EXT. A SMALL TOWN IN NORTH DAKOTA - NIGHT

The year is 1863. The night is silent. All shops are closed except for one. The towns saloon. The lights are dim and inside are a few men playing poker with WES, early 30's, dark hair and handsome. Wes is the best gambler in town and the richest. He wears shiny leather boots, tailored clothing and carries around a gold locket. OLD MAN BOB, mid 50's, is the owner of the saloon, bartender and card dealer when business is slow. He refills the glasses of ENNIS, WADE and HENRY, all mid 40's, and all sweaty, drunk and idiots.

ENNIS
Fill 'er up to the rim, Bobby boy.

OLD MAN BOB
The missus won't like you coming home a doozy, you know that Ennis.

ENNIS
I wouldn't be drinking if she didn't nag my damn ears off.

HENRY
Hear hear.

WADE
Yeah she's not so bad, Ennis. I think she's rather sweet.

ENNIS
Fine...then i'll trade my wife for yours.

Old man Bob fills Wes' glass.

WES
Old man, tell them what you told me earlier.

OLD MAN BOB
Did you hear about the miner up on Maple road? His boss took the day off so he and his colleagues decided to end the day early. When poor little miner Joe got home he saw his boss' horse waiting there at his house. He's been sleeping all kinds of ways with his wife!

Extreme loud laughter fills the room.

HENRY
I'll tell you one thing, that boy ain't never taking advantage at work again!

More laughter.

WES
I wanna raise a toast for my pal Bob here. A good friend with the damn finest damn gin.

Everyone raises their glasses, and throw back their shots. Ennis notices Wes' gold locket.

ENNIS
What's in there, son?

Wes opens the locket and shows the players.

WES
That's my girl, Shelly.

ENNIS
She sure is purty. I wouldn't mind sleeping next to that every night.

WADE
Yeah, Wes. you've got yourself a Ruby there.

WES
She's a doll. Poor thing is probably waiting up for me.

HENRY
If I was you I'd never leave the house. Real looker, that one.

WADE
Look at you, son, Turnin' redder than a pepper.

WES
Been together for about 2 years. I'd move mountains for my darling Shelly.

Ennis raises his glass.

ENNIS
Here's a toast, to Shelly. May you spend 100 more years with her.

WES ENNIS WADE HENRY
To Shelly!

They all take a shot. Ennis contemplates.

ENNIS (CONT'D)
I'll tell you what, partner. If I win... I want that locket. Photo and everything.

Wes sits back and his eyes widen.

WES
Surely you're joking.

ENNIS
Do I look like a joke to you, son?

WES
My locket? Why?

ENNIS
When you get to my age, you get tired of looking at the same old thing for 20 years. I need me something purty to look at.

Wes' face drops. He grinds his teeth.

WES
I'll make that deal...but if I win, I want that shiner you got in your mouth.

Ennis laughs.

ENNIS
Just what the fuck are you talkin' about, boy?

WADE
I think he's talkin' about your gold tooth, Ennis.

ENNIS
Shut up, Wade! I knew that!

Ennis' smile slowly fades. He thinks about it. Then reaches his hand over to shake Wes'.

ENNIS (CONT'D)
You've got yourself a deal. It'll be a privilege to have the company of Shelly with me everywhere I go. Especially on those lonely nights.

Wes looks irritated. He takes a drag of his cigarette.

WES
Flip it, old man.

Old man Bob flips the card. It's an 8 of diamonds. Wes throws in a coin.

WADE
Who are you fooling, son? I call.

Henry and Ennis throw more money into the pot.

Old man flips the second card It's a 7 of diamonds. Wes shifting in his chair, throws in another coin. Wade matches.

HENRY
Look at him. The boy's nearly shittin' his bridges.

Ennis, Wade and Henry all laugh, thinking Wes is bluffing. Old man Bob flips the last card. It's a 6 of diamonds. Wes, once again, throws in a coin. Wade and Henry now feel intimidated.

