VISIONS OF DOC

BY G CALDER NASH

Based on a true story

FADE IN:

EXT. TEXAS DESERT - MORNING

A distant hum.

Dust swirls under a distant Cadillac. Heatwaves ripple beneath the low sun. GOSPEL STATIC filters through the radio.

“O, river call me when the work is done, Lord.

Shadow gonna block out the sun, Lord.

Walk me in-between, Lord!

And the waters fall all around, Lord.”

CUT TO:

Inside the car, DOC ANDERSON, late 50s, grips the wheel with one hand. In the other—a SHEET OF PAPER.

Scrawled across it: cryptic symbols. Coordinates.

He mutters under his breath, eyes flickering between the road and the paper. Then, to a SILVER PENDENT hanging from his rearview mirror.

Ahead—a SMALL CHURCH, emerging from the desert like a mirage. Paint peeling, its cross bent as if bowing to the earth.

INT. SMALL CHURCH - MORNING

The door groans as Doc pushes it open.

Inside, rich amber light filters through stained-glass windows.

A handful of PARISHIONERS sit scattered across the pews, heads bowed, faces darkened.

Doc hesitates in the doorway—his boots creaking against the floor when he steps in.

At the altar, kneeling in the gloom, a WOMAN. Hands clasped tight. Head bowed.

Doc stiffens sharply. That silhouette—it’s—RUTH. It must be.

She doesn't move.

DOC
(a whisper, unsure)
Ruth?

No response.

Doc steps closer, his boots echoing in the silence. His fingers tremble as he reaches out—

The woman lifts her head. Turns.

Her hands rise toward him. BLOOD drips from her palms.

The parishioners stir. The whispering grows louder, a chorus of words in an ancient tongue.

The stained-glass windows GLOW—colors shifting, morphing. Shadows stretch.

Above the altar—A BLACK RAVEN perches on the crooked cross.

The parishioners' faces TWIST stretching into something inhuman.

Doc stumbles backward, heart hammering.

A massive SHADOW crawls across the ceiling. The altar SPLITS—a violent, jagged fracture.

The raven SCREAMS—

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT LANDSCAPE - DAY

The RAVEN'S CRY reverberates through the empty expanse.

The horizon ripples. The desert shifts.

DOC freezes. The land glows, an unnatural current pulsing beneath his feet. He staggers.

From the outer sands, FIGURES emerge, shrouded in light and shadow. SIOUX ANCESTORS, cloaked in ceremonial regalia, their posture regal and solemn. Each face glows faintly.

DOC winces. He steps forward.

Behind them, THE WITNESS MATERIALIZES, silent and dark, ember-like eyes burn amid swirling black smoke.

The ancestors surround Doc, their hands extended out. The Witness does not move, a still contrast to the chaotic swirling.

DOC
What am I supposed to do? What do you want from me?!

Then—

The dance begins.

Movements slow, deliberate.

Feet drag through the dust.

Hands cut through the air.

Then faster. Faster.

A circle of ancient dust tightens around Doc.

The ancestral figures blur, their faces stretching into streaks of color as their bodies whirl, twisting like a human vortex.

The drums THUNDER. Doc gasps as his feet leave the ground.

HE IS LIFTED—VIOLENTLY, UNNATURALLY.

He SPINS UPWARD—twenty feet, thirty—weightless, arms flailing, his breath ripped away. The storm roars around him.

The world fractures into streaks of swirling red and gold.

Then—A FACE EMERGES.

His GRANDMOTHER.

She does not move, but her piercing gaze seizes him. Her whisper cuts through the storm—sharp, commanding.

GRANDMOTHER
(in Lakota Sioux)
"T u kášila, hé wówašake níš
šká ška ya šni."

(*Don't let your gifts go to waste on the worthless.*)

Doc’s breath hitches. His eyes widen. His body twists violently in midair.

And then—

GRAVITY RETURNS. WHAM!

He PLUMMETS.

His body twists as he SLAMS into the ground.

A flash of SEARING PAIN. His hands SPLIT OPEN, a jolt of agony racing up his arms.

BLOOD.

Thick, dark red blood stains the earth.

The drums stop.

The vision flickers—fractures—begins to collapse.

A final echo of his Grandmother's voice:

GRANDMOTHER
(V.O.)
"Do not waste it..."

FADE TO:

EXT. TEXAS OIL FIELD - 1968 - DAY

A SHARP INHALE.

DOC ANDERSON jerks back—his breath ragged. The oppressive heat grounding him back into reality—standing in the desert.

A stream of blood drips from his trembling hands, spattering onto the sunbaked dirt. The color stark against the dust.

The desert is no longer empty.

A cluster of ROUGHNECKS and RIG WORKERS pause their tasks, glancing uneasily in his direction. But two men watch him closer than the rest.

JOHN SHAW, an oil baron in a sweat-stained Stetson, clamps a half-chewed cigar between his teeth.

Beside him, LUTHER WEEKS, wiry, arms crossed.

JOHN SHAW
You all right, Doc? You look like you've seen a ghost.

Doc blinks, sweat dripping into his eyes. His gaze locks onto Shaw—

DOC
(hoarse, uneasy)
Drill here, John.

A tense silence. The desert wind kicks up, whipping through the dry brush. Dust spirals around Doc's feet.

Luther snorts, shaking his head.

LUTHER
Here? We're standing in the middle of five million acres of dirt.

Doc doesn’t answer. Kneeling, he places his bloody palms against the cracked earth. The wind shifts. A low RUMBLE builds beneath them—

DOC
This—this is the last time, John.

JOHN SHAW
(low, to Luther)
You see the blood? And the damn ground’s moving.

Luther stiffens.

LUTHER
(whispering)
See it?! Hell, I smell it. You think... you think this is him?

Shaw's cigar shifts in his teeth.

JOHN SHAW
This ain’t normal wildcattin’ shit.

He waves Luther off.

JOHN SHAW
But, if it hits, we’re back in the black. If it don’t... well, ain’t much further to fall.

LUTHER
John, you sure—

JOHN SHAW
Y—you heard the man.

A sharp gesture to his crew.

JOHN SHAW
Start drilling!

A driller steps forward, setting the rig into place. The drill WHIRS TO LIFE. Dust swirls as machinery ROARS.

Doc exhales.

DOC
(sotto voce)
I’m sorry. I’m sorry, säw won nöüm aramas...

EXT. TEXAS OIL FIELD - NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Near the edge of the commotion, PENNY BROWN—early 20s, sharp, her mod skirt and boots dusted from the road—stands frozen, her CAMERA poised.

Her assistant, FRANKIE—20s, wiry, artsy, arms full of gear—fumbles with the extra film.

FRANKIE
What the hell is this, Penny? This isn't… normal.

Her gaze locked on Doc—his silhouette framed against the drilling rig, his bloodied hands raised.

PENNY
This… this couldn't be real—could it?

Frankie shakes his head, unsure whether to step closer or back away. His eyes dart from Penny to Doc.

FRANKIE
Real? I mean—

Her breath catches—

Then—CLICK. CLICK. CLICK.

PENNY
(urgent)
More film. Frankie. Now.

Frankie fumbles, nearly dropping the extra canister. He stares out at the scene again, shaking his head in disbelief, muttering.

FRANKIE
You don’t actually think it's real.

Penny cuts him off—

PENNY
Just load it.

CUT TO:

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - NIGHT - 1968

A neon-lit dive, PENNY BROWN scribbles in her notebook. Across from her, FRANKIE flips through negatives, muttering.

FRANKIE
This still doesn’t make sense, Pen. I’ve shot weird, but this is... somethin’ else.

PENNY
(without looking up)
Define 'weird.' That Godard phase of yours? That was weird.

FRANKIE
Godard’s chaos has logic. This? It’s like the ground grew a pulse.

PENNY
It wasn’t a trick, Frankie. Doc... he did something. The ground shook.

Across the room, a payphone RINGS. Penny leaps up, heels sharp on linoleum. She grabs the receiver.

PENNY
(INTO PHONE)
Brown.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
(V.O.)
You got somethin' or just chasin' mirages, Brown?

PENNY
It’s real, Ed. Shaw’s man—Doc Anderson. His hands bled into the ground, and then—the oil. They found it where his blood fell.

Beat.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
(V.O.)
You're sure about this? Not Hollywood sleight of hand?

PENNY
I caught it, Ed. It’s on film. Whatever this is—it’s beyond a stunt. The man went into some kind of trance. Then collapsed. His hands... they tell the story the drill can’t.

Silence hums across the line.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
(V.O.)
You think readers want a modern miracle—or a freak show?

PENNY
Maybe both. But it’s the kind of story people remember. And if we don’t run it, someone else will.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Do your research, Brown. Check in. We print in three days.

CLICK.

She returns to the table.

FRANKIE
What's the call, Pen?

PENNY
We chase it. Every angle. This could be big, Frankie.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A Greyhound bus cuts through twilight. Poles flick past like metronomes.

Silos blur into cotton fields.

PENNY
Reminds me why I left LaFayette.

Penny closes her notebook.

Sleep, finally.

FADE TO:

INT. HAMILTON COUNTY LIBRARY - MICROFICHE ROOM - NIGHT

Dim light hums overhead. An exhausted Penny scrolls through reels, her face lit by the flickering screen. The microfiche machine WHIRS. Then stops. Focusing.

LOCAL BOY PREDICTS BROTHER'S DEATH 5000 MILES AWAY

A grainy photo. A boy and his father in mining outfits next to a coal cart.

PENNY
(murmuring)
Brother, Lars. He saw it... before it happened? Or as it happened?

Her notebook page reads: *"Vision or Accident?"* in bold.

PENNY
What does it even matter... How do we prove any of this?

The machine whirs back to life.

FADE TO:

EXT. ANDERSON FARM - DAY (1921)

NELSON ANDERSON hammers a lightning rod onto the roof. Below, DOC, 10, barefoot in the mud, watches next to a

SALESMAN. The distant horizon is bruised with an oncoming storm.

SALESMAN
(anxious)
Smart move, sir. Storms around here don't give much warning. If you could just sign here.

NELSON
(distracted)
Storms give all the warning you need—if you're paying attention. Don't even know if I want this, yet.

He looks down at Doc.

NELSON
Bobby! Stop gawking. That boulder's not gonna move itself. Get her out like I told ya.

Doc sighs, eyes the large stone half-buried in the garden like a sore tooth. He goes and grabs a rope from the shed.

CUT TO:

EXT. GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

He loops the rope around the stone, planting his feet firmly in the muck.

A pull. The wind rustles leaves.

Another, harder pull.

The sky snarls. The boulder shifts an inch.

Straining his young muscles, he heaves with all his might.

CRACK! Lightning slashes the sky.

SMASH TO:

EXT. WWI BATTLEFIELD - NIGHT

Mud. Shrapnel. Screams. World in chaos.

DOC floats above it all— holding onto two ropes that disappear into the void above. Disembodied. Watching. Below, men scurry over trenches and blood. A war.

Amid the horror, his older brother LARS runs through barbed wire and bomb blasts.

A SHADOW FIGURE (THE WITNESS) stands motionless beyond the trench.

Doc tries to yell.

The figure turns. Its eyes burn like coals behind gauze.

DOC
(straining)
Lars! No, stop—!

A deafening BLAST. A burst of light engulfs Lars, and then—smoke. His brother is gone.

The ropes in Doc's hands dissolve into ash, scattering into the void.

THE WITNESS's ember eyes burn.

THE WITNESS
You saw...

Quick flashes behind his wide, horrified eyes—scenes from the past:

— Lars teaching Doc how to tie a knot by the creek

— Lars defending him in a schoolyard fight

— Slamming door, shouts, "Leave me alone!"

The battlefield begins to dissolve into shadow. Doc floats untethered.

CUT TO:

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Doc jolts awake on his back in the mud. Rain pelts his face. The boulder lies beside him. A tombstone yanked from the earth.

DOC
A dream—I'm awake. It's just dirt.
Just stone.

Doc CRIES OUT.

FADE TO:

INT. ANDERSON FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

DOC sits at the warm hearth, wrapped in a blanket. MAY WHITE CLOUD kneels beside him. NELSON smokes his pipe across the room.

MAY
You were burning up out there,
child.

Doc stares into the fire.

MAY
Bobby. Look at me. What happened in the garden?

Doc's breathing uneven. A beat.

DOC
It was Lars, Ma… not here. Somewhere else. He was running. There were flashes, loud crackin'. Like thunder but different.

Nelson shifts, his posture stiffening. He takes a slow drag from his pipe.

DOC
Then he fell... Ma, I saw him fall. And he didn't get up.

May's hand tighten on Doc's arms as if grounding herself.

MAY
No. No, child. That fever's twisting your thoughts.

DOC
It seemed—so real.

May jerks to her feet, pacing, movements quick, frantic.

MAY
You don't know what you're saying! Speaking things like that… the spirits hear you, boy!

Doc recoils.

NELS
May, hush now.

MAY
Don't hush me! You know what this means. What the medicine man said. He saw something...

NELS
We ain't gonna get unraveled about it. He's exhausted. He don't know what he saw.

She kneels again wrapping her arms around Doc.

MAY
My sweet boy.

Doc sinks into her embrace—crying.

Nelson reaches for the family Bible and sits in the rocker. May holds Doc close.

MAY
We don't speak of this, do you hear me? Not to anyone... not ever.

Doc nods.

SLOW FADE TO:

EXT. ANDERSON FARM - DAY (1921)

A MILITARY COURIER appears in the distance, pedaling hard down the mud-slick road. He slows near the porch.

The screen door creaks open.

MAY WHITE CLOUD steps out. Her gaze moves to the courier, first curious, then concerned.

The young soldier dismounts, removes his satchel, and pulls out a folded telegram. But before he can extend it—

May's breath catches. The world seems to slow.

Her knees buckle. Her hands clutch at her apron. A low, guttural wail escapes her lips. The telegram flutters to the ground, unread.

From inside—footsteps pound against the wooden floor.

DOC ANDERSON rushes out, nearly colliding with the doorframe. His eyes dart from the fallen telegram to his mother, collapsed on the porch.

DOC
Mama?

May rocks back and forth lost in a grief.

Doc moves toward her, arms out—

WHAP!

May's hand lashes out, striking him hard across the ear.

Doc stumbles back, stunned.

