

Paper Wings
by
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"Paper wings, all torn and bent
But you made me feel that they were heaven sent
Paper wings, not real at all
But they took me high enough to really fall"

Gillian Welch, "Paper Wings"

EXTREMELY CLOSE

What is it? It could be a black hole at the center of our universe. It could be a marble in a kid's pocket. We're too close to tell. What we do know is that it's beautiful. WE'RE PULLING SLOWLY BACK and it is completely silent. There is a sense of peace here. Of calm.

PULL BACK A LITTLE MORE. It's an eye, isn't it? Open wide and staring. The eye of a very large animal.

Now we can see the enormous, powerful head of a bull. The arch of the neck. The muscles rippling in the withers...

WE CONTINUE TO MOVE, until slowly, we come to realize that we are watching a man riding a bull. We're in slow motion. There is no sound. The young man riding the bull is BILLY BODEEN. By the calm look on his face, you realize that this ride, for him, is peaceful.

We're back far enough now to see Billy, his right hand on this furiously bucking bull, his left circling for balance. But the look on his face is locked in, focused. He's *right* where he belongs.

The bull's hind legs slam silently back down to earth and dust comes up in a beautiful billow, obscuring Billy for a moment as we keep pulling back.

The bull completely airborne... a body roll, all four feet kicking to the side.

Billy anticipates the bull's moves, sliding to one side - to the other - and now, the BUZZER rings. Eight seconds.

Billy waits until the bull reverses again, spinning away from his riding hand (the hand roped to the bull). Then he reaches down with his free hand, jerks loose his riding hand from his bull rope and flings himself off as the bull is kicking so that the momentum of the kick will take him as far away from the bull as possible. He goes high into the air... backwards, away from the bull's horns.

BILLY LANDS

We come crashing into real time. His heart pumping. His breath coming heavy. His eyes ablaze. Now we can hear the ROAR of a crowd... and announcer screaming his name!

He stands a moment, drawn towards this beast.

It's as if some link had been formed between animal and man... a link that Billy doesn't want to break.

Now, two BULLFIGHTERS move to lure the bull away from Billy... And to keep Billy away from the bull.

DOZIER

(pronounced "Doz-shur") is one of the bullfighters. A young man with an open, enthusiastic smile. He gets right in Billy's face.

DOZIER

(smiling)

It's over Billy. It's over.

Something in Dozier's tone brings Billy out of this strange reverie.

The ROAR of the crowd is all around us. People on their feet, cheering a hero.

Now, Billy hears the crowd. He's still got his hat in his hand. He waves it to the crowd, takes a bow.

As WE PULL BACK FURTHER, we realize we're not at some little league stadium at a summer rodeo, or even a local arena where a couple of thousand people might show up for a regional. We're

INTO. THOMAS & MACK CENTER - LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

The arena at UNLV. This is the biggest moment in professional bull riding. The PBR Built Ford Tough World Finals.

A crowd of close to twenty thousand are on their feet, chanting "BO-DEEN -- BO-DEEN!" as an ANNOUNCER'S VOICE comes over the stadium PA.

ANNOUNCER

This year's winner of the PBR Built Ford Tough World Finals. For the third time in three years. With scores tonight from the judges of 23, 22, 23, and 23 -- That's 91 out of a possible one hundred and his fifth ninety plus of the season... and a season total of 7248.2. Billy Bodeen.

Billy smiles and waves his hat. Dozier comes running up. Gives him a bear hug.

DOZIER

THREE-PETE, BABY! One time, Billy,
you're gonna get off a bull and go
in the other direction.

BILLY

You think so?

DOZIER

(smiling)

Hell no.

The crowd continues to cheer. Billy turns to bask in it, taking it all in. He sends his hat soaring towards the stands.

INT. MANDALAY BAY - NIGHT

Very crowded. Top Forty country blaring. We're following an ice bucket on a waiter's tray. Sitting in the bucket, not the bottle of Kristal you'd expect, but a quart of Bud.

A TABLE BY THE STAGE

four young men in new Stetsons. Billy, flanked by three other guys. Bull riders, like other celebrities, have posses. There's Dozier, the bullfighter we met in the last scene. There's MIKE NEEDHAM, Billy's driver and errand runner, and ANDY, his manager.

