

"HURT HAWKS"

Written by

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HURT HAWKS

FADE IN:

EXT. HERMOSA BEACH - DAY - 1911

A perfect summer day. Late afternoon sunlight sparkles on waves lapping the shore.

ROBINSON (ROBIN) JEFFERS, a handsome poet in his early 20s, sits alone on the sand -- tan, muscular, in trousers but shirtless and barefoot, gazing out at the Pacific.

ROBIN (V.O.)

[quoting "At Playa Hermosa,"  
Flagons and Apples, lines  
1-4,9-10]

Grief that takes men by the  
throat

Faltering joy that falters not  
At the illimitable extreme  
Summit of the imperious dream.

What will Fate exact of me  
For this quiet by the sea?

INT. UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA - CLASSROOM - DAY

SUPER: UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, 1911

A tweedy PROFESSOR furiously SCRAWLS on a CHALKBOARD -  
"GESAMTKÜNSTWERK"

PROFESSOR

(writing on  
chalkboard)

Ge-samt-künst-werk. The total  
artwork.

GRAD STUDENTS, mostly men, take notes. ROBIN gazes out the window, bored.

PROFESSOR (cont'd)

That's when all the arts come together - music, dance, theater. That was the ideal for the German Romantics. And it all started with...?

UNA KUSTER, a beautiful young woman, about 22, raises her hand. She is plainly dressed in white but radiant, with her hair in a braided updo, like a medieval princess.

PROFESSOR (cont'd)

Ms. Kuster.

UNA

"Tristan und Isolde."

PROFESSOR

And why "Tristan und Isolde"?

UNA

It had it all. Love, sacrifice, death. Two lovers make the mistake of thinking they're above it all, and they pay the price for it.

Robin is suddenly intrigued. He turns from the window to look at Una.

PROFESSOR

Yes. Wagner's opera crystallized the romantic movement in Germany. It brought the philosophical longings of an entire generation under one big tent. Total artwork.

ROBIN'S POV: Una's profile, classically beautiful.

PROFESSOR (cont'd,  
O.S.)

Perfection.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA - DAY

Una strolls along a leafy walkway after class. Robin bounds up to her from behind, books and papers tucked awkwardly under his arm.

ROBIN

Miss Kuster? Excuse me. I'm in your German lit class. My name's Robin, Robinson...

UNA

(interrupting)

Robinson Jeffers. Yes, I know who you are.

Robin is surprised, not sure if this is a good or bad thing.

UNA (cont'd)

(teasing)

Every co-ed at USC has been warned about you. You had quite a reputation at Sigma Chi. But I know better. I read your poem last week in the university review. It was quite good.

ROBIN

(relieved but  
bashful)

My frat brothers are just jealous that I get better grades, so they spread rumors about me. But what you said about Tristan was right on. Miss Kuster, would I be too forward if I asked you to tea?

UNA

No. Please call me Una. It's actually Mrs.

ROBIN

(embarrassed)

I'm sorry. I wouldn't have dreamed...

UNA

It's alright. I met my husband my first year at Berkeley, and I dropped everything for him. So now I'm making up for lost time, doing what I want to do.

Robin nods, crestfallen.

UNA (cont'd)

Perhaps you could join us for tea sometime this weekend?

ROBIN

Oh. Sure.

EXT. SAN MARINO MANSION - DRIVEWAY - DAY

A lavish villa in a tony old-money San Gabriel Valley suburb. TED KUSTER drives up in a gleaming convertible 1911 ROLLS ROYCE SILVER GHOST with the top down. He's handsome and clearly rich, a few years older than Robin and Una.

INT. SAN MARINO MANSION - KITCHEN - DAY

An enormous kitchen, well-equipped and immaculate but for Una, struggling with a large MIXING BOWL. With flour on her face and all over her apron, she is making a rare stab at being domesticated.

TED (O.S.)

Sweetheart? Pet?

UNA

In the kitchen!

Ted walks in, smartly dressed in a stylish business suit, looking around at the kitchen as though it's the first time he's ever seen it.

TED

What on earth are you doing in here, my pet? Did the servants go on strike?

Ted gives Una a peck on the cheek.

UNA

(working dough with her hands, a little too aggressively)  
I just felt like making something.

TED

And how was school?

UNA

Good.

TED

(dipping his finger into a bowl of frosting, then licking it)  
Did you play nice with the other boys and girls? Make any new friends?

UNA

(hesitating)  
One, actually, yes. A poet. A very sensitive young man.

TED

Oh? Well, then, you should ask him to join us this weekend. He probably doesn't get out much, or get much to eat.

Una is caught off guard, unsure whether this is an opportunity or a trap.

EXT. SANTA ANITA PARK RACETRACK - DAY

Two horses close in on the finish line, neck and neck, as a crowd roars. At the last moment, one horse inches ahead to win.

INT. SANTA ANITA PARK - PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

In a richly-appointed private box above the grandstand, Ted and TED'S TWO FRIENDS AND THEIR WIVES stand cheering as an announcer BARKS about a neck-and-neck finish. Robin and Una sit watching, unimpressed. Ted and his friends are dressed in tuxedos. The wives are also fashionably dressed, with bird plumage in their hats, but Una doesn't wear a hat. Bottles of scotch and tumblers fill a sideboard. Robin looks like the outsider in dowdy tweeds that shout "starving student."

TED

(high-fiving his  
friends and  
collecting money  
from them)

Yes! I win! I always win!

(crashing back  
luxuriously in his  
seat, lighting a  
CIGAR, then  
focusing on Robin)

So, Jeffers, you like playing with  
the big boys?

ROBIN

I've never been to a racetrack  
before.

TED

My poor boy. You must get out more.  
Why, I bet you don't drink, either.

ROBIN

Not really.

TED

And no girlfriend either, probably.

UNA

Ted, really.

ROBIN

No.

TED

Oh, come on my boy. Wine, women  
and...

FRIEND NO. 1

Horses!

TED

And horses!

(another high-five)

There's nothing more in life. No  
gambling? No scotch? Why, people  
are going to think you're a  
preacher's son, Jeffers!

ROBIN

Actually, my father is a  
minister.

TED

(shaking his head  
and laughing with  
his friends at  
Robin)

My poor boy. My poor boy. Forget  
I said anything.

Robin and Una exchange uncomfortable glances while Ted and  
his friends continue laughing.

EXT. - UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA - DAY



Robin walks alone, hangdog and humiliated. Una approaches him from behind.

UNA

(calling to him)

Robin!

Robin ignores her.

UNA (cont'd)

Robin!

(catching up to  
him, grabbing his  
arm)

You weren't in class today.

ROBIN

(avoiding eye  
contact)

No.

UNA

I'm terribly sorry about  
Saturday. Ted can be such a  
beast.

ROBIN

(finally looking at  
her, painfully  
reminded of her  
beauty)

It doesn't matter.

UNA

I felt trapped. I couldn't say  
anything. All our friends are his  
friends. Please don't hold it  
against me.

ROBIN

I just wanted to be your friend.

UNA

I'm sorry you had to get caught up in it. Our whole marriage has been like that. He treats me like a pet. Always posing me for the society page.

ROBIN

That's too bad.

(he starts to turn to walk away, but perceives an opportunity, then slyly turns back to her)

I'll give you a chance to make up for it. Meet me on Wednesday after class.

UNA

What for?

ROBIN

Just meet me. No husband. No boring friends. Just you and me.

Una hesitates a moment, then nods.

EXT. ARROYO SECO - DAY

Robin and Una walk leisurely beside a shady, babbling brook behind Pasadena. Birds SING in the trees.

ROBIN

(self-absorbed, as though speaking to the universe, not Una)

[quoting "To Aileen of the Woods," Flagnons and Apples, lines 1-5]

Loveliest, there lie inside your  
 eyes  
 Marvels of ever new surprise;  
 Ah, in the dear clear depths of  
 them  
 What bright transparencies of  
 flame!  
 What coolness of fresh-growing  
 trees!  
 What...

Una bursts into a fit of laughter.

ROBIN (cont'd)  
 (jolted back to  
 Earth)  
 What's the matter?

UNA  
 That's AW-ful.

ROBIN  
 What do you mean? What's wrong  
 with it?

UNA  
 It's a little too...emphatic.  
 All those thy's and thou's and  
 sighs. It's...mawkish.

ROBIN  
 Mawkish? Is it?

UNA  
 I like poems that are about  
 permanent things. Rock-solid  
 things like mountains or the  
 ocean. This "Gather ye rosebuds  
 while ye may" stuff just makes me  
 feel like...like someone's  
 reaching up my dress.

ROBIN

(dejected but  
teasing)

Fine. I wrote it for another girl  
anyway.

UNA

So why is a medical student  
taking classes like Middle  
English and German Romanticism  
anyway?

ROBIN

I'm bored, I guess. Med school  
isn't really all that hard. I'm  
actually thinking of transferring  
to Washington next year so I can  
study forestry. Whatever I do, I  
still want to be able to write.

UNA

Why forestry?

ROBIN

It would be perfect! Spending the  
day with the trees and animals,  
then coming back to my cabin in  
the evening, lighting a fire, and  
reading and writing until  
midnight.

UNA

(teasing)

So you want to be a hermit?

ROBIN

No! Well, I don't think so. The  
problem is...I'm not sure I'm cut  
out to think about trees in terms  
of dollars and cents. Now my  
turn. What makes a wealthy  
socialite want to read Baudelaire  
and Tolstoy instead of going to  
country clubs and polo matches?

UNA

Life with Ted is a whirlwind. But something has been missing. Going back to college has been like waking up after a long sleep.

Robin tries to kiss her, but she turns away.

UNA (cont'd)

Robin, I'm a married woman.

ROBIN

I'm sorry. It's just...you're like nothing I've ever seen before. I'm sorry.

UNA

Friends?

ROBIN

Yeah.

INT. SAN MARINO MANSION - PARLOR - DAY

Una sits reading. Ted storms in briskly but not angrily, out of breath, his tie loosened.

TED

Sweetheart, have you seen much of that Jeffers boy lately?

UNA

Just...in passing. In class. Why? What's wrong?

TED

There's word you've been seen together.

UNA

Well...we've gone to some events on campus. A play. And a lecture a few weeks ago.

TED

(pressing his advantage)

You've been seen one or two places besides that. Around town.

UNA

What are you talking about? Ted, your friends have always resented me. They're spies who delight in making gossip because their own lives are so empty.

TED

My friends respect me! And if I have friends who look after my interests, it's because I've earned them! I might have expected some gratitude from you, Una. I give you a beautiful house, beautiful clothes, and, yes, I'll say it, access to a higher social circle than a farmgirl from Michigan should expect.

UNA

You owe me every bit as much as I owe you. Your trophy house and trophy car wouldn't mean shit unless you had a trophy wife to make you look legitimate.

TED

(calming down,  
suddenly realizing  
the stakes)

Una, look. It's just that in my line of work, appearances are everything. There's a lot going on at the firm right now and I know I've been preoccupied lately.

(taking her hands  
in his)

Why don't you take a break? As long as you need. You've been talking about Europe for the longest time. Now might be the perfect time. And when you get back, things will be clearer. Okay?

Una nods.

EXT. OCEAN LINER - DAY

Una sits on a lounge chair on the stern of a Titanic-like trans-Atlantic ship bound for Europe, writing a letter. She is silhouetted by a golden setting sun shimmering on the water.

UNA (V.O.)

Dearest Robin, I never dreamed I would find someone like you, with your eye for the beauty of things. The past few months have been wondrous. Your future is dawning. Your poetry gathers thunder. But I fear I can only be a cloud against your sunrise, for I am already lost. I have made my commitments and must honor them...

EXT. HERMOSA BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Robin sits on the sand around sunset, disheveled and distraught, reading Una's letter for the hundredth time.

UNA (O.S.)

How I wish things could have been different. I am so sorry to have hurt you with my confusion. So give me leave. When you read this, I will be in Paris. Then some months in Italy. Finally England and Ireland. A year in all. I will always treasure our time together. Farewell, Una.

Robin wipes tears from his eyes, balls the letter up and throws it toward the crashing waves. A few seconds later, he realizes his mistake, jumps up, and fishes the letter out of the approaching waves. He carefully dusts it off, uncrumples it, folds it neatly, and puts it in his pocket.

EXT. BOOKSTORE - DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - DAY

SUPER: ONE YEAR LATER

Robin walks along a busy sidewalk, pauses in front of the door to build up his courage, then opens it.

INT. BOOKSTORE - CONTINUOUS

A bell on the door JINGLES as Robin enters, hat in hand. Robin walks up to the counter where a prim BOOKSELLER stands sorting books and receipts.

ROBIN

Excuse me, sir. My name is Robinson Jeffers. I left some copies of my book here last month and I was wondering if you had sold any of them.

BOOKSELLER

(annoyed)

Nope. Not a one. In fact...