May sobs, shoulders shaking. Her hand covers her mouth, as if trying to pull the cry back inside her.

Nelson appears in the doorway.

NELS
Get inside, Bobby.

SLOW FADE TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY - (1924)

The road twists through tall grass, gold and wild in the late-summer sun.

DOC ANDERSON, now 16, trudges along. Dirty boots, sleeves rolled up. A wiry frame honed by coal mines and farm life.

A crumpled flier in his hand reads:

PRINCE OGLE CIRCUS - STRONGMAN CHALLENGE!

FIGHT FOR MONEY! WIN BIG!

Doc snorts. Folds the flyer. Tucks it deep in his pocket.

He stops beside a pond. Still as glass.

Doc leans over, studies his reflection.

DOC
Gettin' outta here. You ain't dying face-down in coal dust, buddy. No sir.

He mimics a boxer's stance.

DOC
"Diamond Doc" Anderson. Has a ring to it, don't it?

He drops his fists, and turns back to the road.

FADE TO:

EXT. SMALL TOWN FAIRGROUND - DAY

The sun bakes the lot. Popcorn. Sawdust. Smoke and sugar.

DOC steps in, scanning everything. A whirl of energy. Of escape.

A leathery CARNY, mid-40s, leans against a tent post. Cigarette limp in his mouth.

DOC
Got an extra one?

The Carny chuckles, flicking his half-spent cigarette to the dirt.

Doc picks it up, *coughs*. Carny laughs.

CARNY
You'll get there, cowboy!

Above his head Doc reads:

PRINCE OGLE CIRCUS & STRONGMAN CHALLENGE!

Doc follows it. In the center:

A boxing ring. Dust kicking up around a crowd. A mountain of a man. Suspenders taught over fatty muscle.

BARKER
Step right up! Three rounds with the Toledo Bear! Ten bucks says you don’t last two!

Doc pats the flyer in his pocket.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOXING RING - MOMENTS LATER

The Toledo Bear SMASHES his opponent to the dirt.

Cheers. Groans. Bills change hands.

BARKER
Who’s next?! C’mon, don’t be shy!

DOC stands just outside the ring.

DOC
I’ll go.

Unheard. Louder.

DOC
HEY! I SAID I’LL GO!

Heads turn. Laughter. Whispers.

BARKER
What we got here? You ever fight before?

DOC
Not for money.

Barker chuckles, a raspy sound that cuts through the afternoon noise.

BARKER
Well, ain’t you somethin’. What’s your name, kid?

DOC
Bobby—uh Diamond Doc Anderson.

BARKER
Let’s hear it for Diamond Doc Anderson!

The crowd howls.

Doc climbs in the ring.

DOC
Focus, breathe...

DING.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOXING RING - DAY

DING.

The Bear charges, fists flying.

Doc MOVES.

He doesn’t dodge—he predicts. Knows where each blow will be.

DOC
(V.O.)
Control. Balance.

Sidestep. Duck. Pivot.

A jab. Clean to the ribs.

The Bear stumbles.

MAN IN CROWD
That kid’s got moves!

Doc breathes steady. The world slows.

Flashes of memory:

-- Lars in the trench

-- The mine trembling

-- The boulder splitting ground

DOC
(V.O.)
Fear ain’t weakness. It’s the cry before strength...

The Bear roars.

Doc counters. A flicker of movement—A sudden sidestep—

A slight lean just in time. Swings again—

Doc ducks. Pivots. A sharp jab to the ribs—quick, precise. A perfect right hook.

The Bear goes down.

The crowd ERUPTS.

FADE TO:

EXT. FAIRGROUND - AFTERMATH

Doc wipes sweat from his brow. Coins and crumpled bills rain into his hands.

A Lucky Strike rep steps forward with a carton.

REP
Kid, hell of a fight. You want sponsorship?

Doc eyes it.

DOC
Appreciate the offer, mister... something tells me these aren't that good for a fella.

He waves it off. The Rep ducks out, confused.

Among the lingering audience, a BOY, 9, holds up a BOXING FLIER and pencil. Eyes wide at Doc.

BOY
Is it true? You’re stronger than a bull? Are you magic?

A beat. Doc does a quick awkward signature.

DOC
No magic, buddy. Just focus and strength, I guess.

The Barker steps up.

BARKER
That was somethin’, kid—a real showstopper. Pretty good haul for a fight. Real money’s in the long game. Whaddya say?

Doc looks back at the crowd.

Adventure calls.

FADE TO:

EXT. TRAIN STATION - SMALL TOWN - DAY (1925)

A steam locomotive shrieks into the station. On the crowded platform, townsfolk bustle. Children dart. Chickens squawk in crates.

A sharp CREAK—

The train doors groan open.

Performers spill out: clowns with smeared paint, acrobats with taped hands, animal handlers dragging crates.

Among them—

DOC ANDERSON, 17. Rope slung over his shoulder. Boots hit dirt. He doesn't pause—just moves toward the freight.

DOC
This is it, Bobby. No turning 'round.

An ANIMAL HANDLER passes Doc with a dolly crate of MONKEYS.

HANDLER
First show's in two days, kid. You're up for it?

Doc nods.

DOC
(under breath)
Keep moving, Doc. Rope gets tighter every time you stop.

FADE TO:

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - SETUP - DAY

The big top skeleton rises—Doc hauls beams and rope.

DOC
Alright, big top. Let's see what you've got for me.

The main tent pole looms. Elephants geared up to assist.

DOC steps to the mast, gripping the ropes.

CIRCUS HAND
Hey! You better be made of steel, kid—we lose this mast, it's your head!

DOC
Steel enough for you. Let's move it.

Doc digs in, feet sinking in dust.

They heave—

The tent rises.

The circus hand claps Doc on the shoulder.

CIRCUS HAND
Steel enough, alright. Keep that up, kid.

Doc lets out a small laugh.

FADE TO:

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - NIGHT

The big top glows under the moonlight—canvas rippling, lanterns swaying.

Performers practice against the dark of the night. DOC lingers near a lone caravan. Its windows glow warm.

A sign creaks:

MADAME ZOLKA

He knocks.

From inside, a low voice—husky, deliberate—calls out, muffled but clear.

MADAME ZOLKA
(O.S.)
Enter, wanderer.

FADE TO:

INT. MADAME ZOLKA'S CARAVAN - NIGHT

Smoke curls. A lamp flutters. Drapes shift like breath.

MADAME ZOLKA (50s), eyes like cut amber, shuffles tarot cards with one hand and drinks whiskey with the other.

DOC ANDERSON sits across from her. Tense. Cocky. Coiled. His hands twitch.

MADAME ZOLKA
Door’s wide open in your head, boy—but your heart’s screamin' louder than your mouth.

Doc smirks, legs stretched.

DOC
Ain’t much for bluffin'. Face like mine don’t hide much.

MADAME ZOLKA
No bluff, no shield. Just a stray dog at my door, then.

DOC
I prefer guest of honor.

She doesn’t laugh. Just studies him. Sensing.

MADAME ZOLKA
You got a war brewin’ under your ribs, son. One that don’t quit.

His smirk fades a hair.

DOC
I haul more than most. But lately... seems the load’s haulin’ me.

She slides whiskey his way. He demures.

MADAME ZOLKA
Passin’ on the devil’s water? You either a saint or a fool.

DOC
Still auditionin’, I guess.

She shuffles again. Cards whisper. One slides free:

THE HIGH PRIESTESS

Veiled. Knowing.

MADAME ZOLKA
Ah... truth ain’t always gentle.

DOC
Knowin' truth. Don’t know if it’s a curse or a blessing.

MADAME ZOLKA
Neither. You’re sittin’ on somethin’ you won’t or can’t name. Locked up tighter than a dark tomb.

Doc blinks. His head tilts. Eyes flit.

DOC
Your sister—she still keepin' that garden out back? Red Hot Pokers, is it?

Zolka freezes. She takes a sip of whiskey.

MADAME ZOLKA
My sister? You fishin'—or did somethin' whisper that in you?

Doc returns. Unsure.

DOC
Hell if I know. Just cames loose sometimes. Tha's why I'm here.

A beat. She softens. But not much.

MADAME ZOLKA
Strange bird, you.

She pulls another card:

THE CHARIOT

MADAME ZOLKA
Muscle don't win the long road. Balance does.

DOC
(taps temple)
So what—I quit swingin' blind and start listenin' upstairs?

MADAME ZOLKA
Ain't just fists or ghosts you're fightin'. You're flesh and fire, Doc Anderson. Neither yet both.

She draws a final card without looking.

THE MOON

Shrouded path. A figure in silhouette. Eyes hidden. She doesn't react. Just lays it down in front of him.

MADAME ZOLKA
There's a shadow in you. Been there a long time.

Doc tenses.

DOC
Sometimes... I see a figure I can't explain. It's not me—but it's watching.

Zolka leans in, eyes burning.

MADAME ZOLKA
Don't mean he's your enemy. Might just be the part of you waitin' for you own self to catch up.

A long silence. Then—

She plucks a PENDANT from a velvet pouch.

Old. Cold. Heavy.

Presses it into his palm.

MADAME ZOLKA
(CONT'D)
When the road splits, hold this. It won't point easy. But it won't lie.

Doc fingers the silver.

DOC
Trust a charm?

MADAME ZOLKA
Trust who's holdin' it.

The lamp flickers.

CUT TO:

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - NIGHT

Lanterns dim. Wagons settle into silence.

DOC ANDERSON strides toward the train yard, silver pendant clenched in his fist.

A CLOWN—30s, paint half-smeared sits on a crate nursing a BOTTLE. Fully drunk.

CLOWN
Hidey-ho, wonder boy— strutting like you own the night.

DOC
Ain't my fault it don't belong to nobody else.

The clown snorts. Swigs.

CLOWN
Think you’re clever? Duckin' fists don’t make you invincible.

Doc keeps walking.

CLOWN
Boy Wonder? More like Boy Blunder—bet you fall just as *burp* hard. HAHAHA...

DOC’S VISION FLASH:

— A groaning mast

— A fraying rope

— A crate collapsing

BACK TO:

DOC—

Eyes flare. A flicker of instinct.

He lunges—shoves the clown hard off the crate. Overreaction?

CLOWN
Hey! What the—

CRACK!

A wooden mast SNAPS overhead—

CRASHES down.

The crate EXPLODES in splinters.

Dust. Silence.

The clown lies on his back, staring.

His bottle rolls away, forgotten.

CLOWN
(whispers)
What in God’s name...?

Performers freeze mid-step. All eyes on Doc.

He stands, breathing hard. Gaze fixed on the wreckage. Then on his own hands.

Doc clenches the pendant tighter.

Turns.

Walks off—

EXT. OLD HOUSE - ROSSVILLE, GA - DAY (1968)

A sagging clapboard house slouches at the end of a dusty lane. Paint Porch wrapped in weeds.

PENNY BROWN climbs the warped steps, notebook gripped, camera at her hip.

She knocks.

Silence.

Then—

A door creak. Just an inch.

An OLD MAN (mid-70s), glares through the gap.

PENNY
Afternoon, sir. Sorry to intrude—I'm lookin' into a man named Robert 'Doc' Anderson. Ring any bells?

Beat. He spits.

SLAM.

Penny winces. Crosses off the name in her notebook.

PENNY
(dry)
Friendly fella. Must be late for church.

FADE TO:

QUICK CUT MONTAGE - DOORS SLAMMING

- A woman in curlers squints, shakes her head, THUD.

- A bearded man grunts, slams the screen door.

- A teen flicks a cigarette, glares, shuts the door with a sneer.

- A housecoat flutters shut in mid-question.

Each knock lands harder. Penny's shoulders set tighter.

PENNY
(to herself)
People around here warm as a winter's ditch, let me tell ya...

CUT TO:

EXT. MODEST HOME - ROSSVILLE, GA - LATE AFTERNOON

A humble house—neat lawn, trimmed shrubs, lace curtains drawn. Dusk folds gently over the scene.

PENNY knocks again. Firmer. Tired, but pressing.

A voice—faint, muffled—

OLDER WOMAN
(O.S.)
Mail slot, sugar. Talk down there.

Penny blinks. Crouches, knees creaking. Leans toward the brass slot.

PENNY
Uh, hey there—I'm trackin' someone named R.L. Doc Anderson. Ever cross paths?

A pause. Then—

A laugh—warm, low, cracked like vinyl.

OLDER WOMAN
(O.S.)
Doc? Oh honey, knew him like I knew my own face at one time. I worked the Incline Railroad Cafe. Lived up in St. Elmo. Lordy, that man spun more yarn than a Yankee cotton mill in winter.

Penny lights up. Scribbles fast.

PENNY
Like what? What kind of yarn?

OLDER WOMAN
(O.S.)
North Sea. Africa. Spain. Egypt. Said he saw things dreams couldn't even dream.

Penny leans in.

PENNY
Yeah? What kinda things?

OLDER WOMAN
(O.S.)
Stuff you'd scoff at, city girl unless you're the type to listen past the noise.

Penny's lips twitch—a half-smile, fierce.

Beat.

PENNY
Did he ever find what he was lookin' for?

A rustle.

OLDER WOMAN
(O.S.)
Maybe. Maybe not. But he kept knockin', same as you.

A wrinkled hand slips a peppermint CANDY through the slot—

It CLINKS on the porch.

Penny picks it up, smiles—a bridge crossed.

OLDER WOMAN
(O.S. CONT'D)
Keep on diggin', sweetheart. Just mind what looks back out the hole. Ha ha!

Penny pops the mint. Smiles.

PENNY
Much obliged, ma'am.

Scribbles a word— underlined: SPAIN

EXT. NORTH ATLANTIC - NIGHT - RAGING STORM (1930)

Waves rise like giants, smashing a fishing trawler's steel hull. Wind shrieks through rigging. Rain stings sideways.

The deck tilts hard.

DOC ANDERSON, now early 20s, eyes lit with something beyond fear, clings to a rope line. Oilskin flapping, knuckles white, he braces against the storm.

Crewmen shout—but the storm eats their voices.

A wave crashes—

Nets and crates wash across the slick deck.

A SAILOR slips—legs flying out beneath him.

SAILOR
DOC—HELP!

Doc's head snaps around—

FLASH—

— The mast snapping like a bone.

— A body crushed.

— The hull flipping.

BACK TO:

Doc lunges.