The waiter brings the bucket with the Bud in it to Billy's table. Andy tips him.

There are photographers there to capture the moment. In fact, Andy probably sold this moment to Budweiser.

Dozier and Billy are in the middle of a conversation.

He pulls the bottle from the ice, unscrews the cap and takes a big swig.

DOZIER

What are you guys gonna drink?

ANDY

(to the waiter)

Better bring three more.

MIKE

Honey dips at one o'clock.

AT A TABLE NEARBY

Four women in their twenties, doing Vegas. They've been watching all the action around Billy's table.

BILLY

smiles and gets up.

BILLY

I'll see what they're having.

He walks over to the four women. The one in the front holds his gaze. JILL. He takes off his hat.

BILLY

You girls here to see Brad Harkins?

JILL

He's just about our favorite.

BILLY

(nodding)

Hell of a voice.

(a beat)

You're probably wondering what all the excitement over at our table is about.

JILL

We were curious.

BILLY

You see the fella over there, almost as good looking as he thinks he is? That's Dozier Yates.

ON DOZIER

He knows Bill's talking about him. Does a little muscle flex.

BACK WITH BILLY AND THE GIRLS

Dozier's name clearly rings no bells.

BILLY

You ladies follow rodeo at all?

JILL

Not really. My ex used to watch the bull riding competitions.

BILLY

Then he would know Dozier. Dozier
Yates just might be the best
bullfighter in all of rodeo.

(a beat)

The two other fellas there, they
work for Billy Bodeen.

He can see a hint of recognition on Jill's face.

BILLY

Just won the PBR World Finals -
like the World Series of bull
riding, for the third time.

Jill is getting the feeling that she might just be talking to
Billy Bodeen.

JILL

That's what the rest of you do?
You work for this famous bull
rider?

BILLY

Andy and Mike do. Myself, I don't
really work for anyone.

JILL

What do you do?

BILLY

(cocky smile)
Whatever it takes.

The lights dim. The Music cuts off. The crowd applauds in
anticipation. The show is about to start.

An MC welcomes us all to the Brad Harkins show here at the
Mandalay Bay... *"Opening the show tonight for Brad, please
welcome Lacy Dickenson."*

Polite applause. Most of the crowd would rather get to
Brad.

Lights come up on stage to reveal Harkins' band, the
Vanishing Cowboys, as they vamp out an uptempo instrumental.

And then LACY DICKENSON walks out on stage, holding a guitar.
In her late twenties, you know she's pretty, but when you
look closer, she's heartstopping. But there's something more
there. Something a little edgy. Lacy heads right into a by-
the-numbers version of Faith Hill's last single.

BILLY'S TABLE

Right up front.

Jill and the other two girls are at the table now. A waiter brings more glasses and more to drink. Everyone is basking in Billy's reflected glow.

None of them are paying any attention at all to Lacy. They're drinking, flirting. Mike signals the waiter for more drinks. As he does this, he sees

WANDA CARLYLE

on her way to their table. Wanda is a type you don't see so much anymore. Tough, always smoking or chewing gun. Perfect figure in tight jeans. Tan and athletic and no nonsense.

MIKE

Wanda Carlyle, three o'clock.

BILLY

You've got that radar thing down, don't you?

MIKE

Why I get paid the big bucks.

Andy glances towards Wanda.

ANDY

You be polite, Billy.

BILLY

I'm the soul of the southern gentleman.

His friends laugh.

ANDY

Right.

Wanda has reached their table. Andy stands.

ANDY

Hey, Wanda.

She smiles... has eyes only for Billy.

WANDA

I just want to stare.

BILLY

You're embarrassing me, Wanda.

WANDA

Six point two million dollars in sponsorships. That's what your ride brought in. Let me see your ass.

Billy stands up. Wags his ass out there. Dozier slaps him.

DOZIER

Come on. Work that "W."

Wanda checks out the W.

WANDA

Good boy.
 (to Jill)
 You hold tight to this one, honey.
 This man can do more in eight
 seconds than most men can in a
 lifetime.

Billy's friends all hoot and holler at that one.

ON STAGE

Lacy is working her way through this song. She's well aware of this table in the front, where no one is listening to her. These guys are pissing her off.

BACK AT BILLY'S TABLE

Raucous. Completely oblivious. Lacy might as well be a jukebox. Andy sits back down.