The bookseller reaches behind the counter and slams a box of books down on the counter with a THUD. The covers read "FLAGONS AND APPLES."

BOOKSELLER (cont'd)

Here. Take 'em. They're just taking up space here. You know, you might want to try something else. Stop wasting your time with poetry.

ROBIN

Sorry to trouble you.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Robin steps onto the sidewalk carrying the box of books. The door closes behind him with a JINGLE, and he looks both ways, utterly dejected. He takes a few steps, then, astonished, sees Una stepping out of a cab half a block away! He quickens his pace to meet her.

ROBIN

Una! When did you get back?

UNA

(happy, but realizing her affection for him hasn't dimmed)

An hour ago!

(gesturing toward the box of books)

You've been keeping busy, I see.

ROBIN

Yeah. Gathering kindling for winter.

Robin throws the box down on the curb and dusts himself off. He extends his elbow toward Una, and she takes hold of his arm. They take a few steps down the street, arm in arm, smiling at their good fortune, leaving the books behind.

INT. SAN MARINO MANSION - UNA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Robin and Una relax after sex in Una's bed. Una is on her back staring alternately at Robin and the ceiling. Robin is propped up beside her, nuzzling her.

ROBIN

Come away with me.

UNA

It's not that easy, Robin.

ROBIN

We'll book the next train to New York, then a steamer to Europe. Paris, then winter in Tuscany.

UNA

I can't.

ROBIN

Why not?

UNA

I have everything to lose. My friends, my home, my respectability. I can't be so casual about things.

ROBIN

Can't you see you're with the wrong man? You need someone who loves things like poetry and medieval Ireland. Someone who loves you.

UNA

Ted loves me.

ROBIN

No, he doesn't. He loves cars, and fancy clothes, and controlling people.

UNA

That's not fair, Robin. Ted's a good man.

ROBIN

Maybe he was, back when you were just starting out and all you had was each other. But now he just likes to cut people down, or put leashes on them - especially his wife.

UNA

(breaking down)

No. It's not true.

ROBIN

(consoling her)

I'm sorry. I've said too much. There now.

UNA

(rolling over,  
turning from him)

Ted will be home soon.

Robin kisses the back of her neck.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET, PASADENA - NIGHT

Robin bounds up the sidewalk. He is about to stride onto the walkway to his parents' home when TWO GOONS emerge from the shadows and start beating him senseless. Robin crumples to the sidewalk.

TED (O.S.)

That's enough, boys.

The goons withdraw back to the shadows, and Ted's POLISHED BLACK DRESS SHOES click on the pavement as he emerges leisurely from the darkness and approaches the fallen Robin.

TED

Count yourself lucky. I could do a lot worse to you and any judge in L.A. would see it my way. My boys here owed me one. Well, actually, they owed me seven, if you count the years I saved them at San Quentin. Eh, boys?

GOON #1 smirks.

TED

So, this is your parents' house?

ROBIN

Yeah.

TED

Nice neighborhood, for an old preacher. What is your father, anyway? 75, right?

ROBIN

Yeah.

TED

(squatting to  
Robin's level)

You know, Jeffers, my firm has a new case. Seems now that everybody's buying automobiles, we're gonna need a new highway from L.A. to Pasadena. Question is...where to put it. It's not easy. Nobody likes being kicked out of their house. Especially old folks. It's kind of hard on them. Some of us back at the office think we should put it in the canyon a few miles west of here. But I almost think it would be even better right through here. What do you think?

ROBIN coughs and spits up blood.

TED (cont'd)

Speak up. I'd really like to hear your opinion.

ROBIN

Go to hell.

TED

(standing)

No, not me, Jeffers. I'm not the one who's sleeping with another man's wife under another man's roof. I'm just protecting my property, standing up for the good ol' Ten Commandments. Your father would approve, I think!

ROBIN

Una is not like your horses or your car. She's not your property. You don't own her and you don't deserve her.

TED

But you think you do?

ROBIN

No. I don't. She's too good for me, too. She can see things I can't. The beauty in bad things. Like you, which amazes me.

TED

Someday, when you stop being a spoiled boy, you're going to understand that being a man means holding onto what's yours. In the meantime, stay away from my wife. Come on, boys.

Ted and the goons amble off into the darkness. Coughing and spitting blood, Robin painfully picks himself up off the sidewalk and limps to the front door of his parents' house. He hesitates a moment, then quietly unlocks the door.

INT. JEFFERS HOUSE, PASADENA - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Robin tiptoes inside, trying to sneak up to his bedroom undetected, but he's caught. His elderly father WILLIAM is sitting in a darkened corner of the room, dressed in a somber suit. William turns up a KEROSENE LAMP, puts his book down and walks over to Robin.

ROBIN

Father, I...

WILLIAM

(takes a white  
handkerchief out of  
his pocket and  
gently wipes a  
bloody wound on  
Robin's cheek)

We never quite deserve love. I didn't deserve your mother. I was already an old widower. I had already buried two sons. And then, there she was. Like a ray of sunlight through dark clouds. Love is the rarest thing in the universe. Like gold. You dig a whole mountain for the smallest bit of it. Even in the Bible. I've spent a lifetime reading and teaching that book, and you have to squint to find the love, hidden between the wars and the treacheries. Love may be patient and it may be kind, but that doesn't mean you don't still have to fight for it.

William and Robin embrace.

INT. JEFFERS HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

A PITCHER OF ORANGE JUICE CRASHES to the floor. Robin's mother, ANNIE, is frozen, her hands still seeming to hold the pitcher she has just dropped. She makes no effort to clean it up.

William sits at the kitchen table reading the newspaper, flat on the table.

Annie looks over his shoulder at it in disbelief.

RUSHING DOWNSTAIRS, Robin bursts into the kitchen to investigate the commotion. He approaches the table to see...

THE LOS ANGELES TIMES has a full-page story about Robin and Una's affair, with both their pictures [March 1, 1913, page 17]. The headline: "TWO POINTS OF THE ETERNAL TRIANGLE - PARENTS WASH HANDS OF IT."

Robin and William look at each other.

William nods once forcefully. They both know what Robin must do.

Robin dashes out of the kitchen and out of the house.

EXT. SAN MARINO MANSION - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Robin runs up the driveway and up the front steps and finds the front door ajar.

INT. SAN MARINO MANSION - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Robin peers in, then walks in cautiously. But he's spotted.

TED (O.S.)  
Come in! Come in!

INT. SAN MARINO MANSION - PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

TED

Yes, make yourself right at home,  
as if you haven't already!

Robin enters the parlor to find Una sitting meekly on the edge of the couch, eyes downcast. Ted paces the room, tightly clenching a NEWSPAPER, lording it over Una.

UNA

(defeated, not  
looking at him)

Robin, go away.

TED

No, no, no, no, no!

(relishing this)

We all have a part to play here. My part is to give you a dose of reality, Jeffers. You're a vile poetaster. You have no talent whatsoever. But even if you did, no publisher is going to touch you. Not just here in L.A., but in New York, too. I know them all. I'll make sure of it. And if the sun rises on your pretty face in L.A. tomorrow, you're going to have hell to pay. Last night was just a warm-up.

Hearing "last night," Una looks up, sees Robin is hurt and realizes Ted is behind it.

UNA

Ted, leave him out of it. It was my doing. I'll give you a divorce. But leave him alone.

TED

(smirking, then  
scoffing)



Hell no! You don't understand, Una. I don't do divorces. I'm this city's favorite son. I'm gonna be mayor someday! Maybe even governor! No. You made your decision when you married me. To be loyal to me, and to do as I say.

(stiffening up)

For a married man, it's different. A man can take chances.

UNA

(comprehending)

You...?

TED

(proudly, clicking his tongue)

What's sauce for the goose...

UNA

Who is she?

TED

It doesn't matter. You don't know her. And you don't need to. The important thing is...

ROBIN

(interrupting)

...she's done with you. She gave you everything. She made you.

(turning to Una, extending his hand to her)

Una, if I ever. Please.

Ted, seeing Robin's back turned, tries to sneak a blow from behind, but Robin catches him and stares him down.

ROBIN

You're nothing without your thugs. You may have L.A. and city hall and even New York in your pocket, but we have everything else.

Robin takes Una in his arms and leads her out of the room.

TED

I'm not done with you, Jeffers.  
Not by a long shot.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - DAY

Free and together at last, Robin and Una motor along the highway in a 1912 FORD MODEL T, without a care in the world, bathed in late afternoon light glinting off the Pacific. Una's WHITE BULLDOG "BILLIE" is in the backseat, excitedly sticking his panting, slobbering head out the window.

INT./EXT. MODEL T - CONTINUOUS

Robin is driving contentedly with one hand on the wheel and the other holding Una's hand. He glances at Una, then leans over to give her a quick peck on the cheek. As though imitating Robin, Billie gives Robin a big, wet, slobbering lick on his right cheek.

Robin and Una laugh.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Model T recedes from view down the road as Robin's and Una's laughter fades.

INT./EXT. CENTRAL COAST COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The Model T slowly comes to a stop on a gravel road at dusk. Robin cracks his door open, turning on the dome light.

ROBIN

(apprehensive)

I'm sorry, love. I was sure we'd find a place before now.

UNA

(smiling, soothing)

We'll be fine.

Robin opens up a folded MAP and squints at it, trying to figure out where they are, while Una opens her door and steps out of the car with Billie.

EXT. CENTRAL COAST COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

While Billie scratches and sniffs around, Una contentedly takes in a deep breath of country air (and her freedom from Ted), gazing across the surrounding countryside, still lit up by periwinkle twilight. She sees a classic Californian landscape: oak-studded hills above a tawny pasture, an equestrian fence, and, beyond, set back from the road, a HAYSTACK.

Una opens the trunk of the Model T, fishes out a LANTERN and a BLANKET, and makes a first step away from the car, toward the haystack.

UNA

(looking toward the  
haystack, calling  
over her shoulder)

Robin!

EXT. HAYSTACK - NIGHT

Robin and Una are lying on the blanket and leaning back against the haystack, the lantern flickering beside them. Billie lies on the blanket at their feet, licking his paws.

ROBIN

Europe?

UNA

(shakes her head)

I've had my fill. Besides, war's coming, and we deserve peace.

(curls up to him,  
putting her head on  
his chest)

Robin turns off the lantern, gazes up at the night sky and a brilliant, luminous MILKY WAY.

ROBIN (V.O.)

[quoting the last four lines of  
"Not Our Good Luck," Tamar]  
Far-flown ones, you children of  
the hawk's dream future, when you  
lean from a crag of the last  
planet on the ocean of the far  
stars, remember...we also have  
known beauty.

A SHOOTING STAR crosses his view.

EXT. MONTEREY PINE FOREST - DIRT ROAD - DAY

Thick fog pours through the trees as the Model T SPUTTERS to a stop at the top of a hill. Suddenly, STEAM starts HISSING from the radiator cap.

Robin bolts out of the car and flings the hood open while Una exits the car calmly, followed by Billie, excited as usual. More STEAM billows out and Robin stares at the engine in exasperation.

ROBIN

Well, we have another hour to  
kill.

(looking up at the  
fog drifting  
through the  
treetops, then  
rubbing his arms  
against the chill)

Maybe a little less.

Robin extends his hand to Una and they walk into the forest hand-in-hand, Billie bounding ahead of them.

EXT. MONTEREY PINE FOREST - DAY

Robin and Una walk contentedly hand-in-hand in the foggy forest. Suddenly, Billie explodes past them in a terrified sprint in the opposite direction.

UNA

Billie!

(looks at Robin,  
perplexed)

Up ahead, there's a tremendous CRASHING of branches and shrubs.

UNA

A bear!

(clinging to Robin)

Robin is dubious, having hiked the mountains of Southern California as a boy when grizzlies still roamed them, but he knows they're extinct now.

The RUSTLING draws nearer until, suddenly, GEORGE STERLING bounds out of the shrubbery in front of Robin and Una, oblivious to their presence. He's a few years older than them, but still strikingly handsome and athletic-looking. He's dressed like an outdoorsy dandy -- slightly rakish -- in a vest with a bright red pocket square and cravat -- but he's covered with leaves and flowers. He carries a BUCKET full of HUCKLEBERRIES.

GEORGE

(lifting the bucket  
skyward)

Praise Zeus!

(lowers bucket,  
turns, and is so  
surprised to notice  
Robin and Una  
watching him that  
he fumbles the  
bucket and some  
berries fall out)

Did you follow me?

(squinting  
suspiciously)

Who put you up to it?

ROBIN

No, our car broke down.

GEORGE

Hmm. You don't look like typical  
Carmel tourists.

(approaches Robin  
very closely, but  
not threatening,  
more like a curious  
dog, sniffing him  
out)

More like starving artist types.  
Where are you from?

ROBIN

Nowhere, really. We're kind of  
looking for a new home.