WADE
You give me the creeps, son. I'm out.

HENRY
Yeah, I'll fold too.

ENNIS
You fools! He's playing y'all like a damn fiddle!

Ennis drunkenly laughs to himself.

ENNIS (CONT'D)
I'm all in, son. You ain't foolin' me.

Ennis flips his cards over. He has a 9 and 10 of diamonds.

ENNIS (CONT'D)
That's called a straight.

Wade and Henry chuckle.

ENNIS (CONT'D)
I got him right where I want him, boys.

Laughter fills the room. Wes flips over his cards. He has a jack, and a 4 of diamonds. Silence fills the room.

WES
You know what that's called?

Ennis' eyes lock on Wes' cards. More silence.

WADE
That's a flush.

ENNIS
Wade, I swear to God.

Wes smiles.

WES
Old man, grab me a pair of them pliers. I'm fixin' to get Shelly a souvenir.

CUT TO:

EXT. WES' RANCH- 2 A.M

Wes arrives home, where the exterior is just as lavish as the interior with his own horse stable nearby. He gets off his horse and walks to the front door tossing the gold tooth up and catching it in his hand. He walks through the doors. SHELLY, late 20's and beautiful long brown hair, throws a glass bottle at the entrance, almost hitting Wes. The glass shatters.

WES
What the-

SHELLY
GO LIVE AT THE SALOON FOR ALL I CARE!

Shelly runs to her room and slams the door. Wes follows and waits outside the door.

WES
Shelly?

Wes rests his head on the door.

WES (CONT'D)
Sheeeeellllllyyyy.

WES (CONT'D)
(drunkenly sings)
Beautiful dreamer...walk unto me...list while I woo thee with a soft melody. Shellyyyy that's our song. I know you're smiling right now.

Silence. Wes sighs.

WES (CONT'D)
Shelly honey. Open the door.

Shelly furiously opens the door and slowly charges at Wes.

SHELLY
Every night! The same thing! It takes me hours to prepare your dinner. I sit at that table waiting for you to get home! I've had to eat alone and feed your cold dinner to the dogs outside! And hell, they're startin' to look more well-fed than you.

WES
Shelly please.

SHELLY
This isn't a life anymore! This is a nightmare! How could you do this to me?! How could you do this to us?!

WES
Shelly, let me expl-

SHELLY
What do you think all the women must think about me? When they see you at the saloon 20 hours a day? "That Poor Shelly. Even with a man she spends her days alone. "That poor Shelly and her sorry excuse for a man".

WES
Damnit! What do you think I'm doing out there Shelly?!
(MORE)

WES (CONT'D)
I stay out late at the saloon so I can give you everything! Clothes on your back, food on the table! I stay out late So I can come home with this!

Wes holds out the gold tooth. Shelly disregards.

SHELLY
Everything?! I have everything

Shelly repeatedly taps her heart.

SHELLY (CONT'D)
but I have nothing at the same time. I have needs damnit. I forbid you to continue these games!

WES
You must be crazy woman! I'm the best gambler in this whole damn town! And hell, I'm the richest. I'm on top of the world right now!

SHELLY
And what if one day you just lose everything huh? Listen to yourself, you sound pathetic.

WES
That's where you're wrong honey. I'll never lose as long as I am alive and breathing.

SHELLY
You gotta get off the high horse damnit! You'll go back to living in that disgusting whorehouse where your daddy left you. And you'll be known as the man that lost it all. I refuse to live with such arrogance.

Wes turns red. This hits a nerve.

WES
Well let me help you out then!

Wes fuming with anger grabs Shelly by the arms, dragging her 15 feet from the house and throws her on the ground. Shelly screams.

WES (CONT'D)
You unappreciative brat! I did it all for you! FOR YOU! What do I think what all the women think when they see you?! "Look at that beautiful house Shelly lives in" "Look at Shelly's beautiful dress" "Her man must take real good care of her". You're not getting any of your things back, you know why? You know why, Shelly? CAUSE I PAID FOR IT ALL!. Here!

