROY  
And his wife's name was...

ROPE  
JoAnna.

ROY  
JoAnna, right... I met her two years ago at the finals. Nice lookin' woman.

ROPE  
Yes, she is.

ROY  
When's the next time you're gonna see them?

ROPE  
I don't know. I was thinking about stopping by before the Missoula Rodeo.

ROY  
Good... Here.

He sticks his hand in his pocket, and pulls out a roll of cash.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Five hundred dollars. Half my winnings today.

Rope just looks at him. Roy crams it in Rope's front shirt pocket.

ROY (CONT'D)  
I'm sure you'd do the same for Maggie. If it happened to me.

ROPE  
She'll appreciate it. Thanks.

ROY  
Next year everything's gonna change. No more worrying about doctor bills, and how you gonna pay the mortgage if you're stowed up for a week.

ROPE  
So, you really think the owners are gonna go for more dipping into they're pockets for us?

ROY  
They better or we'll walk away just like we did in 1929. We need insurance, Rope. And we damn better get it.

ROPE  
(to bartender)  
Hey barkeep another round. On me this time.

Bartender sets them up. Glasses high.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
To Cody French.

ROY  
Cody French.

After they slam their shots down on the table, Rope pats Roy on the back, and continues down the bar. Roy turns his attention to a lovely lady that's been eyeing him.

ROY (CONT'D)  
(to the lady)  
And what might your name be?

Rope makes his way through the crowd.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Rope! Rope!

Rope looks to see Tucker, yelling and waving at him to come over.

Tucker sits at a table with two young pretty girls, CANDY and MANDY, who are a little bit on the hippy side. In front of Tucker stands a new bottle of Mezcal, and a pitcher of beer.

Rope saunters up. Tucker starts pouring four shots, and four glasses of beer. Tucker has already had a few.

TUCKER

Candy. Mandy. This here's one of the best bull riders on the tour, Rope McCaslin.

CANDY AND MANDY

Hi.

ROPE

You wouldn't think so if you saw me today.

Tucker not listening.

TUCKER

I seen him ride last year at Amarillo with a cast on his arm. Took second place.

ROPE

How in the world do you remember that?

TUCKER

Cause I was there. AND, he was only a hundred dollars short from winning the world last year too.

ROPE

Yeah, ole Cody beat me in the tenth round on Diamond Back. He deserved it though. He had a good year... Hell, we both had a good year.

A DOWN BEAT.

TUCKER

Hey, we got tequila. We got beautiful girls... We got a party.

Tucker pours some shots. Toast.

TUCKER (CONT'D)  
To the finals.

ROPE  
To the girls.

Shot. Glasses slammed to the table. The crew goes for the beer to chase it down.

INT: COYOTE JOE'S -- LATER THAT NIGHT

A few drunk patrons are left in the bar including Rope, Tucker, Candy, and Mandy. The band plays their last set.

Everyone at Rope's table are laughing and cutting up. Drunk as skunks. They start singing with the band. LOUD. Annoyingly LOUD. *"Okie from Muskogee"* by Merle Haggard.

A group of rough looking COWBOYS get aggravated by the quartet. One of the cowboys, DIXON speaks up.

DIXON  
Damn rodeo shits ain't got the manners  
of a horse... sumbitches... I'm gonna  
put a stop to this right now.

He slides out of seat, and heads to Rope's table. His henchmen follow.

Rope sobers up to some extent, when he spots the group heading his way. Tucker's clueless. Song ends. Tucker laughs with the girls not noticing the audience.

Dixon pulls out a one dollar bill.

DIXON (CONT'D)  
Hey. I betcha a dollar you can't tell  
me who sings that song?

Tucker blurts out.

TUCKER  
Merle Haggard.

DIXON  
Good, let's keep it that way, okay  
partner.

He throws the dollar at Tucker, then turns to leave.

ROPE  
Keep your money.

Dixon and his boys turn back around.

DIXON

What?

ROPE

I said, "keep your money".

DIXON

Oh, I see rodeo can talk.

Rope looks through the cowboys, unflinching.

DIXON (CONT'D)

Is that all you rodeo clowns can do,  
talk, and look pretty?

(to the girls)

When you girls get done playing with  
these wannabees, you come on over to  
our table and we'll show you about real  
cowboys?

Rope stands up. His chair slides back.

ROPE

Real Cowboys have manners.

DIXON

Are you callin' me out, there rodeo?

ROPE

I'm just callin' your bluff.

Tucker jumps up.

TUCKER

(excited)

Hell yes!

Dixon cuts a mean look, and Tucker melts back into his chair.

DIXON

(laughing to his friends)

This here rodeo clown, thinks I'm  
bluffin'.

(looks at Rope)

Would you like to make a friendly  
wager, there rodeo?

ROPE

Wager?

DIXON

Bet! You do know what that is don't cha?

ROPE

On what?

DIXON

Well now, we could just fight. That's always fun.

ROPE

We could.

DIXON

How about we do something a little bit different?

ROPE

What'cha got in mind?

DIXON

A race. A horse race. I'm sure you boys know how to ride a horse, now don't cha? Being cowboys and all.

ROPE

I can ride, but I don't have a horse.

DIXON

We can arrange that. I'll bring two horses, and I'll even let you choose... Sos to make things interestin', What you say... five hundred dollars?

TUCKER

Five hundred dollars, where we gonna get that kinda of money.

DIXON

You ain't got a measly little ole five hundred dollars? Big bad rodeo boys ain't got no money.

Rope glances down at his shirt pocket. Thinks.

ROPE

We got it.

TUCKER

Of course we got it!

Tucker jumps up again only to be set back down by Dixon.

DIXON

And I'll put my horse up for these two  
whores you got here.

CANDY AND MANDY

(yelling)

Who you callin' a whore... you son of  
bitch!

They go after Dixon full throttle. Rope and Tucker are  
able to catch the girls before they get loose.

DIXON

Wild women. I like'em like that.  
(to his henchmen)  
Don't you boys?

YES from the congregation.

CANDY

(to Rope)

Let me go. I'm gonna claw his damn  
eyes out!

ROPE

(to Candy)

Calm down. Don't let him get to ya.  
(to Dixon)  
We don't go around bettin' people...  
Partner.

Rope and Tucker let go of the girls. They calm down.

DIXON

Course you don't. How silly of me.  
(to the girls)  
My apologies. It's obvious you...  
ladies don't have any confidence in  
this man. I can under...

TUCKER

What you talkin' bout confidence.  
These ladies have all the confidence in  
the world in Rope. Right girls?

CANDY

Yeah he's gonna kick your ass from here  
to California.

MANDY

(a little drunk)

Yeah,... what she said.

DIXON

Good it's settled then. The girls, for

the horse. Meet me at the track in an hour.

(pause)  
Cowboy.

Turns to walk out with his henchmen. Stalls.

DIXON (CONT'D)  
Oh, I forgot, be sure to bring the money and... the ladies.

He winks, then leaves. His henchmen follow. All is silent.

TUCKER  
(confused)  
Rope. What just happen?

ROPE  
I believe you just bet the girls against his horse.

Candy goes wild and starts beating on Tucker.

CANDY  
You bet us? You sorry sonofabitch!

Rope and Mandy pull her off of him.

TUCKER  
Hell. I didn't know.

MANDY  
What are we gonna do?

ROPE  
I guess we got us a horse race.  
(to Candy)  
You know where the track is?

CANDY  
I can get us there.

ROPE  
Good.

They all start to walk out. Rope and Tucker let the ladies lead. Tucker nudges Rope.

TUCKER  
Have you ridden anything other than a bull in the past year. Now, I don't mean trottin' out at the beginning of a rodeo. I mean hard ridin'.

Rope thinks. He remembers the ride with Dad.

ROPE

Nope.

TUCKER

Shit!

(whining a little)

Those girls are going to freakin' kill me.

EXT: HORSE TRACK -- NIGHT

There are no lights on the track. Rope, Tucker, Candy, and Mandy pull up crammed in Rope's pick-up.

Dixon and his boys wait next to two quarterhorses saddled up, and ready to go.

Rope stops the truck just shy of Dixon. They all pile out. Tucker carries a six pack of Bud.

DIXON

I was wondering if you boys were gonna show.

Rope looks at Candy.

ROPE

We got a little turned around on the way here.

DIXON

Bring the money?

(smiles)

I can see the... ladies.

Rope pulls the money halfway out of his shirt pocket, then slides it back in.

ROPE

Where's yours?

Dixon holds out his hand, and one of his friends gives him the money.

ROPE (CONT'D)

Why don't we let one of the girls hold the money since...

(looks at Candy)

the girls are yours IF you win.

Dixon thinks about it. Looks at his boys.

DIXON  
Okay, that's sounds good, to me.

They both hand Candy the money. She looks a little scared.

DIXON (CONT'D)  
(to his henchmen)  
Now you boys keep a close watch on her.  
I don't want my money running away.

Dixon rubs the back of his hand down her face. QUICKLY  
Rope snatches it off.

ROPE  
You ain't won yet.

DIXON  
Oh, I will, don't you worry about that.  
Now come on over here and take your  
pick. Let's get this show on the road.

TUCKER  
Don't you think we need some lights?

Dixon and his boys LAUGH.

DIXON  
We're gonna have some lights. Sure  
thing... Now there's something I ain't  
told you boys yet... We ain't suppose  
to be here. So's not to draw too much  
attention, we figured we'll turn the  
lights on to start the race, and off  
once it's over. Sounds all right.

ROPE  
Fine.

TUCKER  
Yeah... me too.

Dixon walks over to the rail fence of the track. Rope  
follows.

DIXON  
Name's Dixon.

ROPE  
Rope.

DIXON  
Okay Rope, we're gonna do two laps  
around this here course. You got that?

ROPE  
Yep.

DIXON  
Let's go.

Rope and Dixon walk over to the horses.

ROPE  
(points to a horse)  
I'll take that one.

Rope checks the straps and the saddle making sure it's safe, then mounts.

Dixon mounts. Rope and Dixon ride out on the track.

DIXON  
We'll start when the lights come on.

The girls and Tucker climb on a rail with beers in hand to watch. The cowboys do the same.

TUCKER  
Come on Rope! Take'em.

CANDY  
You can do it!

MANDY  
(to Candy)  
Are you sure?

Candy looks to the cowboys hanging on the fence HOOTIN' and a HOLLERIN' for Dixon.

CANDY  
Lord I hope so.

Lights come on. Dixon slashes the front breast of Rope's horse with his reins. Rope's horse rears up. Dixon takes off. SCREAMS AND YELLS blanket the night.

Dixon gets ahead by two lengths. Rope settles his horse down and takes off after him.

Rope catches Dixon at the far turn. Dixon try's to kick at Rope, but misses. Rope over takes him.

On the back stretch Rope SEES PATROL CARS heading their way with FLASHING LIGHTS.

ROPE  
Shit!

Rope pulls up to Tucker and the girls.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
(yelling)  
Get out of here the cops are coming!

Dixon passes him oblivious to the Patrol Cars.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
I'll meet you at the spanish fountain.

CANDY  
I know where that is.

TUCKER  
What are you gonna do?

ROPE  
Win.

He takes off after Dixon. Dixon has a solid lead, but Rope cuts it down.

The cowboys stay focused on the race. They don't see Tucker and the girls sneak off to the truck and leave.

On the back stretch Dixon's ahead by a nose.

The DEPUTY SHERIFFS pour in. Some of the cowboys make a break for it. Some put their hands up and surrender.

Rope sees what's happening but it doesn't effect his riding.

Dixon on the other slows up, as soon as he sees the Deputy Sheriffs.

DIXON  
(to himself)  
Oh shit.

Rope streaks by him, beats him to the finish line, and cuts the gate.

The Deputy Sheriffs WAVE GUNS trying to get Rope to stop. Rope cuts around the door on one of the Patrol Cars, knocking down an Officer, and bolts out into the street.

One of the DEPUTY SHERIFFS FIRES his GUN in the air.

SHERIFF DEPUTY  
STOP!

Rope is gone.

EXT: CITY STREETS -- NIGHT

Rope rides down the street. No cops in sight.

EXT: SPANISH FOUNTAIN -- NIGHT

Rope rides up. Slides off the horse.

TUCKER  
Did ya win?

ROPE  
What do ya think?

Candy runs up, all excited, and hands Rope the money.

CANDY  
You did it.

TUCKER  
Damn right! Damn right!

Tucker starts jumping up and down pouring beer all over everyone. Mandy joins in. They stop bouncing for a second. Mandy looks into his eyes.

MANDY  
Tuck, Were you really going to give us to those... ranch hands?

TUCKER  
Ah, Hell no honey. That would have never happened. Even if I had to whup them all myself.

MANDY  
Oh... you're so sweet.

Then she kisses him like there's no tomorrow.

Candy hugs Rope. Rope senses a shadow, turns to see...

A DEPUTY SHERIFF walk up.

INT: JAIL -- MORNING

A DEPUTY SHERIFF unlocks a cell door.