GEORGE

(starting to smile)

On the lam, eh? Aren't we all!  
Tell you what. I won't tell  
anyone that I caught you if you  
don't tell anyone about my secret  
huckleberry patch. Deal?

ROBIN  
(uncertain)

Okay.

GEORGE  
Hooray!  
(flinging the  
bucket of berries  
into the forest)

It would be a shame if the birds  
went hungry, no?

Robin and Una trade glances, thinking he must be crazy.

GEORGE  
(manic)

Wait a minute. This is all very  
vexing. We haven't made proper  
acquaintance. I'm George. But  
don't tell me your names! Let me  
guess. Spirits abound here, and  
I'm getting good at seance-ing  
with them. If I'm wrong, I'll  
just give you new names of my  
own.

(breathes deeply,  
closes his eyes)

You...

(to Robin)

...are of the animal kingdom,  
wild, fierce. Like...a hawk!

(opens his eyes)

So perhaps...the Celtic French  
Gauvain...the white hawk of  
battle. Your name is Gavin!

UNA

He's Robin.

GEORGE

Aha! See! I was pretty close! Not  
quite the bird I had in mind, but  
still.

(turning to Una,  
more calmly,  
grooming himself  
and brushing some  
of the leaves out  
of his hair)

But you, my dear, are something  
else entirely. A mythical  
creature.

(talking closely,  
gently, charming)

Like a spirit or a sprite. In  
fact, I took it as a sign when I  
saw these this morning...

(reaches into an  
inside vest pocket  
to retrieve a small  
bouquet of fragile  
WHITE GLOBE LILIES  
-- Calochortus  
albus)

...the first of the year. They're  
called fairy lanterns.

(holds them up  
close to Una)

Look how they keep their interior  
sacred, sheltered from the world.

(gently hands her  
the bouquet)

UNA

I'm Una.

GEORGE

Of course you are. As I said, the  
mythical creature. The unicorn.  
I'm pretty good at this, aren't  
I? That settles it! I have found  
you your new home.

Billie licks George's hand, and George reciprocates with a  
scratch behind his ears.



GEORGE (cont'd)

This is the place for you. Come  
to the beach with me tonight.  
I'll show you.

EXT. CARMEL BEACH - NIGHT

A gaggle of writers sits around a roaring campfire on the beach -- JACK LONDON, MARY AUSTIN, SINCLAIR LEWIS, JIMMY HOPPER and OTHER MEN. They are mostly the age of Robin and Una, except Jack -- about 10 years older. Mary is the oldest, clearly the queen bee of the troupe. They are not drunk, but they pass around a BOTTLE, drink liberally, joke and laugh -- except Jack, aloof.

Robin and Una sit quietly, observing, huddled close, not drinking, and not quite feeling like they belong yet.

Robin becomes aware of being stared at by Jack, across the fire.

GEORGE

(standing, the  
ringleader)

She snatched the sandwich out of  
my hands and started wolfing it  
down, tears streaming down her  
cheeks! I only figured out it was  
poisoned when she started going  
into fits fifteen minutes later!

SINCLAIR

What did you do?

GEORGE

I took her to the hospital, of  
course! Somebody told me she  
became a nun after she got out. I  
hope so, anyway.

JIMMY

(to Robin)

So, Jeffers, Sterling says you're a poet. Give us a sonnet to get the taste of his sandwich out of our minds.

ROBIN

(caught off guard)

I...haven't really...written much lately. Still kind of...looking for a good subject.

JACK

(kindly)

That's not how it works.

The crowd falls silent.

JIMMY

The wolf-man speaks!

(imitating wolf  
howl)

Ow owww!

OTHER MEN

(joining Jimmy)

Ow owww!

JACK

(waiving them off)

You have to stop looking to start finding. That's how it was for me and Alaska. Back in the gold rush, men going over the mountain pass above Skagway, one by one. Leaving loves and comfortable lives behind, many finding no gold, only death.

[Inadvertently quoting the last line of Jeffers' "Boats in a Fog," Tamar] Men "going about their business among the equally earnest elements of nature." I had never seen anything so beautiful. I thought, of course this is what I have to write about. There's nothing else in the whole world.

MARY

(to Robin)

But it doesn't come without a price. [Paraphrasing Mary Austin's "The Basket Woman - First Story"] Once there was an Indian who desperately wanted to sing. But he could make no songs, so he got no praise from his tribe. Then, one day, as he was gathering wild onions by a stream, a wolf went by. And the wolf said to him, "What can I pay you for your beautiful onions?" And the man said, "Teach me to sing as you do." "Gladly," said the wolf. And the wolf taught him, and that night he sang the wolf's song to his people, and it made their hearts burn. Then the man fell down as if he were dead, out of the pure joy of singing. But that night, as he slept, the wolf came and stole his song away. Neither the man, nor any of his people, remembered it. When you sing like no one else ever has, you have the wolf's song.

JIMMY

(imitating wolf  
howl)

Ow owww!

OTHER MEN

(joining Jimmy)

Ow owww!

MARY

(laughing)

Oh, shut up.

As the troupe giggles and passes the bottle, Jack smiles hopefully at Robin. Robin nods back but is still unsure how to sing the wolf's song.

INT. CARMEL FOREST COTTAGE - DAY

Robin sits at a small table by a dirty window, deep in concentration, composing poetry. A hint of forest outside. He taps the eraser of a PENCIL against the table, sounding out sing-songy iambic pentameter, nodding his head and quietly mouthing non-descript words along with it.

Una sits a few feet away at the kitchen table, alternately knitting and watching Robin work.

Robin scratches out a line aggressively with his pencil, then in exasperation balls the draft up and reaches for a new sheet of paper.

There's a KNOCK at the door. Una sets her knitting down to answer it while Robin remains oblivious, tapping out new lines.

Una returns to the table reading a LETTER then SLAPS the OPEN ENVELOPE to her side in disbelief.

ROBIN

What's wrong?

UNA

It's from Ted.

(finally looking up  
at Robin)

He's giving me a divorce!

Robin jumps out of his chair, overjoyed. He and Una kiss and hug tightly.

EXT. OLD COAST ROAD - BIG SUR - DAY

On a cold winter day, Robin and Una sit huddled together wrapped in gray blankets in the back of an open HORSE-DRAWN WAGON driven by CORBETT GRIMES, a rumpled working-class man with a Liverpool accent, about Robin's age. He wears a crumpled, sweat-stained FEDORA.

Though rumbling down a rough dirt road, Robin and Una are on cloud nine. Una wears a WEDDING RING, and Robin holds and kisses her hand.

CORBETT

Some place for a honeymoon! If you ask me, Big Sur is all about murder!

UNA

Murder?

CORBETT

Or murder made to look like suicide! At every bend in the road! See that old oak tree? That's where my wife's aunt hung herself when she found out her husband was in love with her younger sister! And the guy I bought my house from? He faked his own death! When his wife found out he was still alive up north, she downed a bottle of strychnine tablets!

UNA

Oh my!

CORBETT

Loneliness. Jealousy. People go crazy here. They jump off a cliff. Or they wander off into the mountains, never to be seen again!

(drawing the horses  
to a stop)

Time for a hay break. Fifteen minutes.

(hops down to tend  
the horses)

Why don't you two stretch your legs? Take this trail down. You'll like what you see.

(winks)

The lightning did it.

EXT. REDWOOD CANYON - BIG SUR - DAY

Robin and Una walk along a trail through a redwood forest, hand in hand.

UNA

George was right. This is the place for us. The raw passions of people living like the sagas or ancient Greece, by the sea, on narrow farms...

(looking ahead)

Oh, Robin. Look!

Beams of sunlight through the clouds illuminate an ALBINO REDWOOD TREE with white leaves.

With one hand, Una touches its foliage, while with the other, she brings Robin's hand to her belly.

UNA (cont'd)

I hope our baby will be as beautiful as this.

ROBIN  
(surprised, elated)  
What? You're...

Robin and Una embrace.

EXT. CARMEL RIVER BEACH - DAY

On a pleasant summer day, side-by-side, Robin and George amble barefoot alone on the beach. George looks toward the ocean and stops suddenly while Robin continues a few more steps.

GEORGE  
Treasure!

ROBIN  
What?

GEORGE  
Imagine it! Treasure beyond your wildest dreams! Once or twice every year, for 250 years, you could stand right here and see it. The Manila galleon, full of jewels and spices and silk. Never stopping. Never landing. Just going about its business, back and forth, between Mexico and the Philippines.

ROBIN  
Yeah. So?

GEORGE

So that's how it is with writers, too. You're trying to trade between two worlds -- one that's ugly and ordinary, and one that's rich with imagination. But there are so many risks. Rocky shores. And hurricanes. And pirates! If one in ten makes it through, it's still a success.

(quickly shuffles  
across the sand,  
trying to improve  
his view of Point  
Lobos in the  
distance)

Right about...here!

GEORGE (cont'd)

(pointing)

From here, the point looks like an island, does it not?

ROBIN

(taking a few steps  
closer)

I guess.

GEORGE

I'll bet he was right here, on this beach. Fifty years ago. Robert Louis Stevenson. Broke. Delirious. Coughing his lungs up from tuberculosis. So he made his own new world. Treasure Island!

(looks back at  
Robin and walks  
towards him)

Artists see different things in the same things.

George stands directly behind Robin and puts his hands on his shoulders.



GEORGE (cont'd)

Now, you tell me what you see.

ROBIN

What do you mean?

George starts turning Robin around gently.

GEORGE

Permanent things are what a poem needs. Look around you. What do you see?

ROBIN

Um...mountains.

GEORGE

Okay. What else?

ROBIN

I don't know. Waves? Grass.

GEORGE

Now bring them together. They've been here a million years, but you are their voice now. What do they say?

ROBIN

(tentative)

[paraphrasing "The Treasure",  
Tamar]

Mountains are like waves, rising  
and falling. Even the stars are  
like the grass -- short-lived,  
dying.

George and Robin stop turning. Robin gazes around with new eyes.

GEORGE

Go on.

ROBIN

Nothing lives long. Before birth  
and after death is the same.  
Eighty years in-between --  
laboring, crying, dying -- is  
nothing. A flash of activity.  
Enormous rest after, enormous  
rest before. Stars burn, grass  
grows, men breathe. As a man  
finding treasure says, "Ah!" But  
the treasure's what it's all  
about. Before the man spoke, it  
was there, and after he speaks he  
gathers it: inexhaustible  
treasure.

EXT. CARMEL RIVER BEACH - NIGHT

Robin and George sit alone on the sand in late twilight,  
watching stars glisten over the ocean. Waves crash gently.

INT. JEFFERS HOUSE, PASADENA - BEDROOM - DAY

Robin and Una sit closely on the edge of the bed,  
side-by-side, looking downward with blank expressions. Una  
rocks gently forward and backward. Her eyes are red, as  
though she has been crying.

They gaze upon A CRIB with the OUTLINE OF A DEAD BABY UNDER  
A BLANKET with a single WHITE ROSE laid over it.

UNA

(rocking)

I want my baby. I want my baby. I  
want my baby.

(breaks down)

Robin tries in vain to console her.

EXT. JEFFERS HOUSE, PASADENA - GARDEN - DAY

It's a beautiful spring day, completely at odds with the grief they've been enduring inside. William sits on one of two benches in the shade, bespectacled and reading a small leather-bound book. Robin ambles into the garden, forlorn and dejected, and slowly takes a seat directly opposite William.

WILLIAM

(putting down his  
book and taking his  
glasses off)

How is she?

ROBIN

Not well...

[quoting Matthew 19:14] "Let the  
little children come to me and do  
not hinder them, for to them  
belongs the kingdom of heaven."

WILLIAM

(hesitant)

[quoting Matthew 5:4] "Blessed  
are those who mourn, for they  
shall be comforted."

ROBIN

I envy you, father.

[inadvertently quoting "To His  
Father," Californians]  
Christ was your Lord and captain  
all your life. He fails the  
world, but he never failed you.  
He led you through all kinds of  
grief. But I have followed other  
guides, or more often no leader  
at all, and what has it gotten  
me?

WILLIAM

No. I failed you. It would have been easier for both of us if I had imposed on you my vision of God, my faith. I should have insisted you go to Sunday school, taught you the Bible as I taught it to my flock -- as revelation, hard and fast, non-negotiable -- instead of as history and literature. But even when you were a baby, I looked into your blue eyes, and I knew that wouldn't do. I was frightened. Your eyes were the eyes of an old soul. The eyes of a prophet. What's a father to do with such a son? A falconer can hood a hawk but can never tame it. The wild God of the world can't be tamed.

(taking Robin's  
hands into his)

I promise you, son. Our faith may be very different. But our grief is the same. You blessed your little girl. With love and light. Whether she lived a day or a century, it doesn't matter. Now, I promise you...she will bless you, both of you, all the days of your life.