Wes throws the gold tooth at Shelly as she bawls and covers her head.

WES (CONT'D)
Maybe this'll help you get back on your feet!

Shelly continues to cry. Wes walks back into the house and slams the door, leaving Shelly out in the dark cold night.

CUT TO:

INT. WES' HOME- EVENING

4 MONTHS LATER.

Wes wakes up in the evening, clearly hungover from the night before. He gets dressed in his fine clothing. Shelly's dresses are still there. Wes gargles some gin, spits it out and heads out the door. As he looks off into the distance, he has a flashback of Shelly on the ground screaming in that same spot. Wes gets on his horse and heads to the saloon.

INT. SALOON- EVENING

Wes walks over to the bar to greet Old man Bob.

OLD MAN BOB
Look who finally decided to show up. Shit, you look like hell, son.

Old man Bob lights Wes' cigarette.

WES
Feels like I just got back.

Old man Bob chuckles.

OLD MAN BOB
What you need is some soda water.

WES
Thanks, old man.

Old man Bob pours seltzer into a glass. He notices that Wes is still wearing the locket that holds Shelly's photo.

OLD MAN BOB
Still no sign of Shelly, huh?

Wes hesitates.

WES
No.

OLD MAN BOB
I'm sorry, son. She was a saint that one. I'll never forget when she took care of Gina when she was ill. Always kept her company while I was here. She was a good one, Wes. I always thought y'all would get married.

Wes turns around avoiding the conversation. He scouts for drunk pathetic men to play poker with.

WES
Who have you served more than once today?

OLD MAN BOB
Well, that big fella in the fringe nearly drank a tank...and scrawny fella over there...he ain't drink much. He's been sitting there quietly. Don't think he's up for a game.

WES
Yeah, we'll see about that.

Wes approaches WYATT, late 20's, shy, scrawny and poor.

WES (CONT'D)
You new to town?

WYATT
Sorry?

WES
I haven't seen you here before.

WYATT
Oh..I just live about 3 miles down.

WES
So what brings you here?

WYATT
Just explorin'. Haven't really seen this part of town.

WES
I'll drink to that. Hey old man! 2 glasses of beer over here!

WYATT
Sorry I can't-

WES
Don't worry, boy. It's on me.

WYATT
Wow...th-thank you, sir.

WES
Please- Wes.

Wes holds his hand out to shake Wyatt's.

WYATT
Thank you, Wes.

WES
And you are?

WYATT
I'm Wyatt, sir- uh I mean Wes.

WES
Relax, son you've got more nerves than a doe.

Old man Bob brings two beers for Wes and Wyatt.

WES (CONT'D)
Thanks, old man. To new friends.

Wes and Wyatt raise their glasses. Wyatt takes sips while Wes chugs his drink.

WES (CONT'D)
Say Wyatt...you fetchin' for a game?

WYATT
'scuse me?

WES
Poker! I need me a player.

Wyatt shifts and avoids eye contact.

WYATT
Sorry, sir. I'm just here for a drink.

WES
Couldn't hurt to play one game.

WYATT
In all honesty sir, I don't have much to give.

WES
Neither do I. I'm okay at this game and big man over there never played a day in his life.

WYATT
You pullin' my leg?

WES
I ain't got a reason to lie. You could end up with the lot.

Wyatt smirks.

WYATT
Well...alright. I'll play one game and that's it.

WES
Suit yourself.

CUT TO:

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

Wes convinces Wyatt to play more than one game, beating them over and over. Old man Bob flips three cards. They are revealed to be an Ace, a king and a 9 of hearts. Wyatt checks, meaning he can't afford to add more money. He keeps the stakes. Wes also checks. Old man Bob flips another card. It's a 9 of clubs. Wes and Wyatt both check again. Old man Bob flips the last card. It is a 2 of hearts. The players now have to reveal their cards. Wyatt shows reveals his two cards which is a Queen and Joker of hearts.