ANDY

Join us, Wanda.

BILLY

Sure. We'll make room.
 (to Jill)
 Come on up, darling.

He slaps his lap. And Jill gets on. Wanda looks at them, shakes her head.

WANDA

I've got to get backstage.

BILLY

You pay Brad Harkins to wear your pants too?

WANDA

You're Goddamned right.

BILLY

Who makes more money?

WANDA

Up until this afternoon, Brad did... a three time Finals winner just might edge him out.

Wanda walks off. Jill makes no move to get off of Billy. In fact, she turns and straddles his thigh.

JILL

This how you sit on a bull?

BILLY

You're a natural, darling.

And, to Jill's delight and the loud hollers of his friends, Billy starts to bounce her on his knee. Hard. Giving her a bull ride.

LET'S INTERCUT A BIT.

Lacy, singing louder. Getting madder.

Billy and his pals... getting rowdier. Looks like Jill's going to get thrown any minute. Why, she has to wrap her hands around the back of Billy's neck to stay on.

He "bucks" her. His friends howl.

OK! THAT'S IT.

Lacy brings her hand up in the air and stops the band. They stumble to a halt, mid-chorus.

The crowd is surprised.

Billy and his friends are still messing around.

LACY

Hey. Ass-hole.

That shuts the crowd up.

LACY

You... with the little chickey poo
on your knee.

OK, now Billy knows she means him. He looks up, smiling.

Lacy unstraps her guitar. She holds it out to him.

LACY

You want to come up here and do
this?

Billy, far from being offended, is taken with her spunk.

BILLY

Naw. You go right ahead on.

LACY

I'm trying to, but you're making
too much noise.

The whole crowd is taking this in.

IN THE WINGS

LARRY LEFTON, Brad Harkins' manager. He does not like what
he's seeing here.

A guy in new jeans, a fresh hat and a star's smile comes up
to stand with him. Clearly it's BRAD HARKINS. Brad is
watching the stage with admiration.

ON STAGE

LACY

Maybe you don't like the song.
Tell you the truth, it's not one of
my favorites either. You have a
request?

Billy gestures. Me?

LACY

Yeah, you. It's all about you,
isn't it? So whatever you want to
hear, I'm sure the audience
wouldn't mind.

Billy smiles at his friends. What the hell? He looks at
Dozier. Dozier makes the most cliched suggestion in concert
history. The one every drunk in every audience makes!

DOZIER
(a prankster)
"Freebird."

BILLY
Yeah. "Freebird." Good one,
Dozier.

The others laugh too. Billy looks at Lacy.

BILLY
How about it? Can you play it?

Lacy gives him a supremely confident look. She can play it. She hits a chord on her guitar and begins to play. Wait a minute, this sounds all right. It's a slow and surprisingly moving version of the intro to "Freebird."

... and then Lacy starts to sing.

Oh my God. If you thought she was pretty before, what happens when she opens her mouth and lets go... It's really something. It carries you away.

Billy's knee has stopped bouncing, but Jill is not coming off. The guys are all still smiling, but Billy senses something...

IN THE WINGS

Brad Harkins smiles to himself. He knows a good thing when he hears one. Even Larry Lefton is listening.

Lacy is wonderful.

Mike nudges Dozier. Look at Billy. He's in love.

ON STAGE

She started out doing this cause she was mad, but now Lacy's into it. She stops playing guitar and just sings. Acapella. It's devastating.

Billy can't take his eyes off Lacy.

And she's looking right at him, beating him down with every ounce of her vocal... paying back every drunk in every bar she ever played... but the harder she goes after him, the more she senses something happening between the two of them.

But just when the band would come in... just when the song should explode, she turns to the band, does a four count...

and they come right back in on the song they were covering when Lacy stopped the band.

The crowd thinks this was all part of the act. There's applause. But we're on Billy, studying her. The others at the table are laughing, going back to what it was... but Billy's heard something.

Jill's wriggling around on his lap. "Show me how to ride."

Almost unconsciously, he lifts her off his lap and puts her back in her own seat. She's not happy about this... but Billy has forgotten her, and everything else in the world.

When the song is over, Billy is on his feet in an instant. Clapping. Hollering.

His boys get up too. A moment later, so does the rest of the audience.