INT./EXT. CARMEL FOREST COTTAGE - DAY

Robin sits at his desk by the open window, deep in concentration, writing poetry, quietly mouthing formless words and tapping out poetic rhythms on the desk with his fingers. Late afternoon sunlight slants through the window. The SQUEALING of an injured or cornered animal suddenly interrupts his concentration. He gets up out of his chair and starts to close the window, but something outside catches his eye...

...in the distance, on a low hill above the house, he sees the silhouette of a coyote or wild dog against sunset orange light repeatedly charging something hidden in grass at the edge of the forest.

EXT. CARMEL FOREST COTTAGE - DAY

Robin walks up to the coyote to investigate.

Startled by Robin's approach, the coyote scampers away, sulking.

Robin is amused watching the coyote depart, then hears the SQUEALING again, now much closer, and a RUSTLING in low bushes nearby. He peers into the spot where the coyote was focused and sees a bloody, BADLY INJURED HAWK partly hidden in the grass, flapping its torn wing, trying to escape, squealing and calling.

Robin squats down on his hams near the hawk, extending his hand to try to mend its wing, but he quickly withdraws it when the motion causes the hawk to squeal and squawk even more loudly. He watches the hawk -- motionless, tenderly.

EXT. CARMEL FOREST COTTAGE - NIGHT

About an hour has passed. Twilight. Robin sits cross-legged helplessly on the ground, several feet away from the hawk, watching it attentively. A RIFLE lays across his lap.

Frightened but resigned to the coming night, the hawk calls softly and plaintively.

Robin slowly rises and looks down at the hawk, conflicted and on the verge of tears.

BEGIN MONTAGE

As a GUNSHOT echoes...

...a startled covey of quail in the forest explodes into flight

...a flock of sandpipers on the beach explodes into flight

...a flock of white geese soars above the river lagoon,  
HONKING, their whiteness set off against green mountains.

ROBIN (O.S.)

[paraphrasing "Hurt Hawks",  
Cawdor]

If it weren't for the penalties,  
I would rather kill a man than a  
hawk.

END MONTAGE

EXT. CARMEL - OCEAN AVENUE - DAY

Robin excitedly thumbs through the offerings at a sidewalk newsstand.

Finding the magazine he's been looking for, he plops a few coins down on the counter, steps a few feet away onto the sidewalk, and quickly flips through it.

He appears to find an article that he's especially interested in. He reads it quickly, first with a furrowed brow, then easing into a confident smile. He rolls up the magazine and hurries home.

INT. CARMEL FOREST COTTAGE - KITCHEN - DAY

Robin bursts into the kitchen, where Una is shuffling about, preparing a meal. She wears an apron that hides her figure.

ROBIN

(exhilarated)

Dearest! Look! The Nation  
reviewed my book! Listen to this!

(reading the  
magazine)

"Robinson Jeffers is a new poet, a man whose name is as yet unknown, but whose work is of such outstanding character that once he is read he is sure of acceptance. His passionate devotion to the rivers and stars and landscape and atmosphere of California is certainly impressive. This is poetry both splendid and inspiring."

UNA

Oh, sweetheart. I knew you could do it.

ROBIN

This is it! This is the break I've been waiting for!

UNA

I'm so happy for you. But now it's MY turn for a break!  
(rubbing her very pregnant belly)

Una and Robin kiss.

INT. HOSPITAL - PASADENA - DAY

Una is in childbirth, fully awake and sitting partly upright on a bed in the maternity ward, wrapped in white sheets. DOCTOR COFFEY sits at the foot of the bed, preparing to receive the birth. THREE NURSES stand beside the bed. Robin sits nervously several feet away.

DOCTOR COFFEY

I'm sorry we didn't have time for anesthetic, Una.

UNA

Never mind. Let's do this.

Una bears down.

DOCTOR COFFEY

Just a bit more now, Una.

(beat)

And...here is...a son!

The nurses wipe and swaddle BOY #1 and gently present it to Una.

Una sinks back on the bed, overjoyed and overcome.

Robin breathes into his knuckles, a nervous wreck.

DOCTOR COFFEY

And here is...another boy!

UNA

(incredulous, not  
feeling it)

What? How can that be?

Doctor Coffey hands BOY #2 to the nurses, who wipe and swaddle it. One nurse stands cradling it next to Una's bed.

Una again eases back on the bed. Still holding the first boy, she reaches out to caress the second.

DOCTOR COFFEY

Una! You're not going to believe this! Triplets!

UNA

(sitting up,  
incredulous)

Oh come on! There couldn't  
possibly be a third!

Doctor Coffey and the nurses laugh.

DOCTOR COFFEY

(sitting back,  
still laughing)

Just joshing, Una. Well done.

Una lays back onto the bed, perfectly content.



The nurses hand her the second boy.

Una cradles both, one in each arm.

Robin looks on, tearfully happy.

Doctor Coffey pats Robin on the shoulder as he passes, exiting the room.

EXT. CARMEL - OCEAN AVENUE - NIGHT

A festive night on the usually sleepy main street of town. People haphazardly jaywalk, going to and fro in all directions. RAGTIME MUSIC spills out onto the sidewalk.

Robin and Una walk side-by-side along the sidewalk, Una pushing a DOUBLE PRAM holding their two baby boys.

Some BOYS run by with sparklers.

ROBIN

The town's awfully festive  
tonight. I wonder what's going  
on.

Large fireworks go off ahead of them, exploding overhead and lighting up their faces.

A PATRIOTIC MAN runs past them.

PATRIOTIC MAN

(to Robin)

We're in, man! We're in the war!  
Let's go whoop us some krauts!  
(runs off)

ROBIN

(to Una)

Gee. I can't even imagine fighting the Germans. I was a schoolboy in Leipzig. Thirteen. Reading Nietzsche in his hometown. And the music of Bach and Wagner in the air everywhere. It was magical.

UNA

Good. You don't have to fight them.

ROBIN

But I imagine it's my duty now, isn't it?

UNA

(stopping, getting upset)

How is it your duty? America isn't in any danger. We're not being attacked. It's not self-defense.

More fireworks explode above them. Orange firelight paints their faces. Suddenly, more people start running about them, calling for help. They see a PINE TREE ON FIRE ahead.

Robin rushes up to the tree, alongside other men. Like some of them, he takes off his sportcoat to help smother the flames spreading around the base of the tree.

RINGING ITS BELL LOUDLY, a FIRE TRUCK pulls up.

Robin and the other men back off as the fire truck takes charge and dowses the flames with a hose

Robin runs back to Una, carrying his soiled sport coat.

ROBIN

I don't think I could endure  
being away from you and the boys,  
unless you were willing.

UNA

I can't believe we're having this  
conversation. I'm not willing at  
all! And you shouldn't be either.  
I see no point in any of it.

Una brusquely turns homeward, pushing the pram at a brisk  
pace.

ROBIN

(struggling to keep  
up)

But this war can prevent even  
worse wars. If America isn't a  
part of the victory, we won't  
have any say in the peace.

UNA

You don't know that. There's  
never a shortage of excuses for  
new wars. Every generation comes  
up with new ones. Victory  
guarantees nothing.

ROBIN

I know war is disgusting. But  
it's inevitable. It's the natural  
condition of the human race. It's  
what a man has to do.

UNA

(stopping to look  
into his eyes)

You can't really believe that,  
with your love of mountains,  
rivers, wild places -- everything  
you write poetry about. Why would  
you sacrifice all that?

ROBIN

I'll probably be drafted anyway.  
Better to enlist and maybe have  
some say in where I go.

UNA

(hurrying on again)  
You're married. And you have two  
sons. Let younger men go. Men who  
have less to lose.

ROBIN

Now that Russia is in revolution,  
it's up to us.

UNA

I don't care about Russia or the  
archduke of Austria or any of it.  
Our peace and our happiness as a  
family should come first!

ROBIN

Una, I have a duty to protect my  
country.

UNA

Your duty is to your family! Not  
to some imaginary idea of your  
country. We're the ones who  
matter. We should be all that  
matters to you. I gave up  
everything for this life we've  
built together. Wealth, society,  
culture. I can't believe you're  
so quick to piss it all away!

ROBIN

I at least have to go through the  
physical and see what I'm  
qualified for.

UNA

Fine. You figure it out. But in the meantime, I'm leaving. I'm taking the boys and I'm going south. You let me know when you come to your senses.

Robin stops as Una stomps home alone wheeling the pram. He SLAMS his dirty sportcoat down on the ground.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Robin sits nervously in a patient gown on an examination table. A young doctor, MAST WOLFSON, sits at a desk, scribbling in his notebook.

MAST WOLFSON

So, Mr. Jeffers. What does your wife think about you volunteering?

ROBIN

She hasn't said much. I think she'll come around though.

MAST WOLFSON

Mhmm. You know, my Charmaine had a fit when I told her I wanted to enlist. I told her I could do a lot of good over there. She said I could do even more good here.

ROBIN

I'm aiming for the army balloon service, which is about as safe as can be. They're behind the lines, out of the line of fire, and they're covered all the time by anti-aircraft guns.

## MAST WOLFSON

Mmhmm. Mr. Jeffers, let me do you a favor. You have high blood pressure for a man your age -- or a man of any age, for that matter! Your nose has an obstruction that requires surgery. Your tonsils need operating. And...you need to be circumcised. All in all, you make a very poor candidate for service. That's what my letter will say.

## EXT. CARMEL COAST - MAL PASO CREEK BRIDGE - DAY

Robin's Model T comes to a stop at a pullout beside the bridge. The road is lonely and quiet, without any other traffic.

Robin steps out of the car and walks to the edge of the cliff amid the sound of CRASHING WAVES. He gazes downward.

Below him, a CHURNING SURF sloshes in a cove. Seagulls call.

## EXT. CARMEL COAST - MAL PASO CREEK BEACH - DAY

Alone and lonely, Robin ambles dejectedly along the beach.

He stops at the edge of a lagoon at the creek mouth that adjoins the cove, then tosses two or three pebbles into it.

He notices FAUNA, a beautiful young woman, sitting on the opposite bank about fifty feet away, watching him. She has long black hair and dark features, and she wears a peasant dress.

Robin smiles at her, but she averts her eyes. He throws two more pebbles into the lagoon, dusts his hands off, and walks toward her hungrily.

EXT. CARMEL COAST - STREAMSIDE FOREST - DAY

Robin and Fauna lie kissing in a bower under oak trees.

ROBIN (V.O.)

[paraphrasing "Mal Paso Bridge",  
God's Peace in November]

This is the year when young men  
cannot guess

From night to night what bed  
they'll sleep in.

So I swore to drink wine while I  
could,

And love where I pleased

And to shear the rhyme-tassels  
from my verse.

(beat)

Turbulent loveliness, you are the  
shallow creek-mouth

The surf of all my seas converged  
upon.

EXT. FRENCH BATTLEFIELD - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE

Robin is standing in the wicker basket of a Caquot-type  
kite OBSERVATION BALLOON, surveying a hellscape of war. He  
wears World War 1 battle fatigues, headphones, and a  
parachute harness.

Dark, cloudy skies around him pulsate with ANTI-AIRCRAFT  
FIRE, while on the ground below, BOMBS explode and MACHINE  
GUNFIRE echoes amid a miasma of yellow gas, fog, and smoke.

Robin peers through BINOCULARS at the battlefield below.

A German ALBATROSS D.V. FIGHTER painted with IRON CROSSES  
buzzes Robin's basket at close range, then arcs around for  
an attack, peppering the balloon with incendiary bullets.

As the balloon catches fire, Robin jumps out of the basket.

As Robin falls to earth, the balloon EXPLODES behind him,  
sending ribbons of flaming balloon fabric falling around  
him like FIERY SNOW.

Robin pulls the ripcord on his parachute and lands on the battlefield. As EXPLOSIONS and CRACKING BULLETS ripple around him, he struggles to cast off the parachute, runs and jumps into a nearby trench.

SOLDIERS hurry and shout around him as Robin tries to get his bearings.

As Robin runs madly along the trench, trying to find shelter from the barrage, smoke gradually thickens, blackening the sky.

A very close EXPLOSION throws Robin to the ground and sends clods of earth flying all around him, MUFFLING the commotion of shouting and bullets. FOG blankets everything in a gauzy twilight haze.

The shouting and bullets subside as the fog thickens and deepens.

Gradually, the sound of WAVES ON A BEACH replaces the sounds of war. The fog lightens gradually to reveal a beach in foggy twilight.

EXT. CARMEL COAST - BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Robin sits on the beach, still in battle fatigues, facing the waves.

ROBIN (V.O.)

[paraphrasing "Natural Music",  
Tamar]

The old voice of the ocean. The  
bird-chatter of little rivers.  
Different throats, one language.  
If only we were strong enough to  
listen the same way to the storm  
of the sick nations, the rage of  
the hungry cities, their voices  
also would seem clean as a  
child's, or...



Down the beach, wrapped in thick mist, Fauna dances deliriously, alone, without music.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

(almost whispering)

...like some girl's breathing who dances alone by the ocean-shore, dreaming of lovers.