Rope and Tucker are sound asleep on cots.

DEPUTY SHERIFF  
All right wake up. Come on now, get to movin'.

Rope and Tucker wake slowly. Heads are spinning.

TUCKER  
Did I get kicked by a mule?

Rubbing his head.

DEPUTY SHERIFF  
Sheriff wants to talk to you boys.

ROPE  
Shit.

The Deputy Sheriff leads Rope and Tucker out of the cell.

TUCKER  
Where's the girls?

DEPUTY SHERIFF  
Home.  
(looks at Rope)  
You node them girls is barely of age.

TUCKER  
So am I.

Deputy cuts him a look. Tucker backs down.

INT: SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Two ton SHERIFF BRODY sits behind a big desk shuffling papers. KNOCK at the door.

SHERIFF BRODY  
Come in.

Rope and Tucker enter.

TUCKER  
You wanted to see us Sheriff?

SHERIFF BRODY  
To tell ya the truth boys, no I don't.  
Have a seat.

Rope and Tucker sit. Rope stares at the bottom of the desk. His thoughts lie elsewhere.

Sheriff Brody gets up to pour himself a cup coffee. Tucker salivates.

SHERIFF BRODY (CONT'D)  
Now I have a whole list of complaints  
about you boys last night. What in the

hell am I going to do with ya? You boys came in with the rodeo, right?

TUCKER

Yes sir.

SHERIFF BRODY

Where ya headed next?

TUCKER

Uh... uh... We have to be in Dodge City by tomorrow night.

SHERIFF BRODY

Mmm, Hmm.

Sheriff goes over to his desk. Picks up a piece a paper. Grabs his reading glasses.

SHERIFF BRODY (CONT'D)

Now, let's see. Disturbing the peace. Illegal horse racing. Trespassing. Fleeing from justice.

(looks at them)

Now you boys got anything to say for yourselves.

TUCKER

No sir we pretty much done them things.

SHERIFF BRODY

(looks at Rope)

Ain't you a little too old for this kind of nonsense?

Rope says nothing.

SHERIFF BRODY (CONT'D)

That's what I figured. I have to say I'm right disappointed in you boys.

(thinks)

I'm fining you five hundred dollars and ninety days.

TUCKER

Now Sheriff we need...

Sheriff raises his hand.

SHERIFF BRODY

Now hold on a minute. Let me finish. I'm suspending your sentence provided... that you boys get out of town, and that when you come back next

year. I don't want to hear hind nor  
hair of you two. Understand?

TUCKER  
Yes sir.

SHERIFF BRODY  
(at Rope)  
I didn't hear anything from you.

Rope looks up.

ROPE  
We understand.

SHERIFF BRODY  
Okay that settles it then. You can  
just pay the clerk outside.

Rope and Tucker leave. Rope's out first. Tucker...

TUCKER  
Thank you Sheriff.

SHERIFF BRODY  
You can find your horse in the stable  
out back.

Rope turns around.

SHERIFF BRODY (CONT'D)  
That is your horse ain't it?

TUCKER  
Yes Sir. Thanks.

They leave.

EXT: SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT -- DAY

Rope and Tucker Exit. Sun pierces the sky. They pull  
their hats down low to shade themselves. Rope stops at the  
curve. Looks over at the Sheriff's Patrol Car parked in a  
reserved parking spot in the front of the building.

ROPE  
That fat sumbitch just took us for five  
hundred dollars dollars.

TUCKER  
It was a fine, Rope.

ROPE  
Yeah, right... Need a ride to Dodge

City?

TUCKER

(smiling)

I was wondering how I was gonna get there.

ROPE

How'd ya get here?

TUCKER

Bummed a ride.

Rope smiles for once.

ROPE

Still got the keys to my truck?

TUCKER

Yep.

ROPE

You want to bring it around here and I'll see if I can't rustle up something to take that horse in.

TUCKER

Sounds like a plan.

Tucker takes off down the street.

Rope pauses, sees a pay phone across the street, stumbles to it.

INT: PHONE BOOTH --

Picks up the phone, dials.

RINGS

Someone picks up.

ELDERLY FEMALE (O.S.)

Hello.

ROPE

Leanne in.

ELDERLY FEMALE (O.S.)

No, she's not here at the moment. Can I tell her who's called?

ROPE

That's okay.

ELDERLY FEMALE (O.S.)  
Is this Rope?

Rope hangs up.

EXT: SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT -- DAY

Rope walks the horse from between the Sheriff's patrol car and a Deputy Sheriff's patrol car.

Tucker pulls down the gate on an old rusted out horse trailer. Rope walks the horse up to the trailer.

TUCKER  
What took ya so long back there?

Tucker helps Rope put the horse in the trailer.

ROPE  
Just thought I'd leave the Sheriff a little somethin' to remember us by.

Rope pulls up the gate, climbs in the truck and pulls out.

INT: SHERIFF'S PATROL CAR --

A pile of horse manure lies in the driver's seat.

EXT / INT: ROPE'S TRUCK --

Rope sucks down a bottle of Maalox. Driving. Tucker's asleep.

They pass a billboard. "DODGE CITY DAYS ROUND-UP JULY 31ST- AUGUST 4TH".

EXT: DODGE CITY DAYS ROUND-UP -- DAY

Women's barrel racing is in progress. A YOUNG WOMAN rides like the wind around a barrel and out the arena.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
What a ride By Miss Kelly Wright. Give a hand to this talented young lady.

*THE ANNOUNCER calls out the barrel racing event.*

BEHIND THE CHUTES

Contestants are gathering.

Rope in his chaps, drapes a bull riding rope over a panel siding. He puts his glove on, and works the rosin in his bull rope.

Tucker walks up, and hands Rope his contestant number.

ROPE

Thanks.

Various BULL and BRONC RIDERS warm up.

Roy Terry takes a dip of Skoal. He stands with a few other COWBOYS watching...

Tucker walks over to his bag. Tucker opens it and reaches for his gear... SCREAMS.

TUCKER

WHAT THE F...!

Tucker jerks out a garden snake, and jumps back flinging the garden snake in the air.

Roy and his COHORTS LAUGH.

Rope grins, shakes his head.

ROY

Way to go rookie!

COWBOY 1

Gotta watch out for those mean ole garden snakes.

Tucker smiles, takes it.

Roy Terry and his troupe go back to their pre-ride rituals.

ROPE

They're just having some funny. They don't mean nothin' by it.

TUCKER

I know, but when's it gonna end... it seems like everyday somethin'.

ROPE

Next year... then you'll be pullin' pranks on some ole rookie yourself.

TUCKER

I reckon...  
(to himself)  
damn garden snakes.

ROPE

It was kinda funny.

TUCKER  
You would think so.

Tucker throws a rosin bag at Rope.

EXT: DODGE CITY DAYS ROUND-UP -- DAY

Tucker stands over a bull in the bull riding chute. Rope assists.

ROPE  
Remember what I told ya. Stay over  
your hand at all times. You lean back  
on this bull and you're down.  
Understand?

Tucker shakes his head "yes".

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
Next Contestant up is Tucker Price from  
Medicine Hat, Alberta Canada. This is  
his first year on the circuit and Roy  
Terry tells me that the boys surprised  
him with a little gift today.

Tucker hears the remark made by the announcer. He looks over Rope's shoulder and sees Roy grinning at him, tipping his hat.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Hope it helps this Canadian ride this  
1800 pound brahma.

Tucker gets serious. Settles over the Bull. Secures his hand. Nods. Chute opens. The bull bolts out to...

THE ARENA

Rope CHEERS him on.

He rides well. Eight second BUZZER. Slides off clean and runs to the fence.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Give a good hand for this Canadian  
Cowboy, for his eight second ride.

CROWD CHEERS.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
That's good for a 67 and it's just  
short of the money.

INT: THE ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH -- DAY

The ANNOUNCER and his SIDEKICK sit amongst a ton of disheveled papers.

ANNOUNCER

Next contestant we have is Rope  
McCaslin runner-up to last years World  
Champion, the late Cody French, who  
died early this year.

EXT: DODGE CITY DAYS ROUND-UP - THE CHUTE -- DAY

Rope listens as he settles in on his bull.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

He'll be riding Big Sky. Let's give a  
good hand for this cowboy.

Tucker makes it back to the chute in time to help Rope  
settle on the bull. Rope stretches his rope around his  
glove hand. Inches onto the bull. Hand in air. Nods.  
Chute opens. The bull crushes out of the gate and into...

THE ARENA

Rope seems to be holding on. The Bull twists against his  
hand and Rope loses his grip. Down he goes. THE BUZZER.

Rope hits the ground hard. He gets up and runs to the  
fence. Up and over.

EXT: PARKING LOT -- DAY

Rope rips off his glove and walks. Determined. Angry as  
HELL. Toward the truck.

Tucker comes up from behind caring both their bags.

Rope walks to the side of his truck and in a fit of rage  
pounds into the side door panel.

Tucker stops in his tracks.

After a good outburst, Rope stops. Not turning around...

ROPE

Get in. We got a ways to Missoula.

EXT / INT: ROPE'S TRUCK -- NIGHT

Rope and Tucker are riding along in silence.

ROPE

Did good today.

TUCKER

Thanks.

ROPE

Just remember when you're ridin' you're puttin' on a show. Now I don't mean show boat or nothin' like that. But a little flashyness want hurt. Hold your body position and if you have a bull that's not givin' you anything, rake him a couple of times with your spurs.

TUCKER

I'll try to remember that.

ROPE

Once we get to Missoula. I'm gonna let out for couple of days get rid of this horse. Be sure to register for me.

TUCKER

Sure Rope, no problem. I'm gonna catch a wink. Let me know when you want me to spell ya.

EXT: MOTOR LODGE -- DAY

Tucker gets his things out of the truck.

TUCKER

Sure ya ain't gonna need some help with this mare here?

ROPE

I'll be all right.

TUCKER

Okay then.

Tucker turns to leave.

ROPE

Hey.  
(gets Tuckers attention)  
Stay out of jail.

TUCKER

(laughs)  
I plan on it.

Rope pulls off in the truck.

EXT: COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

Rope listens to country music over the radio.

EXT: LAZY "F" RANCH -- EVENING

Rope drives underneath a cast iron arch, reads "The Lazy F Ranch," and pulls up to the house. Gets out. Grabs his hat and strolls to the porch. He puts one foot on a step WHEN...

the door slings open. In the doorway stands JOANNA FRENCH, an attractive country girl in her early thirties.

JOANNA

Thought I heard a truck pull up.

ROPE

Yep.

JOANNA

I take it you're on your way to the Missoula Rodeo?

ROPE

Yep.

JOANNA

Well don't just stand there, Rope McCaslin. I have supper on the table.

JUST THEN...

A 6 year old boy, CODY FRENCH JR, BURSTS through the door.

CODY

(screaming)

Uncle Rope! Uncle Rope!

JUMPS into Rope's arms.

ROPE

Whoa! There partner... You're getting heavy...

Sets him down.

ROPE (CONT'D)

Let me look at ya. You've must of grown three inches since the last time I was by.

JOANNA

Food's gonna get cold.

Rope doesn't pay Joanna any attention. He kneels to the

young boy.

ROPE  
Got a surprise for ya.

Joanna reiterates.

JOANNA  
That can wait. Supper. Now.

ROPE  
Supper can wait just one little minute.  
Can't it?

CODY  
Yeah, momma please. Please.

Rope starts taking Cody over to the horse trailer.

JOANNA  
You're nothin' but trouble Rope  
McCaslin. If you don't behave  
yourself, I'm tellin' Leanne on ya.

ROPE  
Yeah.  
(to the Cody)  
Come on.

Joanna notices the trailer.

JOANNA  
Oh no.

Rope and Cody reach the trailer. Rope lets down the gate.

ROPE  
Stand back now. She maybe a little  
skittish after the ride.

CODY  
(excited)  
Is it mine?!

Rope backs the horse out.

ROPE  
She's all yours.

CODY  
Momma look, look what Uncle Rope got  
me!

Joanna walks to the edge of the porch. Shaking her head.

JOANNA  
(not happy)  
Now who's takin' care of this animal?

CODY  
I will Momma. I will.

INT: THE FRENCH HOUSE KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Joanna sets a plate in front of Rope, steak. Young Cody devours his supper.

JOANNA  
(to Cody)  
Slow down... That horse will be there when you're finished.

CODY  
Yes ma'am.

ROPE  
Looks great. Thanks.

JOANNA  
(smiling)  
You sure did time it perfect.

ROPE  
(smiling)  
Sure did.

JOANNA  
(to Rope)  
Where did you get the horse?

Before he opens his mouth...

JOANNA (CONT'D)  
You didn't steal it, did ya?

ROPE  
I...

JOANNA  
The truth.

He looks at her with a blank look on his face.

ROPE  
I won it.

Starts back to eating.

JOANNA

Poker?

ROPE  
Horse racing.

Confused. JoAnna starts to say something then she decides it's best not to know.