His makes a hand that consists of an Ace, King, Queen, Joker and 9, all of hearts. Wyatt is full of hope and smiles.

WYATT
That’s an Ace high flush.

WES
Sure is, partner.

Wes nods in approval.

WES (CONT’D)
Damn good hand ain’t it, old man?

Old man Bob nods, impressed with Wyatt.

WES (CONT’D)
I knew there was something about you, kid.

WYATT
Thank y-

WES
Old man, get my friend Weston a drink here. It’s on me.

Old man Bob goes to the bar and returns with a glass of gin. Wyatt reaches for the pot.

WES (CONT’D)
Well hold on now don’t you wanna see what my hand looks like?

Wyatt silently sits back down.

WES (CONT’D)
That boy eager ain’t he, old man?

Old man Bob and Wes share a laugh. Wes flips over his two cards which is an Ace and 9 of diamonds. The rest of his cards are an Ace of hearts, Ace of diamonds, 9 of hearts, 9 of clubs and 9 of diamonds. Wes wins the game. Wyatt sits dispirited. Wes enthusiastically slaps his hands together.

WES (CONT’D)
That’s a full house, honey pie! That’s how you play poker!

Wes reaches for the pot. Wyatt grabs his arm.

WYATT
Please. I have a wife and baby at home. I can't afford to give all my money away. Please. I have nothing.

Wes has a flashback of Shelly.

SHELLY
I have everything but nothing at the same time!

Shelly taps her heart. Wes snaps out of it. He looks at Wyatt's hand.

WYATT
I have nothing. Please.

WES
You got a wedding ring.

Wyatt hesitates. He takes off his ring and hands it to Wes in exchange for his money back.

CUT TO:

EXT. SALOON DECK- 8 P.M

Wes stands outside, lighting a cigarette. He holds up Wyatt's wedding ring to get a good look at it. He smirks. While looking at the ring, Shelly appears through the hole. Wes, in shock, puts the ring down and sees that it actually is Shelly. She is wearing a pink dress with a pink bow in her hair. He smiles.

WES
(Whispers)
Shelly?

Before he takes a step to approach her, Shelly runs into the arms of another man, DAN, early 30's, blonde, and lower middle class. Dan's clothing are baggy and not as polished as Wes'. Wes' smile fades as he watches Shelly and Dan get in a carriage and head out of town. Wes puts his hands on his hips, looks down and walks back and forth, trying to process what he just saw. He drags his palm down his face. Heartbroken, Wes walks back into the saloon and hears the saloon ENTERTAINER. He plays a slow melancholy tune and sings.

ENTERTAINER
(singing)
Beautiful dreamer, Wake unto me,
Starlight and dewdrops are waiting
for thee. Beautiful dreamer, awake
unto me. Beautiful dreamer, awake
unto me.

Wes looks at the entertainer with a distressed look, breathing heavily. He then looks at old man Bob with watering eyes.

OLD MAN BOB
You gotta go get that girl, son.

Without hesitation, Wes runs out of the saloon and gets on his horse. He pulls on the horse' lead ropes and leads it to the direction of where Shelly rode off to.

EXT. SMALL TOWN IN NORTH DAKOTA- NIGHT

Wes rides 7 miles from town in hopes of catching up to Shelly. As he enters a small town he pulls the lead ropes back to slow his horse down. He looks around. A crowd of bubbly people enter hoedown being held at one of the largest saloons. Wes spots Shelly and Travis exiting their carriage and entering the saloon. Wes notices another saloon just a few buildings down and decides he's going to check into a room. He hops of his horse and ties the ropes to a hitching rail. He enters the saloon and is met with the receptionist, NED, early 70's and short.

NED
How do you do, son ?

WES
Fine. I need me a room for the
night. One bed and a bottle of gin.