END SEQUENCE

EXT. PICO BLANCO MOUNTAIN - DAY

Robin and George hike steeply uphill through a forest dappled with late afternoon light. Robin is sweaty and out of breath, while George appears fresh and unruffled.

GEORGE

Come on, old man. Almost there now.

EXT. PICO BLANCO MOUNTAIN SUMMIT - DAY

Robin and George finally reach the open summit of the mountain, near sunset. George is triumphant, smiling and sucking in the mountain air and awesome views over the ocean, but Robin is still winded and distracted.

ROBIN

I'm going from bad to worse! I get rejection after rejection. Even Macmillan. They published my awful book three years ago, but now they say my work lacks the grace and charm it used to have. It's "too dirty." Or it's "too long."

GEORGE

Look, man. If anyone deserves a pity pot, it's me! The war took away everything my generation had. Everything beautiful. We traded the Gilded Age and Viennese waltzes for death and shell shock. Now I'm just a court jester in a faded Bohemia. My sun is setting. (gesturing to the horizon)  
But at least your star is rising. Your work is still ahead of you.

ROBIN

Great men have done their work by thirty -- Keats, Shelley, Byron -- but I'm still flailing. Doomed to go on imitating dead men and falling short.

GEORGE

Great poetry aims for the future. Not fame, but to be understood 1,000 years from now. So if there's another dark age, and a gentle monk in a bleak monastery picks up your book, he'll see the treasure in it, even across the centuries. That's the goal.

ROBIN

Now that Una's gone, I can't imagine any future.

GEORGE

When is she coming back?

ROBIN

(sighs)

I don't know. I don't know if she will.

GEORGE

You can't force inspiration. The only thing you can do is prepare the way for it a little.

(knowingly,  
reprovingly)

Sweep away distractions.

(beat)

Don't forget what Jack London told you on the beach that night. You need to stop looking to start finding. You need to have the strength to listen.

[unintentionally paraphrasing "Wise Men in their Bad Hours", Tamar] To leave something more equal to the centuries than muscle and bone -- that's strength.

INT. CARMEL FOREST COTTAGE - NIGHT

Robin sits at his desk by the darkened window, writing a letter by the light of a KEROSENE LAMP.

ROBIN (V.O.)

[paraphrasing Letters 275 and 280, Selected Letters, 1938]  
Una, dearest. I cannot write. Not one word. Though writing has been my rock ever since I was a boy. I'm useless without it. Just as I am useless without you. I have been insensitive. I know it. I have thought too much about myself. I have wasted so much time -- my entire youth,  
[inadvertently quoting "To His Father", God's Peace in November] "years nailed up like dripping panther hides for trophies on a savage temple wall." Either of a pair of lovers ought to think of

the other. But I believe I will break through, somehow. Something will change. Something will happen. Something has to. If only you will come back to me. Our love is different from the love of people who live in apartments. Our love is different from the love of people who smell like offices and newspapers. I want to know you and be with you for a thousand years. And I want to share with you the beauty of things forever.

INT. JEFFERS HOUSE, PASADENA - KITCHEN - DAY

A bright, sunny morning. A pan of bacon SIZZLES on the stove.

William stands in front of the stove, scrambling eggs, a hand towel draped over his shoulder.

Suddenly, he stops stirring the eggs. He wavers, then crashes to the floor with a THUD.

ANNIE (O.S.)

William?  
(alarmed)  
William!

Annie rushes into the kitchen and sees William lying unconscious on the floor.

ANNIE

Oh, God!  
(rushing to  
William, sobbing)  
Oh, God!

INT. JEFFERS HOUSE, PASADENA - BEDROOM - DAY

William lies unconscious in bed -- his right arm resting at his side above clean, crisp white sheets, his left arm under the sheets.

Annie sits beside the bed, holding his right hand in her own, looking lovingly at his face, hoping for any sign of consciousness.

Una sits on a simple wooden chair in a corner of the room, a few feet from the foot of the bed, looking downward, hands folded as if in prayer.

A DOOR CLOSES down the hallway, followed by HEAVY FOOTSTEPS approaching.

Robin hurries into the room but stops abruptly at the doorway. He's disheveled after a long drive. He scans the room uncertainly -- looking first at his father, then longingly at Una.

Una looks up at him, lovingly but pained, not quite forgiving.

He walks toward Annie and kisses her on the forehead.

ANNIE

It won't be long now.

Robin walks to the other side of William's bed. He lifts the sheet to hold William's left hand but sees that it is BRUISED DEATHLY PURPLE.

ANNIE (cont'd)

(rising from her  
chair and stepping  
aside)

Here. This one's better. I've  
been holding it.

Robin gently covers William's left hand with the sheet and slowly walks over to Annie's side. He takes hold of William's right hand, then kneels by the bed, looking intently but tearlessly at William's face.

Annie, still standing, puts her hand on Robin's shoulder.

EXT. JEFFERS HOUSE, PASADENA - GARDEN - DAY

A sunny day, a few hours after William's funeral.

Robin and Una each sit on one of two benches in the shade, directly opposite each other.

Wearing a gray suit with a black mourning armband, Robin sits hunched forward toward Una, in supplication.

In a black dress, Una sits back, aloof, averting his entreaties.

Over their shoulder, Annie and the boys DONNAN and GARTH, now toddlers, play with a BIG RED BALL on the lawn. Billie chases after them playfully.

UNA

What do we do now?

ROBIN

Come back to me. I can't bear all this alone. First our daughter, now my father. Then the war, and now this ridiculous peace. The only way I can bear it is with you. I could bear anything with you. [Paraphrasing "The Truce and the Peace" VII, God's Peace in November] This war has just set us up for another one. The liars, the clowns. They lied, conspired, oppressed, robbed, murdered. And they'll do it again. In ten years or twenty. Just in time for...

Robin and Una look at the boys playing.

Donnan gleefully catches the ball.

Billie BARKS playfully at Donnan, then jumps on him, knocking him down on the grass.

ANNIE

Billie! No!

Donnan is stunned, as though about to cry. But then he bursts into laughter and rolls around in the grass.

Annie reaches to pick him up and dust him off.

ROBIN

(turning back to  
Una, taking her  
hands in his)

Peace may get away from the  
world, but we can't let it get  
away from us.

EXT. MONTEREY PINE FOREST - DAY

A grey, foggy day. A light wind blows through the pine trees.

Robin and Una walk arm-in-arm along a forest path, Billie trotting ahead of them. In his other arm, Robin holds a canvas FIREWOOD CARRIER loaded with small branches and kindling sticks.

Robin seems content to have Una back, but also distant and deep in thought.

UNA

What's wrong?

ROBIN

(snapping out of  
it, smiling)

Nothing.

(kisses Una on the  
forehead)

I'm glad you're back.

UNA

Something's bothering you.

ROBIN

No. Just my old war with myself, I guess. It just seems like everywhere I look, everything good and beautiful is being torn down. Even though we're five thousand miles away from it, the war has ruined everything. Not just in Europe, but here, too. People are busy breaking things up, tearing things down, destroying, not creating. How can you be an artist in a world like that?

UNA

You live your life. You carry on.

ROBIN

How can I be original, if being original means getting rid of everything I learned and loved and practiced?

UNA

Maybe make a guess which way you think poetry is going, and go there first. Read all your contemporaries, your competition, figure out where they're headed, then beat them to it. And if they look to France or Germany for inspiration, you can read French or German as well as any of them.

ROBIN

I'm not competitive that way. You're the only thing I've ever fought for.



(kisses Una's hand)

Poetry isn't worth it. Ideas went  
out of style, then rhyme, then  
meter. Then imagery and emotion.  
Now there's nothing left but  
musical sounds. Syllables and  
murmurs. Maybe that's next to go,  
and we'll just be left with blips  
and clicks you make with your  
mouth.

UNA

That's not such a bad thing is  
it? Remember that lovely little  
ballad we saw a few months ago?  
We both loved it, even though it  
seemed like such fluff at first.  
It was just a simple rhyme, just  
a medley of beautiful words. No  
complexity or meaning beyond  
their musical sound. Remember?

(reciting from  
memory)

"Cylinder, shelter, saber, where  
Elfin, delta, lee  
Circumstance, morning, grieving,  
glare  
Laughing, longing, key"

ROBIN

"Mystery, vellum, value, veil  
Carbon, candle, chrome..."

ROBIN AND UNA

(looking at each  
other proudly)

"Cinnabar, sacred, royal, grail  
Turning, onward, home"

ROBIN

(amused and  
embarrassed)

Home it is.

EXT. MONTEREY PINE FOREST - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Robin and Una approach a deep ravine about twenty feet wide and stop at the edge. A narrow wooden TRESTLE without a railing spans the ravine, carrying a PIPE about twelve inches in diameter. Around the pipe in the middle of the trestle is a BEEHIVE swarming with BUZZING bees.

Billie timidly sniffs at the edge of the gully.

ROBIN

(setting down the  
firewood carrier)

After you, my dear. Mind the  
beehive.

Una shuffles carefully along the narrow trestle.

Robin watches her attentively. When Una is about halfway across the bridge, Robin picks Billie up in his arms and shuffles after Una.

Robin sets Billie down with Una and heads back across the bridge. He picks up the firewood carrier and walks across the bridge a third time.

Robin pauses directly over the beehive and looks down at it. The BUZZING intensifies.

UNA

You can really smell the honey  
today.

The buzzing wanes to SILENCE as Robin's focus on the hive intensifies, blotting out everything else.

Robin looks up at the surrounding forest with new eyes.

ROBIN (V.O.)

(spinning)

I don't want to be abstract. Whimsical. Unbelievable. I don't want to be a communist, or a capitalist, or a Dadaist, or an expressionist, or a symbolist, or a regionalist, or a humanist, or a futurist, or a surrealist or a modernist. I don't want to tell lies. I don't want to feign any emotion that I don't actually feel. I don't want to pretend to be an optimist or a pessimist when I'm not. I don't want to say anything just because it's popular, or fashionable -- unless I really and truly believe it, for real, myself, deep down.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Big Sur redwood forest

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

[paraphrasing "The Tower Beyond Tragedy", Tamar]

I want to enter the life of the brown forest...

B) Cone Peak

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

and the great life of the ancient peaks, the patience of stone...

C) Deer beside Big Sur River in redwood forest

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

I want to be the stream draining the mountain wood, and the stag drinking...

D) Milky Way

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
and the stars boiling with light,  
wandering alone, and the darkness  
outside the stars.

E) City downtown

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
I want to be mankind also, to go  
behind things, beyond hours and  
ages...

F) Una in childbirth

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
and be all things in all time, in  
their returns...

G) William on his deathbed

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
and passages...

H) A full moon

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
in the motionless and timeless  
center...

I) A campfire in the mountains

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
in the white of the fire. I want  
to climb...

J) the Eiffel Tower

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
the tower beyond humanity...

K) The Minaret of Jam

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
the tower...

L) The Pagoda of Chongsheng Temple

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
beyond time.

M) Tor House, Carmel (out of focus, gradually resolving)

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
The tower beyond tragedy. To  
enter...

N) The ocean off Carmel Point, sunset

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
the earlier fountain.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. CARMEL POINT - DAY - LATER

The ocean off Carmel Point is bathed in noon light. Waves  
crash gently on the shore and seagulls call.

UNA (O.S.)  
What do you see?

ROBIN (O.S.)  
The end of things. This is where  
it all ends. Only to begin again.

Robin stands on Carmel Point gazing out to the horizon.

ROBIN  
Continent's end. This one ocean  
lashing the Aleutian Islands to  
the Coral Sea. Behind us all the  
bloodthirsty striving of Europe,  
and Asia ahead of us, doubling  
back now.

UNA (O.S.)

It's beautiful.

ROBIN

And a little terrifying.

GARTH (O.S.)

(imitating)

Hair-fy-ing!

ROBIN

(laughing)

Not for you, little man.

Una, Garth and Donnan sit on a PICNIC BLANKET surrounded by tall green grass and wildflowers rippling in the ocean breeze. A mostly-eaten lunch is spread out: cheese, crackers, and cups of milk. Billie snoozes beside Una. Garth and Donnan play with Lincoln Logs.

ROBIN (cont'd)

(picking Garth up  
playfully)

Nothing needs to terrify you.

(bouncing Garth in  
his arms, to Una)

I owe you more than this. You  
deserve more than this. I  
promised you Europe.

UNA

What are you talking about? Never  
mind that. The war changed  
everything. I couldn't imagine  
going back to all that death and  
destruction.

ROBIN

No, I'm serious. I need to do  
better. You deserve more. And I'm  
going to give it to you.

(setting Garth  
down)

UNA

Robin, please. I'm perfectly content just as we are, right now. Look at what we have.

ROBIN

I owe you a home, at least. Something that's ours, not just something we rent.