The ship pitches.

He SLAMS into a crate—splinters fly.

Fingers reach—miss—grab again—

Got him. Wrist to wrist.

The sailor dangles over black water. His feet kick air.

CAPTAIN
(O.S.)
Get a line! Hold tight!

Wind roars. The sea HITS again.

CRACK—

A beam smashes down inches from Doc. Wood explodes across the deck.

Doc holds. Eyes wide.

Another vision flickers—he knows what comes next. The sea is about to take them both.

He shifts—leans hard—

PULLS.

Just as the next wave obliterates the railing where they clung.

A rope drops. CREWMEN rush in.

They haul the sailor in. Gasping. Soaked.

SAILOR
I—I shouldn't be here.

Doc stands over him. Breath heavy. Rain pouring.

DOC
Almost weren't.

Their eyes lock.

SAILOR
You knew… didn’t you? How’d you know?

Doc says nothing. Just turns. Looks to the dark sea.

CAPTAIN
(O.S.)
Doc—bridge!

Doc nods. Peels away.

The sailor watches him vanish into storm.

FADE TO:

EXT. PORT OF MÁLAGA - DAY (1934)

A fishing trawler glides into Málaga’s sun-scorched harbor.

Mediterranean light shimmers— salt, diesel, and grilled fish hang in the air.

DOC ANDERSON (26), lean and sun-bitten, stands at the rail. His eyes scan whitewashed hills and looming stone forts.

A shadow slides across the deck.

He turns—

A dark German naval vessel cuts through the harbor. Sleek. Silent.

SWASTIKA FLAG cracking in the breeze.

Uniformed sailors line the rail, stiff as tombstones. Doc’s stomach knots. His fingers grip the rail—tight.

The vessel glides past. A ghost in black. The buzz of the port resumes. Doc exhales—low, measured. But the shadow will linger.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOCKSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

The trawler moors. Lines pulled taut. Dockworkers shout in Spanish.

Doc steps onto sunbaked stone. Duffle in tow.

A SPANISH MERCHANT (40s), wiry and weathered, barks at a deckhand. Then spots Doc. Grins.

SPANISH MERCHANT
Oye, amigo! Welcome to Malaga! I can get you anything you need.

DOC
Just tryna' to get by, buddy.

The merchant lifts a cloth bundle from his cart and unfolds it—spices, beads, a small carved charm.

SPANISH MERCHANT
"Trying to get by" means you're lost! Maybe you need direction. Here—this brings fortune. Or maybe luck. Depends who you ask.

Doc eyes the charm he holds, then the man.

DOC
Money back guarantee?

SPANISH MERCHANT
Haha, mi amigo eres inteligente. How about a mango for energy. Or dates? Or this blessed scarf—keeps the sun off and spirits away.

Doc chuckles, shakes his head.

DOC
Don't really go with my boots.

SPANISH MERCHANT
Fine. No scarves. How about—purpose?

Doc raises an eyebrow.

DOC
Purpose?

The merchant leans in, lowers his voice.

SPANISH MERCHANT
Tanganyika, amigo. That's where roads bend strange.

Where people don't just go—they go to see.

Doc watches him, intrigued despite himself.

DOC
See what, exactly?

SPANISH MERCHANT
The edge. The cracks. The breath between things. Some places whisper to you. Some shout.

He digs under the cloth—pulls out a small leather pouch.

SPANISH MERCHANT
(CONT'D)
This will take you there. And, only ten centavos.

Doc takes the pouch and looks inside.

SPANISH MERCHANT
(CONT'D)
Inside looks like nothing inside. But if you carry it, you'll know the way.

Doc laughs out loud.

DOC
Haha, I guess I could use it to hold Zolka's pendant at least. I'll give you five.

He hands the man a coin, pockets the pouch, and slings his duffel over his shoulder. Striding into the clatter of old Málaga.

SPANISH MERCHANT
If you need money. You can always fight el Toro!

Doc turns heel and walks away.

And, remember Tanganyika, amigo! It will show you the way. Vaya con Dios!

FADE OUT:

EXT. MÁLAGA PLAZA - OUTSIDE BULLRING - DAY

Cobbled streets hum—guitar twangs, café chatter. A bullring looms—arched, imposing.

DOC leans against a sun-baked wall. Rolls a cigarette. Lights it.

Crowds swirl. Excitement crackles all around. He flicks the match, adjusts his jacket.

He notices a weathered poster flapping against a lamppost—bold red letters:

¡EL TORO! - 500 PESETAS AL HOMBRE QUE RESISTA EN EL RUEDO !

A local BOY, about 12, catches Doc staring.

BOY
(grinning, broken English)
You fight? Strong man, sí? El Toro! Dinero si no mueres! Money if you don't die!

He laughs, runs off.

Doc squints at the poster again. Cracks a smile.

DOC
Five hundred for not dying? Sounds like a fair deal.

He crushes his cigarette under his heel. Then he melts into the crowd, heading toward the ring.

FADE TO:

INT. MÁLAGA BULLRING - MOMENTS LATER

The crowd roars—heat and dust rise in waves.

A MATADOR, cape flashing, pivots with deadly grace. The bull charges—hooves tearing ground.

DOC watches from the front row—skin flushed, hands twitching.

The matador guides the beast—so close it brushes silk. Doc leans forward—something deep stirs. Familiar. Old.

CUT TO:

FLASH—RED CLOTH

HOT BREATH

A CAPE SNAPS—

FADE INTO:

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE STYLE - SCRATCHED BLACK & WHITE

TITLE CARD: MÁLAGA, SPAIN - 1935

INT. BULLRING - DAY - FLASHBACK

Flickering frames. A bull barrels into the ring.

DOC ANDERSON—shirtless, chest sun-slicked, bandana tied at the wrist—stands in loose trousers, a borrowed cape clenched tight. No training. Just instinct and bravado.

He breathes steady. Eyes locked on the beast.

The crowd watches, murmuring.

The bull charges—

DOC sidesteps, rough but reactive. His timing saves him by inches. Another pass—he pivots, untrained but unnervingly fluid.

The crowd gasps—then cheers.

FREEZE FRAME:

ON-SCREEN HEADLINE:

“AMERICAN WILDCARD ENTERS RING AND WINS”

FADE THROUGH MONTAGE:

- DOC now in training attire practicing behind the ring with older toreros.

- A glimmering SUIT OF LIGHTS being adjusted over his frame.

- He bows low in front of a cheering crowd, radiant in full traje de luces.

INT. BULLRING - DAY

DOC ANDERSON—now resplendent in gold-threaded traje de luces—stands tall.

His eyes lock with the bull’s. He nods once.

ON-SCREEN HEADLINE:

“R.L. ANDERSON - THE MATADOR YANKEE”

The bull charges—

Doc sidesteps, cape snapping—

A dance of instinct and precision.

MONTAGE:

- Bulls twist and lunge

- Doc spins, taunts, bows

- The crowd rises

- His confidence swells

ON-SCREEN HEADLINE:

“THE AMERICAN MATADOR CONTINUES HIS STREAK”

He shines. Reckless. Untouchable.

Then—

ON-SCREEN HEADLINE:

“DOC ANDERSON DISAPPEARS FROM THE RING”

The reel flickers—

Then burns to black.

EXT. OLD WOMAN’S HOUSE - NIGHT (1968)

PENNY still sits on the porch, pencil hovering mid-note.

PENNY
(dry, intrigued)
A Roman bullfighter. Sure, why not.

A laugh crackles through the mail slot—warm.

OLDER WOMAN
(O.S.)
After that, he went lookin’ for his brother.

Penny blinks—sits up straighter. Flips notes.

PENNY
Lars. His brother’s name was Lars, right? Died in France?

OLDER WOMAN
(O.S.)
Mmhm. And, buried in France. Doc stood over that grave. But it was Africa where things got truly strange.

She shifts—sits cross-legged on the porch.

PENNY
(quiet, steady)
Keep talkin’, ma’am—I’m here as long as you hold out.

A faint creak. The mail slot opens just a little wider.

FADE TO:

EXT. MILITARY CEMETERY - VÉLU, FRANCE - DUSK (1936)

White crosses stretch into dusk—lined in perfect rows. The wind carries dry leaves across the mist-laced ground.

DOC ANDERSON, late 20s, coat collar up, stands still. Road-worn.

He faces a modest grave:

LARS ANDERSON

1897 - 1918

Beloved Son and Brother

His hands stay buried in pockets. Breath sharp. Controlled. Until it isn't.

His knees dip. Shoulders shake.

DOC
(raw)
Thought maybe I'd feel somethin'.

A crack of thunder. A jolt. Somethin'.

He bites his lip. Fist tight against his mouth. A breath—long and ragged.

The wind whistles low through the stones.

DOC
Been runnin' since it happened. From this. From you. From whatever keeps showin' me things I can't unsee.

He crouches. Traces his fingers over the etched name.

DOC
Used to think it was bad luck. Or a curse. Now I just think—maybe that's life. My life.

Silence.

DOC
Shoulda been there, Lars. Like I was for that sailor—and, the damn clown.

A sharp breath. One tear he doesn't bother hiding.

DOC
Maybe I coulda stopped it. Maybe I coulda saved you.

He kneels. Eyes closed. Bells toll in the distance. Heavy. Hollow.

DOC
Funny. Came lookin' for answers. Still can't get a word outta you.

Doc stands. Wipes his palms down his coat.

DOC
Gotta keep movin’. Still got places to—bleed.

One last look. Then he walks away.

SLOW FADE TO:

EXT. TANGANYIKA - VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT (1936)

A bonfire roars, flames licking high into the night. ELDERS form a circle—faces painted in ash and shadow, eyes like wells.

DOC ANDERSON stands at the fire's edge. Sweat beads on his brow. Young. Lean. Cocky.

Drums throb—a low, pulsing rhythm that rumbles through the earth.

Beyond the fire, huts blur in darkness. The village watches, unseen.

At the circle’s center, a SPIRITUAL LEADER (60s), cloaked in patterned robes, holds a WOODEN MASK.

SPIRITUAL LEADER
You’ve walked far, Strange Tongue—but distance don’t teach wisdom.

Doc shifts. A smirk ghosting his lips.

DOC
Maybe not.

(under his breath)
But it sure makes for an interesting journey.

A few Elders glance sideways.

The Leader lifts the spiritual MASK—firelight dancing over its edges.

SPIRITUAL LEADER
Know what’s in you. Then see past it.

Doc shrugs, cocky.

DOC
Sounds easy enough, buddy.

The mask is offered. Doc steps forward.

His hand touches the surface. He hesitates.

Then pulls it to his face.

It sucks to him.

A beat.

DRUMS SLAM.

FLAMES BURST GREEN.

The air BUCKLES. Sky warps.

Doc’s breath jerks. The world swirls.

His smirk? Gone.

MORPH TO:

EXT. ENCHANTED FOREST - NIGHT

DOC stumbles through a nightmare jungle alive with wild energy. The MASK clamped to his face—guiding, dragging him.

CRACK—A branch SNAPS inches from his head.

He’s pulled sideways—then violently left—roots grabbing at his boots.

SPIRITUAL LEADER
(V.O.)
True strength does not fight the current, it flows with it.

DOC’s hands scramble through vines. Bark rakes his skin.

WHAM—he hits a trunk. Gasps. Claws at the bark.

The mask twists—yanking him upright.

SPIRITUAL LEADER
(V.O.)
Stillness isn't weakness. It is mastery of your emotions.

DOC growls. Gathers himself. Charges forward— gripping the mask’s edges like reins.

Leaping into the air. He feels the energy.

DOC
(roaring)
YESSS! THIS ISN’T A CURSE! IT’S A DAMN CROWN!

He surges upward—feet leave the forest floor, soaring in the canopy. Leaves explode around him in golden spirals.

The jungle bursts open below like a map of memories—FLASH OF BATTLE, CIRCUS, BULLFIGHTING

DOC spins—laughing now, exhilarated.

DOC
You hear me?! I see it all! This gift—it was mine to carry all along!

Light streams from the mask. His body becomes streaks of energy, trailing behind him like comet fire. He rises higher—above treetops, above clouds.

The air thins. Stillness sets in.

Then—

A tremor. The light dims. The sky shifts.

A shadow forms at the horizon—stretching wide. The colors around him begin to bleed, darken.

Below—

A shape waits in the thinning light.

THE WITNESS.

Shrouded. Unmoving.

Its face is veiled, but its presence cuts.

DOC's breath catches.

The Witness raises one hand—silent.

DOC
(stunned, quiet)
What are you...?

No reply.

The mask pulses.

DOC lands violently on the jungle floor and stumbles back—shaken.

Behind him—

The forest drops off.

A DARK CHASM yawns—bottomless and black.

The Witness points.

The mask pulls.

DOC stumbles. Skids to the edge—too late.

FALLING—

Wind SCREAMS past. The void yawns wide. All alone.

In the mask's reflection—his eyes flicker. Not his own.

SPIRITUAL LEADER
(V.O.)
Do not focus on the storm cloud. You are the silent sky above. Watch. Breathe. Remain free.

DOC yells—rips the mask off—

BLACK.

THUD.

EXT. TANGANYIKA - RITUAL CIRCLE - NIGHT

DOC slams into the dirt. Gasping. Spent.

The ELDERS watch.

The mask lies beside him.

SPIRITUAL LEADER
You cannot fight fate, Strange Tongue.

Doc blinks. Shakes. Tries to rise.

He eyes the mask—unsure if it showed him the truth, or just tore something loose.

The Leader steps forward. Kneels. Scoops dry earth. Lets it fall through his fingers.

SPIRITUAL LEADER
You clutch a power that does not bow to command, Strange Tongue. It does not come to serve you—it demands you serve it.

He looks up, his gaze piercing into Doc.

SPIRITUAL LEADER
True mastery begins when you stop trying to cage the current. Awareness is your anchor. You seek to command your visions, yet it is your fear that keeps them wild.

Doc stares into the fire. His hands tremble slightly, still feeling the intensity of the ritual.

SPIRITUAL LEADER
Pride blinds you, Strange Tongue. And blindness in the presence of sight is a burden no man can carry.

DOC exhales sharply, his voice raw and uncertain.

DOC
It’s like... it’s burnin’ through me. Every time I fight, it just burns hotter. What if—what if I let go...?

The Leader’s face softens slightly. He puts his hand on his shoulder.