NED
If you don't mind the extra fees,
then of course, sir.

WES
Fine by me.

NED
Say, you goin' to that hoedown next
door tonight?

WES
That’s the plan.

NED
Alone? Hoping to bring someone back?

WES
That’s what the gin’s for ain’t it?

Ned chuckles.

NED
That’s what I thought.

A beat.

WES
She’s a pretty thing too.

NED
They’re all pretty ain’t they.

WES
This one’s different. She’s beyond that.

NED
If I didn’t know any better I’d say you’re in love with this girl.

WES
You’d be right. I haven’t seen her in months. Not since I kicked her out of the house.

NED
You kicked the poor thing out?

Wes nods.

NED (CONT’D)
Now why would you kick this girl out? If she’s as special as you say.

WES
Well I-I was fallin’ short in some areas.

NED
You were falling short... so you kicked her out of the house?? Are you fuckin' stupid, son?

Ned cracks up.

NED (CONT'D)
You're even dumber than I was when I was your age. You just made my night, son. You better get down on both knees and pray she takes you back.

Ned continues to laugh.

Wes doesn't crack a smile.

WES
I'd like to see my room now.

Ned shakes his head at Wes and grabs the key to his room.

INT. SALOON ROOM- NIGHT

NED
Right in here, sir. If ya need anything else just ring the bell in the front.

Wes looks around the room disgusted. Clearly not what he's used to.

WES
Yeah..yeah will do.

Ned leaves and shuts the door. Wes approaches the bed and finds a Bible on it. He tosses it on the night stand. He sits on the bed and bounces on it and discovers it's a cheap mattress that loudly creaks.

WES (CONT'D)
You've gotta be shittin' me.

Wes walks up to the cracked mirror and makes sure he looks presentable. He slicks his hair black, tucks his shirt in and puts his hat on.

He points to the mirror and rehearses.

WES (CONT'D)
Shelly, you're my girl...and you're comin' back home with me.

Wes nods in approval.

He leaves the room and heads over to the hoedown.

INT. HOEDOWN - NIGHT

Wes scans the room. The band plays some ragtime country music while the ladies dance with their partners. He sees Shelly with the biggest smile. Wes grins until he sees that she's dancing with Travis. The song ends and everyone applauds. Shelly goes to grab a refreshment. Wes approaches her.

SHELLY
Can I have two Brandi's? And can you-

WES
Put a lime in one of them.

Shelly takes a look at Wes and is startled.

SHELLY
W-Wes?

WES
It's me, baby.

SHELLY
Wow I-I don't know what to say. What are you doing here?

WES
A cowboy can't come dancin' and enjoy a cup of gin?

SHELLY
No, of course you can.

A beat.

WES
Surprised to see me?

SHELLY
I think it's a little more than that. I'm...shocked.

WES
You look beautiful Shelly. You always looked good in pi-

Shelly looks down at Wes' chest.

SHELLY
The locket. You still have it?

WES
Of course I still have it. I never got rid of-.

SHELLY
Why?

Wes' face drops

WES
I jus-

SHELLY
I-I'm sorry. This is just so awkward. It's- it's just I haven't seen you in so long. Not since... that night.

WES
Shelly, I did you wrong. That, I'll admit. But we were such a great team. Wouldn't you say so?

SHELLY
Wes, I'm here with someone.

WES
Surely it can't be that son of a bitch I saw you leavin' old man Bob's saloon with. Awful dancer by the way.

SHELLY
You saw us?

WES
Yes I saw. He was stepping on your feet. The boy can't follow a tune.

SHELLY
No, Wes. You saw us leavin' old man Bob's?

Wes sighs.

WES
Shelly I didn't come here to dance. I followed you for miles to get you back.

Wes grabs Shelly's hand

WES (CONT'D)
I still have this locket cause I have not been able to get you out of my head. I've been yearnin' for you, doll. You were the best thing to happen to me and I didn't know it then.