UNA

But I love our little cottage. I like our life. We're poor, but we're free.

ROBIN

I have my inheritance now. It's not much, but it's something. What else is there to do with it?

UNA

Well...you could self-publish another book.

ROBIN

(rolling his eyes)

No, I'm not doing THAT again. Remember that awful year we were apart, when you went to Europe, right before your divorce from Ted? You wrote to me from England all agog about a little stone farmhouse you saw in Dartmoor.

UNA

(smiling,  
remembering)

Oh, yes. It was on a rocky hill above the moor.

ROBIN

On a tor. From the Gaelic "torr."  
And who's to say which came first  
-- the Old Welsh "twrr" --  
meaning a pile of rocks -- or the  
Latin "turris," meaning...tower.  
We could build something like  
that here, just to our liking, in  
the old style.

UNA

Here? You mean, in Carmel?

ROBIN

(a sudden epiphany,  
looking around)

No. I mean right here. On this  
very point. Our own house on the  
tor.

UNA

Oh, you're being silly. There  
isn't sewer or electricity or  
anything here.

ROBIN

Even better! We'll be able to  
live just like in Beowulf, or in  
the ancient Greek idylls! Close  
to the bone!

Billie perks up at the mention of a "bone."

ROBIN (cont'd)

(excitedly  
pacing-off an  
imaginary house)



Look. Right here can be the living room. With windows looking due west, out to sea. And your piano right here. A couple of reading chairs here, in front of a big fireplace. Then a big oak dining room table right here. The kitchen could be on the left, and a guest bedroom on the right. A desk for you at the end of the hall, looking out over the garden.

Billie trots up to investigate Robin's layout, sniffing around.

ROBIN (cont'd)

Then a stairway up to a sleeping loft, through a trapdoor. One side for the boys, one side for you and me. And right above the kitchen a little loft where I can write. It would be perfect!

Una giggles.

ROBIN

What?!

UNA

(amused)

You're mad.

DONNAN

(parroting)

You're MAD, fah-zer.

ROBIN

(playfully, to  
Donnan)

Am not.

(to Una)

You need to play fair and keep  
your lieutenants out of this.

(excited again)

It would be cheap, too! I could  
get all the stone we would need  
right down at the beach myself.  
And I could even hire myself out  
to the stonemason - to save money  
and keep an eye on the builder at  
the same time!

DONNAN

Can I help, fah-zer? I'm good  
builder!

(showing off his  
Lincoln Logs)

GARTH

Me too, fah-zer. I'm good builder  
too!

ROBIN

(to Una)

See! More free labor! How can we  
lose?

UNA

(amused, giggling  
again)

Madness, I say.

(throwing up her  
hands)

I give up.

Robin leans down to kiss Una.

Billie copies him by giving Una a big, sloppy kiss.

UNA

(kindly, wiping her  
face)

Ugh...what am I getting myself  
into?

EXT. SCENIC ROAD, CARMEL POINT - DAY

On a bright foggy morning, Robin paces expectantly along unpaved Scenic Road, which winds along a rocky beach at the foot of a grassy hill. He is dressed in a somewhat formal-looking tweed suit.

The sound of an approaching MACK TRUCK towing a canvas-covered load on a flatbed trailer causes Robin to stop and wait for it.

The truck pulls into a pullout where Robin waits and the motor stops.

PIERSON, a stonemason, hops down from the truck. He looks decidedly working class, wearing a white shirt, vest, baggy pants, and a baggy newsboy cap. About the face, he bears a striking resemblance to William.

PIERSON

(in an Irish  
brogue)

You Jeffers?

ROBIN

(pausing a moment,  
startled by  
Pierson's  
resemblance to  
William)

Yes.

PIERSON

Pierson.

(looks Robin up and  
down skeptically)

I'm not sure about this. Not used  
to having owners working for me.  
I don't really need help.

ROBIN

I'd just like to learn. I promise  
I won't get in the way. And I can  
do the meanest work.

PIERSON

Aye. Well then...

Pierson flings open the canvas cover of the flatbed trailer to reveal a pallet of CANVAS SACKS and a WHEELBARROW. He effortlessly pulls the wheelbarrow down onto the road.

PIERSON (cont'd)

(slapping the  
sacks)

Lime and cement.

(gesturing toward  
the top of the  
hill)

Up the hill.

Pierson unhitches the trailer and jumps back in the truck.

PIERSON (cont'd)

(through the open  
window)

Until tomorrow.

Pierson starts the truck and rumbles off.

Robin, a little nonplussed, takes off his jacket and lays it on a rock, then starts heaving sacks into the wheelbarrow.

EXT. CARMEL POINT - DAY

Sleeves rolled up, Robin laboriously pushes the loaded wheelbarrow up the grassy hill. He pauses, panting and wiping the sweat from his brow, then resumes pushing the wheelbarrow uphill.

EXT. SCENIC ROAD, CARMEL POINT - NIGHT

Gray twilight.

Exhausted, dusty and disheveled, Robin pushes the wheelbarrow back to the pullout along the road, turns it over, and collapses down on it. Shaken by the tough physical work and by memories of his father, he looks aimlessly out across the ocean.

EXT. SCENIC ROAD, CARMEL POINT - DAY

Another bright foggy morning.

Dressed less formally, with no jacket, Robin stands waiting at the pullout along the road beside the overturned wheelbarrow.

Pierson pulls up in his truck, turns the engine off, and steps out, grabbing a long crowbar off the back of the truck.

PIERSON

You're sure about this now?

Robin nods.

Pierson walks a few feet to the edge of the road and peers over the cliff at the beach. He gestures to Robin to join him.

Robin plods up beside him.

PIERSON

Now...

(handing Robin the  
crowbar)

stones.

Pierson walks back to the truck and takes out a toolbox, then walks up the hill.

Robin looks down at the rocky beach, then shuffles down the slope with the crowbar in hand.

EXT. SCENIC ROAD, CARMEL POINT - DAY

Midday.

Hunched over a small wall, Pierson artfully smooths mortar around a stone with a trowel. He stands fully upright and looks down the hill at Robin sympathetically.

In the distance, Robin heaves granite boulders into the wheelbarrow and pushes it up the hill.

EXT. CARMEL POINT - DAY

Pierson works over wet, gray mortar on a mortarboard, skillfully flicking his trowel quickly back and forth over it.

Robin watches him attentively.

PIERSON

The old masons of Ireland were like kings. In a cold, wet country, their trade mattered most, keeping people safe and dry. When they were building the great castles and monasteries, nobody charged the masons rent.

Or taxes. They had secret signs, ways of handling their tools, smoothing mortar. With a flick of the wrist, or a nod and a wink. An unspoken language all their own. They called it "Bearla lagair."

Pierson throws a handful of sand into the mortar and works it in.

PIERSON (cont'd)

It all started with a man named Goban Saor. He was the best of the masons. 'Tis said he was a prince left on a mason's doorstep as a baby. Handsome lad, smart as a whip. The king of Ireland hired him to build a palace, and it turned out so beautiful, the king decided to have him murdered, so that no other palace would ever match it. But Goban Saor was wise to the king's scheming, so he slowed his work down on purpose. When the king complained, Goban Saor said he needed a special tool from his workshop back home, a hundred miles away. But the king wouldn't let him go home and sent a messenger, the king's only son, to get it. The king's son told Goban Saor's wife that he needed the "crook and twist" tool. But she was wise, and she knew there was no such tool, so she knew her husband was in trouble. She told the king's son, it's in the chest in the cellar. Come help me fetch it. So they

went down to the cellar, and she told him to jump into the chest to get the tool she was pointing to. And just as he did, she shut the lid on him and locked the chest! She told him, "There you will stay till your father sends my husband home." So even the king had to bow to the secret language of the stones.

Pierson chuckles and sticks his trowel into the mortar on his board.

PIERSON

(smiling)

Now, mix!

Pierson pats Robin amiably on the shoulder as he walks off.

Robin watches Pierson walk away, then pensively starts shoveling sand into the wheelbarrow.

EXT. CARMEL POINT - DAY

Pierson is troweling mortar and setting stones in a low wall as Robin emerges behind him, coming up the hill with the loaded wheelbarrow.

PIERSON

(turning around to  
Robin, wiping his  
hands with a rag)

Jeffers, come!

Robin sets the wheelbarrow down and walks over to Pierson.

PIERSON

(looking Robin in  
the eye)



This isn't wood. Fire and mold  
and storms are nothing to it. The  
stakes are higher. When you work  
with stone, your work has to mean  
something. Your work has to  
be...equal to the centuries.

He reaches down for a COBBLE from a PILE OF STONES beside  
the wall and puts it in Robin's hands.

PIERSON

(standing aside,  
gesturing to the  
wall)

Now, you try.

Robin approaches the wall apprehensively. He takes the  
trowel and works some mortar into a new joint, then starts  
to place the cobble on it.

Pierson stands behind him, watching intently.

ROBIN

Like this?

PIERSON

(gently)

Naw. Don't give the stone mortar  
till it's ready. You shape each  
stone in your hands, just as you  
shape words with your mouth.

Robin tries again, turning the stone and gently troweling  
around it.

PIERSON

(relaxing, pleased)

That's it. Every stone is a key.  
You use the keys to unlock more  
and more strength as you work  
your way up. Always looking for  
what comes next, weaving  
everything together. Aye.

EXT. CARMEL POINT - TOR HOUSE - NIGHT

Dark night. Several days or weeks later, Robin stands on a wooden scaffold several feet off the ground, working alone on a section of stone wall with a HAMMER, TROWEL and BRUSH. He and the wall are illuminated orange by a CAMPFIRE burning below him, the sound of gentle ocean waves in the background.

Robin notices a RUSTLING below him and turns to see a COYOTE a few feet from the fire, gazing up at him, half playful, half startled.

Robin smiles, and the coyote dashes off into the darkness.

Robin turns to the wall and resumes working -- troweling mortar, standing back to assess his progress.

ROBIN (V.O.)

[reciting "To the Stone-Cutters",  
Tamar]

Stone-cutters fighting time with  
marble, you fordefeated  
Challengers of oblivion  
Eat cynical earnings, knowing  
rock splits, records fall down,  
The square-limbed Roman letters  
Scale in the thaws, wear in the  
rain. The poet as well  
Builds his monument mockingly;  
For man will be blotted out, the  
blithe earth die, the brave sun  
Die blind and blacken to the  
heart:  
Yet stones have stood for a  
thousand years, and pained  
thoughts found  
The honey of peace in old poems.

In the distance, the coyote HOWLS.

EXT. CARMEL POINT, TOR HOUSE GARAGE - DAY

On a bright sunny day, Robin is behind the garage mixing mortar in TWO WOODEN BUCKETS. He is wearing a wifebeater that reveals how tan and strong working with heavy stones has made him after several weeks.

Suddenly, feeling uneasy, he stops mixing and looks up to see LAURA, a beautiful young woman in a flapper-type dress, leaning against the corner of the garage and staring at him, her arms folded behind her coquettishly.

Robin turns his back to her and continues mixing mortar.

LAURA

I heard you're a poet who's  
building a stone tower.

ROBIN

Hello. No. I mean, I really don't  
have time to talk just now. It  
hardens up very quickly.

Equal parts embarrassed and annoyed, Robin lifts the two buckets and quickly walks away.

EXT. CARMEL POINT - TOR HOUSE HAWK TOWER - CONTINUOUS

Robin walks to a part of the tower wall he's been working on, carrying the two buckets.

Laura sashays after him coyly.

Flustered, Robin tries to concentrate on setting stones in the wall.

LAURA

Do you mind if I just watch you  
awhile?

ROBIN

If you wish. But I can't talk  
while I work. I have to  
concentrate.

Robin sets some stones, troweling them in with mortar.

Laura watches him hungrily.

ROBIN  
(looking up,  
gently)  
Aren't you getting tired standing  
there watching me?

LAURA  
Yes, I am.

As if accepting an invitation, Laura sits down on a low wall closer to him, still watching him.

LAURA  
Aren't there some people you like  
better than others?

ROBIN  
(curtly)  
Yes. There are.  
(continues working)

Laura sighs. Then sighs again, more noticeably.

Robin glances quickly up, increasingly perturbed. He tries to concentrate on his work, but it's a losing battle.

ROBIN  
I say, you're really disturbing  
me very much! Would you mind  
going now?

LAURA  
(jumping to her  
feet)  
Oh! If you ever run out of  
stones, use yourself! You're made  
of stone!  
(dashes off,  
pouting)

Robin is astonished and relieved to have resisted the siren song. He laughs and shakes his head at himself as he

watches her leave, then happily goes back to work with his stones and trowel.

INT. TOR HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Morning light streaming through the windows, Robin and Una snuggle in bed, asleep.

A distant RAT-TAT-TAT of a hammer. Then the BUZZ of a power saw, a bit louder, wakes Robin up.

Robin gets out of bed, trying not to wake a still-sleeping Una.