SPIRITUAL LEADER
Let go, yes—but not into chaos. Let go into stillness. Let your strength flow from the roots of calm. Only then will the flame in your soul turn from consuming fire to guiding light.

Doc closes his eyes.

DOC
Maybe not fightin’ so hard... might finally give me room to breathe.

The Leader chuckles—a low, warm sound. The Elders join him.

SPIRITUAL LEADER
Breathe, Strange Tongue. Let the silence guide you. In stillness, you will find what you seek—and perhaps, what seeks you.

FADE TO:

EXT. MODEST HOUSE - NIGHT (1968)

PENNY BROWN sits next to the mail slot.

OLD WOMAN
(V.O.)
He could’ve stopped searching. But he weren't built that way. He went lookin’ for silence—but silence only echoed louder.

PENNY
Why didn’t he stop? If it was tearing him apart... why keep going?

OLD WOMAN
(V.O.)
Sometimes, darlin', the louder the echoes, the more a person feels they gotta answer back.

CUT TO:

INT. TIBET - TEMPLE HALL - DUSK

DOC kneels before an ELDER MONK. A hand rests gently on his brow—

A VISION flashes:

— his brother's grave

— the circus

— a woman's eyes he hasn't met yet

— The Witness, just out of frame

DOC gasps. Steadies himself.

OLD WOMAN (V.O.)
They taught him how to control his visions—

EXT. MONGOLIA - CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

DOC sits among NOMADS. Their gazes drift upward toward the vast night sky, where constellations shimmer like scattered jewels. The NOMAD ELDER traces patterns in the starlight with a gnarled finger.

NOMAD ELDER
We are made of the stars. Their position is prelude to our path in life.

OLD WOMAN
(V.O.)
He rode with wanderers. Slept under stars. And still—he couldn't outrun the question: gift, or curse?

EXT. INDIA - DUSTY MARKETPLACE - DAY

DOC walks beside a WISE MAN, barefoot, steady.

WISE MAN
The Bhagavad Gita says, 'The self is not pierced by weapons or burned by fire; water does not wet it, nor is it dried by the wind. This self is
(MORE)

WISE MAN (CONT'D)
eternal, all-pervading, stable, immovable, and everlasting.'

OLD WOMAN
(V.O.)
So he began to stop askin'. Stopped fightin'. Let it be what it was.

EXT. INDIA - TEMPLE GARDEN - SUNSET

DOC sits beside SADHUS in deep stillness.

His hands shake—then slow.

SADHU
Set thy heart upon thy work, but never on its reward. Work not for a reward, but never cease to do thy work.

Doc breathes deep. Stillness. Peace, almost.

EXT. WEST COAST, USA - DOCKS (1937)

A steamship groans into port. Depression-era America looms—gray suits, soup lines, static in the air.

DOC steps onto the dock. Older. Quieter. A single bag over his shoulder.

OLD WOMAN
(V.O.)
The world had changed while he was gone. Now he had to change with it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AMERICAN HIGHWAY - DAY (1937)

A rickety truck bounces down a dirt road, pulling a trailer stacked with gear.

At the wheel—

DOC ANDERSON. Older now. Eyes on the horizon.

OLD WOMAN
(V.O.)
The country was broken. So was he. The world had no place for him… so he made one.

EXT. CCC WORK CAMP - DAY

Young men toil—planting trees, swinging axes, hauling logs.

Doc's truck rattles into camp, trailing dust. A few heads lift.

OLD WOMAN
(V.O.)
Camp to camp, job to job—he offered what he had: strength, stories, and a show like no other.

EXT. CCC CAMP - NIGHT

Firelight flickers. Dozens of weary workers gather. Doc peels off his coat—biceps impressive, hands steady.

He holds up a CARRIAGE BOLT.

OLD WOMAN
(V.O.)
They called him strongman. But it wasn't just muscle. It was focus. Will. Belief.

MONTAGE:

— Doc bends the bolt.

— Drives a spike through wood with his palm.

— Four men tug on a rope looped around his neck—he doesn't move.

The crowd cheers.

Doc grins.

CUT TO:

EXT. CCC CAMP - LATER

A fire crackles low. Men sip from tin cups, laughter easy.

Doc sits among them, relaxed. Talking soft.

OLD WOMAN
(V.O.)
But the real show came after—when they leaned in close, looking for answers.

A YOUNG WORKER inches forward.

YOUNG WORKER
You really see things?

A beat. Doc nods.

DOC
Sometimes. When it matters.

The worker hands him a locket.

YOUNG WORKER
Can you tell me if she's still waitin'?

Doc takes it. Fingers brush the surface. Eyes close.

OLD WOMAN
(V.O.)
That was the hardest part. Knowing what to say. And when to lie.

EXT. LOCAL SMALL TOWN FAIRGROUND - NIGHT

A larger crowd and bigger show.

Doc rips a DECK OF CARDS with his hands.

Holds an ANVIL aloft with one arm.

He PULLS A RAILCAR—with his teeth.

Crowd ROARS.

OLD WOMAN
(V.O.)
And then...

Across the flickering light—DOC sees her. RUTH. Watching. Curious.

OLD WOMAN
(V.O.)
He saw her.

DOC ANDERSON returns his gaze to center stage, sleeves rolled, breath steady. In his hands—a thick metal horseshoe.

BARKER
Step right up! Witness the man who bends iron! No tricks, no fakes—just raw strength!

Doc exhales—twists—The steel gives.

The crowd gasps, then erupts.

Near the front—

A YOUNG WOMAN watches, arms crossed, a teasing smirk tugging her lips.

RUTH FUNDERBURK.

Their eyes lock.

The crowd fades. The world stills.

RUTH
(playful)
Oh, please—that’s gotta be a trick.
Bet that’s painted tin!

Doc, amused, rolls the still-warm horseshoe in his palm.

DOC
Did you not see the rail car thing,
ma’am.

He tosses it to her. She catches it. It’s heavier than expected.

RUTH
(grinning)
Well... I stand corrected.

She tries to hand it back—

Doc turns back to the crowd.

FADE TO:

EXT. FAIRGROUND - QUIET CORNER - LATER

Lanterns flicker. Music drifts faint from afar. DOC leans against a post, smoking a cigarette.

RUTH approaches, horseshoe in hand.

Behind her, arms folded, stands JAMES—her brother. Watching.

RUTH
So… you just go around bending
things for a living?

DOC
Just the things that need bendin’,
ma’am.

A beat.

DOC
(CONT'D)
That horseshoe? That one’s lucky.

She twirls it.

RUTH
Oh? What makes it lucky?

DOC
Coz', I gave it to the woman I'm gonna marry.

A heavy beat.

RUTH stares. JAMES steps closer, protective.

JAMES
That so?

Doc glances at him, measuring, then grins slightly.

DOC
No disrespect, at all. Just a feeling.

RUTH laughs—part challenge, part caught off guard.

RUTH
How dare y--- you a fortune teller now?

DOC
Well, now that you mention it...

Her smile falters—emotion behind it.

RUTH
You don't even know me.

DOC
True. True. Maybe I've just seen you in the stars.

A beat. She LAUGHS OUT LOUD.

RUTH
You really think that line works?!

DOC
Probably wouldn't-- If it was just a line.

She huffs a laugh. But doesn't step back.

JAMES watches. He doesn't smile—but he doesn't step in, either.

FADE TO:

EXT. COUNTY ROADS - OPEN TRUCK BED - DAY

An old Ford pickup rumbles along a dusty road.

DOC ANDERSON and RUTH sit side by side.

Ruth studies a map—finger tracing roads.

RUTH
So, where's next?

DOC
Could be anywhere. Could be nowhere.

RUTH
(grinning)
Then I choose there!

She hurls the map out the window.

Doc watches her—this woman, fierce and full of fire. He smiles.

FADE THROUGH MONTAGE:

— A tiny church. Doc and Ruth exchange vows—simple rings, a soft kiss. Her dress plain, his shirt pressed. A few locals clap.

— CCC camps: Doc bending steel, lifting weights. Ruth watches from the crowd, one hand on her growing belly.

— Ruth behind a camera, catching their life in frames. In one: Doc spinning baby JUNE in the air, Ruth laughing behind the lens.

— A winter diner. Frosted windows. Ruth hugs June close, both sipping from a too-big mug.

— Ruth, pregnant again, eggs Doc on during a strongman act. He grins, muscles flexing.

— A cramped motel. Ruth hangs a hand-lettered "Mr. & Mrs." sign on a suitcase. Doc bounces giggling BETSYE. June looks on, bossy and proud.

— Another roadside room. Ruth cradles newborn CAROLE. June and Betsye lean in, awestruck.

FADE TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - TEXAS - NIGHT

Rain hammers the roof. Lightning cracks behind thin curtains. They have a full family now.

JUNE (6) and BETSYE (4) tear around the room, shrieking. CAROLE (1) laughs from a makeshift cradle in an open dresser drawer.

RUTH raises a hand—

RUTH
Y'all keep this up, and I'm puttin' you out in the rain! I will!

June pauses—then grabs Betsye's hand and takes off again. Carole squeals.

DOC leans in the doorway, cigarette glowing. Smiling. His eyes drift to packed suitcases in the corner.

Ruth catches his look.

Her exhaustion softens.

RUTH
You remember your CCC buddy—what was the town called he was from—?

DOC
Rossville. He said we should go see Rossville.

Ruth studies him. He finally meets her gaze, offers a tired smile.

RUTH
You wanna?

A beat.

Doc nods.

She touches Carole's hair, smiling.

DOC
(softly)
No more running.

Thunder rolls outside. Decisions made.

FADE TO:

EXT. CHATTANOOGA FREE PRESS - INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT - MORNING (1968)

A low hum of activity fills the air. Trucks rumble past, loading docks clatter. The scent of ink mingles with diesel and dust.

PENNY BROWN strides toward the building, notebook tucked under one arm, scarf snapping in the wind.

She pushes through the double doors—

INT. CHATTANOOGA FREE PRESS - PRINTING FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Controlled chaos.

Presses THUNDER. Ink-streaked workers hustle. Carts of newsprint weave between printing machines. Paper coats the air.

Penny dodges a passing cart and spots ED, the EDITOR-IN-CHIEF—half his body jammed inside a massive, groaning printer. A flustered PRINTER'S ASSISTANT hovers nearby.

PRINTER'S ASSISTANT
Uh, I think it's jammed?

ED
You think?! That's some real genius, kid. Maybe next time—unjam it first.

Penny leans near a slot vent in the machine frame—the only way to speak to him.

PENNY
Morning, boss. Got that update you wanted.

ED
If it's not about this beast's resurrection, then—

PENNY
It's about Doc Anderson.

A pause. Then sigh, still stuck.

ED
Go on. One ear and half a nerve left.

PENNY
Chatted with an old woman—through a mail slot last night.

ED
(through slot vent)
Sounds like your M.O.

PENNY
Doc left the CCC camps. Rossville was the launchpad to his next life. Psychic to the Hollywood stars. Predicted some amazing stuff. Full World Book of weirdness.

ED
(grunting)
Hollywood, huh? What's the angle, Brown?

PENNY
Still finding it, Ed. But Rossville's where it gets the local interest.

Ed pulls his head free, wiping his hands on a blackened rag. He eyes her.

PENNY
Apparently celebrities love a man who sees the future.

A worker flags Ed—the machine coughs to life.

ED
Go See Dolores. Upstairs. She remembers everything since Prohibition.

PENNY
(mock saluting)
On it.

CUT TO:

INT. CHATTANOOGA FREE PRESS - ARCHIVES ROOM - LATER

Smoke-hazed. Walls stacked with yellowed papers and crammed filing cabinets.

DOLORES LANE, 70s—former gossip queen—sits at a desk buried in newsprint and overflowing ashtrays. She puffs on a cigarette, eyes sharp behind oversized glasses, earrings jingling as she moves.

Penny drops into the chair across from her.

DOLORES
Come in! *cough* You're the one digging up Doc Anderson, huh?

PENNY
That's me. Heard you knew a thing or two about Rossville.

Dolores chuckles—raspy.

DOLORES
Honey, I knew everything about anything. And Rossville? That's where the psychic's story starts.

She takes a long drag, exhales slowly, leaning in closer with conspiratorial delight.

DOLORES
Doc had charisma. Half the women in town, married or not, went weak whenever he walked by. But Doc wasn’t turning the Lover’s card.

PENNY
Lover’s Card?

Dolores eyes Penny with a knowing smile.

DOLORES
Tarot reference, hon’. Anyway, Doc drove poor Fred Teachmer crazy. Pegged him as a fraud, but—

PENNY
Teachmer?

Dolores nods, smirking with mischievous nostalgia.

DOLORES
Fred Teachmer. Rossville’s original psychic. Used to write astrology columns nobody read, do palm readings nobody believed.

She leans back, blowing smoke toward the ceiling.

DOLORES
Teachmer was convinced Doc was a fraud—but mostly he was jealous. Insecure types always scream the loudest, honey. Trust me, I know.

Penny raises an eyebrow.

PENNY
Sounds personal.

Dolores winks playfully, tapping ashes into a cluttered tray.

DOLORES
Well, Fred and I had our own little history. Let’s just say he wasn't reading palms when he predicted I'd break his heart.

She laughs, coughing heavily, eyes sparkling with old memories.

DOLORES
You wanna understand Doc? Talk to Fred—but don't believe a thing he says. Fred always did like to rewrite history when it suited him.

Penny makes a note.

DOLORES
But in the end, Rossville wasn't about predictions or palmistry. It was about Doc finding stillness.

Penny leans in.

FADE TO:

EXT. SMALL HOUSE - ROSSVILE, GA - DAY (1943)

A modest home—nothing fancy, but theirs.

RUTH stands on the porch, hands on hips. CAROLE toddles nearby. DOC unloads furniture, sweat on his brow.

RUTH
It’s perfect.

DOC
It’s small.

RUTH
(smirking)
Perfectly small. Much bigger than a motel room!

She swipes his hat, plops it on her own head.

Her eyes flick to a crooked Rotary Club calendar just inside: *VISIT HISTORIC ST. ELMO!*

RUTH
(mock-mystic)
I see... a *DOC ANDERSON PSYCHIC* sign... hanging in... in St. Elmo.

DOC
St. Elmo, huh? Over the ridge? Amazing vision, Ruth.