Lacy stares at Billy Bodeen, right in front of her in the audience, standing, clapping. Then she takes off her guitar and drops it to the stage, where it lets out an ear-pealing ring of feedback as she storms off.

INT. MANDALAY BAY - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Lefton is in the middle of yelling at Lacy.

LEFTON

You don't ever walk off Brad Harkins' stage. You do your God damned set.

LACY

Larry, the guy was an ass-hole.

LEFTON

I don't care if he's the anti-Christ. Just do your Goddamned set. How hard is that?

LACY

You're not out there, Larry. All you have to do is collect the money. Doesn't matter to you how we make it.

LEFTON

That's what you think?

LACY

That's what I know.

BILLY (O.S.)

Excuse me.

They both turn. Billy's there, holding Lacy's guitar.

BILLY

You dropped this.

Billy takes his hat off.

BILLY

I'm Bill Bodeen, ma'am.

LEFTON

Hell, she knows who you are, Billy.

BILLY

(ignoring him)

Bill Bodeen, ma'am and I want to apologize for being... I think you said it best. An ass-hole.

LEFTON

Hey, come on. After your day, you're allowed to work off a little steam.

BILLY

You work here?

LEFTON

I work with Brad Harkins.

BILLY

Would you be the one, decides if this young lady stays on the show?

LEFTON

It's my decision, yes.

BILLY

Then I want to ask you... what was your name?

LEFTON

Larry... Larry Lefton.

BILLY

I wanted to ask you, Mr. Lefton, please not to fire this lady, not on account of my bad behavior and general assholiness.

He smiles at Lacy. Lefton is about to say something, but before he can, Brad Harkins has joined them.

BRAD

"Fire?" Nobody's getting fired around here. Lacy's adding two songs to her set every night, and I'm hoping one of them will be "Freebird."

LARRY

Brad...

BRAD

Hell, Larry, she's the "T-shirt" act. She can do whatever she wants. Nobody's listening anyway.

He smiles at her. He turns to Billy.

BRAD

Brad Harkins, Billy. Watched your ride today on the bus. Damn fine. Congratulations.

They shake hands.

LACY

Can I have my guitar back?

Billy turns as Lacy snatches her guitar from his hands. He looks right at her.

BILLY

You can make something beautiful with that. You ought to treat it with a little more respect.

Lacy is surprised. This guy is lecturing her!

LACY

You've got to be kidding me.

And she walks off down the hall. Billy watches her go. Brad watches Billy.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Lacy rides up the hotel elevator to her room. Lefton is in the elevator too and he's still trying to set her straight.

LEFTON

Just play by the rules for once,
Lacy. That's all I'm saying.

LACY

Larry, I appreciate you giving me
this opening slot. I know what a
strain it is for you to do anything
nice.

LEFTON

There, like that. That's the
attitude that's cost you two record
deals and a management contract
already.

LACY

And men. It's cost me a lot of
men.

LEFTON

You do five songs. "Freebird," and
one original. I want the other
three to be covers. And keep the
between song patter to a minimum...
and for Christ's sake, remember to
smile.

Lacy looks right at him, no smile at all on her face.

LACY

Some day, Larry, if the good lord's
willing and the creek don't rise,
I'm gonna kill you.

LEFTON

I die a little every day, darling.

The elevator stops on Lacy's floor. She's got her back to
the doors so Larry sees them before she does. Off Larry's
startled look, she turns.

EXT. LACY'S FLOOR OF THE HOTEL - NIGHT

Flowers. Mountains of flowers. Waist deep. Everything you
could imagine. This is unbelievable. A floral carpet
stretching all the way down the hallway to her room.

LEFTON

Oh Lord. Now you're gonna have to
fuck him.

She's enjoying this. She starts down the hall through the thousands and thousands of flowers. Somewhere, a phone is RINGING.

NEAR THE DOOR TO HER ROOM

Roses. The ringing seems to be coming from there. She pushes aside the flowers and finds a six foot tall teddy bear blocking her door. It's holding a cell phone.

Lacy takes the phone and answers it.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Billy in the passenger seat of an Escalade. Dozier in the middle, Mike behind the wheel. Billy's on his cell phone.

BILLY
(in a cool voice)
Hi. What's going on?

LACY

smiles. Puts on an accent. INTERCUT AS NEEDED.

LACY
I'm sorry?