EXT. CARMEL POINT - DAY

Hastily dressed, Robin emerges from a thicket of cypress trees and pauses to find a busy construction site a few hundred feet away from his house. Several CONSTRUCTION WORKERS mill about the site, digging with shovels, carrying lumber, HAMMERING and SAWING and calling to each other. In the foreground, a man in a suit stands beside a TABLE with BUILDING PLANS spread out on them, arms akimbo, watching the workers, with his back to Robin approaching -- Ted.

Sensing Robin's approach, Ted turns around and tosses his head back with laughter when he sees Robin.

Robin stops dead in his tracks.

ROBIN

What the devil are YOU doing  
here?

TED

(still laughing,  
extending his hand  
for a handshake)

My good man!

Robin draws back, refusing his hand.

TED (cont'd)

(putting his hand  
down)

Can't blame you. I owe you an  
apology. Let me start with this.

(gesturing to the  
construction)

Can you believe it? I'm building  
a stone house too!

ROBIN

Why? To taunt me? To try to outdo  
me? To show yours is bigger than  
mine?

TED

No, you've got me all wrong,  
Jeffers. I dare say it will be  
bigger, only because that's how  
rich people express themselves.  
But really, it's a tribute to  
you.

Robin turns to storm away.

Ted reaches for his arm, but Robin brushes it away, turning  
back to face him.

TED

I'm serious! Look, you got the  
girl. I haven't had any illusions  
about getting Una back for ten  
years. When I saw you were  
building your Tor House in the  
L.A. papers, I thought that old  
boy's onto something. Come see.

Ted steps back to the table, gesturing for Robin to follow.

Robin follows, skeptically.

TED

(pointing at the  
plans  
enthusiastically.  
They show a  
rendering and a  
plan view of a  
large stone house.)

Two stories, all in stone, and a  
tower, just like yours. Every  
house on this coast should have a  
tower, no?

(smiling)

Mind you, I have no illusions  
about building the damn thing  
myself. There, again, you have me  
beat.

ROBIN

(calming down,  
looking down at the  
plans carefully,  
then back up,  
pointing to some  
rocks in the middle  
of the construction  
site)

That group of rocks in the  
middle, it's a shame. We always  
thought they were like an altar.  
There are scars from old Indian  
campfires on them, and a family  
of weasels lives there.

TED

(takes a RED PENCIL  
out of his jacket  
pocket and crosses  
off a room on the  
plans, then throws  
up his hands)

Done! No parlor.

(comically, rubbing  
his chin)

What the hell does one do with a parlor anyway? Look, Jeffers, let's let bygones be bygones. We have a lot more in common than not. Tell you what. We're renting the old Flanders Mansion while we're building this house. Why don't you and Una come over for dinner? You can meet my Edith. You'll love her. Everyone does. You pick the evening. Tonight, if you're free!

ROBIN

(more at ease,  
skeptical but  
hopeful)

Yeah. Yeah, we'll be there.  
Tonight.

Ted smiles, shakes Robin's hand, and pats him on the shoulder.

INT. FLANDERS MANSION - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

An elegant salon, with a fire crackling in the fireplace.

EDITH, Ted's young wife, a beautiful woman with auburn hair and a voluptuous body, dances artistically while Una plays "Chopin" from Robert Schumann's "Carnaval" on a grand piano.

Ted and Robin sit back on comfortable couches, enjoying the performance, each holding a GLASS OF WINE. Robin is completely at ease now, without the slightest suggestion of the suspicion he had before.

When the music stops, Ted and Robin applaud enthusiastically, and Una gets up from the piano to embrace Edith, who is very bashful and admiring of Una.



TED

(wrapping up his  
applause)

I told you, Jeffers, we have  
always had a lot in common.  
Namely, our love for brilliant,  
talented, beautiful women.

ROBIN

(a little  
embarrassed for his  
earlier rudeness)

So it would seem. We are nothing  
compared to them. Hangers-on, at  
best.

Una sits down beside Robin, and Edith beside Ted. There is  
a sense of budding friendship all around.

UNA

Oh, pooh! Don't try to make us  
blush. Edith, dear, tell us about  
the Denishawn School.

EDITH

It was a dream. After growing up  
around cows and oil wells, it was  
all so beautiful...the dancers  
and the costumes.

TED

She and Martha Graham were their  
star students, you know!

UNA

Oh, I'm so jealous. You have the  
gift. The body says what words  
cannot.

EDITH

(meekly)

Oh, don't be! I'm jealous of YOU! Ted always said, "Wait till you meet Una. She's so smart and beautiful and understanding." I could never do all you have: studying, traveling the world, building a home, raising two sons.

Una smiles kindly.

TED

Isn't it incredible? Where before there were two sad souls just tolerating each other, now we are four happy ones.

(taking Edith's  
hand)

And the world is a better place.

UNA

But Ted, what made you want to leave L.A.? You were the king of the hill there!

TED

Ugh. Besides the love of yet another good woman...

(kissing Edith's  
hand)

I woke up. Thanks to you two. I always wanted to be an artist, but my father insisted I go into law. I hated it but I put up with it. YOUR father had it figured out, Jeffers. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven, right? It's true! The rich are such bores. Always trying to atone for their empty lives by buying something.

(springing to his  
feet)

But I'm going to leverage that.  
I'm going to start a theater,  
right here in Carmel. And I'm  
going to hit up all the fat cats  
to build it. I'm going to call  
it...

(gesturing to an  
imaginary marquee)  
the Golden Bough! And you,  
Jeffers, are going to write my  
first play!

ROBIN

(scoffing  
humorously)

Um, no. I have no talent for the  
stage, believe me.

TED

Hmmm. Likely story. I'm talking  
big stuff. Greek tragedy!

ROBIN

You've got the wrong man.

TED

(taking his seat,  
lounging back)

Don't underestimate me, Jeffers.  
We both have a way of getting  
what we want. I'll get Sterling  
on my side. A one-two punch.

Robin laughs.

TED

What are you writing now?

ROBIN

Oh, nothing really. I've been too  
busy finishing the house.

UNA

Don't believe him. There's been such a change in him, working with stone. An awakening, like adolescents or religious converts go through.

ROBIN

(uneasy)

There is one new poem. I haven't written anything like it before. Or read anything like it, either.

TED

(encouraging)

Well, originality is good!

ROBIN

I don't quite know how to handle it, to be honest. I think it's the war still playing on my mind. The war ruined everything, didn't it?

TED

No argument there.

ROBIN

The world devouring itself, looking inward, people hating each other, hating themselves, instead of looking outward, to the wild beauty of things. It's perverse, this self-absorption, leading us to new wars, every twenty or thirty years. It's...incestuous.

You could hear a pin drop.

ROBIN (cont'd)

It's about a girl, much like  
Edith.

(he smiles at  
Edith)

A beautiful dancer. She lives at  
a little farm down the coast.  
With her father, a bitter old  
man, always in prayer, trying to  
make up for some old sin. And a  
brother, a playboy, who wants to  
go to war, just for the fun of  
it. And her dead mother's sister,  
who talks with spirits. And a  
real ghost, her father's dead  
sister, who shares a secret with  
the old man...

EXT. BIG SUR COAST - CONTINUOUS

A full moon rises above the coast range.

ROBIN (V.O.)

[paraphrasing "Tamar"]

A night the half-moon was like a  
dancing-girl

No...no, like a drunkard's last  
half dollar

Shoved on the polished bar of the  
eastern hill-range...

EXT. BIG SUR COAST - CONTINUOUS

A moonlit night on a clifftop above a rocky beach. A  
handsome, drunk teenage boy, LEE, rides a horse along the  
edge of the cliff.

ROBIN (V.O.)

Back from town, the drunken boy  
rode his pony along the  
sea-cliff. When she stopped, he  
spurred. When she trembled, he  
drove...

Lee's spurs lash the sides of the horse.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

...the teeth of the little jagged  
wheels so deep they tasted blood.

The horse rears. Losing its footing, it scrambles down the cliff.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

The mare pivoted like a top, went  
down, caught, slipped, and broke  
her life out on the boulders.

Below, Lee lies unconscious near the dead horse on a rocky beach. Moonlit waves gently lap against them.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

The waves covered him, the  
ancient water...

INT. CALDWELL HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Lee's head rests on a white pillow, unconscious. TAMAR, a beautiful teenage girl with auburn hair, gently caresses his forehead, smiling down at him.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

His sister nursed him. Young  
bones knit easily.

EXT. COAST HILLS - DAY

On a sunny day, Lee rides happily across spring-green California hills.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

And as soon as he could, he rode across the roaring southwind to the winter pasture up in the hills. A hundred times he wanted to show her some new beauty of canyon wildflowers, water dashing its ferns, black-oaks smouldering with foliage. And one day he did.

EXT. MAL PASO CREEK - DAY

Lee and Tamar dismount from horses in a shady thicket beside a stream on a sunny day.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

They two had unbridled the horses and tied them with long halters near the thicket under Mal Paso bridge.

Naked, Tamar steps into a swimming hole along the creek.

Lee sits on the ground, fully clothed, his arms resting on his knees, partially turned from her, stealing a quick glance at her from behind.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

They came to the hidden stream, sweet, green and cool. He saw the clear-skinned shoulders, and the hollow of her back.

Tamar launches gracefully into a suicidal dead-man's float on the surface of the swimming hole, her hair fanning out around her.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

She slipped face down and lay in the harmless water, the auburn hair trailed forward darkened like weeds, the double arc of the shoulders floated...

Lee jumps into the water and grabs Tamar from behind, trying to rescue her from suicide. He carries her to the riverbank.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

And when he had dragged her to  
the bank...

As Lee sets Tamar down on the riverbank, she fiercely wraps her arms around him and drags him down with her.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

...she clung to him, the white  
body in a sobbing spasm clutched  
him. He could not disentangle the  
white desire. So they were  
joined.

EXT. MONASTERY BEACH, CARMEL - NIGHT

Lee and Tamar sit on the sand side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder, looking out to sea at a setting moon reflecting off the water.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

They learned, these two, not to  
look back nor forward. Their  
blue, though it dulled a shade  
with custom, shone serene to the  
fifth moon, when the moon's mark  
on women died out of her.

EXT. CARMEL VALLEY - DAY

Tamar hides behind a large tree beside a dirt road, watching a handsome boy, ANDREWS, approach on horseback. As he nears, she steps into the road, coquettishly.

Seeing her, Andrews stops his horse and doffs his hat with a smile.



ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

So she sought cover, in a boy  
three miles up the valley who  
loved her.

EXT. CARMEL VALLEY - DAY

Tamar kisses Andrews' muscular, hairless chest like a vampire while Andrews caresses her shoulders. Her eyes are wide open, scheming.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

She pressed her mouth between the  
muscles of his breast. But he  
could not feel how she hated him.

EXT. CARMEL VALLEY - DAY

Naked, Tamar and Andrews lie together after sex on a shady streambank much like the one she shared with Lee. Andrews gently caresses her from behind, but Tamar has her back to him and looks away. Her arm covers her breasts.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

She told him never again,  
unless...unless he saw a lamp in  
her window, then he might climb  
the cypress tree beside it and be  
with her once more. So he waited  
and watched, night after night.

EXT. BIG SUR HILLS - DAY

Tamar's face and the golden hills behind her are lit up orange by a smouldering sunset.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

The year went up to its annual  
mountain of death, gilded with  
hateful sunlight, waiting for  
rain. And she felt in her blood  
the filth and fever of the  
season.

EXT. BIG SUR COAST - NIGHT

On a moonlit night on the beach, Tamar's aunt Stella sits  
in a trance.

Tamar implores her for a vision.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

Damp and dark the sea's breath,  
she and the old woman went down  
to the beach to talk to her  
father's dead sister.

Suddenly, terrified, Tamar is seized by unseen forces that  
cause her to start flailing and dancing against her will.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

But others came first. Dead men  
and dead gods and a dead tribe  
ruling her, she and the evening  
star sharing the darkness. She  
danced on the naked shore, with  
slow steps and streaming hair.

Transparent GHOSTS like wisps of fog clutch at Tamar,  
tearing at her clothes.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

Her hands accepting a strange  
will that undid the fastenings of  
her garments. Her body gone mad  
invited the spirits of the night,  
her belly and her breasts  
twisting, her feet gashed with  
blood where the granite bruised  
them...

Tamar falls to the beach, sweaty and gasping.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

And she fell, and lay gasping on  
the sand, on the tide-line.

Tamar looks up to see the ghost of her aunt HELEN, sitting  
where Stella was, smiling mockingly.

Helen mouths a story of her affair with Tamar's father.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

At last she appeared, her  
father's sister, speaking through  
the old woman, her aunt,  
confessing to the secret love  
she, too, had known as a girl.  
The secret hours she had loved  
her own brother.