INT: THE FRENCH HOUSE LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Rope drinks a cup coffee, while looking at old photos of Cody Sr., JoAnna, Leanne, and himself. On the mantle he sees a Gold Buckle. He takes it down. It reads "World Champion Bull Rider 1973". JoAnna breaks in...

Uncomfortable silence occurs for a moment. Rope puts the buckle back in it's place.

JOANNA  
I don't know why I even keep that thing around.

ROPE  
It'll be lil' Cody's one day.

JOANNA  
I don't know if I want him to have it.

ROPE  
He'll want it. Is he asleep?

JOANNA  
Oh yes. You and that horse worn him out today. I don't know who's more the kid, you or him.

ROPE  
He's gettin' more and more like his paw every day.

JOANNA  
I know. That's what scares me.

ROPE  
Going to the rodeo?

JOANNA  
I don't know... I don't know if I have the stomach for anymore rodeos.

ROPE  
I'd like for Cody to go. I think it would be good for him.

JOANNA

I'll think about it... Your room's ready. I'm tired. I'll see ya in the morning, Rope.

She kisses him on the cheek.

ROPE

Oh, I almost forgot.  
(he pulls out the money)  
Roy gave me this to give to you. He sends his best. I wish I...

JoAnna puts her finger to Rope's mouth.

JOANNA

Shh... You do plenty. Now there's soap and water in the bathroom, and there's a razor under the sink. Be sure to use it. You do remember how to bathe don't you?

ROPE

(smile)  
Good-night.

JOANNA

Good-night.

She goes off to bed. Rope looks back up at the Belt Buckle and strokes his three day old beard.

EXT: THE FRENCH RANCH HOUSE -- DAY

A clean shaven Rope repairs a split rail fence. Cody helps. The horse prances in the corral.

JoAnna walks out on the porch. Watches.

JOANNA

Cody! You and Rope come on in now, Breakfast is ready.

CODY

Be right there, momma.

INT: THE FRENCH HOUSE KITCHEN -- DAY

Cody runs into the room.

JOANNA

Hey, slow down.

CODY

(excited)  
Uncle Rope's takin' me ridin'.

JOANNA  
He is? Well you better eat a good  
breakfast then. Did you wash your  
hands?

CODY  
Yes ma'am.

Rope enters.

ROPE  
Me too. See.

Holding up his hands to show...

JOANNA  
You clean up pretty good.

ROPE  
Well thank ya ma'am.

JOANNA  
Now sit before Breakfast gets cold.

Ropes and Cody takes their seats, while JoAnna serves them  
breakfast.

JOANNA (CONT'D)  
What are we going to do with that  
horse?

ROPE  
I don't know. I guess ride him.

JOANNA  
I swear I don't know how Leanne puts up  
with you.

ROPE  
(casually)  
She doesn't...  
(pause)  
anymore.

JoAnna looks at him bewildered.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
She moved back to Oklahoma City.

JOANNA  
I didn't know. I'm...

ROPE  
It's okay really. I guess it's all for  
the best.

He sits. JoAnna fixes him a plate.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
(to Cody)  
Wanna go with me to the rodeo tomorrow?

Cody SCREAMS!

CODY  
Yes!

JOANNA  
(angry)  
Rope!

Rope looks at her with a sheepish grin.

ROPE  
It'll be alright... Promise.

JoAnna does not look happy.

EXT: MISSOULA RODEO -- DAY

Rope and JoAnna are standing next to the arena looking  
through the fence.

JOANNA  
Are you sure he's gonna be all right?

ROPE  
Tuck knows what he's doing.

JOANNA  
And where did you meet this Tuck?

ROPE  
Rodeo in Cheyenne.

JOANNA  
(kidding)  
Sure it wasn't in jail?

Rope points to the center of the ring.

ROPE  
There they go.

THE ARENA...

is scattered by tons of children riding little calves.

Rope points out Cody. Tucker stands in the background watching, and yelling for Cody.

JOANNA  
(getting excited)  
GO CODY!!!!!! Wooo!!!

ROPE  
Hold on there partner!!!

Cody rides his heart out. THE EIGHT SECOND BUZZER. Lots of kids rode. Lots of kids fell.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
Look at that! His first 8 second ride.

That hits home with JoAnna.

Cody falls off the calf.

JoAnna gasps.

Tucker helps Cody up.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
He's fine.

EXT: BEHIND THE CHUTES -- DAY

Rope escorts JoAnna to the gate.

JOANNA  
I don't know about all this Rope. I don't think...

Cody runs up holding a ribbon.

CODY  
(excited)  
Look Momma...  
(showing the ribbon)  
look what me and Tuck got.

Tucker walks up from behind, sporting a new black eye.

JOANNA  
Tuck and I.

CODY  
Yes, Ma'am, Tuck and I got.

She smiles picks him up and hugs him.

JOANNA  
(softly to Tucker)  
Thanks.

TUCKER  
My pleasure ma'am. He's good boy.  
Rides like his paw.

Uncomfortable moment. JoAnna sets Cody down.

JOANNA  
(to Cody)  
Tell Tucker thanks.

CODY  
Thanks Tuck.

JOANNA  
We need to be getting to our seats.

Rope sees it in her eyes.

ROPE  
Don't worry.

JOANNA  
Please be careful.  
(pause)  
You too Tucker.

TUCKER  
Yes mam.

JoAnna grabs Cody by the hand.

JOANNA  
Come on.

As they leave to find some seats, Cody turns around.

CODY  
Ride'em 8 seconds Uncle Rope and...  
Tuck.

TUCKER  
We will lil' partner.

Rope, caught in the moment, looks at JoAnna.

JoAnna and Cody disappear into the stands.

TUCKER (CONT'D)  
That's a fine Woman.

ROPE  
Yes, she is.

He looks at Tucker. Breaks his thoughts. Changes the subject.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
What happen to that eye of yourn?

They turn and walk off to the stockyards.

TUCKER  
Ah... nothin' really. I got into a little scuffle with couple of cowboys.

ROPE  
How'd ya do?

TUCKER  
You should see them.

ROPE  
Mmmm hmm. Looks like you slept in jail?

TUCKER  
I did.

Rope snickers.

EXT: MISSOULA RODEO --

Rope helps Tucker settle on to a bull in the chute. Rope tightens the rope around Tucker's hand.

ROPE  
Feel good?

Tucker shakes his head "yes".

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
Let's give a hand for that Canadian Tucker Price ridin' Texas Star.

ROPE  
This is a good money bull. So hold on. He's gonna give you a good ride. As soon as the chute opens he's gonna cut to the right. Got it?

Tucker shakes his head "yes". Tucker looks at the MAN AT THE GATE shakes his head "yes". The gate opens.

The CROWD goes wild.

ROPE (CONT'D)

Yee Hi! Go!

THE STANDS

JoAnna clenches at the sight. Cody jumps up and down.

CODY

Go Tuck!

THE ARENA

Tucker holds on for eight seconds.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Look at this young cowboy ride. We got a 76 for this young gun out of Alberta, Canada.

Tucker runs up to the fence rail, and tips his hat to the crowd before climbing over.

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

Next up we have a Cowboy out of Bearcreek, Montana. Let's give a good hand for Rope McCaslin...

THE STANDS

The crowd CHEERS...

CODY

(excited)

Uncle Rope, Momma!

JOANNA

(worried)

I know... settle down.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

riding Nightmare. This Bull has thrown more cowboys than a prairie dust storm.

THE BULL CHUTE

Tucker runs up onto the fence to finish helping Rope settle in. Rope says nothing.

Rope wraps the rope once around two fingers and then over again on the other two - The Suicide Wrap.

Tucker's surprised. He wants to say something, but doesn't. Rope inches up on the Bull.

Rope clears his mind. Spots JoAnna and Cody in the stands. Looks at the MAN AT THE GATE. Gives the nod. CHUTE OPENS. The bull darts out into...

THE STANDS

The CROWD goes CRAZY. Clearly a tougher ride than Tuck's.

ON THE FENCE,

Tucker pumps his fist into the air.

TUCKER

Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! GO! ROPE!  
GO!

THE ARENA

Rope holds on. Spectacular ride. 8 SECOND BUZZER. He gets off clean. Runs up the rail fence. Jerks off his hat and thrusts it into the air. He is pumped. He knows he had a hell of a ride.

THE STANDS

JoAnna relieved. Cody going bananas.

JOANNA

(under her breath)  
Thank you God.

CODY

Look at Uncle Rope! Look at Uncle  
Rope!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

We got a new first place here, Cowboys  
and girls, with a 92 for Rope McCaslin.  
We have one last contestant here  
tonight and he will be riding the  
toughest thing since Tornado back in  
'67. It's what we've all been waiting  
for... Tequila Storm.

JoAnna reacts to the naming of the Bull.

BEHIND THE CHUTES

Rope's turns his head to the arena. Tucker walks up.

TUCKER

ALL RIGHT! You are a shoe in for first  
(looking in the arena)  
if he doesn't hang on.

Rope shuns him, all attention's on the arena.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Let's give a big warm welcome for our  
on Jacob Younger and, yes, he is a  
descendant of that famous outlaw  
family.

THE STANDS

JoAnna holds Cody Jr.

BEHIND THE CHUTES

Rope watches intently.

THE ARENA

The Chute opens. Tequila Storm tears out, twisting madly,  
throws JACOB YOUNGER on top of his horns, and slings him to  
the ground.

THE STANDS

Anguish from THE CROWD.

THE ARENA

The CLOWNS help Jacob get away.

BEHIND THE CHUTES

Rope's mind takes off to another place and time.

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

Let's give a hand for good try to our  
hometown Cowboy.

*THE announcer NAMES OFF THE FIRST THROUGH FOURTH PLACE  
FINISHES. Rope takes first and Tucker gets fourth.*

SERIES OF SHOTS:

The crowd claps.

Jacob sees medical attention.

Rope in a different world.

Joanna in horror.

BEHIND THE CHUTES

Rope spots JoAnna and Cody walking toward him.

Picking up on the cloud of uncomfortableness Tucker...

TUCKER

I'm gonna go throw our gear in the truck.

ROPE

Good idea.

TUCKER

I guess that slump of yours is over.

ROPE

Yep.

He leaves.

ROPE (CONT'D)

(to JoAnna)

Wanna get a steak at Reva's?

She thinks.

JOANNA

Yeah. Sure I can drop Cody off at Mom's.

CODY

Did you win, Uncle Rope?

ROPE

(smiles)

I guess I did... With your help.

CODY

Me?

ROPE

You're my partner ain't cha?

Rope starts tickling Cody. Cody laughs.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Excuse me Mr. McCaslin.

Rope looks up and sees KELLY WRIGHT, young twenties cowgirl with a little dirt on her face.

KELLY

That was a great ride back there.

ROPE

Thank you Miss...

KELLY  
Oh, I'm sorry. I'm Kelly Wright.

ROPE  
Race Barrels.

KELLY  
I try... Who's the little cowboy?

ROPE  
This here's my partner Cody and his maw  
JoAnna.

KELLY  
(nervous)  
Hi... Mr. McCaslin... Is Tuck around?

ROPE  
He just ran over to the truck. He  
should be back in a sec.

Kelly looks down. Disappointed.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
Anything wrong?

KELLY  
Sorta... Would you mind telling Tuck  
how sorry I am about last night?

ROPE  
Sorry?

KELLY  
I didn't mean to hit him... I was  
trying to hit someone else and... well,  
Tuck just stepped in the way.

Rope tries to keep from laughing.

KELLY (CONT'D)  
Everything went haywire after that...  
And I didn't see Tuck again. I think  
he's a great guy and...

ROPE  
I'll tell him.

KELLY  
You will? Great! I appreciate it. I  
guess I better get going.

Rope looks at JoAnna about to laugh.

ROPE  
Uh... Kelly.

Kelly turns back around.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
You wouldn't happen to be interested in  
going to dinner tonight with JoAnna,  
Tucker and Me would ya?

INT: REVA'S ROADHOUSE -- NIGHT

Reva's Roadhouse is packed with patrons from the rodeo. A  
WAITRESS takes a couple of pitchers of beer over to Rope,  
JoAnna, and Tucker.

WAITRESS  
(to Tucker)  
Reva don't want no ruckus tonight.

TUCKER  
Don't look at me. I didn't start  
anything.

WAITRESS  
If only I had a nickel for every time  
I've heard that.

TUCKER  
I was the one punched.

WAITRESS  
No trouble. Okay?

TUCKER  
No trouble from me.

She looks at him.

TUCKER (CONT'D)  
I swear.

WAITRESS  
Okay... Now what would ya'll like to  
order?

Tucker starts to give his order.

ROPE  
We'll wait just a minute.

TUCKER  
Wait? I'm starving. I could eat a  
bull.

Rope looks at Tucker.

TUCKER (CONT'D)  
Okay...  
(to the waitress)  
We'll be a few minutes.

The waitress disappears into the crowd. Kelly appears. Tucker tries to hide. Hoping she doesn't see him.

She spots Rope and JoAnna. Waves.