BILLY
Is this Lacy Dickenson?

LACY
Dickenson. No. This is housekeeping. She checked out.

She's amused.

BILLY

ends the call, disappointed.

BILLY
Damn!

Lacy hangs up the phone. Lefton shakes his head.

LEFTON
Playing games?

She smiles at Lefton.

LACY

He rides bulls. I'm gonna ride a
bullrider.

CLOSE ON THE FACE OF A BULLFIGHTER

These guys are said to have the most dangerous job in all of
rodeo. Under the get-up, we recognize Billy's pal, Dozier.
He's got his hands high in the air, working a crowd, siking
them up as WE PULL BACK TO

INT. THE STAPLES CENTER - NIGHT

A big exhibition bull ride in L.A. We hear a TV commentator,
Jack Dunlap, calling the event. From the first you hear his
voice, you know he's been there himself.

JACK

Our first rider is Douglas Rake, a
young man off the island of Kauai
who has taken the Hawaiian islands
All State twice. This is his first
ride here on the mainland and he's
coming out of the gate on a bull
called Blind Rage. He gives his
gate man the nod. The gate opens
and all he's got is God and his
bull rope...

The gate opens. Bull and rider come out in a ball of fury.
It's over in less than a second.

JACK

And Alooooooha, Douglas.

As the rider falls on his back in the dirt, pulls himself up
and starts to run, Dozier moves into action.

Part of a bullfighter's skill is to make his escapes look
close. This bull is chasing Dozier around the arena. Dozier
runs around behind him, grabs the bull by the tail. The bull
spins, with Dozier pretending to be pulled around until
finally, Dozier climbs the fence, getting out of the bull's
way. He throws his hands up in the air. The crowd ROARS.

IN THE BOOTH

JACK DUNLAP is the quintessential cowboy/philosopher.
Comfortable with himself and all his failings. Comfortable
with life.

JACK
(smiling at Dozier's
antics)

And another narrow escape for our
bullfighter, Dozier Yates. We have
a treat for you folks, joining us
in the booth today is Dozier's old
friend and mine, Billy Bodeen, who
just five days ago won the PBR
World Finals out there in Las
Vegas. Thanks for coming in,
Billy.

Billy is sitting next to Jack, head-set on. He smiles, goes
into "broadcast mode" along with Jack.

BILLY
Glad to be here, Jack.

JACK
That last ride just shows you how
difficult this sport is, wouldn't
you say?

BILLY
Well as you know, a lot of it has
to do with what bull you draw.

JACK
I got to tell you, some of today's
bulls are truly fierce competitors.

BILLY
They were no walk in the park back
when you were riding either, Jack.

JACK
They get bigger and badder every
time I talk about them.
(a beat)
That was back in the day. Just
about the time you and I met.

BILLY
That's right. I was ten.

JACK
And as tough as you were crazy.
I'll tell you folks, I haven't seen
someone fall and get back up on the
bull so many times in one day, than
watching little Billy.

Billy doesn't know where he's going with this.

BILLY

Like I always tell people, I may be ugly, but I sure am stupid.

Jack smiles. This banter is for the audience, but you can see in the way they look at each other that the two men really like each other.

JACK

We're gonna have a lot of time to talk to Billy Bodeen more about stupidity and bulls and his own eight seconds... right after this.

Commercial cued. Jack turns to Billy. They're off-mike now, and Jack gives Billy a good, long look.

JACK

How the hell are you?

BILLY

I'm good. It's been good.

JACK

You're still on top of the world. Some Goddamn ride.

BILLY

(he knows it was)

Thanks. Almost as good as you used to be.

Jack looks at him, serious now for a moment.

JACK

You could be... but you got something else going on up in that head of yours. You always did.

BILLY

You still got the school going out there in Santa Fe?

JACK

This thing didn't pay in my day. I got to run the school, do a little announcing, just to keep both of my ex wives in cigarettes and toilet paper.

Someone brings him a crib sheet. He glances at it.

JACK

You know anything about this new bull Jimmy Meeker has going today?

BILLY

Naw, but if Meeker's pushing him, I'm sure we're all gonna get an earful.

JACK

(smiling)

Calls him "the Beast."

BILLY

That's a little bit, what do you call it, presumptuous?

JACK

Way I hear it, this bull owns it.