Tamar is horrified. She tears at Helen's clothes as Helen  
disappears and is replaced by Stella, coming out of her  
trance.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

It was then she realized her  
darling sin was a shadow and that  
she was just a doll on wires...

Tamar stands back, horrified.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
 ...re-treading the same path.  
 Re-living the same nightmare. It  
 made her feel like she  
 was...nothing.

Tamar suddenly clutches her stomach in the pain of  
 miscarriage.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
 And about that time, a harsh pain  
 wrung her loins and belly. Blood  
 ran, and she fell down on the  
 round stones.

Tamar falls on the boulders of the beach, writhing in pain.

INT. CALDWELL HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tamar's head rests asleep on a white pillow. A LANTERN  
 flickers on the nightstand.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
 Where her brother had lain nine  
 months before, her aunt nursed  
 her. Her brother loved her, and  
 he came to see her.

Lee bends over to kiss Tamar gently on the forehead.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
 He bent above the white pure  
 cameo-face on the white pillow...

Just as Lee is about to kiss her, Tamar suddenly wakes up  
 and pulls his head down to kiss him on the lips.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
 ...but she caught him. Her lips  
 reached up for his.

Lee pulls himself away.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

And told him...

Tamar mirthfully mouths "You weren't the first" along with Robin...

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

...he wasn't the first. That there was another, who might still come if only he would light the lamp in her window.

Lee steps back, angry and jealous.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

Jealousy flowed through him, and his whole baffled and blindfolded life...

Lee reaches for the CATTLE WHIP holstered on his belt, draws it back and cracks it on Tamar's thigh.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

...flowed sideways into the whip, though he half repented while it dropped.

Tamar writhes in pain, arching her back.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

It was all such foolishness. But still he set her lamp for a signal on the sill.

Still fuming and disgusted, Lee moves the lantern to the window sill, then storms out of the room.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

And at length his rival appeared.

Andrews taps hopefully on the window.

Tamar leaps out of bed and opens the window, smiling with bloodthirst.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
With a high look of joy, she let  
him in...

Andrews climbs over the sill and into the room, in love with Tamar and overjoyed at finally being invited in. Tamar turns morose, and mouths that Lee has struck her. She opens her nightgown to reveal the fresh and bloody scar from the whip.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
...And bared the scar her brother  
gave her.

Andrews recoils in horror.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
The sharp spasm of physical pain  
one feels at the sight of a wound  
shot up his entrails.

Tamar caresses her belly, mouthing that she had been pregnant.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
She told him their love had borne  
fruit, but it was too late.

Tamar mouths, "Only stone or fire should marry into this house" along with Robin...

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
"Only stone or fire should marry  
into this house," she told him.

Lee, Stella and Lee's father DAVID, a bearded old man, enter the room.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)  
So when they came to meet the  
bridegroom, he was beyond rage.

Andrews throws a punch at Lee's face.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

He felt the jerk of his arm  
striking, and his fist hitting  
the sharp edge of the jawbone.

Lee charges Andrews, but Andrews pushes him off, then hits him again, and Lee drops to the floor.

Stella mouths a scream.

Lee springs up holding a KNIFE and slashes Andrews across the belly, then sinks it deep into him.

As Andrews coughs and staggers backward, Lee slashes at his face, cutting his cheek open.

Bloody, Andrews falls backward, knocking the lamp over.

David collapses on his knees in prayer beside the bed.

The fallen lamp catches the floor on fire.

Lee drops the knife and flees for the window, but Andrews catches his leg and Lee falls to the floor.

As fire and smoke engulf the room, Lee staggers up, but Tamar clutches onto him.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

He struggled for the window, but  
the floor turned like a wheel...

EXT. POINT LOBOS - MEADOW - DAY

A sunny, dew-dappled meadow surrounded by trees. A few charred bricks and a rusty, broken LANTERN litter the grass.

ROBIN (V.O. - cont'd)

Grass grows where the flame  
flowered. A hollowed lawn strewn  
with a few black stones. And the  
brick of broken chimneys. All  
about there the old trees, some  
of them scarred with fire, endure  
the sea-wind.

INT. TOR HOUSE - ROBIN'S STUDY - DAY

Robin sits at his desk by the window.

Disheveled and exhausted by writing, Robin peers down at his just-completed manuscript. He reaches for a blank piece of paper and with his FOUNTAIN PEN writes "TAMAR" on it in big letters.

He looks down at the sheaf of papers meditatively for a moment, then reaches for a copy of the NEW YORK TIMES folded open to a quarter-page ad that reads:

PUBLISH YOURSELF!  
We print everything  
Peter G. Boyle  
267 West 17th St.  
New York City

He muses over the ad.

EXT. TOR HOUSE - DAY

A pleasantly overcast day a few weeks later, Robin is digging and weeding in the garden in front of the main entrance to the house.

Garth and Donnan, now about age seven, run around the house and through the garden holding simple CARDBOARD AIRPLANES, imitating airplane engine noises. Billie chases after them, barking.

Robin looks at them, amused.



A DELIVERY TRUCK rumbles up the street and lurches to a stop in front of the house.

Robin wipes his hands with a rag as TWO DRIVERS carry a LONG WOODEN CRATE that looks like a coffin to the front door.

Garth and Donnan swoop into view. They drop their airplanes and run over as soon as they see the crate.

DONNAN

Father! What is it? Is it  
Dracula's coffin?

GARTH

Let me see!

ROBIN

Shhhh. It's a secret. We can't  
let it out yet.

DONNAN

(spooked)

Why not?

ROBIN

She needs to rest.

GARTH

(wide-eyed)

Who is she?

ROBIN

(wily)

Our neighbor. Here, help me get  
her upstairs before your mother  
sees us. Shhhh.

The boys look at each other in astonishment as they grab one end of the crate and Robin grabs the other. They lift it over the threshold and shuffle it into the house.

INT. TOR HOUSE - ATTIC - DAY

Robin sits on the bare attic floor next to the open wooden crate. A ray of sunlight shines in through the window onto him, illuminating dust in the air.

He takes several identical green-grey books out of the crate and carefully stacks them against the wall.

He takes one more book out of the crate and looks at it meditatively.

EXT. TOR HOUSE - DAY

A slightly overcast day, Sterling bounds up to the front gate and pauses, observing a rustic WOODEN SIGN reading "NOT AT HOME" hanging on it. He leaps over the gate and bangs on the door.

INT. TOR HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Robin opens the door and Sterling barges in.

STERLING

Poems, man! I need poems!

(charming)

Hello, Una.

Una stands at the kitchen counter, apron on, chopping vegetables.

Sterling plucks a morsel from Una's cutting board and pops it in his mouth.

Robin, amused and bemused, quietly shuts the front door.

UNA

What's the matter, George?

STERLING

(dramatically  
sinking into a  
chair on the edge  
of the living room)

Unlucky in love, as always.

UNA

What's her name?

STERLING

(surprised)

Come to think of it, I'm not  
sure.

(histrionically)

But what a scrape I'm in. What a  
pickle!

Robin sits down opposite Sterling.

STERLING (cont'd)

She's the most darling thing,  
fresh out of Radcliffe. A  
beautiful smile, freckles, and a  
plump little...

(conscious of mixed  
company)

We met on the beach and got to  
talking about poetry. She's  
putting together some kind of  
anthology for the Book Club of  
California. And of course, I said  
I know the best and brightest and  
could round up some good poems  
for her no problem at all. But  
then I realized everyone I know  
is either back East, or a train  
wreck, or both, except...

Sterling jumps out of his chair and gets on bended knee in  
front of Robin.

STERLING

Pleeease, Robin. She's really got the most gorgeous...I'll take whatever you can give me.

ROBIN

(conflicted)

Uhhh. I've been so busy with the house, I don't have anything at the moment.

STERLING

Pleeease. It's now or never for me, man!

ROBIN

(rising from his chair)

Hold on.

Robin pulls down a trap door in the ceiling, pulls down a folded wooden ladder attached to it, and rushes up.

STERLING

(to Una)

Hey, that's swank. I didn't know you had an attic.

UNA

It's Robin's secret lair. I have no idea what he hides up there.

Robin comes down the ladder with a BOOK in hand.

ROBIN

I'm afraid this is all I've got.

STERLING

(jumping up eagerly and taking the book from Robin)

You rascal. You didn't tell me you had a book out. "Tamar and Other Poems." I'm sure it's wonderful.

Grabbing Robin by the cheeks, Sterling gives Robin a big, sloppy kiss on the mouth, but with an eye-roll smile, Robin seems hardly surprised.

STERLING (cont'd)

Thank you! Thank you! Gotta run!

Sterling dashes for the door, book in hand, but quickly backtracks a step to grab another morsel from Una's cutting board.

STERLING

Ta-ta!

UNA

Bye, George!

Robin sheepishly watches Sterling dash off through the open door into the garden.

UNA (cont'd)

What's all this about a book?

Imitating Sterling, Robin mischievously grabs a morsel from Una's cutting board and pops it in his mouth.

Una looks at him with a wry smile.

INT. TOR HOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A tranquil, quiet evening in front of the fireplace. Robin sits reading with his glasses on in a favorite chair by the window. Una sits gazing at the fire, gently combing her long hair. Donnan and Garth lay belly down in front of the fire, drawing and coloring. Billie lays close to the fire, asleep.

Suddenly, there's a loud BANGING on the front door. BAM-BAM-BAM-BAM-BAM-BAM-BAM!

UNKNOWN MALE VOICE (TED)

Jeffers, we know you're in there!

Bewildered, Robin takes his glasses off, looks over at Una, then walks to the door.

UNA

Robin! Careful!

ROBIN

Who's there?

STERLING

Just open the door, you rascal!

ROBIN

(looking at Una  
again, shrugging  
his shoulders)

It's George!

As soon as Robin opens the door, Sterling playfully raps Robin on the head with a ROLLED NEWSPAPER, shakes his head in feigned disapproval, and barges in.

Confused, Robin pats his head.

Ted and Edith appear behind Sterling, each carrying a BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE.

TED

I tried to stop him.

Robin gestures for them to enter.

UNA

(turning on a  
light, rising to  
greet them)

What's the occasion?

STERLING

(kissing Una on the  
cheek)

Una, we have come to liberate you  
from this wily husband of yours.

(grandly)

Little did you know, little did  
anyone know, that right above us

(rapping on the  
trap door in the  
low ceiling)

he was hiding...one of the  
masterpieces of 20th century  
literature.

ROBIN

(scoffing)

What are you talking about?

STERLING

I'm talking about THIS, if you  
please.

(flourishing the  
newspaper open with  
a SLAP)

The New York Herald Tribune: "a  
magnificent tour de force.  
Nothing as good of its kind has  
been written in America. America  
has a new poet of genius."

TED

My turn!

(reading from a  
magazine he has  
taken from his  
pocket)

The Nation: "That it was printed  
at the author's expense is a  
disgrace to American publishing.  
It is rich with the beauty and  
strength that belong to genius  
alone."

STERLING

And another, Poetry Magazine:  
"Magnificent rhythm, genuine  
passion, beauty and vigor  
unsurpassed by any other poet  
writing today."

ROBIN

I don't get it.

STERLING

After that delicious Radcliffe  
girl...

(remembering that  
Garth and Donnan  
are present)

I, uh, sent that book of yours on  
to some friends in New York, and  
it made the rounds. Little books  
have such strange destinies  
sometimes.

TED

Like it or not, old boy, you're  
famous now!

Una fishes five WINE GLASSES out of a cabinet.

Ted pops a champagne cork and Billie barks playfully amid  
laughter.

TED (cont'd)

A toast! To friends!

DONNAN

To father!

EDITH

To love!

STERLING

To poetry.

Robin holds his champagne in one hand and Una in the other.  
Robin leans down and kisses Una.



## CARDS ON BLACK

George Sterling died by suicide in San Francisco in 1926.

Edward (Ted) Kuster opened The Theater of the Golden Bough in Carmel in 1924. Though the theater burned down twice -- in 1935 and again in 1949 -- Kuster was a dedicated producer, translator, and actor. He remained friends with Una and Robinson Jeffers until his death in 1961.

Edith Greenan remained a devoted friend of Una Jeffers after her divorce from Ted Kuster. She published her memoir of their friendship, Of Una Jeffers, in 1939. She died in 1980.

Robinson Jeffers published several volumes of poetry, including

The Women at Point Sur (1927)  
 Cawdor (1928)  
 Give Your Heart to the Hawks (1933)  
 Solstice (1935)  
 and  
 Such Counsels You Gave To Me (1937)

He won acclaim for his Broadway adaptation of Euripedes' Medea, for which Dame Judith Anderson won the Tony Award for Best Actress in 1948.

Una Jeffers died of cancer in 1950.

Published four years after her death, Robinson's last work, Hungerfield, is a moving tribute to Una and their life together.

Robinson Jeffers died in 1962.

His ashes were buried beneath a yew tree in the courtyard of Tor House, where Una's had been laid twelve years before.

THE END