TUCKER (CONT'D)  
(under his breath)  
Oh... Hell.

ROPE  
'bout time.

KELLY  
Trying to find a parking spot was a mess.

Tucker looks at Rope. Rope smiles.

KELLY (CONT'D)  
Have ya'll ordered?

ROPE  
Not yet. But I think Tucker's a little hungry, right Tuck.

KELLY  
I'm starving, I could eat a bull.

Tucker looks sick.

INT: REVA'S ROADHOUSE -- NIGHT

The dinner is over and the waitress takes the plates. Kelly has become irritated with Tucker's quiet demeanor and they both sit in silence with arms crossed.

ROPE  
That was a great steak.

Rubs his belly.

JOANNA  
That was good.

ROPE  
What did you think, Tucker?

TUCKER  
Well,.. It was alright.

KELLY  
Alright! You sure did tear into it.  
For it just being alright.

The BAND kicks in a rollicking Bob Wills country swing tune.

The foursome look around in silence.

ROPE  
So why don't you two dance?

TUCKER  
(looks at Kelly)  
I ain't interested.

KELLY  
That's probably cause he doesn't know how.

TUCKER  
'Scuse me.

Kelly glares at him.

TUCKER (CONT'D)  
I don't know how to dance? You couldn't hang with me.

KELLY  
'Scuse me.

Tucker glares back.

KELLY (CONT'D)  
I couldn't hang with you? You couldn't lead.

TUCKER  
All right that does it.

Grabs her arm. Jerks her out of her chair.

KELLY  
What?

TUCKER  
Come on. We gonna dance.

They head to the dance floor.

ROPE  
(to JoAnna)  
This is going to be good.

JOANNA  
What are you doing?

Rope just smiles.

#### THE DANCE FLOOR

Tucker and Kelly square off. Tucker grabs her hand, twirls her hard. He's good. They dance harder and harder as if each one is trying to prove something to the other. They look great. They close in.

KELLY  
Your wrist is weak.

TUCKER  
That's 'cause you're off rhythm.

Twirls her hard.

#### THE TABLE

JoAnna and Rope watch the dancing duo.

JOANNA  
Tucker remind you of anyone?

ROPE  
(looks at her strangely)  
You don't... Naw... I was...

JOANNA  
Just as wild.

ROPE  
Me? I wasn't that bad.

JOANNA  
Rope McCaslin. Don't forget, I've known you along time. Remember the last time I was on the road with you and Cody, right before I got pregnant, you were seeing that stock contractor's daughter. What was her name?

ROPE  
(reluctantly)  
Debi.

JOANNA

Debi.

(thinking)

It was... Dallas. You missed the rodeo because you were bound and gagged to the bed posts in your hotel room all day.

ROPE

I don't want to...

JOANNA

She busted you with...

ROPE

Okay, okay... enough.

JOANNA

I can't believe you ever got married.

ROPE

I was ready to settle down.

JoAnna looks at Rope.

JOANNA

What happen?

ROPE

I don't know, maybe I chose the wrong person to settle down with.

JOANNA

I tried to warn you about those city girls. Life moves a lot slower on a ranch.

ROPE

It was definitely too slow for her.

An uncomfortable silence breaks in.

JOANNA

You know if I remember correctly you used to dance... Not too bad either.

ROPE

Are you asking me to dance Mrs. French?

JOANNA

Why not?

ROPE

Why not.

Rope stands, takes her hand like a gentleman and escorts her to...

THE DANCE FLOOR

Tucker and Kelly are going strong. Rope and JoAnna square off. The lights dim. The band starts to play a slow song.

Rope and JoAnna pause.

Tucker and Kelly glare at each other.

ROPE (CONT'D)

What do we do now?

Trying to keep his cool.

JOANNA

I'd still like that dance.

Rope moves in slowly, being very careful. They dance uncomfortable at first, but then they warm up.

TUCKER

So... what do we do now?

KELLY

Just shut up.

He's stunned. She moves in, presses her head to his chest. They dance.

INT: THE FRENCH HOUSE LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

JoAnna enters. Rope follows carrying Cody. Cody's asleep. JoAnna flicks on a light. Rope follows her into...

CODY'S BEDROOM.

QUIETLY, she turns on a lamp and untucks his bed. Rope lays him down. JoAnna takes his shoes off and tucks him in, then kisses him on his forehead.

He wakes a little.

CODY

Momma.

...as JoAnna gets him ready for bed.

JOANNA

(whispering)

Go to sleep honey. Good-night.

CODY  
Good-night... Good-night Uncle Rope.

ROPE  
Good-night partner.

He falls fast asleep. Rope and JoAnna leave the room.

LIVING ROOM

JoAnna walks up uncomfortably close to Rope.

JOANNA  
(a little tipsy)  
I had a great time tonight.

She hugs him. Rope doesn't know what to do.

JOANNA (CONT'D)  
Thank you.

She pulls back. They look at each other. Wanting to kiss.  
It's wrong. They know. Rope breaks away.

ROPE  
I best be going.

JOANNA  
It's too late to drive back now...  
stay...

Rope thinks about that word.

JOANNA (CONT'D)  
Your room's still made up.

ROPE  
I'm wide awake. The drive would do me  
good... besides Tucker and I need to  
let out early in the mornin'. Headin'  
to Colorado.

JOANNA  
Cody will be disappointed.

ROPE  
I'll be back.

They break away slowly. He leaves.

JoAnna puts her hands into her pockets to clean them out  
and FINDS an envelope. She pulls it out. Opens it. It's  
filled with money. She thinks for a moment and smiles,  
then she glances up at a picture near by of Cody Sr., Rope,

and herself and cries.

EXT: MOTOR LODGE -- DAY

Rope pulls up in the truck, gets out and walks up to a door. Goes in.

INT: MOTOR LODGE -- DAY

Rope enters. Hits a light switch.

ROPE  
Get ready. We're headin' out.

Tucker sprawled out on a bed tangled up with Kelly.

Rope opens the curtains. Piercing sun. Tucker and Kelly  
MOAN AND GROAN.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
Be right back.

Rope exits.

Tucker jerks the cover over his body to hide from the sun.  
It rips off Kelly.

KELLY  
Hey!

She jerks the covers back.

EXT: MOTOR LODGE -- DAY

Rope walks across the street to a pay phone. He picks up  
the receiver and dials. After a few minutes of nodding...

Tucker comes out with Kelly. She kisses him.

KELLY  
See ya in Colorado Springs?

TUCKER  
You betcha.

Kelly smiles.

KELLY  
I better go hook up to my trailer.

TUCKER  
Need any help.

KELLY

I can manage. I'm not one of those frail little girls that you're used to hooking up with.

TUCKER

Excuse me. Then I guess I'll see ya in Denver.

KELLY

(winks)

If you're lucky.

She walks to her truck. Gets in. Leaves.

Rope walks back across the street.

TUCKER

That's one wild cat.

ROPE

Yeah, but who's cornering who?

TUCKER

I'm not sure.

ROPE

Let's get out of here. We got a lot of rodeos to win if'n we're gonna make it to Oklahoma.

TUCKER

Now ya talkin'.

They get in the truck. Pull out.

ROPE (O.S.)

So... Tell me again, how'd you get that black eye?

The truck turns out on the street and down the road.

EXT: GAS STATION -- DAY

Rope fills up the tank. Tucker comes out of the station with a small bag of groceries, walks up to Rope.

ROPE

Damn gas prices are going through the roof.

TUCKER

Yeah, I don't know why we don't go over there and take over that whole damn region.

ROPE

Wouldn't be right. You wouldn't want someone tellin' you what to do, would ya?

TUCKER

No, I reckon, but they shouldn't have that much control over our gasoline. Making it so it's tough to make a livin' rodeoin'.

ROPE

I guess we're gonna have to start doing a little better then.

Tucker's thinking.

TUCKER

You know I've been meaning to ask you since Missoula... What was with the double wrap?

Rope hangs up the pump.

ROPE

I don't know what you're talking about.

EXT / INT: ROPE'S TRUCK -- DAY

Rope and Tucker ride down the highway.

TUCKER

You know damn well what I'm talking about... Since when did you start using the "Suicide Wrap"?

ROPE

I think you're touched in the head.

TUCKER

If you fall against your glove hand you can get hung up. Rip your whole arm out of socket.

ROPE

Well, I guess I better not fall then, huh?

TUCKER

Maybe I should try it.

ROPE

No.

TUCKER  
Why not? You do it.

ROPE  
No!... Get me my Maalox?

TUCKER  
Yeah, I don't know how you can drink  
that shit.

Tucker hands him the Maalox from the bag.

ROPE  
You will one day.

EXT: PARKING LOT LUBBOCK TEXAS -- DAY

*An ANNOUNCER calls out the winners from the LUBBOCK RODEO.*

Rope tightens a loose valve under his hood.

Roy Terry walks up with a clip board.

ROY  
Need your signature Rope.

ROPE  
What for?

ROY  
Establishing a new association.

ROPE  
What's this one gonna be called?

ROY  
PRCA.

ROPE  
What's the "P" stand for?

ROY  
Professional.

ROPE  
Oh... now we're the Professional Rodeo  
Cowboy Association.

ROY  
Yep, rodeo cowboys, stock contractors,  
tournament sponsors, everybody's  
puttin' money aside for a Cowboy Relief  
Fund. Insurance for cowboy's families  
who get roughed up on the circuit.

ROPE  
What about for past cowboys?

ROY  
Talkin' bout Cody's wife?

ROPE  
Yep.

ROY  
They'll be somethin' set aside, to be honest, there want be enough.

Rope looks disappointed.

ROY (CONT'D)  
You can't get insurance for past accidents, but we can make it sos nothin' like that happens again.

ROPE  
Yeah.

Rope grabs the petition and signs.

Tucker and Kelly run up.

TUCKER  
(all excited)  
Rope! Weee whooo! Guess What? Yeah!

ROPE  
Sign this first.

Tucker signs it without reading it.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
You ain't married are ya?

TUCKER  
No! Hell NO!

Kelly hits him hard. He SCREAMS IN AGONY.

KELLY  
Watch it.

Tucker hands the clipboard back to Roy.

ROY  
(to Tucker)  
Thanks.  
(to Kelly)  
I believe I've all ready got yours?

KELLY  
Yes sir.

ROY  
See ya around Rope.

ROPE  
Later Roy.

Roy heads off.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
(to Tucker)  
What is it?

TUCKER  
Your second today moved you up 12th  
overall.

ROPE  
Kinda figured if I could put out some  
good rides I'd have a shot.

Tucker puts an arm around Kelly.

TUCKER  
Kelly's first here in Lubbock puts her  
5th overall. I guess I'll be the only  
one not going to the Finals this year.

ROPE  
There's still a lot of Rodeos left.

TUCKER  
Yeah, but I started too late. I'm too  
far down.

Kelly hits him in the stomach.

KELLY  
Oh, but you're still going.

TUCKER  
If you don't stop hitting me, I ain't.

KELLY  
Rope needs ya there.

TUCKER  
No one else needs me, huh?

KELLY  
(smiles)  
Maybe one more person.

They look into each other's eyes. Kelly breaks away.

KELLY (CONT'D)  
You going out dancing with us tonight,  
Rope?

ROPE  
Nah, I think I'll pass. Get an early  
start in the morning for Dallas.

TUCKER  
Come on go out with us. You ain't had  
more than a dozen beers since we left  
Denver. What's getting into you?

ROPE  
Nothin'. Just not in the mood, I  
guess... Jump inside there and kick her  
off.

Tucker climbs in the truck and starts it. SMOOTH.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
That sounds better.

Tucker cuts it off.

KELLY  
Well, I guess I'll see ya later then.

ROPE  
I'm sure of it.

Shuts the hood.

KELLY  
(to Tucker)  
Wanna come help me brush down my horse?

TUCKER  
Do I have a choice?

Kelly shakes her head.

KELLY  
No.

TUCKER  
Well, in that case. I guess so.  
(to Rope)  
What are you gonna do?

ROPE  
I'll probably just grab me a steak

somewhere and hit it early... Go on and have fun. I'll be fine.

TUCKER

I hope this seriousness ain't contagious.

Kelly hits him.

KELLY

Wouldn't hurt you none.

TUCKER

If you don't...

Kelly leans up and gently kisses Tucker on the cheek. He melts.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Well... See ya back at the Motel. Rope.

ROPE

Sure.

TUCKER

In the mornin'.

Kelly hits him.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Ouch. That's starting to hurt.

KELLY

So what are you saying?

...as they walk off.

TUCKER

Nothin' honey. Honest.

Rope laughs at the two of them, climbs in his truck and pulls out.

EXT: CITY STREETS --

Rope turns into a post office, gets out of his truck, and goes inside.

INT: POST OFFICE --

Rope walks in. Goes over to a counter. Grabs an envelope. Crams money inside of it. Licks it. Scribbles something on the outside. Purchases a stamp from a stamp machine. Mails the letter.

