

Scene 1.

A raw October dawn. A ranch house in the Aspen Creek, Nevada, 1900. A gentle wind whispers through its eaves, but everything is still and sleeping.

Then, all at once, a flash of electric blue – carbines fire out of nowhere – and again – each taking a window with them. Glass smashes and booms throughout the house.

Pause.

All is quiet again, but for the gentle rise of one dim lamp, which silhouettes JOE SAM, hunched above the flame. The lamp flickers and shakes from the broken windows, and an almost imperceptibly dull thud has begun a slow and steady surge through the floor.

JOE SAM. There is a great noise like thunder, and blood streaming from the mouths of men –

A fierce voice from without:

CURT (off). JOE SAM!

JOE SAM. They may think it is a dream – but their dream will come to pass –

The voice again, nearer and louder:

CURT (off). YOU LISTENIN' TO ME?

JOE SAM. Their hearts will be stained by the blood of the wounded stars, and their screams will shatter the night –

A violent kick rebounds against the door.

CURT (off). I'M GONNA KILL YOU!

JOE SAM. The panther is everywhere they tread –

Another violent kick against the door.

CURT (off). I'M GONNA END YOU!

JOE SAM. They cannot drive it away.

A final kick, and CURT smashes through the front door, armed with a Winchester carbine. When he shouts, his voice reverberates against the walls.

CURT. I'M GONNA BLAST YOUR BONES TO BITS, YOU SAPLESS BASTARD! I'M GONNA BURY YOU WITH MY HANDS! YOU HEAR ME? YOU'RE GONNA BE ERADICATED!

MOTHER (*calling out sharply*). Curt!

CURT. WELL? WHERE THE HELL IS HE THEN?

The MOTHER appears.

MOTHER. Curt!

CURT. WHERE IS HE? YOU SEEN HIM?

MOTHER. Calm down, Curt. Nobody understands a word you're saying when you're shouting like that. We haven't all suddenly gone deaf, you know.

FATHER (*off*). Lettie –

CURT. Are you LISTENING to me?

MOTHER (*to the FATHER*). Yes, pa? (*To CURT*) Perhaps I'll start listening when you decide to stop shouting.

FATHER (*off*). What's the boy yelling for?

MOTHER. Nobody's yelling, pa!

CURT lashes out in frustration.

CURT. EAH!

MOTHER. And what have you been doing to my windows?

CURT. Your WINDOWS?

CURT raises the carbine and aims it at the MOTHER. He leaves a pause.

LOOK, DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE? ARE YOU GONNA ANSWER ME OR NOT?

MOTHER. Not unless you stop shouting I'm not.

Beat.

FATHER (*off*). Lettie –

CURT. Jesus CHRIST!

CURT snaps and shoots her. But she carries on as if nothing has happened.

MOTHER. Too much vigour and not enough breathing, that's what I've always said.

CURT. WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?

The MOTHER turns back to regarding the windows.

MOTHER. And watch your feet on this glass if you're shooting in the kitchen.

CURT. WATCH MY FEET? (*Beat*). Oh . . . oh . . . what's this? You've given me a little guise, have you? Thrown me a little spectre? WELL JUST GIVE ME ONE SHOT, THAT'S ALL, JUST ONE SHOT –

The FATHER appears.

FATHER. Yell and yell – that's all I ever hear – I don't know why we bother having words at all in this house . . .

CURT turns to the FATHER.

CURT. YOU! Where is he?

MOTHER (*to the FATHER*). Pa, don't answer him if he's shouting at you.

CURT raises the carbine and aims towards the FATHER.

FATHER. Smash and bang our way through every conversation . . .

CURT. I said WHERE IS HE?

FATHER. Like living with a clan of marmots!

CURT shoots him. The FATHER carries on as if nothing has happened.

Yes, that's right. You work all your life, and now they're shooting at you in your kitchen.

CURT lashes out in frustration.

CURT. EAH! I'M GONNA GET YOU! YOU CAN'T OUTWIT ME,
BOY! YOU CAN'T OUT-THINK ME!

MOTHER. Curt. You're shouting again.

CURT. SHUT UP!

GRACE appears.

GRACE. What's he tearing up this time?

MOTHER. Who said that?

GRACE. I said what's Curt tearing up this time?

MOTHER. When did she learn to speak?

CURT (*to GRACE*). WHERE IS HE?

GRACE. You can't find him!

CURT. Don't think I won't –

MOTHER. She's right, Curt. I'd kill him before he kills you.

GRACE. I hope it's a real killer!

MOTHER. Or else you'll have to kill her.

CURT aims at GRACE and shoots her. She carries on as if nothing has happened.

FATHER. Now he's shooting at his sister. Is there no end to this?

CURT. I'm gonna blast his wooden frame from here to kingdom come.
You hear? You hear me? WELL IS NOBODY HERE LISTENIN' TO
ME?

ARTHUR appears.

ARTHUR. Curt.

GRACE (*giggling*). Hey, Art – the master killer's out!

ARTHUR. Curt? C'mon?

CURT (*to ARTHUR*). WHERE'VE YOU HIDDEN HIM?

FATHER. Does anyone know what he's even *talking* about?

CURT (*to ARTHUR*). I KNOW IT'S YOU!

MOTHER. I think we've all heard just about enough, son.

ARTHUR. Somethin's swellin' in the fields, Curt.

CURT. MY GOD, IS THERE NO CHANCE OF A SANE WORD FROM ANY OF YOU?

MOTHER. I don't know where he gets all this shouting from.

GRACE. He wants us all dead.

CURT. JOE SAM!

MOTHER. Arthur, will you talk to him, please?

ARTHUR. Listen – when the wind shifts – there's something at the steers up there.

CURT. WE'RE NOT DONE YET, YOU MURDERIN' BASTARD!

MOTHER. Oh, what the point.

GRACE (*giggling*). Curt, you're gonna have to shoot him too!

MOTHER. The poor boy doesn't know what's real or a dream any more.

CURT. I'M GONNA FINISH YOU!

FATHER. Will somebody please tell me what's going on?

MOTHER. Arthur, are you going to take control of this or not?

GRACE (*to CURT, mimicking*). I'M GONNA FINISH YOU!

MOTHER. Not while there's glass on the floor, Grace.

CURT. JOE SAM!

ARTHUR. There's somethin' at the steers, Curt.

MOTHER. Is that all he can ever say?

FATHER. Will somebody please tell him that anything he wants to kill in here is probably already dead.

GRACE. And you're next, Art!

CURT *aims at ARTHUR and shoots.*

(*Giggling*). See!

Simultaneously, the thud that's been surging up towards the floor has reached its apex, and the entire house rocks for a very long time. ARTHUR stands as normal, but CURT has fallen to the floor. Everyone falls silent and still.

JOE SAM. Have much brother one time. All go now.

Pause. The silence is eventually broken by the MOTHER.

MOTHER. You see. This is how it ends. Earthquakes in the kitchen, and nonsense from the native.

The MOTHER goes off.

FATHER. I think, in the moment, we have all forgotten ourselves. Yes.

The FATHER goes off.

GRACE. Couldn't kill what you couldn't see, Curt?

GRACE goes off.

JOE SAM. Have much friend. They go now.

ARTHUR. Curt –

JOE SAM. Much snow.

ARTHUR. Wake up.

JOE SAM. Much dead.

CURT. Arthur –

JOE SAM. Not Arthur dead.

ARTHUR. Wake up.

JOE SAM. Curt dead.