RUTH
Told you I had the gift.

They share a kiss.

FADE TO:

INT. DOC ANDERSON’S OFFICE - ST. ELMO - DAY (1946)

Small, sparse. A desk, a few chairs, old books and a BUNDLE OF SAGE near the window.

DOC studies a fresh business card:

R.L. “Doc” Anderson

Psychic Readings, Spiritual Guidance

By Appointment

The door creaks.

EVIE HARPER (mid-50s, African American), dressed neat and nervous, steps inside.

EVIE
You the one they call Doc Anderson?

DOC
That’s what they tell me. You must be Evie Harper.

EVIE
My cousin Talbot said you were honest. Said you helped folks.

DOC
Talbot Everly? He’s a good man. How I ended up here.

EVIE
(eyeing the sage)
You a Christian man, or is this some kind of—

(gesturing vaguely)
—hoodoo-voodoo?

DOC
Raised with a Bible in one hand, sacred bundle in the other. Spirit and faith—same thing, different names.

She studies him.

EVIE
I got family wouldn’t approve. But I need answers more than approval.

DOC
I've read the Bible front to back, ma'am. you've come to the right place.

She exhales, sits.

EVIE
My son’s gone sideways. My daughter don’t talk to me. And I feel time slippin’ away.

DOC nods.

DOC
Let’s see what we can find.

He reaches. She offers her hands.

He closes his eyes.

FLASH -

— water rising.

— a yard, familiar.

— Evie, framed in a doorway, looking down.

DOC blinks, covering.

EVIE
You see something just now?

DOC
Just that you’re stronger than you know.

EVIE
(snorts)
That’s no revelation.

She softens.

DOC
Close your eyes. Let’s not look ahead just yet—let’s look where you been.

She nods. Eyes shut.

DOC’s grip steadies. Voice low.

DOC
You lost someone.

EVIE
(whisper)
My husband.

DOC
James. Strong hands. Quiet man. You still hear him sometimes.

Tears gather. She nods.

EVIE
You really see him?

DOC
I see how you carry him. In the silence you leave for him. In the way you wait for his voice, even now.

She exhales—one long, aching breath.

A pause.

DOC
Now let's look ahead.

Another flicker in DOC—

FLASH - WATER. DARK. A BODY FLOATING.

DOC's breath catches.

EVIE
You alright?

He lets go. A smile surfaces, faint.

DOC
You're gonna be just fine, Evie Harper. Your children will come back into your life. Forgive them. Love them.

A tear. She nods—. Composing herself.

She reaches into her wallet and hands Doc some folded bills.

She stands. DOC walks her to the door.

EVIE
Thank you. I mean it.

DOC
You'll be fine, Miss Evie. You know where to find me.

She exits.

DOC closes the door.

Alone, he palms his hair back.

His hand trembles.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOC ANDERSON’S OFFICE - ST. ELMO, TN - DUSK (1948)

Another knock. DOC opens the door. A CITY OFFICIAL stands there, envelope in hand.

CITY OFFICIAL
Mr. Anderson? The City Council has concerns about your... business.

FADE TO:

INT. CITY HALL - NIGHT

A long wooden table. DOC and RUTH sit across from stony-faced councilmen.

COUNCILMAN WRIGHT
Let’s be clear—we don’t issue licenses for fortune-tellers.

DOC
I don’t tell fortunes, sir. I help folks see what’s really already there.

A quiet stir. REVEREND HOBBS clears his throat.

REV. HOBBS
This ain’t honest work. It’s deception.

DOC keeps calm. Smirks just a bit.

DOC
Deception? Folks pay for hope every Sunday.

Gasps. The Reverend tenses. RUTH kicks DOC under the table.

COUNCILMAN WRIGHT
This isn’t about theology. It’s about whether St. Elmo wants a mystic-for-hire.

Beat.

DOC leans forward.

DOC
Fine. Let’s make it simple.

He picks up a councilman’s hat from the table. Turns it slowly in his hands.

DOC
This was a gift. You hadn't worn it in years—until today. And now, you're wondering if it makes you look too old.

The councilman stiffens.

DOC
The initials inside—W.J.—those aren't yours. They're your father's. He passed not long ago. My true condolences, sir.

Silence.

DOC
And you ain't sure what he'd think about you sittin' here tonight. When you should be with your ailing wife.

A deep pause.

DOC
Who will be fine, by the way.

RUTH squeezes his knee beneath the table.

The councilman looks at Doc hopefully. Swallows.

COUNCILMAN WRIGHT
I think... we need time to review this application.

Papers shuffle. Councilmen exchange glances.

REV. HOBBS
(gritted)
The devil works in mysterious ways.

DOC
(smiling)
So does God, Reverend Hobbs.

SLOW FADE TO:

INT. DOC ANDERSON'S OFFICE - ST. ELMO, TN - DAY (1956)

Time has passed. The waiting area is full.

DOC leans back, rubbing his temples.

On his desk—

a bursting ledger, scattered slips, half a cup of cold coffee.

The front door creaks.

EZRA “EZ” THOMAS (30s), lanky, neat but worn, steps in, holding his hat.

EZ
You Doc Anderson?

DOC
(not looking up)
Last I checked.

EZ eyes the packed waiting room.

EZ
Looks like business is good.

DOC
Good enough to be bad. What can I do for you?

EZ
Ain’t got money for a reading. But I got hands that work.

DOC looks up.

DOC
What kinda work?

EZ
Any kind that keeps food on the table.

DOC gestures to the mess of notes.

DOC
You read?

EZ
Like an English teacher.

DOC
You good at organizin’?

EZ
Like a squirrel packin' for winter!

DOC pulls a card from a nearby TAROT DECK, places it face down.

DOC
Flip that card.

EZ pauses. Then turns it over—

KING OF DIAMONDS.

DOC grins.

DOC
Welcome aboard, King.

FADE TO:

MONTAGE - DOC GAINS AN ASSISTANT

—EZ calmly sorts appointments, moving between nervous clients and a growing ledger.

—At a café, DOC fires off names and dates. EZ answers without pause.

—A client tries to leave without paying. EZ steps in.

EZ
Payment’s due same as prophecy, friend.

DOC
(calling from behind)
Not this time, King. He’s hit some hard times.

INT. DOC ANDERSON’S OFFICE - ST. ELMO - NIGHT

A quiet night. DOC and EZ play cards.

EZ
You ever read someone don’t wanna be read?

DOC
More times than I can count.

Beat.

Ez throws a card in and draws another.

EZ
You ever hear a fella named Marty Melcher?

DOC
That name supposed to mean somethin’ to me?

EZ
Maybe. Married to Doris Day.

DOC
That so? And how you know him, King?

EZ
Friend of a friend's cousin's sister.

DOC
(grinning)
Uh-huh. And I'm Teddy Roosevelt's nephew.

The phone RINGS.

They trade a look. EZ answers.

EZ
Doc Anderson's office. Ez speakin'...

Long beat.

EZ
Wait—who? Marty Melcher?

He looks stunned.

EZ
Y—Yes sir. He's right here.

Covers the receiver, mouthing wide-eyed:

EZ
It's him!

DOC raises an eyebrow, takes the phone.

DOC
This is Doc Anderson.

MELCHER
(V.O.)
Doc—Marty Melcher. Sorry for the cold call. Doris—my wife—she's havin' some concerns. Health and otherwise. I'd like to fly you out.

DOC leans back, voice steady.

DOC
I'm not that kind of doctor, Mr. Melcher.

MELCHER
(V.O.)
No, of course not. She just needs... answers.

She met someone a while back—Madame Zolka—who mentioned you by name.

DOC pauses.

DOC
Zolka's been gone a few years now.

MELCHER
(V.O.)
If you helped others, maybe you can help her. We'll pay.

DOC
When d'you need me?

MELCHER
(V.O.)
Yesterday, if it were up to me. Let's say next week.

DOC
Alright. I'll work something out. And... sorry about Doris.

MELCHER
(V.O.)
Me too. Hopin' you can show us some light.

CLICK.

DOC lowers the phone to the cradle gently.

EZ leans back, smug.

DOC
Your vibrations are sharp tonight, King.

EZ
You think I got the gift?

DOC
Lordy, You best hope not, buddy.

He flicks his cigarette, stands.

DOC
I better get home and tell Ruth and the girls.

INT. DOC ANDERSON'S KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

DOC stands at the sink, rinsing a coffee cup. RUTH leans against the doorway, drying her hands with a dish towel. The girls SCREECH playfully in the background.

RUTH
So, what's this about a trip?

DOC
Hollywood. Some fella named Marty Melcher called. Wants me to help his wife.

Ruth pauses mid-motion, arching a brow.

RUTH
Hollywood? What, Chattanooga’s needs too small now?

DOC
Don’t start, Ruth. Woman’s in a bad way. I reckon I can help.

Ruth folds the dish towel deliberately, her expression skeptical.

RUTH
Help her, or help some movie folks think you’re somethin’ mystical?

DOC
I’m not lookin’ to impress anyone, Ruth. I turn down plenty, you know that. This one feels different.

Ruth crosses her arms.

RUTH
And how long’s "different" gonna take? You’ve got locals countin' on you, Bob.

DOC
A week. Maybe two. And folks here’ll manage. EZ can re-schedule things just fine.

She lets out a sigh, tilting her head.

RUTH
You’ve turned down trips further than Hollywood without battin’ an eye.

DOC
Woman they mentioned knew Zolka. That name didn’t pop outta nowhere.

Ruth’s expression softens. She shifts her stance, leaning a hip against the counter.

RUTH
Zolka, huh? Who is this woman?

A beat.

DOC
Doris Day.

Ruth's eyes widen with surprise, and a genuine smile breaks across her face.

RUTH
Doris Day? Well, aren't you movin' up in the world, Mr. Anderson. And she knew Zolka?

DOC
That's what he said.

Ruth shakes her head, her smile lingering.

RUTH
Then by all means—go help America's sweetheart. Just don't go forgettin' your sweetheart back home, alright?

DOC
Never could, Ruth.

She lets out a small laugh, tossing the towel onto the counter.

RUTH
Better not keep her waitin'. Hollywood's a timely place, I hear.

Doc steps forward, presses a kiss to her lips.

FADE TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - NIGHT (1956)

Neon reflects in rain puddles. A Cadillac glides past marquee lights flickering gold. Mink stoles and crisp suits spill from lobbies. Laughter. Smoke. Flashbulbs.

DOC ANDERSON steps out of a taxi, suitcase in hand, adjusting his hat.

DOC
(to himself)
Now this... this a different kind of circus than I'm used to.

A premiere roars down the block. Paparazzi turn the sidewalk into starlight. A starlet laughs into a producer's arm.

Doc exhales. This was never his stage.

A black STUDIO CAR idles at the curb. The DRIVER steps out.

DRIVER
Mr. Anderson?

Doc nods. Tosses his case in, slides into the back seat.

They pull away—past a billboard:

SEE DORIS DAY—IN "THE PAJAMA GAME”

FADE TO:

INT. DORIS DAY’S ESTATE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

Grand, and warm. Soft lamplight. Framed posters. A piano.

DORIS DAY, poised but drained, sits across from DOC.

MARTY MELCHER leans in the doorway, arms crossed.

DORIS
You must think this is silly. A woman young as me scared of getting—old.

DOC
Ain’t silly at all. Fear’s real. Don’t matter if your name’s in lights or not.

She breathes out. DOC leans forward, gentle.

DOC
Close your eyes. Just breathe. Let’s see what we find.

She hesitates, then complies. He takes her hands.

A flicker crosses his face.

FLASH - VISION:

—Doris on a sitcom set, older, in pastels.

—Studio lights. A domestic world.

—Laughter. Success. But loneliness flickers beneath it.

BACK TO SCENE

DOC blinks, pulls back.

DORIS
(eyes open)
What is it, Doc? Something bad?

DOC
No, ma’am. Something big.

(beat)
A show. A show on TV.

DORIS
A... TV show?

He nods.

MARTY
Ridiculous. Doris is a movie star, not some—television personality.

Doris doesn't respond. The idea lingers.

FADE TO:

INT. HOLLYWOOD PARTY - NIGHT

A swanky affair. Laughter, cigarettes, champagne flutes overflowing. Glamour and schmooze in every corner.

DOC ANDERSON sits with EDDIE ALBERT—suspicious but curious.

EDDIE
You see the future, huh?

DOC
(grinning)
Sometimes, buddy. Not all of it—just the parts folks need.

EDDIE
Alright then—lay it on me.

DOC studies him.

FLASH - VISION:

—EDDIE in overalls beside a pig. A farmhouse. A laugh track.

—GREEN ACRES in glowing letters.

BACK TO:

DOC
Hope you like farmin', Mr. Albert.

EDDIE
(chuckling, pointing at his tux)
Me? On a farm? Now THAT'S comedy.

FADE TO:

INT. PRIVATE STUDIO LOUNGE - LATER

DENVER PYLE, whiskey in hand, sits beside DOC shuffling cards.

DENVER
You ever see somethin' you wish you hadn't?

DOC
(quietly)
More times than I care to count.

DENVER nods. DOC eyes him, thoughtful.

DOC
You ever grow a beard?

DENVER
Beard?

DOC
(grinning)
Just a thought.

FLASH - VISION:

—DENVER in the wilderness. A thick beard. Cabin. A bear.

—GRIZZLY ADAMS faintly glowing.

BACK TO:

DENVER
(deadpan)
That supposed to mean something?

DOC
(shrugging)
Maybe nothing. Maybe everything.

FADE TO:

MONTAGE - DOC IN THE HOLLYWOOD SPOTLIGHT

—DOC laughing with movie stars.

—Reading for directors, producers, skeptics—some stunned.

—Magazine cover: "THE PSYCHIC TO THE STARS."

—Talk show: DOC bends an Academy Award statue.

—Flashbulbs pop as he steps from a flashy car.

INT. SWANKY PARTY - NIGHT

A rooftop soirée. DOC holds a microphone stand, slowly bending it.

CELEBRITY
(O.S.)
My God—he's a real-life Samson!

Cheers. Applause. Laughter.

Champagne pours. Someone refills DOC's glass—again.

FLASH SEQUENCE - PHOTOS IN RAPID BURSTS

—DOC smiling, flute in hand.

—DOC at poolside, drink untouched. Then another—half gone.