EXT: POST OFFICE --

Rope exits. He notices a phone booth at the street corner. He thinks. Decision time. No. He walks to his truck gets in and pulls away.

EXT / INT: ROPE'S TRUCK -- DAY

Rope and Tucker Travel down the highway drinking Pepsi's.

TUCKER

I think I'm taking a break after Dallas.

ROPE

That's probably not a bad idea.

TUCKER

You should think about taking a break too... Kelly thinks we're pushing too hard... She's taking a couple of weeks off for Thanksgivin', wants me to join her.

ROPE

I see.

TUCKER

Just a thought.

ROPE

We're not getting a little serious are we?

TUCKER

Who me? Nah.

Rope laughs.

EXT: DALLAS RODEO -- BEHIND THE CHUTES

Rope stands by himself in a uncharacteristic way. Kelly and Tucker are standing together. Rope turns to the arena. Expressionless.

KELLY

Go over there and say something to him.

TUCKER

It's his call.

KELLY

If you don't I will.

Kelly starts to take off and Tucker grabs her by the arm.

Kelly looks at Tucker with fear in her eyes, and then anger. She snatches her arm away and storms off.

The ANNOUNCER CALLS out The RIDES. Rope...

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Next up we have Rope McCaslin riding the treacherous Tequila Storm. The Storm as the riders call him, has thrown 176 riders, cowboys and cowgirls, so let's give a brave hand to this cowboy out of Bearcreek, Montana.

heads for the chutes. Tucker follows.

The ANNOUNCER goes through ADVERTISEMENTS.

Rope jumps up on the rail and looks down at this 2000 lb. brahma bull. The bull rams his heavy body into the fence.

Tucker comes up from behind. Rope looks at him. Tucker sees something in Rope's eyes he's never seen before, fear.

Rope says nothing as he straddles the bull.

TUCKER

(not loud enough)  
Don't.

...as Rope sets up the "suicide wrap". Reluctantly Tucker helps.

ROPE

Tighter. Tighter!

Tucker tries.

ROPE (CONT'D)

(angry)  
MORE... GOD DAMN IT!

Rope snatches the rope from Tucker, and pulls it tighter. The bull's about to go nuts. Rope pounds his fist into the rope to help tighten it more.

Rope lowers himself gently on the bull. Rope nods at the GATE MAN. Chute OPENS. The bull hurls himself out like a whirlwind into...

THE ARENA

Rope's holding on.

THE CHUTE

TUCKER  
(under his breath)  
Come on.

RAIL FENCE

Kelly prays.

THE ARENA

Rope holds till the 6th second when he is hurled off. His glove hand is caught. He can't get loose. The bull drags him around the arena like a rag doll. Rope tries to jump back up on the bull to loosen the rope. To no avail.

THE CROWD goes dead from shock.

The CLOWNS come out to help. They get tossed around.

Rope falls to his knees being dragged by the bull. He tries desperately to get up.

The clowns fight with all their might.

RAIL FENCE

Kelly in horror.

THE CHUTE

Tucker shocked.

THE ARENA

One of the clowns distracts the bull while the other helps Rope get loose. Rope's CUSSES like a drunken sailor through his torture.

ROPE  
Pull that \*%#@&\* rope \*&^\*#.

The CLOWN that distracted the bull is knocked down.

The Clown assisting Rope finally releases the bull rope. Rope falls to the ground in agonizing pain.

Tucker springs over the fence and runs to Rope. He helps Rope to his feet, and then to the fence.

The Clowns get the bull out of the arena. All is calm.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Let's give a big hand for that Montana  
Cowboy, now, rodeo fans. He's one tough  
ole buzzard that Rope McCaslin is.

The CROWD RESPONDS.

Kelly rushes over to Rope.

PARAMEDICS arrive. Tucker's in shock. Kelly grabs hold of  
Tucker.

An AMBULANCE backs in. The Paramedics help Rope into the  
ambulance.

TUCKER  
(to Rope)  
We're right behind ya.

Rope just shakes his head.

INT: HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

Tucker and Kelly walk down the hall.

ROPE (O.S.)  
There's nothing wrong with my legs... I  
don't need no damn wheel chair.

They turn the corner to see...

Rope arguing with a nurse, whose standing behind a wheel  
chair. Rope's arm lies in a cast and sling.

NURSE  
Please, Mr. McCaslin.

ROPE  
I walked in here. I'm walking outa  
here. Simple.

TUCKER  
Miss, I'd give up on him. He's worst  
than a mule.

NURSE  
Fine.

Nurse walks away with the chair.

TUCKER  
Why ya givin' these poor little nurses  
here a hard time. They just doing  
there job.

KELLY  
Are you okay?

ROPE  
I'm fine, let's get out of here.

TUCKER  
How long you gonna be stowed up?

ROPE  
Oh, 'bout three to four weeks.

Rope walks over to a desk to check out.

RECEPTIONIST looking over his chart.

RECEPTIONIST  
Mr. McCaslin, it says here that you have a sprained wrist, torn ligaments in your forearm, broke two fingers on your right hand, and a torn rotator cuff. You should keep your arm immobilized for six to eight weeks and then start...

Rope interjects.

ROPE  
I know, Doc already explained everything to me.

RECEPTIONIST  
(aggravated)  
Therapy. Okay, If I can get you to sign right here.

He signs. Turns to Tucker.

ROPE  
Truck outside?

TUCKER  
Yep, three to four weeks huh?

ROPE  
I hate hospitals.

EXT: HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

Rope, Tucker, and Kelly walk through the parking lot.

TUCKER  
So, What are your plans?

ROPE

Head home for Thanksgivin', I reckon.

TUCKER

That's not a bad idea. Kelly, said I can hit the road with her, maybe have Thanksgivin' at her folks.

ROPE

Good, then, I'll catch up with ya in a few weeks.

KELLY

Don't come back too soon.

ROPE

Course not. I wouldn't do somethin' like that.

TUCKER

Yeah, and you don't eat steak either.

They get in the truck and pull off.

ROPE

Damn Docs don't know anything.

EXT: COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

Rope travels down the road listening to country music.

EXT: LAZY "F" RANCH -- DAY

Rope pulls in. Rope notices...

a sedan parked out in front of the house with a MAN standing there talking to JoAnna. She seems to be signing something on the hood of his car. She sees Rope.

Rope pulls up.

The man gets into his car and drives off.

Rope gets out. Bewildered.

JoAnna doesn't feel like talking.

ROPE

What's going on?

JoAnna notices the arm.

JOANNA

What happened?

ROPE  
Bull got the best of me.

JOANNA  
Which bull?

ROPE  
I... I.

JOANNA  
Which Bull?

She knows.

JOANNA (CONT'D)  
Cody will be home soon. I need to get  
supper going.

She turns and walks up the porch.

INT: THE FRENCH HOUSE KITCHEN -- DAY

Rope sits at a table drinking coffee.

JoAnna makes supper.

ROPE  
Are you gonna tell me what was going on  
out there?

JOANNA  
Are you going to tell me which bull did  
this to you?

ROPE  
You know which bull.

DEAD SILENCE.

JOANNA  
That was a banker man. I can't keep up  
with the bills...

ROPE  
But...

JOANNA  
I appreciate the money. Really, I do.  
You can't keep doing that, Rope. It's  
not your responsibility... and this  
place is too much for me without...

Tapers off to silence.

Cody bolts into the room.

CODY  
Uncle Rope!

Runs and jumps into Rope's lap.

ROPE  
Hey, partner!

JOANNA  
Cody. Be careful Uncle Rope's hurt.

ROPE  
He's alright.

CODY  
What happened, Uncle Rope?

ROPE  
A big ole Bull got me.

EXT: THE FRENCH HOUSE PORCH -- NIGHT

Rope leans on a porch column drinking coffee.

JoAnna exits the house.

JOANNA  
He finally got to sleep.

ROPE  
Sorry. Didn't mean to rile him up so much.

JOANNA  
That's okay, he thinks a lot of you, you know.

ROPE  
He's a good kid. I think a lot of him.

JOANNA  
Rope, why did you ride him?

ROPE  
I can't walk away from a bull. If...

JOANNA  
You know I've heard that before. The ole cowboy code of honor. And I don't buy it. You could have stepped away from that bull... Cody could have stepped away from that bull... You two

are just alike. It scares me to death to think that you could wind up...

ROPE

I'm all right. Just busted up a little, that's all.

JOANNA

But, what about the next time? The next time you might not be so lucky.

Rope's silent. Changes subject.

ROPE

What're you and lil Cody gonna do now?

JOANNA

I don't know. Move in with Mom and Dad for awhile. At least until I get back on my feet.

ROPE

Got any plans for Thanksgivin'?

JOANNA

I haven't thought much about it, Why?

ROPE

Thinkin' ya might want to come down to Bearcreek. Folks would love to see ya.

JOANNA

I don't know. I'll think about it. Okay?

ROPE

Okay.

JOANNA

I'm going to get some sleep. Good-night.

ROPE

Night.

She thinks about kissing him on the cheek like she's done thousands of times before, but doesn't.

EXT: THE FRENCH RANCH HOUSE -- DAY

Rope latches up the horse trailer.

JoAnna and Cody exit the house. Cody runs up to the truck.

ROPE  
Ready?

JOANNA  
Yes. I am.

ROPE  
Good.  
(to Cody)  
Climb aboard partner.

CODY  
Yeah!

Cody climbs in the truck. JoAnna slides in beside him.  
Rope gets in and drives away.

INT: THE MCCASLIN RANCH HOUSE DINNING ROOM -- DAY

A huge southwestern room filled with antique furnishings is the back drop for Thanksgiving dinner. Rope has a big family and tons of food.

JoAnna helps MRS. MCCASLIN and OTHER FEMALE FAMILY MEMBERS set the table. One is SARAH, Rope's sister.

The MEN reside around the fireplace talking. James stands next to Rope and JAMES JR.

The KIDS are running about. Cody seems to have found some friends.

MRS. MCCASLIN.  
All right now, food's on the table.  
Now ya'll come on over here before it gets cold.

JoAnna smiles at Rope as he walks over. They sit next to one another.

Cody sits at a smaller table with the kids.

JAMES  
Momma you want to say grace?

Everyone holds hands. Sheepishly, Rope softly takes JoAnna's.

MRS. MCCASLIN.  
Yes, Blessed is the Lord in these thy gifts, which we are about to receive. From thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Food is passed with fast precision, while James carves the turkey.

JAMES

I know ya'll ain't shy, so speak up.  
And if you're wondering who this ugly  
feller here on my right is... it's your  
brother Rope.

The gathering chuckles.

JAMES JR.

Rope, You get a chance, come up and  
spend a couple days in Billings. We've  
got plenty of room.

ROPE

Sure.

SARAH

Rope you're gonna take the rest of the  
year off aren't you?

JAMES

Will you people let Rope eat in  
peace... I swear.

SARAH

Dad, I haven't seen him hardly at all  
since Christmas.

JAMES

Well you can spend time with him after  
dinner. Now eat.

He dumps a big portion of turkey right on her plate.

Rope holds up his broken arm.

ROPE

Sarah, I think I'm gonna be around  
awhile.

SARAH

You are gonna quit riding aren't you?

James shoots her a look.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Okay, I'm eating.

EXT: THE MCCASLIN RANCH HOUSE --

Rope stands on the porch talking to James Jr, with after

dinner drinks and cigars.

JAMES JR.

The country's headed for another depression Rope, as sure as I'm sitting here. What with the layoffs and oil prices going through the roof, you need to get yourself settled and get off the road. Now I can still get you a reasonable loan on a place if you act fast...

James Sr. walks out. Smoking a pipe.

JAMES

There you are Rope. I want to talk to ya for minute.

(to James Jr.)

Excuse us for a minute, Junior.

JAMES JR.

Sure, I need to go around back and check on the kids.

James Jr. leaves.

JAMES

I don't want to be nosey son, but I always speak my mind, you know that... First of all, What are your intentions?

ROPE

Intentions?

JAMES

Yes Son, You have your best friend's widow in there...

Rope starts to talk.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Now, I know she's a wonderful girl. I love her to death as if she was my own. But she's going through a difficult time right now and she's vulnerable. And...

ROPE

I know what ya gettin' at. And to be honest, I don't know... I just don't know.

INT: THE MCCASLIN RANCH HOUSE KITCHEN --

JoAnna helps Mrs. McCaslin, Sarah and JAMES JR.'S WIFE wash the dishes.

JOANNA

Thanks for having Cody and me over, Mrs. McCaslin. We really appreciate all that you've done.

MRS. MCCASLIN.

We love having ya, and anytime you want to come by for a visit, you are more than welcome. There's plenty of room here in this ole' house.

SARAH

That goes for me too. Trey just loves playing with Cody.

JoAnna thinks for a minute.

EXT: THE MCCASLIN RANCH HOUSE -- LATER THAT NIGHT

JoAnna sits on the porch rocking in a chair with Cody, asleep in her arms.

Rope walks out carrying a bottle of wine and two glasses.