Wes grabs Shelly's face

WES (CONT'D)
Just come back home darlin'. All your stuff is still there. We can pretend that nothin' of this ever happened.

SHELLY
Wes, I'm pregnant.

Wes' hand slowly falls from Shelly's face.

SHELLY (CONT'D)
I'm getting married next month. Travis and I...we're very happy.

A beat.

SHELLY (CONT'D)
You have to understand that...it just wasn't meant to be...you and I.

WES
How could you do this to me?

Shelly is taken back.

SHELLY
How could I do this to you?! Boy You have been blinded by your own selfishness since the day I met you.

WES
You...you said you never wanted kids.

SHELLY
Maybe cause I didn't want to raise children with a thick headed son of a bitch.

WES
Oh and the father isn't? Look at him, how will he even provide for you?! I should've thrown you out a long time ago if I knew you were this stupid.

SHELLY
Weep all you want! At the end of the day I get to go home to someone who loves me. When you go home, you're suffocated by your own loneliness and a will to live that's hangin' by a thread.

WES
Listen to yourself, woman! Not even a year goes by and here you are opening it up for the first guy that comes around.

Shelly gasps and storms away but Wes grabs her arm.

WES (CONT'D)
Don't you walk away from me, woman!

SHELLY
Let go of me! You're a sick bastard!

TRAVIS
Shelly?

Wes let's go. Shelly fixes herself.

SHELLY
It's alright Travis. I was just leavin'.

TRAVIS
What's goin' on here?

WES
So, this is Travis.

TRAVIS
'scuse me?

SHELLY
Ignore him darlin’. He’s dimwitted.

TRAVIS
Were you grabbin’ on my woman?

Wes pushes past Shelly.

WES
You best get to walkin’ before you end up with a bullet in your leg.

TRAVIS
Only a jealous fool resorts them words.

WES
And only a rattled doe would avoid ‘em.

SHELLY
That’s enough Wes!

TRAVIS
I think it’s bout time you get goin’ home. You stink of gin.

Wes gives a glance to Shelly.

TRAVIS (CONT’D)
Are you lame, boy? I said GET!

Wes gets close to Travis.

WES
I challenge you to a showdown, boy.

TRAVIS
You really must be lame.

WES
You quakin’ in your boots?

TRAVIS
You’ll ruin this lil gathering for everyone.

WES
I don’t know. Let’s see what they think.

Wes climbs up on the bar.

WES (CONT'D)
Stop the music! Stop what you're doin'!

Wes shoots his gun in the air.

Everyone gasps.

The room goes silent.

WES (CONT'D)
I'm sorry everyone! I don't mean to put a damper on things! You see, I was just wonderin'...

Silence. Everyone watches.

WES (CONT'D)
WHO WANTS TO SEE A REAL FUCKIN' LIFE SHOW DOWNNNNNN !

The room is silent. No one entertains the idea. Shelly and Travis awkwardly look at each other. ABEL, mid 50's, white hair, long white beard and drunk, breaks the ice.

ABEL
HELL YEAH !

The crowd starts cheering. Wes points to Travis

WES
I challenge that raggedy boy right there.

SHELLY
ENOUGH, WES!

TRAVIS
I accept!

SHELLY
TRAVIS DON'T!

ABEL
Split this crowd like the red sea damnit!

Everyone moves off to the side. Leaving only Wes and Travis in the center facing each other.

SHELLY
Travis, please !

Travis ignores Shelly.

Wes whispers into Travis' ear.

WES
I'm gonna hate seeing Shelly a widow...raising a child on her own. tsk tsk tsk poor Shelly.

Wes walks to the other side of the room.

ABEL
Alright, boys. Fastest draw and best hit wins. Remember, no high draws and no draws before the count of three. You ready, son?

Travis nods with eyes locked on Wes.

ABEL (CONT'D)
You ready?

WES
Call it, old man.