—Eyes glassy. Off-kilter. A bead of sweat.

—Someone checks on him—he waves them off.

—Gripping the edge of a table. A slur in a laugh.

—Losing balance—

—A starlet yelps as DOC falls—

—SPLASH—both tumble into the pool.

SPINNING TABLOID HEADLINES:

"PSYCHIC TO THE STARS TAKES A DIVE—LITERALLY."

"DROWNING IN FAME: DOC ANDERSON LOSES HIS SHINE."

"PARTY TRICK OR POWER TRIP? HOLLYWOOD QUESTIONS 'DOC'."

Silence.

The rippling water. Voices calling, muffled.

Then—

FADE TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - HOLLYWOOD - MORNING (1956)

Sunlight slices through drawn blinds.

DOC sits on the bed, staring at the phone. A soaked, blurry image of him graces a tabloid.

He lights a cigarette. Thinks twice. Snuffs it. Tosses the pack.

He dials.

MARTY MELCHER
(V.O.)
Melcher.

DOC
Marty. It’s Doc.

Long pause.

MARTY MELCHER
(V.O.)
You alright? The papers—hell of a splash.

DOC
I'm fine.

MARTY MELCHER
(V.O.)
It's just Hollywood noise.

DOC stares at the skyline out the window.

DOC
I don’t drink, Marty. Never have. Last night... I had a drink.

MARTY MELCHER
(V.O.)
Happens. Don’t beat yourself up. Lay low. It always passes.

Beat.

DOC
I’m catching a flight.

MARTY MELCHER
(V.O.)
Doris sends her love. We’ll keep in touch.

CLICK.

DOC hangs up. Sweeps the tabloids into the bin. Pops two aspirin.

FADE TO:

INT. FRED TEACHMER ASTROLOGY OFFICE - DAY (1968)

Dimly lit. Celestial charts. Planetary models. Books teeter in towers. A large astrology wheel hangs on the wall. A worn sign reads: ST. ELMO PSYCHIC READINGS.

PENNY BROWN sits across from FRED TEACHMER—70s, meticulous yet a touch self-important. He scans her chart with exaggerated flair.

TEACHMER
Gemini sun. Scorpio rising. You ask questions—but seem to already know the answers.

PENNY
You sound like my editor.

He chuckles, smug. Penny leans in.

PENNY
I’m here about Robert Anderson. Doc Anderson?

Teachmer stiffens slightly.

TEACHMER
Doc Anderson. Now that’s a name I haven’t uttered willingly in years. Who sent you?

PENNY
Dolores Lane. Chattanooga Free Press. She implied you two had a—history.

Teachmer shifts uncomfortably.

TEACHMER
Dolores would say a lot of things. Mostly colorful, mostly exaggerated. But yes, Doc and I were rivals if that's what you're implying.

PENNY
Rivals?

TEACHMER
I was Rossville area's trusted astrologer before Doc wandered in with his visions and parlor tricks. People stopped listening to sense and started chasing ghosts.

He leans forward.

TEACHMER
Christmas of '44 was when things got interesting.

PENNY
How did I miss this in the archives? What are you talking about?

Teachmer drums fingers dramatically.

TEACHMER
Government cover up, darlin'.

Penny does a take.

TEACHMER
Doc scribbled a list—claimed Roosevelt wouldn’t see the war's end. Predicted Europe done by May, Japan by year’s end. Even saw a "weapon unlike any before. It drew attention he didn’t want.

PENNY
From the government?

TEACHMER
Just a polite interrogation. Nothing more—so they say. Right after, Roosevelt died. Coincidence? Maybe.

Penny closes her notebook slowly.

PENNY
Did Doc ever miss?

Teachmer smirks, relishing the moment.

TEACHMER
Oh honey, we all miss! But yes, he did.

Teachmer leans back, savoring Penny’s curiosity.

TEACHMER
(clears throat)
He predicted jet packs by 1963.

Penny’s pen stills.

TEACHMER
I had my doubts about Anderson, Ms. Brown.

But, I do know he was a fine man and husband. He shuffles a tarot deck.

TEACHMER
On his way home from his Hollywood daze, he had a vision. His wife, Ruth, dying.

He flips the Three of Swords.

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT (1956)

Doors swing open, rain ROARING outside.

DOC ANDERSON strides in—clothes soaked and wrinkled, suitcase dragging, fear masked in resolve.

He approaches the front desk.

DOC
Ruth Anderson. Where is she?

The NURSE AT THE DESK, 40s, steady, looks up.

NURSE
Are you family?

DOC
(controlled urgency)
I’m her husband.

She checks the chart. Her tone softens.

NURSE
Room 214.

But... she’s critical. The doctors... aren’t...

Doc straightens, absorbing it.

DOC
I need to see her.

The nurse hesitates.

Behind her, a PRIEST exits Ruth’s room, adjusting his stole.

Doc freezes.

DOC
(CONT’D)
You gave her last rites?

The priest nods, gently.

PRIEST
It’s in God’s hands now.

NURSE
(soft)
I’m sorry, Mr. Anderson.

Doc swallows hard. Nods.

DOC
My kids?

NURSE
With family. There's a note.

She hands it to him. He barely looks.

DOC
Let me in.

She holds his gaze, then steps aside.

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Dim. Machine hums. Ruth lies still, breath thin.

Doc steps in. Pauses. The vision hadn't prepared him for this.

He sits. Takes her hand.

DOC
(soft)
I'm here, darlin'.

She doesn't stir. Her hand is warm, but fading.

A DOCTOR enters, checking vitals.

DOC
(CONT'D)
What happened? She was fine two

DOCTOR
Pneumonia. Her lungs... fragile. We've done what we can. The rest is up to her.

He nods. The doctor leaves.

Silence.

Doc bows his head, clutching her hand tighter.

DOC
(whispers)
Lord, I can't do this life without her.

He breathes deep.

DOC
(CONT'D)
By Your mercy... by Your grace. By Your mercy… by Your grace. She's Yours—but… she's mine too.

His grip shakes. He reaches into his pocket—pulls out the silver PENDANT.

He holds it tight. Begins to chant—quiet, urgent—a mantra repeated again and again.

The sound builds.

THE ROOM BLURS—vibrates slightly.

Then—

A pause.

Machines BEEP—sharp and steady.

RUTH INHALES—a deep, grounding breath.

Color floods her cheeks.

Her fingers curl tighter around his.

Doc’s eyes open—shining.

The door bursts open—THE DOCTOR and NURSE rush in.

They check the machines. The doctor stares.

DOCTOR
(stunned)
Nurse!... vitals.

NURSE
(soft)
She’s stabilizing.

Doc doesn’t speak.

He just bows his head.

This time—in quiet relief.

FADE TO:

INT. DOC ANDERSON’S OFFICE - MORNING - APRIL 1, 1968

DOC ANDERSON sits at his desk, fingers at his temples, eyes distant. A CLIENT shifts uneasily across from him. EZRA "EZ" THOMAS stands nearby.

Then—

Doc stills. Breath catches. The room dissolves around him.

FLASHES OF VISION:

—A preacher on a Memphis balcony. A burst of gunfire.

—Riots erupt in Washington, D.C.

—Another man in a hotel kitchen—gunfire, panic.

—A crowd presses in. A young man on the floor. Face obscured.

BACK TO PRESENT—

Doc gasps, gripping the desk. The CLIENT jerks forward.

CLIENT
Mr. Anderson? You alright?

Doc doesn’t respond. Slowly exhales. Palms flat against the desk.

CLIENT
(nervous)
You see something bad?

DOC
That'll be all for today. You’re fine. No charge.

The client hesitates, then exits. The door clicks shut.

EZ steps forward.

EZ
Bobby... what did you see?

DOC
Dr. ML King, EZ. I saw him—shot.

EZ sucks in a breath. Doc closes his eyes.

Doc paces, rubbing his temple.

EZ
What are you gonna do?

Doc grabs the phone. Taps the receiver. An OPERATOR clicks on.

DOC
Get me the Atlanta SCLC office. Dr. King's office. Tell them it's Doc Anderson from Chattanooga.

Long beat. An answer on the other end.

DOC
(steady but urgent)
Good morning. This is R.L. ‘Doc’ Anderson from Chattanooga. I’m a
(MORE)

DOC (CONT'D)
licensed psychic. A bad vision came to me this morning.

Please... tell Dr. King. Tell him to be very careful today. Watch his surroundings. Don’t go out alone. Just... be careful.

Anxious Pause.

DOC
(CONT'D)
I know how this sounds. But I’ve seen too much to doubt it now. Every time I look away—people die. Every time I hold my tongue, something cracks loose in the world. I don’t want credit. I don’t want attention. I just want him to live. This vision—it came clear. Loud. Sharp. Like someone shouting through the veil instead of whispering.

Doc takes a heavy breath.

DOC
(CONT'D)
He’s on a balcony. Memphis. He doesn’t see it coming. But I do. I did. Please. Tell him.

CLICK.

Doc lowers the receiver.

EZ
You get through?

DOC
He wasn't there. I left a message with his secretary.

Beat.

DOC
(CONT'D)
Help me write a memo. I want to see if I can change things—for once.

FADE TO:

MONTAGE - DOC’S WARNING GOES PUBLIC

—Doc calls Bill Cooley at the Chattanooga Free Press.

—A printing press roars to life.

—The paper rolls, Doc's warning printed and timestamped.

—A newsroom editor circles the headline in red ink.

—A teletype rattles—regional bulletins lighting up.

FADE TO:

INT. DOC'S OFFICE - APRIL 4, 1968 - 6:32PM

A radio hums. The static clears.

RADIO ANNOUNCER
(V.O.)
This is an emergency bulletin... Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has been shot in Memphis, Tennessee...

Doc stares at the radio.

EZ stands frozen.

RADIO ANNOUNCER
(V.O.)
Dr. King was standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel when a gunman fired. He has been rushed to the hospital— we do not have confirmation on his condition.

Silence.

EZ
Oh, Bob...

DOC
(sharp)
Don’t say it.

EZ hesitates.

EZ
You knew. And they didn’t listen.

DOC
No one listens! No one ever listens!

He slams a fist onto the desk.

DOC
(CONT’D)
What’s the point, EZ? What’s the point if I see it coming, and it don’t change a damn thing?!

EZ steps back.

EZ
You did what you could, Bob.

DOC
No. I didn’t.

He turns away.

FADE TO:

INT. DOC'S OFFICE - JUNE 6, 1968 - NIGHT

The radio crackles. Dim light.

EZ watches Doc. A newspaper rests between them:

“SENATOR ROBERT F. KENNEDY SHOT IN LOS ANGELES”

Doc exhales.

DOC
(softly)
That’s two.

EZ nods.

EZ
You done tryin' to warn people, Bob?

Doc doesn’t respond. He pulls a MAP of Texas out of a manilla envelope addressed to "DOCK" ANDERSON.

He flips the map over—revealing an oil survey.

A name is scrawled in the corner:

John Shaw.

SMASH TO:

DOC'S VISION SEQUENCE - JOHN SHAW’S RISE & FALL

A SHARP WHISTLE BLASTS—metal CLANGS.

The Texas skyline burns gold, oil derricks carved against a setting sun.

JOHN SHAW, 40s, swaggering and driven, marches across a bustling rig.

JOHN SHAW
(V.O.)
More! Keep her running!

BLACK CRUDE erupts from the ground—glistening, uncontrolled.

QUICK CUTS—

—Contracts inked in an oak-paneled boardroom.

—Hands shaking.

—Stacks of cash.

BANKER
(V.O.)
You’re a rich man, Shaw.

CHAMPAGNE ERUPTS—pop!—bubbly rains down.

A crowd toasts him.

CROWD
(scattered)
To John Shaw! To fortune!

JUMP CUT:

DARKNESS.

—An EXPLOSION at an oil rig.

—A FORECLOSURE NOTICE nailed to an office door.

—A WHISKEY BOTTLE slammed down, liquid spilling.

VOICE
(V.O.)
You’re finished, Shaw.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

SHAW sits alone—shirt unbuttoned, eyes bloodshot.

A GUN trembles in his hand.

He lifts it—CLICK. A dry misfire.

He stares—stunned.

A SHADOW shifts.

He lifts a MAGAZINE from the table.

On the cover: “THE PSYCHIC WHO STRIKES GOLD - DOC ANDERSON.”

Shaw’s gaze lingers. Something stirs.

BACK TO:

INT. DOC’S OFFICE - NIGHT (1968)

Doc blinks, pulling himself out of the vision.

EZ
You were gone there for a minute, Doc. What’d you see?

Doc squints at the map of Texas, John Shaw’s name scrawled in the corner.

DOC
Trouble. Covered in oil.

He exhales, folding the map slowly. His gaze lingers, heavy.

EZ
You sure you want to take this one, Bobby?

DOC
Want ain't the word I'd use, King. But it'd seem this trouble’s already found me.

INT. DOC’S OFFICE - ST. ELMO - DAY (1968)

Across from DOC sits JOHN SHAW—creased suit, eyes bloodshot, desperation barely hidden beneath stale cologne and a forced smile.

Doc studies him—silent. Then:

DOC
You’re in debt eight hundred seventy-five grand. You don’t believe in God, yourself, or me. But before I’m done—you will.

Shaw blinks. Caught.

SHAW
(low, skeptical)
You get that from my aura?

DOC
(smirk)
Got that from your boots. Left one’s scuffed, right one’s polished.

Men who stop mindin’ the little things usually stopped mindin’ the big ones, too.

Shaw leans forward. The bravado slips.

DOC
(CONT'D)
And, I think I can help you Mr. Shaw.

He's listening now.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - DOC & SHAW'S WILDCATTING ODYSSEY

—A stretch of empty land under the punishing Texas sun. DOC crouches low, hand pressed to cracked earth, eyes closed—searching for something deeper.

—SHAW paces behind him, barking at the rig crew. They scoff, trading eye-rolls. One spits. Another taps his temple—crazy mystic.

—First drill site. Nothing. A busted pipe, dust, defeat. Shaw slams his clipboard. Doc doesn't flinch.

—Second site. More tension. Workers idle, arms crossed, unimpressed. Shaw's voice is hoarse from shouting.

—Doc raises one hand— stops them. He points to a forgotten patch of scrubland.