ROPE

Dad's homemade elderberry wine, want some?

JOANNA

Yes, that'll be nice, thanks. Your whole family is so wonderful. Cody and I appreciate you taking us in the way you have.

He pours.

ROPE

They're quite fond of you too.  
(looking at Cody)  
He's had a active day.

JOANNA

Yes he has. I think I'm going to go put him to bed.

She gets up and carries him in the house.

Rope walks out and sits on the top porch step, and looks out at the million stars in the sky.

ROPE

(to himself)  
What am I doing?

The screen door opens. Rope turns. It's JoAnna. He hands her a glass of wine. She takes a sip and sits beside him.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
JoAnna, I'd like to talk to you about something. I would like...

JOANNA  
Rope. Don't. Don't. Just leave it be for right now. Please.

Rope goes silent. JoAnna sets the glass of wine beside her, and lays her head on his shoulder.

EXT: THE MCCASLIN RANCH -- DAY

Cody flops around on his new mare.

Rope sits on a fence rail hollering instructions. Cody responds.

ROPE  
Good, good keep his head up. That's it. Look at that cowboy ride!

Rope HEARS another horse approaching. He turns. It's James McCaslin.

Cody yells with excitement at the sight of James.

CODY  
Look Mr. McCaslin! I'm riding!

JAMES  
I see.  
(to Rope)  
Got yourself a pupil and a good one at that.

ROPE  
Yeah, He's gonna be one hell of a cowboy. That's for sure...  
(to Cody)  
Bring her on in here Cody.

Cody rides up to the railing. Rope helps Cody down.

JAMES  
Since you're all saddled up.

James grins.

EXT: THE MCCASLIN RANCH BACK PASTURE -- DAY

Rope and Cody are doubling up on Cody's horse. James rides along side.

EXT: THE MCCASLIN RANCH LAKE -- DAY

Rope, Cody and James ride.

ROPE

Forgotten how beautiful it is up here.

JAMES

Yeah, there's nothin' like Montana skies. A man can get lost up here if'n he had a mind to.

ROPE

Roamin' free.

JAMES

Yep.

ROPE

That's it you know?

JAMES

What?

ROPE

The freedom. The independence. Being in a different town on any givin' day. That's been my life for a long time.

EXT: THE MCCASLIN RANCH PASTURE - DAY

Rope, Cody, and James pull to let the horses eat a little hay.

JAMES

You got the spirit of the cowboy in ya, son. And there ain't nothin' wrong with that. I have to admit that ever now and then even I have to get out, and get my feathers ruffled on occasion. But there ain't nothin' like going home to a good woman  
(looks at Cody)  
and raising a young'un or two. I know it ain't my business... and you got every right to shush me up. But, I can see it in your eyes, Rope. The wear on your body...

ROPE

Dad.

JAMES

Just let me finish. A good cowboy knows when it's time to hang up his spurs. And I know that you'll know when that time comes.

A long silence.

ROPE

Best start heading back. It'd be dark soon.

JAMES

Yep, Momma will start getting worried if we ain't there for supper.

EXT: THE MCCASLIN RANCH -- NIGHT

JoAnna wrapped in a shawl walks off the porch and into the night.

Rope exits the house. Walks to the edge and starts to light up a cigar WHEN...

He sees JoAnna. Puts the cigar away and walks out to join her.

ROPE

JoAnna.

Startles her.

JOANNA

Rope. I didn't hear you come up.

ROPE

Want some company?

JOANNA

(smiles)

Yes.

ROPE

Good.

They continue walking in silence.

JOANNA

It's beautiful tonight.

Rope looks up at the myriad of stars in the sky.

ROPE

That it is.

She gets a little chill. He puts his arm around her to keep her warm.

JOANNA

Thanks... I want you to know I've had a wonderful time. The past two weeks have been great.

ROPE

I'm glad.

JOANNA

I just love your parents. Your sister is so funny. Cody ran into the kitchen with a mouse he found in the barn, and she nearly jumped out of her skin, then Mrs. McCaslin took the mouse from Cody and went to show Sarah it was harmless, She ran out of the kitchen screaming... She's somethin'.

ROPE

Sarah's a little skittish, always has been. Probably my fault. I played quite a few mean tricks on her when we were younger.

JOANNA

Rope. I've been doing a lot of thinking.

ROPE

Me too.

She turns to face him.

JOANNA

Hear me out first. Please.

ROPE

Okay.

JOANNA

I can't do it again. I don't want to sit at home every night worrying if you're alright. Where you are. What you're doing. I want someone who's around... not on the road. Not riding bulls.

(she tears up)

I can't fall in love with you, Rope. I

can't. You're a wonderful man. But I can't. It would tear me apart if I had to go through that again. And I don't want to be the woman who takes you away from your dream. I couldn't live with you resenting me... That's why Leanne left, wasn't it?

His silence tells all. She hugs him. He holds her.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

She kisses him tenderly on the lips and runs into the the house.

Rope stands there for a moment, walks over to...

THE CORRAL.

Stares at Cody's horse, roaming restlessly between the rails. Sharply, Rope turns towards the barn.

INT: BARN --

Rope walks up to a bench, lights an oil lamp, searches, finds an old pair of pruning shears, and starts to cut off his cast.

EXT: DENVER RODEO -- DAY

The calf roping is in progress.

*THE ANNOUNCER CALLS out the action.*

BEHIND THE CHUTES

Various bull riders and rodeo contestants are milling about, going through their pre-riding ritual.

Tucker finishes rosining up his bull rope.

Rope walks up. Tucker's surprised.

TUCKER

What happened to six weeks?

ROPE

Turned into three.

They start walking toward the chutes.

TUCKER

You okay to ride?

ROPE  
As okay as I'll ever be.

TUCKER  
But the doc said...

ROPE  
(snaps)  
Goddamnit Tuck! I know what the doc  
said. And I just said I'm fine.

Tucker's startled. Dead silence.

TUCKER  
Who'd ya draw?

ROPE  
Big Sky.

TUCKER  
You should get a good score off him.

ROPE  
Should.

TUCKER  
We're gonna have to hit some rodeos if  
you're planning on making it to  
Oklahoma.

ROPE  
That's my plan. What ranking am I?

TUCKER  
18th.

ROPE  
I gotta move up at least three more  
notches. Let's get to work.

EXT: DENVER RODEO CHUTES --

Rope climbs up on Big Sky. Tucker tightens the rope around  
Rope's hand - No Suicide Wrap. Chute opens. 8 second  
ride. HORN. Crowd Cheers.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Tucker rides a bull. 8 second HORN.

THE ANNOUNCER CALLS out the ride of Tequila Storm. He  
tramples another COWBOY. Rope watches on.

Rope rides a bull. 8 second HORN.

Tucker falls off a bull. Kelly watches on.

Rope rides a bull. 8 second HORN.

Tucker rides a bull. 8 second HORN.

Rope rides a bull. 8 second HORN.

Rope rides. HORN.

Rope rides. HORN.

EXT / INT: ROPE'S TRUCK -- DAY

Rope's driving, pulling a nice trailer. On the side reads, "Kelly Wright 72' World Champion Barrel Racer".

Rope, Tucker and Kelly sit crammed in the truck.

Tucker sips liquor from a flask, and shares it with Kelly. She winces and hands it back to him.

TUCKER  
(screaming)  
Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! I can't believe  
it! We're going to the Finals! Whoa!  
Whoa!

Offers the flask to Rope.

ROPE  
No thanks.

TUCKER  
Ah come on it's celebration time.

Rope looks at him. Grabs the flask and takes a swig,

TUCKER (CONT'D)  
Whoa! Yeah!

then passes it to Kelly.

TUCKER (CONT'D)  
Going to the Finals!

INT: OKLAHOMA CITY UPSCALE HOTEL SUITE -- NIGHT

A large eloquent hotel room completely destroyed by clothes and rodeo gear.

From the bathroom radiates, Tucker and Kelly laughing in the shower.

TUCKER (O.S.)  
This is what I call a fancy HO-TEL,  
Right Rope?

PARLOR ROOM

Rope grabs his hat and walks out into the corridor.

EXT: THE NATIONAL FINALS RODEO OKLAHOMA CITY ARENA -- NIGHT

Rope strolls out to the middle of a large outdoor arena,  
also known as the Oklahoma Stock Yards. A FEW WORKERS  
finish the last touches of preparation for the event.

Rope walks over to a rail fence, climbs up and sits. His  
eyes are wide as he marvels at the spectacle. He pulls out  
a pint of Mezcal.

ROPE  
This is for you partner.  
(takes a swig)  
I'm gonna need ya, if I'm gonna win  
this thing... What was it? Twelve  
years ago when we hit our first finals.  
You, me, and JoAnna. Damn time goes by  
so fast... it's hard to believe, ain't  
it? I got dumped on my ass in the  
first round. I wouldn't have rode  
another bull if ya hadn't of got me to  
cowboy up.

Rope looks up to the million stars in the sky.

ROPE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
They say that no one lasts too long in  
this game. And a good rider knows when  
to hang up his spurs. All I know is  
tomorrow, I'll swing myself on to a  
2000 lb. Brahma with no bridle, no  
saddle, no stirrups. Nothing. Just me  
and the beast. Like two Generals  
squared across a meadow. Heart  
pounding. Adrenaline pumping. Pumping  
through my...

EXT: THE NATIONAL FINALS RODEO OKLAHOMA CITY ARENA -- DAY

A packed outdoor arena. CROWD ROARING.

ROPE (V.O.)  
...veins like a wild stallion.

A MAN ON HORSE streaks around the arena carrying the Stars  
and Stripes. As soon as he breaks out of the arena...

THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER BLARES through the loud speakers.

A SERIES OF SHOTS of the OPENING CEREMONY.

A parade breaks through the gates, with MEN and WOMEN on horse back riding around the arena. The CLOWNS burst onto the scene pulling pranks on one another.

Kelly rides out on her beautiful quarterhorse, waving to the crowd.

A proud Tucker Price sits on the split rail fence.

The parade circles the arena.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

This rodeo has been dedicated to one of our fallen heroes, friends. A man we all knew and came to love last year at the National Finals Rodeo where he rode Apache to a 96 to win the...

BEHIND THE CHUTES,

Rope McCaslin arrives carrying his gear.

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

1973 World Championship in Bull Riding...

Rope looks out toward the arena.

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

Your legacy will live in our hearts always Cody Aaron French.

LATER - BEHIND THE CHUTES

Contestants prepare for the events.

Rope in full rodeo gear, walks with Tucker.

TUCKER

You've got a shot.

ROPE

Yeah, a snowball's chance in hell. I'd have to ride a minimum of 8 out of 10 bulls... not too mention place high in each. Where am I sitting?

TUCKER

Fourteenth.

ROPE

Shit.

Tucker and Rope stop to watch a bull bang up a rider in the chute.

ROY (O.S.)

Looks like problems just settin' a rope.

Rope and Tucker turn to see Roy Terry.

ROPE

Hi Roy.

Rope, Tucker, and Roy watch the cowboy struggle setting his rope on Tequila Storm.

ROY

I think I got this one figured.

ROPE

You do, huh?

ROY

Yep... Tequila Storm is going to be the deciding factor. Who ever can ride him is going to win this damn thing.

ROPE

I believe you're right about that... unless of course you never draw him.

ROY

(smiling)

That would be a blessing wouldn't it? Good luck Rope.

ROPE

Thanks. You too. Roy.

Rope and Tucker continue walking to...

THE CHUTE.

Rope climbs up on the rail. Lowers himself onto a bull and sets his rope, loosely. Tucker assists.

TUCKER

What'd ya think?

ROPE

I think. I'm gonna to have to win the average if I'm going to make a run at

this thing.

TUCKER  
Now you're talking.

He finishes setting his rope.

ROPE  
(to the bull)  
Give me a good ride baby.

He pats the bull, then climbs off. HE SEES...

JoAnna.

TUCKER  
(stutters a little)  
Pardon me Mrs... Miss... ah, French, I  
need to go check on Kelly.

JOANNA  
Nice seeing ya Tuck.

TUCKER  
You too... ma'am.

Tucker bolts off.

Rope climbs down off the railing.

ROPE  
Glad you could make it.

JOANNA  
Wasn't really planning on it. The  
"new" PRCA is throwing a banquet in  
honor of Cody tonight and they asked me  
to be there.

ROPE  
I heard.

JOANNA  
You think this organization will make a  
difference?

ROPE  
Everybody seems to think so.

JOANNA  
Do you?

ROPE  
Anything's better than what we have

now. I guess we'll have to see.

JOANNA  
Want to be my guest, tonight?

ROPE  
Love to.

JOANNA  
I brought Blacky?

ROPE  
Blacky?

JOANNA  
That's what Little Cody named your horse.

ROPE  
You mean your horse. It was a gift.

JOANNA  
I know, but the Ranch goes up for sale on the 28th, and we want have a place to keep it.

ROPE  
But...

JOANNA  
Please, this is for the best... It's tough on me too. Cody can come up and ride it anytime, right?

ROPE  
Anytime.

JOANNA  
Then I'll see ya tonight at 7?

ROPE  
I'll be there.

JoAnna smiles.

EXT: THE NATIONAL FINALS RODEO OKLAHOMA CITY ARENA -- NIGHT

Rope settles on the bull, he set his rope on earlier. Tucker assists with tightening the bull rope over Rope's gloved hand. No suicide wrap.

ROPE  
(to Tucker)  
More...

Tucker pulls the rope. Rope pounds his gloved fist with his free hand to get it as tight as possible.

ROPE (CONT'D)  
More... Good. Good.

Rope looks at the Man at the gate. Nods. The chute opens. The bull spurts out of the gate. Bucking. Twisting. Rope doesn't flinch. 8 SECOND HORN. Rope gets off smooth.

CROWD GOES WILD.

Rope waves his hat in the air as he runs up the rail.

Roy Terry rides to an 8 second horn.

Tequila Storm takes another victim - the cowboy WE SAW earlier.

A COUPLE OF SHOTS of other rides.

EXT: OKLAHOMA CITY UPSCALE HOTEL SUITE -- NIGHT

Rope, dressed to the nines, for him anyway, straightens his bolo tie in the mirror.

Tucker and Kelly bounce on the bed.

TUCKER  
(yelling, drunk)  
First place. First place. My baby got  
first place.

He tackles her. SCREAMS. He rolls off the bed and runs over to a bottle of Tequila sitting on the table close to Rope.

TUCKER (CONT'D)  
And where are we going all dressed up  
in your sunday-go-to-meeting clothes?  
Celebrating after your BIG second place  
finish?

Rope's laughing at him.

ROPE  
You're a mess.

TUCKER  
Hey! It's 'bout time you get out and  
do a little ramblin'.

ROPE  
Don't get in any trouble.

(looks at Kelly)  
I'm holding you responsible if he gets  
us kicked outa here.

KELLY  
Me?

ROPE  
Yeah you.

TUCKER  
I'll behave. Scouts honor.

ROPE  
You were never a scout.

TUCKER  
An Indian scout.

He starts jumping on the bed acting like an Indian.

Rope opens the door AND...

LeAnne is standing there getting ready to knock.

LEANNE  
Hi Rope. Got a minute?

ROPE  
Yeah, sure.

Rope exits.

EXT: HOTEL TERRACE -- NIGHT

On a high deserted terrace looking over the city, Rope and  
Leanne uncomfortably lean on a railing.

LEANNE  
You're all dressed up.

ROPE  
They're holding a banquet in honor of  
Cody.

LEANNE  
Is JoAnna around?

ROPE  
Yep.

LEANNE  
Haven't seen her in awhile. How's she  
doing?

ROPE  
Good, considering.

LEANNE  
I need to say hi to her. I am sure  
it's tough for her and little Cody...  
You look good. You look like you've  
lost weight.

ROPE  
I'm still about the same.

LEANNE  
Well, I don't want...

ROPE  
Why are you here Leanne?

LEANNE  
I don't know... I haven't seen or heard  
from you in so long...

ROPE  
I called.

LEANNE  
I know. You could have left a message.

ROPE  
What was the point? You're the one  
that left.

LEANNE  
(snaps back)  
You were never there to leave...  
(stops herself)  
Look I didn't come here to argue.

ROPE  
Then why did you come?

INT: BANQUET HALL -- NIGHT

Western decorations line the walls of a large formal dining  
hall crammed full of people dressed in western formal wear.

JoAnna, dressed to the nines, looks around the hall, for  
Rope.

SPEAKER  
Can everybody please take your seats?  
Dinner will be served momentarily.

An ELDERLY LADY approaches JoAnna, MRS. FRENCH, Cody Sr.'s

mom.

MRS. FRENCH

I thought you said Rope was coming?

JOANNA

He'll be here. You know Rope, he's always running behind.

MRS. FRENCH

He's a good boy. I remember the first time Cody brought him home for supper. They were running between rodeos.

(they start walking to their tables)

He was so well mannered. Help me with the dishes. To this day I believe he is the only man that's ever help me with the dishes. Yeah, he's a good boy.

JoAnna takes one more look around the room. Nothing.

EXT: HOTEL TERRACE -- NIGHT

Rope and LeAnne embrace in a kiss.

INT: BANQUET HALL -- NIGHT

Everyone is in the middle of dinner. Steaks fill the plates.

JoAnna sits at table eating next to CODY'S PARENTS and one empty chair.

Rope strolls in. Looks for JoAnna.

JoAnna looks up.

Simultaneously they spot each other. JoAnna smiles.

Rope walks over and sits down.

JOANNA

It's about time.

ROPE

Leanne stopped by.

JoAnna's expression changes.

Mrs. French heard him.

MRS. FRENCH

Oh how is that lovely wife of yours,  
Rope? Will she be joining us?

ROPE  
Not tonight Momma French.

MRS. FRENCH  
You tell her not to be such a stranger.

ROPE  
I will.

MR. FRENCH  
You rode good today Rope.

ROPE  
Thanks. Are you staying for the week?

MR. FRENCH  
No. I don't think Momma can handle too  
much. We're headin' back in the  
mornin'.

MRS. FRENCH  
(teary eyed)  
It's a little trying on me, Rope. But,  
you'll come by and visit us sometime  
want you?

ROPE  
Yes ma'am. I sure will.

MRS. FRENCH  
You're a good boy. I've always thought  
so.

JOANNA  
(to Rope)  
Do you want to order a steak?

ROPE  
No, I better not. I'm not going to be  
able to stay too long.

JOANNA  
(hiding the disappointment)  
Okay.

ROPE  
I'm going to meet Leanne. We still  
have some unfinished business.

JOANNA  
I understand.

EXT: THE NATIONAL FINALS RODEO OKLAHOMA CITY ARENA -- NIGHT

Arena is packed full of spectators.

THE CHUTE

Rope lowers himself over a bull, and sets his gloved hand.  
No Suicide wrap.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Next contestant from Bearcreek,  
Montana, Rope McCaslin riding  
Nightmare. This bullrider has been  
tearing up the finals this year with  
three first place finishes riding six  
for six bulls. Giving Roy Terry a run  
for the World Championship and that  
Gold Buckle. Lots of excitement this  
year for you rodeo fans...

Tucker tightens the strap.

ROPE

(seriousness)

More... More... Good.

Looks at the gate. Nods. Gate opens. The bull takes off  
twisting and turning. 8 seconds. HORN. Rope slides off  
victorious.

Crowd goes WILD.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

That makes 7 bulls Rope McCaslin has  
conquered, he is burning up this year's  
finals.

Rope tips his hat to the crowd, then jumps over the  
railing...

BEHIND THE CHUTES.

LEANNE

Nice ride cowboy.

ROPE

(smiling)

Thank ya, ma'am.

Leanne stands there dressed like a city girl.

LEANNE

You always did look good in chaps.

Rope BLUSHES.

CODY (O.S.)  
ROPE! ROPE! ROPE!

Cody runs up and jumps into Rope's arms.

ROPE  
Hey there partner.

JOANNA  
He had to see you before we left.

JoAnna walks up, dressed in her wranglers and a nice shirt.

ROPE  
You're leaving?

JOANNA  
Yeah, I have a lot to do. I need to  
get home.

Leanne walks over and hugs JoAnna. Uncomfortable moment.

LEANNE  
How have you been doing? Haven't seen  
you in so long.

JOANNA  
Getting by.  
(looks at Rope)

Leanne senses something.

JOANNA (CONT'D)  
This week has been a little  
difficult... being up here around all  
this.

LEANNE  
I can't imagine, I'm sure it was  
tough... I wished we had gotten  
together.

JOANNA  
Maybe next time.

LEANNE  
Let's do that...  
(looks at Cody playing with  
Rope)  
I can't believe Cody... He's growing up  
like a weed.

JOANNA

Yes he is... He's eating me out of house and home.

LEANNE

(looks at JoAnna)

If you ever need anything. You know I am just a phone call away.

JOANNA

I know. Thanks. Come on Cody we need to get going.

CODY

I wanna stay with Uncle Rope.

ROPE

You go on and do as your Ma says. Okay?

Cody shakes his head "yes", hugs Rope goodbye, and leaves with JoAnna. JoAnna and Rope share a brief moment.

Leanne picks up on it.

LEANNE

You want to go to dinner tonight.

ROPE

Sure.

INT: LEANNE'S HOTEL SUITE -- MORNING

Dawn breaks through the windows. Leanne lies asleep on the bed. She awakes slowly. Reaching for something or somebody who is no longer there. She looks. Nothing.

EXT: NATIONAL FINALS RODEO -- THE CHUTE -- DAY

Rope sits on a bull in a daze.

QUICK FLASHES: OF LEANNE WITH EDWARD KRAFT THROUGHOUT THIS SCENE.

TUCKER

Rope. ROPE!

Gets Ropes attention.

ROPE

Huh?

TUCKER

Are you okay? Cause you ain't been

here for the last few minutes.

                  ROPE  
I'm all right.

                  TUCKER  
Ya sure?

                  ROPE  
Tighter.

Gate opens. Rope falls off the Bull just out of the gate.

INT: LEANNE'S HOTEL SUITE -- NIGHT

Rope, wide awake laying next to Leanne. Thinking.

EXT: NATIONAL FINALS RODEO - BEHIND THE CHUTES -- DAY

Rope rubs rosin in his bull rope. Tucker stands by.

                  TUCKER  
You know you've got a good chance of  
winnin' this thing...

Rope's not listening. His mind is elsewhere.

                  TUCKER (CONT'D)  
You've pertnere got the average. And  
what with Roy's draw today... you  
should be a shoe in.  
                  (getting angry)  
That's of course if you stay on the  
damn bull.

Rope cuts him a look.

Roy walks up. There's fear in his eyes.

                  ROY  
Rope. I guess ya heard.

                  ROPE  
Yeah.

                  ROY  
I need ya on this one.

                  ROPE  
I'll be there.

                  ROY  
Thanks... Good luck.

ROPE  
You too. Partner.

Roy walks off. Rope and Tucker stand in silence.

EXT: NATIONAL FINALS RODEO - THE CHUTE --

Roy settles on Tequila Storm. The bull rages. Rope stands on the side rail.

ROY  
Here we go again.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
Roy Terry will attempt to ride the most treacherous of all the bulls here at the Finals. Tequila Storm. He has not givin' into a rider, yet. But if anyone can figure this bull out it's Two-Time World Champion Roy Terry...

ROPE  
Go easy on him. Easy!

ROY  
I am goddamnit! This sumbitch want let me on.

ROPE  
Get off and try again.

Roy listens.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
There seems to be a little trouble in the chutes. It looks like Roy has his top competitor Rope McCaslin assisting him. Rope sure did come on like a whirlwind here at the finals, riding his first seven bulls and puttin' him smack dab among the leaders. He's had some trouble with his last two, of late, but still stands an outside chance here to win the bull riding competition...

Roy finally gets set.

ROY  
(to Rope)  
Pull it tight... more... more... Good.

Roy nods. Gate opens. Tequila Storm tears out into the field. Roy tries desperately to hold on. No such luck.

The bull flings him forward. Knocks Roy unconscious. Roy hits the ground, hard.

*The Announcer calls out the events taking place.*

The CLOWNS race out to get the bull away. The PARAMEDICS rush out as soon as the coast is clear, Rope follows.

EXT. NATIONAL FINALS RODEO - BEHIND THE CHUTES --

The Paramedics slide Roy into an ambulance and drive away. Rope watches.

INT: HOTEL BAR -- NIGHT

Rope stares at a shot of tequila. Leanne, Tucker and Kelly burst into the bar.

TUCKER  
(points at Rope)  
There he is. I told ya he'd be here.

KELLY  
Hey, what's the big idea standing us up for dinner?

ROPE  
I needed some time.

LEANNE  
(aggravated)  
Where have I heard that song before.  
You could at least stop by.

TUCKER  
You missed a good steak...  
(looks a Kelly)  
Well, we have an early start in the mornin'. Kelly's first up. She's got a chance, if she doesn't knock over any barrels. Like today.

Kelly hits Tucker.

TUCKER (CONT'D)  
Hey!

KELLY  
I know what I'm gonna hit.

TUCKER  
(sweet as can be)  
What did I do?

KELLY  
I'll remember that.

ROPE  
You two. See ya in the mornin'.

TUCKER  
You bet.  
(to Kelly)  
Let's go.

KELLY  
(to Leanne)  
Nice meeting you.

LEANNE  
Nice meeting you too.

Kelly kisses Rope on the cheek.

KELLY  
If I don't see ya. Good luck tomorrow.  
And please be careful.

ROPE  
I will.

Tucker and Kelly leave. Leanne moves in close.

LEANNE  
They're good kids.

ROPE  
Yes, they are.

LEANNE  
Remind you of anybody? Don't ride  
tomorrow.

Rope shocked. Expecting it though.

ROPE  
It's what I do.