—Third site. A slow whir. A cough from the drill. The rig bucks—

BOOM—BLACK GOLD EXPLODES UPWARD.

—Oil sprays the crew. Chaos turns to cheers.

—SHAW dances in it, arms wide, howling with relief. He grabs Doc in a half-hug. Doc doesn't smile—just watches the spray.

—SPINNING NEWSPAPER:

"FORTUNE STRIKES IN TEXAS - MYSTIC WILDCATTER MAKES MILLIONS."

—Champagne flies on the tailgate of a pickup. Shaw hoots, covered in dust and success.

—Doc sits apart at dusk, cleaning his hands. The oil stains his palms like blood.

—In the distance, PENNY BROWN snaps a photo. She's barely seen, behind the chaos—just a shape with a camera.

—Doc catches a glimpse of her. Their eyes meet across the rising fog of oil mist.

—He looks down at his hands. The black sheen won't wipe off.

FADE TO:

INT. DOC'S OFFICE - NIGHT (NOVEMBER 30, 1968)

PENNY BROWN slams the PLAY button on her tape recorder. Across from her, DOC ANDERSON sits in worn repose. Still. Watchful. His presence dominates.

Penny clears her throat, her hand trembling as she adjusts a notepad.

PENNY
(soft, deliberate)
I've been chasing your story for days—Trying to understand who you are. Not just the psychic. Not the healer. Not the man who pulled trains with his teeth at traveling shows.

DOC
And?

PENNY
Every trail deepens the contradictions. You call yourself a Christian, yet you bleed like a mystic. You believe in free will, but claim to see destiny. You deny being a prophet—but you live off visions.

A long pause.

DOC
So all you found is contradiction?

Penny steadies her breath.

PENNY
(whispered)
I just want to understand.

Doc sighs. Rubs his chin. Then leans in.

DOC
Ok, Miss Brown. Here is some insight.

He studies her—her guarded posture, the steel beneath the fatigue.

DOC
(CONT'D)
Remember that smell of honeysuckle after a summer rain? Over in LaFayette?

PENNY
What?

DOC
That old porch swing—the peeling paint. You sat there past dark, hoping your father would return. But later felt relieved when he didn't.

Her eyes are wide. How does he know?

DOC
You didn't run from that town because it was small—you left because every street echoed with something you wanted to forget.

Penny's silence is heavy, her gaze fixed downward.

DOC
Now here you are, chasing down my past, but carrying your own.

A quiet, tense moment passes.

PENNY
(softly)
Doc, can I ask you something?

Doc nods, receptive.

PENNY
You seem to see inside me.

She stammers.

PENNY
When I was young—around ten—I saw something. Like a shadow, a watcher, silent. It appeared again when my father died. It never spoke, but… it always felt like every bad thing was somehow because of me. I've been seeing it more, lately.

She swallows hard, vulnerable. Doc gently hands her a tissue.

DOC
You're not alone in that, darlin'.
(MORE)

DOC (CONT'D)
Many have seen this— silent watcher. Some think it’s a piece of God’s quiet reflection. Others say it’s who you were before you became you.

Penny lifts her gaze, hesitant.

PENNY
I thought it meant something was wrong with me.

Doc’s voice softens, reassuring.

DOC
You’re not broken, Penny. Darkness comes and goes, just like clouds across the sky—no need to fixate on the storms. They are just a small part of you.

Her posture relaxes slightly.

She nods.

DOC
What I do—it ain’t magic, Miss Brown. Ain’t prophecy. It’s just seeing the curve before someone else does. Maybe like you. Always looking. Always leaning forward.

PENNY
So what do you see in my road?

Doc leans back. Calm. Clear.

DOC
A long road, winding and bright. A story trying to get out—so loud it keeps you awake. But remember, your peace isn’t to be found on the outside, it's waiting within.

Penny smiles.

DOC
You came for my story, Miss Brown…but you need to understand yours before you can write mine.

Beat.

DOC
And, you’re closer than you think.

PENNY
(quiet)
Thank you, Doc.

Doc smiles, reflecting quiet gratitude himself.

DOC
And thank you, Miss Brown.

FADE TO:

BLACK SCREEN

PENNY
(V.O.)
When my article hit in '68, it made him a household name, again—at least for a little while.

MONTAGE - 1968 HEADLINES AND PRESS REACTIONS

- “THE PSYCHIC WHO STRIKES OIL” - Chattanooga Free Press

- “DOC ANDERSON READS OILMEN LIKE CARDS” - Nashville Banner

- “FAITH HEALER OR FRAUD?” - Newsweek (sidebar blurb)

- DOC’S FACE on a regional talk show flyer: “LIVE: DOC ANDERSON - SEER OR SCAMMER?”

PENNY
(V.O.)
Some called him a prophet. Others called him a con. Didn’t seem to bother him either way. And, he didn’t stop after the spotlight faded. He just... shifted. Moved with the current. Helped people more.

MONTAGE - DOC'S POST-FAME YEARS - INT. BOOKSTORE - 1972

- 1970 Doc signs a copy of "Visions of Doc Anderson" for a tearful woman. He pats her hand gently.

PENNY
(V.O.)
He wrote a book that sold out three printings.

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY - 1973

Doc sits at a mic, eyes closed. He listens to a long silence from a caller.

PENNY
(V.O.)
He took calls. Calmed fears. Helped people sleep again.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT - 1975

A DETECTIVE watches Doc sketch something. It's a rural scene.

PENNY
(V.O.)
He worked a missing persons case in Mississippi. The girl was found right where he said.

INT. PARAPSYCHOLOGY CONFERENCE - DAY - 1979

Doc speaks before a modest but rapt crowd. Someone scribbles notes. Another stares, wide-eyed.

PENNY
(V.O.)
By the late ‘70s, he stopped trying to prove anything. He just started helping the ones willing to listen. But, he was tested again as Teachmer had predicted.

INT. UNIVERSITY OFFICE - NIGHT - 1980

A TULANE PROFESSOR flips through Penny’s old article beside Doc’s out-of-print paperback. He circles a line, leans back, then dials a number on a rotary phone.

PENNY
(V.O.)
That’s when the men in lab coats came calling. They thought they were testing him. But in the end, he was testing them.

FADE TO:

EXT. TULANE SCIENCE HALL - NIGHT - 1980

Rain slicks the cobblestones as a yellow cab pulls up. DOC ANDERSON steps out slowly—older, steady, unshaken.

He gazes up at the archway:

TULANE SCIENCE HALL - EST. 1894

PENNY
(V.O.)
I wasn’t there that night. But I can
(MORE)

PENNY (CONT'D)
see it. Doc Anderson walking into a room full of skeptics… like a man headed to the inquisition.

FADE TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

A grand, wood-paneled lecture hall. Rows of students, academics murmer.

A blinking console. Reel-to-reel tape machines. Wires snake across the floor.

DOC sits in a chair at center stage. Cables affixed to his temples, chest, and wrists. Calm. Watching.

A PANEL of SCIENTISTS sits nearby, eyes sharp, clipboards ready.

LEAD SCIENTIST
Mr. Anderson, you claim to see what others cannot. Tonight, we hope to measure that claim.

Doc says nothing.

LEAD SCIENTIST
Subjects have been chosen at random. We will ask you what you perceive to see if we can register any—real data.

A STUDENT VOLUNTEER steps forward. Doc watches him... but something's wrong.

DOC'S FLASH—VISION:

—The lead scientist, coughing violently at a desk.

—A spilled bottle of pills.

—A collapsing body.

—Darkness.

BACK TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Doc blinks. His focus wavers.

VOLUNTEER
What do you see in me?

DOC
You… had an accident.

Volunteer looks at scientist, then back at Doc.

VOLUNTEER
No, sir. No accident I can remember.

Doc falters. A SECOND VOLUNTEER steps forward. Doc strains to focus again.

DOC's FLASH—VISION RETURNS:

—A phone ringing.

—No one answers.

—A man alone in his chair, motionless.

BACK TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM - NIGHT (CONTUOUS)

DOC
Someone close to you… drowned?

SECOND VOLUNTEER
What? Absolutely not.

Chatter builds in the room. A THIRD VOLUNTEER steps forward.

DOC
A new change in your life. You're getting married.

THIRD VOLUNTEER
That would be news to my wife— of five years.

Snickers now. The Lead Scientist leans back, smug.

LEAD SCIENTIST
Did we catch you at a bad time, Mr. Anderson?

He gestures to the machine.

LEAD SCIENTIST
And, not a single spike in any of the readouts.

A TECHNICIAN confirms with a nod. Laughter ripples across the room.

Doc steadies his breathing. His hand shakes. His eyes land on the Lead Scientist.

DOC
You ever feel your heart skip around 3 a.m.—alone in bed, buddy?

A loud BUZZ. The computer starts lighting up. Recording pens scratch wildly on graph paper.

The Technician scans the read outs in shock.

DOC
Little flutter like wings inside your chest.

Doc stands up—pulling cables off his temples.

DOC
Might want to have that looked at.

The scientist is shocked. Touches his sternum—almost involuntarily.

The audience goes quiet—the computer the only noise in the room. Doc exits the auditorium.

EXT. TULANE UNIVERSITY ARCHWAY - NIGHT

DOC ANDERSON and EZRA “EZ” THOMAS step into the humid night air. Behind them, faint murmurs drift out from the auditorium doors.

EZ
(low)
Bob, what was that?

Doc walks slowly, lost in thought.

EZ
I saw your hands shake. You really saw that man sick, didn’t you?

Doc stops. Still. His expression unreadable.

DOC
Tell me, King—if you saw a man drowning, but knew he wouldn’t believe you, would you still call out?

Ez blows out a sharp breath. Frustrated.

EZ
Yeah. I would.

DOC
I try to do the same.

EZ
(muttering)
Well, they sure as hell don't deserve you.

Doc glances sideways. A rare flicker of gratitude crosses his face.

DOC
Appreciate that, King.

Doc pats EZ's back.

FADE TO:

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREET - NIGHT (LATER)

Doc steps out into the heavy air, shaking off a weight.

From his pocket, he pulls the pendant—Madame Zolka's gift. He turns it over, watching how the street light flickers off its surface.

A trolley bell CHIMES in the distance.

EZ
(low, hesitant)
You coming back to the hotel?

Doc glances up at the approaching streetcar.

DOC
Nah, King. Think I'll take the long way.

Ez hesitates but nods.

EZ
See you on the other side, then.

EZ exits.

FADE TO:

INT. ST. CHARLES TROLLEY - NIGHT

Doc sits in the nearly empty trolley. At the helm, the TROLLEY DRIVER, a woman in a crisp uniform—her presence calm.

TROLLEY DRIVER
Long night?

Doc meets her gaze in the rearview mirror but says nothing.

The trolley lurches forward— but the city outside the windows transmutes—lights dim, shadows shift.

THE WORLD CHANGES

—The woman's uniform becomes—deep-colored robes wrapping around her shoulders.

—Gas lamps flicker into burning torches.

—Buildings warp, stretching impossibly tall, their balconies curling like wrought iron vines.

—The cobblestone street becomes a river, dark and endless.

Doc grips the seat beside him, heart pounding.

WOMAN
They will never believe you.

Doc keeps his voice steady.

DOC
I don't have anything to prove to anybody.

The woman smiles—revealing sharp teeth.

WOMAN
But you do, Mr. Anderson. Your fear is proof.

FADE TO:

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - DEEP IN THE FRENCH QUARTER - NIGHT

Doc steps off the trolley. Empty streets.

The air electric. Gas lamps cast long shadows along cobble streets. The distant echo of drums pulses through the alleys.

The TROLLEY DRIVER steps off and walks through a darkened side entrance of an old converted parish. Doc follows.

FADE TO:

INT. VOODOO TEMPLE - NIGHT

A grand chamber, dimly lit by candles clustered in melted waves along the walls. The floor is dirt—the air thick with incense and smoke.

Figures stand in a circle, their faces unreadable in the low light. An altar of skulls. Symbols drawn in white chalk beneath it like warnings.

Doc steps forward. His eyes scan the room with hesitation. His chest rises and falls faster than usual.

WOMAN
The spirits have called you here, Mr. Anderson.

He swallows hard. Doesn’t answer.

WOMAN
(CONT'D)
Do you accept?

DOC
(forcing a smirk)
I don’t remember signin' up.

A low dark murmur passes through the circle.

WOMAN
This test was never yours to refuse.

She steps back. The drums begin. Doc flinches at the sound.

The circle chants. Voices low, primal. The room contracts.

A VOODOO PRIEST steps forward, COCO MACAQUE stick in hand.

The first blow lands on Doc’s shoulder. He winces.

The second strike knocks the wind from him. He staggers back, knees buckling.

He grips the air. Everything tilts.

His vision blurs.

DOC’S VISION - THE VOODOO OTHERWORLD

The temple bends. Melts.

Candlelight stretches like pulled thread. The floor becomes thick, wet. Marsh.

Doc reels, breath shallow. His hands claw for something—anything—solid. But columns are now trees. Trees that whisper.

He’s not grounded. He’s floating. Lost.

Now he stands in a burning bayou. Trees drip flame. The sky boils.

He clutches his chest.

DOC
(to himself)
Not like this... not yet…

A figure waits across the water.

THE WITNESS — Faceless, enormous, cloaked in black smoke.

It raises its head.

FLASH — The WITNESS becomes:

-- The DRUNK CLOWN, cackling in the circus ring.

-- The CITY COUNCILMAN, sneering behind his hat.

-- The LEAD SCIENTIST, cold and clinical.

They speak, voices layered and surreal.

WITNESS (DRUNK CLOWN)
You’re a joke, son. A two-bit trick.

WITNESS (COUNCILMAN)
This town don’t need mystics.

WITNESS (SCIENTIST)
Nothing to see here. Nothing at all.

The voices grow louder. Doc stumbles back.

DOC
Leave me alone...

WITNESS (ALL)
You always saw it coming.

The fire draws closer. The water begins to boil.

DOC
(shouting)
I didn’t ask for any of this!

Suddenly—a soft voice cuts through.

RUTH
(O.S.)
Bob. You listen to me.

He turns.

RUTH stands amidst the fire. Calm. Glowing.

RUTH
You’re scared. It’s alright to be
(MORE)

RUTH (CONT'D)
scared. I can’t see past it, Ruth. I’ve seen death my whole life. Mine.