LEANNE  
It's not worth your life.

ROPE  
You've never understood.

Rope reaches for his shot. Slams it.

LEANNE  
No. No I haven't. Explain it to me.

Explain to me why a man wants to kill himself in front of thousands of people.

EXT: HOTEL TERRACE -- NIGHT

Stars beaming.

LEANNE  
(about to cry)  
I want be there.

ROPE  
I know.

LEANNE  
I'm not as strong as JoAnna.  
(frustrated)  
I couldn't take my husband getting killed right in front of me!

Dead silence. Rope gazes off into the night.

LEANNE (CONT'D)  
Maybe, finally you can reach that coveted grail you've been chasing all these years.

ROPE  
Grail?

LEANNE  
Yes, that gold belt buckle you want so desperately. You'd give up everything. Even your life... I never really understood. I tried. I really did, Rope... but the more I did, the more...  
(starts to cry)  
...I came to hate it. I hated the fact that you'd rather roam the country side with Cody in that damn truck than be with me. I started to hate you...  
(beat)  
What are we going to do?

ROPE  
I don't know.

LEANNE  
It's not going to work is it?

ROPE  
No.

LEANNE  
I don't know what I was expecting, but  
I had to try.

ROPE  
Me too.

LEANNE  
(crying)  
Can I have a hug?

Rope stretches out his arms to a welcoming Leanne. She holds on tight as if there's no tomorrow.

INT: BAR -- SAME NIGHT

A few PATRONS scatter the bar as Rope sits on a stool and stares into empty shot glasses.

BILL MORGAN, a middle aged burly stock contractor, slides on a stool next to Rope.

BILL  
They say Roy's gonna be all right.

ROPE  
That's what they say.

BILL  
Sorry, I'm Bill...

ROPE  
I know who you are.

BILL  
Can I buy you a drink?

ROPE  
Why not.

BILL  
(gets the bartenders  
attention)  
Hey barkeep.  
(points at the drink)  
Two more. I heard you drew my bull.

ROPE  
You heard correctly.

BILL  
I'm retiring him after the Finals...  
He's just too mean. He's hurt too many  
good riders.

ROPE  
What about all the money?

BILL  
Fuck the money.

The BARTENDER sets up the round. Immediately Rope shoots his down without a thought. Bill tries to catch up and make a toast but... too late.

BILL (CONT'D)  
I want you to ride him Rope.

ROPE  
That makes two of us.

BILL  
Yeah, well, I'm going to tell you how to do it.

Rope's interested.

ROPE  
(to Bartender)  
Another round barkeep.

BARTENDER  
Gotcha.

Bartender makes them up and sets them down. Rope listens to Bill and doesn't acknowledge the shots.

BILL  
I've been noticing something about Tequila Storm... I noticed it back in February when Cody French rode him for close to six seconds. Tequila pinpoints a rider's weakness by the way he sits on him.  
(he looks dead into Rope's eyes)  
I don't know how he knows this, but he knows whether a rider is left or right handed and every time he goes against that hand. It's amazing. The only way you are going to be able to beat him is if you can some how stay off of him until the last possible second. That'll give you your best ride. Maybe even for eight seconds.

Rope thinks about what he just heard. Bill stands up, takes his shot, tosses some money on the bar and leaves.

BILL (CONT'D)  
Good luck tomorrow.

Rope stares at the glass.

EXT: HOLDING BINS FOR BULLS -- NIGHT

Rope saunters up to a rail fence, climbs up, and pierces over at a 2000 POUND BRAHMA, known as Tequila Storm. The bull stares back up at Rope excepting the challenge.

ROPE  
It's just you and me tomorrow Storm.  
Just you and me.

The Bull snorts.

EXT: THE NATIONAL FINALS RODEO OKLAHOMA CITY ARENA -- DAY

SERIES of SHOTS of the RODEO. Packed house of screaming fans. Kelly knocks over a barrel.

BEHIND THE CHUTES

Rope rosins up his bull rope. Tucker stands by.

Cowboys walk by looking at the impending victim. A young cowboy walks up.

YOUNG COWBOY  
Mr. McCaslin.

TUCKER  
Not now... partner.

YOUNG COWBOY  
I have a package here for him. Urgent.

TUCKER  
I'll take it. Thanks.

YOUNG COWBOY  
(slow to leave)  
Good luck Mr. McCaslin.

With that Rope looks toward the Young Cowboy and acknowledges his presence.

The Young Cowboy leaves.

TUCKER  
You want to take a look at this?

ROPE

Yeah.

Rope unwraps the small package. It's Cody's WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BELT BUCKLE.

EXT: NATIONAL FINALS RODEO - THE CHUTE --

Rope wraps his bull rope around Tequila Storm's belly. Storm's not giving a inch. He fights him the whole way. The Championship buckle sparkles in the lights.

The bull rope is set. Storm shoves Rope into the rails. Rope keeps his composure and climbs on the other side.

ROPE

Sumbitch.

Storm slams against the railing knocking Rope off. Rope lands on his feet.

SERIES of SHOTS of the BULL RIDING competition.

EXT: NATIONAL FINALS RODEO - THE CHUTE --

Rope climbs up the rail of Tequila Storm's chute.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

For our grand finale, we have Rope McCaslin riding Tequila Storm cowboys and cowgirls. This is for all the Gold. If he's able to do what no man has done before he'll win the National Finals Rodeo Championship here in Oklahoma City. Let's show this Montana cowboy a warm welcome, Cowboys and cowgirls.

The CROWD YELLS AND CLAPS.

Rope straddles the bull, sets his hand, single wrap. Tequila Storm goes nuts.

Tucker standing on the rail, tightens the bull rope.

ROPE

Tighter... Tighter.

Pounds his fist to make it tighter.

ROPE (CONT'D)

No... No.

Tucker stops. Confused.

Rope loosens his hand. Rewraps. The Suicide Wrap.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

It appears there are some problems in the chute. It looks as though Rope is calling for a rewrap. I can't believe it... he's going with a double wrap also known as the "Suicide Wrap". We don't encourage this for all you young bull riders out there.

Tucker pulls the bull rope tight with all his strength.

ROPE

Tighter... Tighter.

Tucker pulls. Rope pounds his fist. Rope keeps his feet on the side rails and settles SIX inches above the the squirming bull.

THE ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH

ANNOUNCER

We have a special guest with us today. Two time World Champion, Roy Terry. Who's shot at a third World Championship was cut short by Tequila Storm earlier this week. What do you think of Rope's chances?

ROY

If anyone can ride that bull, it's Rope.

ANNOUNCER

Can you explain to us the unique strategy Rope is taking?

ROY

I don't know what to tell you there. I've never seen anyone ride like that. Rope's got something up his sleeve, I'm sure.

ANNOUNCER

We hear from sources close to Rope that he is wearing Cody French's World Championship Bull Riding Belt Buckle here this evening. Paying homage to his riding companion of many years.

THE CHUTE.

On Rope.

ROY (O.S.)  
I guess that's just another legend for  
the books. Carl.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
And a good one at that.

Rope nods. The chute door opens. Rope thrusts forward  
unto the bull sitting upright. Perfect form. The bull  
jumps out. Rope hangs tight. The Bull twists and thrusts  
with all his strength. Rope holds. Camera lights go wild.  
FLASHES everywhere. EIGHT SECOND BELL.

CROWD GOES WILD.

The Announcer goes wild.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
HE DID IT! HE DID IT! ROPE MCCASLIN  
THE MAN FROM MONTANA WON THE 1974 WORLD  
CHAMPIONSHIP BULL RIDING COMPETITION  
HERE IN OKLAHOMA CITY! YOU SEEN IT  
HERE FOLKS TEQUILA STORM HAS BEEN RODE  
ON HIS 167th TRY! THIS IS ONE FOR THE  
BOOKS COWBOYS AND COWGIRLS. THIS IS ONE  
FOR THE BOOKS.

Rope hops off. Runs up the rail and flings his cowboy hat  
into the crowd of CHEERING fans.

INT: BAR -- NIGHT

In the midst of rodeo contestants, Rope, Tucker and Kelly  
line up whiskey shot glasses at the end of the bar.  
Everyone keeps coming up congratulating Rope on his ride.

Roy walks up. Smiles. Grabs one of the shot glasses.

ROY  
To Rope McCaslin 1974 World Champion  
Bull Rider.

Rope smiles. This is the moment he's been waiting for all  
his life... so he thinks.

TUCKER  
Whoa! Whoa! Yeah.

They slam the shots.

ROY  
Next year.

Rope acknowledges with a nod.

TUCKER

(to Roy)

I wouldn't worry 'bout ole Rope. I'm givin' you a run next year.

ROY

Just watch out for those garden snakes.

Everyone LAUGHS. Roy continues down the bar.

TUCKER

(to Rope)

I can't wait to get started again.

ROPE

(not convincing)

Yeah.

KELLY

Me neither. It's gonna be different, next year. We can all three travel together. And I'm not letting Amy Jacobs take another championship from me.

TUCKER

You get'em baby.

Tucker snuggles up to Kelly. Rope watches this. Reflects.

A FAN walks up to Rope.

FAN

Mr. McCaslin.

Rope's in thought. Looking at Tucker and Kelly.

FAN (CONT'D)

Mr. McCaslin.

Rope looks at the fan.

ROPE

Rope.

FAN

'Scuse me?

ROPE

Call me Rope.

FAN

Mr... I mean Rope. I just wanted to say, that was one hell of a ride this

afternoon. I mean one hell of a ride.  
I don't believe I've ever seen a ride  
quite like that one.

ROPE

Thank ya.

FAN

Man, I'd do anything if I could ride  
like that. Anything. What ever it  
takes.

ROPE

(looks into the whiskey glass)  
It takes 200 rodeos a year. Always on  
the road. Never seeing your family.  
That's if your lucky enough to keep  
one. Broken bones. You learn to live  
with pain. That's what it takes.

Rope looks at the Fan, finishes his drink, puts on his hat,  
and walks out of the bar. The fan is stunned.

Tucker notices Rope leaving. Bewildered.

EXT: OKLAHOMA CITY UPSCALE HOTEL -- DAY

Rope, wearing his 1974 WORLD CHAMPION BELT BUCKLE, throws  
his gear in the back of the truck. The horse - Blacky  
seems restless in the trailer.

Tucker strolls out, looking rough. Still foggy from last  
nights festivities.

ROPE

What in the world happened to you?

TUCKER

I don't know. Kelly flipped out cause  
I said congratulations to Amy for  
winnin'. I thought everything was fine  
until I woke up hog tied to the  
bedposts.

Rope laughs.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

I'd still be there if'n it weren't for  
the maid. It ain't funny... It  
ain't...

Tucker joins in the laugh.

ROPE

I wouldn't let her get away with that.

TUCKER

Oh, I ain't... So yer serious, huh?

ROPE

Yeah.

TUCKER

Turnin' in yer spurs?

ROPE

Yeah.

TUCKER

Nothin' I can do to change yer mind?

ROPE

Nope.

TUCKER

Who am I gonna get to show me what I'm doing wrong?

ROPE

You look good out there. You'll do fine... In fact I expect to see you here next year.

TUCKER

Me?

ROPE

You can do it.

TUCKER

Where ya headin'?

ROPE

Home for few days then... I think I'm gonna take my winnin's and look for me a ranch.

TUCKER

You? A rancher?

ROPE

Yeah... Maybe I'll raise one of them 2000lb brahmas instead of riding 'em. What about you?

TUCKER

I was suppose to spend Christmas with Kelly's folks.

ROPE

And now?

TUCKER

I ain't been told, I've been uninvited.

ROPE

Well, Good luck to ya. Tell Kelly I  
said bye.

They shake hands.

TUCKER

I will... Thanks... For everything.

A moment.

Rope gets in the truck. Tucker leaves.

INT: ROPE'S TRUCK -- DAY

Rope pulls out Cody's Belt Buckle from his front shirt  
pocket. Looks at it then...

ROPE

Thanks for your help. Partner.

puts it back in his pocket.

EXT: OKLAHOMA CITY UPSCALE HOTEL -- DAY

Truck pulls out on the street. Heads out of town.

EXT: LAZY "F" RANCH -- DAY

Prospected BUYERS line up for an auction. The AUCTIONEER  
stands beside JoAnna and Cody. Cody's in tears.

The Auctioneer checks his watch.

AUCTIONEER

It's about that time.

JOANNA

Let's go ahead and get it over with.

JoAnna looks down. A tear starts to form. She regains  
herself, looks up, and SEES...

An old Dodge Pickup pulling a trailer driving up.

Cody sees Rope. SCREAMS...

CODY

UNCLE ROPE! UNCLE ROPE!...

Breaks away from JoAnna. Bolts through the crowd,  
SCREAMING...

CODY (CONT'D)  
UNCLE ROPE! UNCLE ROPE!

Rope gets out of the truck just in time to catch Cody as he  
leaps into the air.

JoAnna's tears are flowing with happiness as Rope carries  
Cody through the crowd toward her.

THE END