RUTH
And you’ve been running all that time. Pretending you weren’t.

DOC
I thought if I understood it clearly, I could change it. But the more I fought, the stronger it got.

The WITNESS pulses behind him. Still watching.

Suddenly—the final vision.

A riverbank. A body. Face down. Still.

DOC
No... no, please...

He reaches out. Can’t move. Suddenly, another familiar voice.

GRANDMOTHER
(O.S.)
You always knew where the road ended, boy.

She appears beside Ruth. Peaceful. Steady.

GRANDMOTHER
You gave others clarity, but you've been holding tightly to a vision of yourself. Your attachment to control is what's keeping you from peace.

Doc falls to his knees, trembling.

DOC
I just wanted more time. I can’t just let go.

GRANDMOTHER
Letting go doesn’t mean you lose yourself. It means you finally find yourself. Stop fighting the current. Let it carry you home.

The WITNESS slowly dissolves.

The flames recede.

Ruth and Grandmother step forward.

Ruth places her hand gently on his chest.

RUTH
This isn't the end, Bob. It's just a change. Be the stillness you seek.

GRANDMOTHER
Release your hold, grandson. The journey is not to gain more but to need less.

Doc exhales deeply, releasing tension with the breath.

His world folds to BLACK.

FADE TO:

INT. ST. CHARLES TROLLEY - LATER THAT NIGHT (1980)

Doc gasps awake.

The trolley jerks slightly as it slows. The lights are normal again. The woman at the controls is just a driver—back in her crisp uniform.

Across from Doc is Ez—watching him. Concerned.

EZ
Bob? You with me?

Doc blinks, breath unsteady. He looks around—the trolley is pulling up to their stop. The city outside is just as it was.

Ez studies him.

EZ
You weren't here for a minute. Where'd you go?

Doc exhales, gripping the pendant.

DOC
So—somewhere I had to, I guess.

Ez nods, as if that's answer enough.

Doc stares, lost in thought.

FADE TO:

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - CHATTANOOGA - NIGHT (1980)

Air brakes hiss as a BUS pulls into its bay. The fluorescent lights of the station buzz faintly.ment.

DOC ANDERSON and EZ THOMAS step off the bus together, their breath visible in the chill night air. Each carries a small bag—Doc's older and frayed, Ez's neatly packed.

They linger for a beat near the edge of the platform, neither in a rush to leave.

EZ
(teasing, but soft)
Haven’t ridden Greyhound since I was twelve. Forgot how much a seat could squeak.

DOC
The squeaks grow on you. It’s the stops you forget you ever wanted.

Ez chuckles faintly, glancing at Doc.

EZ
You alright, Bob?

DOC
Ain’t sure yet. Maybe that’s the point.

A soft silence stretches between them.

A TAXI IDLES nearby, headlights cutting through the misty drizzle.

DOC
King—

Ez stops mid-reach for his bag, looks up.

DOC
You’ve been good to me. More than good. A man like me doesn’t deserve that, but you gave it anyway.

Ez holds his gaze, caught off-guard by the weight in Doc’s voice.

EZ
Don’t start gettin’ sentimental on me now. You know how I feel about long speeches.

DOC
Ain’t much of a speech. Just—thank you, buddy. For everything.

Ez nods, fighting the urge to smile. He slings his bag over his shoulder.

EZ
Told you before, Bob—I’m here ‘til the wheels fall off.

Doc chuckles quietly. They exchange a look.

A CAB DRIVER leans out of the window of one taxi, waving them over.

CAB DRIVER
You fellas need a ride?

Doc and Ez walk toward separate taxis. As Ez climbs into one, he glances back. Doc tips his hat. Ez smiles faintly as the door shuts.

The two taxis pull away in opposite directions, their taillights vanishing into the rainy night.

FADE TO:

INT. DOC'S OFFICE - NIGHT (1980)

The dim glow of a single desk lamp casts long shadows. DOC ANDERSON sits at his desk, pen poised above paper, a nearly untouched glass of water by his side. Each word he writes is slow, deliberate, yet a part of him hesitates, caught between urgency and reluctance.

His hand shakes.

DOC
(V.O.)
I have spent my life looking ahead, but I need to find peace in what is right before me.

Doc folds the letter with care, placing it in an envelope, his palm smoothing it down. He inhales deeply, hesitating before dipping his fingers into the glass of water, watching the ripples with a mixture of resignation and hope. Silence envelops him, a moment of clarity fraught with internal conflict.

FADE TO:

A SERIES OF FAREWELLS

INT. DOC'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Doc's fingers graze the back of a worn armchair. He lifts a PHOTO FRAME from the mantle—a snapshot of Ruth and him, young and vibrant.

He sets it down with deliberate care, yet reluctantly.

DOC
(V.O.)
I spent so much time looking forward—trying to see past the curve. Not enough time looking where I was.

INT. BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

The sky outside remains dark, rain tapping softly against the roof.

Doc sits on the edge of the bed, eyes fixed on RUTH, who sleeps peacefully.

He reaches out, hesitates, then withdraws, simply watching.

DOC
(V.O.)
Every road has an end. And some things ain't meant to be seen until you reach it.

Rising slowly, he pauses at the doorway—torn.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

Doc sets the small envelope on the table, laying Madame Zolka's PENDANT beside it. His fingers hover, eyes carrying a silent, conflicted prayer.

A deep inhale, a slow exhale.

With one last glance, he turns and walks away.

FADE TO:

EXT. DOC'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - EARLY MORNING

The rain has intensified.

Doc steps onto the porch, standing for a moment, letting it wash over him.

He closes his eyes. Feels the weight of it all.

Then—he descends, heading for his garage.

FADE TO:

INT. DOC'S OFFICE - DAY

Old, worn books and scattered notes fill the desk; A soft knock at the rattling door.

DOC
(softly)
Come in.

EVIE HARPER, now grey, steps in bundled in a coat with wet hair from the storm. She hesitates at the doorway, hands gripping her coat. She looks older—worn, but dignified.

EVIE
I wasn't sure you'd be here.

Doc smiles gently, shaking off his coat.

DOC
Neither was I. But here we are.

They sit in a heavy, yet comfortable silence.

EVIE
I keep thinking about our first meeting. I never forgot what you said.

DOC
Did it help?

EVIE
More than you know.

She pauses, then inhales deeply.

EVIE
(CONT'D)
I need to know what's next.

Doc reaches for her hand.

DOC
Alright, then.

Their fingers intertwine. Doc closes his eyes; the room quiets. A candle flickers, its flame unnaturally stretching toward the unseen.

VISION SEQUENCE:

Water rushing—a powerful current pulling, a yard with a grief-stricken face, then nothing but silence.

BACK TO PRESENT:

Doc exhales sharply, breaking the contact. His breath wavers, his eyes momentarily distant before they refocus on Evie.

The storm thrashes outside, rattling the windows.

EVIE
(softly)
You saw something. Didn't you?

Doc hesitates, leaning back in his chair, his hand dragging across his face.

DOC
Nothing bad for you, Evie... just the shape of what I've always known—about myself.

A beat—her gaze steady.

EVIE
You know, Doc, when I first came to you all those years ago, I thought you were just another man with a good story to sell. I was desperate—lost. My house didn't feel like a home, my kids barely spoke to me, and I thought, if there's anyone or anything out there—not even God, just... something that saw me—I needed to know.

Her voice catches, and she pauses to steady herself.

EVIE
Then you told me that I wasn't broken. You said the love I'd been looking for had never left—that it was in the way I kept setting the table for my husband. Or the way I hummed his song when no one was listening. You told me I needed to stop looking past myself to find what was already here.

She presses a fist to her chest.

EVIE
And I've carried that all these years, Doc. Every step, every hard day, every empty moment—I've carried it because you looked straight through me, and still, somehow, you saw the best parts. And I don't know how you did it, but I can never thank you enough.

DOC
I just held up the map, Evie. You're the one who took it—and kept going.

A long, comfortable silence.

Evie reaches into her purse, pulling out a few crumpled bills. But Doc waves it off gently.

DOC
Not this time.

EVIE
No, let me—

DOC
This one’s on me.

After a moment, Evie relents, tucking the money back into her purse. She rises.

EVIE
Thank you, Doc. For everything. I truly mean that.

DOC
I know you do. And don’t be a stranger, alright?

She smiles through misted eyes, nods, and heads toward the door. Pausing at the threshold, she looks back.

EVIE
I’ll see you again soon.

DOC
Sooner than you’d think.

He smiles warmly as she exits. The storm rages outside.

CUT TO:

INT. DOC’S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The storm thrashes outside. Rain smears across the windows, the house groaning under the weight of wind and water.

RUTH, now awake, pads into the kitchen, rubbing her arms against the early chill. The clock reads just past dawn. Something’s wrong.

Her eyes land on the envelope on the table. Damp at the edges. Her name: RUTH. Doc’s handwriting. Familiar. Final.

She stares at it. Then slowly, tears the envelope open.

DOC
(V.O.)
My Ruth—I spent my life chasing proof. Of what I saw as a boy. Of a gift I never asked for. Of something waiting on the other side.

She smooths the trembling paper with her fingers.

DOC
(V.O. CONT'D)
But it was never in the visions. Or the stars. My answer was in you. In the children. In every breath I didn’t take alone in life.

Her eyes flick to the wall phone. She lifts the receiver. Dials.

A dead line.

DOC
(V.O. CONT'D)
Some things are just set. Like rivers drawn to the sea. We don’t choose the end—only how we meet it.

She rattles the switch again. Her breath shaking.

RUTH
(barely audible)
Come on, Bob. Pick up.

She slams the phone down. The letter clutched to her chest. Cheeks wet with tears.

DOC
(V.O. CONT'D)
I go now, not in fear, but in faith. Because I’ve seen what’s waiting. And I know— love doesn’t end. It just changes form.

She presses the letter to her lips.

RUTH
(choked)
No, Bobby!!

Then she breaks. A sob tears loose.

She drops into the chair, the letter the only thing anchoring her.

She grabs the receiver once again and dials the police.

FADE TO:

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE ST. ELMO - AFTERNOON

Rain. Endless. Relentless.

DOC drives slow. Wipers struggle.

Ahead, the bridge. Water churns beneath it.

DOC
(V.O.)
I never wanted to see the end. But it was always there. And I finally stopped running from it. I couldn't do it.

He eases onto the bridge. Halfway across—the engine sputters. Dies.

Crank. It won't turn over.

He exhales. Steadies himself. Steps into the water.

It's higher than expected. Up to his knees. Then thighs.

DOC
(V.O. CONT'D)
Tell our children I love them. Every laugh. Every memory.

He struggles. A misstep. The current takes him. The river roars. The world flips. Water swallows all.

DOC
(V.O. CONT'D)
I'll be with you. In the quiet moments. Between heartbeats. I am with you. And I am not afraid.

FADE TO:

EXT. EVIE'S BACKYARD - DAWN

The storm has passed. The world is quiet.

EVIE steps outside, a shawl wrapped tight around her.

She crosses the damp grass, something catching her eye near the water's edge.

A shape.

A body.

She gasps, rushing forward.

DOC lies still, half-submerged in the reeds.

The man who once told her what was to come, now silent. Now gone.

The wind stirs. A faint whisper.

And then—

Nothing.

FADE TO:

EXT. EVIE'S HOUSE - DAY

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW — Emergency vehicles gather gradually, flashing lights bouncing off the wet ground.

We SLOWLY DESCEND, coming closer to the scene.

A REPORTER stands near the police barricade, microphone in hand. Rain drizzles as she faces the camera. Behind her, officers speak with a shaken, EVIE on the porch. EZ is next to her offering comfort.

REPORTER
A tragic discovery this morning along the Chattanooga Creek. The body of Robert "Doc" Anderson missing since last night was recovered here outside this home. Once a famed psychic and spiritualist, known for his work in Hollywood and across the country, Anderson lived his final years in relative obscurity.

She turns to PENNY BROWN, who stands nearby, in shock, her press badge clipped to a rain-slicked coat, exhausted.

REPORTER
We are joined by journalist Penny Brown, who has followed Anderson's work for years. Penny, can you tell us about Robert Anderson?

A long pause, her lips parting, closing again. Finally—

PENNY
Doc? I met him a long time ago… thought I was telling his story. He was more than just a story, though.

A beat. The REPORTER waits, but Penny is lost in thought. When she finally speaks again, her voice cracks.

PENNY
People wanted to see their futures. The burden on him was enormous. It defined his life.

She steps out of frame. The REPORTER opens her mouth to follow up, then stops.

FADE TO:

MONTAGE - ARCHIVAL INTERVIEWS

GRAINY BLACK AND WHITE FOOTAGE — Various television interviews from the past.

DORIS DAY sits in a studio, smiling warmly.

DORIS DAY
Doc was… he was the real thing. He just knew things. It was eerie sometimes, but he had such a kind heart.

CUT TO: EDDIE ALBERT IN AN OLD INTERVIEW, MID-LAUGH.

EDDIE ALBERT
I once asked him if I'd ever win an Oscar. He just looked at me and said, 'Buddy, you're gonna get close enough to smell it, but that's it.'

And he was right!

CUT TO: DENVER PYLE, NODDING SOLEMNLY.

DENVER PYLE
Doc helped a lot of folks. He just wanted to do right by people. But I think it took a lot out of him. He carried things nobody else could see. And that's a heavy burden.

FADE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A light drizzle falls. DOC'S GRAVE sits among the quiet headstones. A simple marker.

BETSYE and FRANCIS, his granddaughter, now in her late twenties, stand before it. FRANCIS holds onto her mother, their grief silent but deep.

Francis kneels, tracing the name on the stone with her fingertips.

FRANCIS
(softly)
He told me once that death isn't an ending. And I truly believe it.

BETSYE smiles sadly, holding her daughter tighter.

A BLACK RAVEN perches nearby. Watching. Waiting.

It lifts off, wings beating against the air as it SOARS into the sky—

DOC
(V.O.)
We are all just passing through. Like the wind over the fields, like the river carving the stone. We leave behind what we can, and we hope it was enough.

The raven disappears into the open sky.

DOC
(V.O.)
I have seen beyond the veil, and I can tell you now—There is no need to be afraid.

MUSIC SWELLS.

FADE TO BLACK.

TEXT ON SCREEN:

In memory of R.L. “Doc” Anderson

1908 - 1980