BILLY

According to Jim Meeker.

The booth gives them the "back in "Five, Four, Three, Two" count and Jack swings back into action.

JACK

Welcome back, everyone. Just talking with Billy Bodeen, three time Finals Champion, about Jimmy Meeker's new bull, the Beast. This Bull's been tearing up the Northwestern Circuit, Billy. He's hurt a couple of riders pretty bad.

BILLY

We can always use another good bull, Jack, but I'm sorry to hear any of the boys got hurt.

JACK

Bones heal and ladies love scars.

Billy couldn't agree more and he smiles at Jack.

JACK

Let's see how Hank Warrington does, climbing up now and about to ride the Beast.

IN THE ARENA

as a cowboy in white cowboy shirt and blue jeans climbs up to mount his bull.

IN THE BOOTH

Jack smiles appreciatively.

JACK
Goodness. That is a beautiful creature.

Billy leans forward to try to get a better look at the Beast. We push in on him as Jack continues.

JACK
This is our first look at this bull and from what I can see, I have to tell you, I've never seen an animal this size...

IN THE CHUTES

HANK WARRINGTON lowers himself onto the rippling, muscular back of a huge bull.

Of this monster, all we catch are glimpses. Because the moment HANK is on his back, THE BEAST CLIMBS THE CHUTE!

JACK (V.O.)
AND NEITHER HAS HANK WARRINGTON!
THE BEAST IS CLIMBING THE CHUTE.
HANK IS TRAPPED. HE CAN'T GET HIS
ROPE UNTIED.

Hank is trapped. The flankman and another cowboy try to get the chute open. The Beast's thrashing has jammed it shut.

The Beast thrusts forward, and Hank's head hits the bar, knocking him unconscious. The bull keeps bucking.

Dozier and the other bullfighters move in, desperately trying to get to the unconscious Hank -- to get his rope untied.

The Beast is thrashing, ramming Hank into a corner of the chute. The cowboys are struggling with the gate...

... they finally get it open. A beat...

... and then the Beast comes out into the arena.

Dozier and the others look up as the bull's huge flank blurs by heading back for the pens.

DOZIER

God Damn! That's a whole lot of
rage.

The Beast disappears into the pens.

IN THE BOOTH

Billy's still caught up in what he just saw. O.S., Jack is saying that we're going to be seeing one heck of a lot more of this bull.

INT. LOAD OUT - NIGHT

Where the bulls are kept after an event. Handlers, crews. Rodeo is big business. This looks like the load out after a stadium rock show.

Billy walks through it all.

People stop. Nod. A couple of cowboys come up to shake his hand. But Billy is focused. Determined.

JIMMY MEEKER is by the holding pen where the Beast is being loaded out. A slick fifty year old who wears rodeo suits and a hat with a brim crusted in diamonds, he is rodeo's answer to Don King.

MEEKER

Billy Bodeen. Pride of Beaumont.
Come to take a look at the future.

He takes Billy's elbow, guides him through the crowd.

MEEKER

Make way here. We've got a
historic meeting taking place.

People get out of the way.

UP AHEAD

Billy can see the Beast in his pen. As he takes his first good look, so do we.

Jesus, you can't believe this monster up close. A wonder of nature. Bigger, badder than any bull ever. If you've never seen a rodeo, if you couldn't care less, you will still think this is one of the most beautiful creatures you've ever seen.

The Beast is calm now, but as Billy approaches, he seems to sense an adversary. He paws and snorts. Jimmy Meeker is still talking a streak about his finest bull ever, a whole new dimension in bull riding. *"The rider's day is over, boy, with the Beast, the bull becomes the star..."*

... but Billy isn't listening. He has gone right up to the pen. Meeker is going on. *"Go ahead boy, give him the once around."*

But Billy just stands there, a man looking at his destiny, right there in front of him. An announcer's voice comes up from the next scene. *"Opening the show tonight, a warm Los Angeles welcome to Lacy Dickenson."*

INT. UNIVERSAL AMPHITHEATER - NIGHT

FROM BACKSTAGE, IN POV as WE MOVE OUT ONTO THE STAGE. (We're Lacy's POV.) There's the band, the lights so bright you can only see the first couple of rows of the crowd. There's the buzz of amplifiers and then the vamp as the band kicks in. Up-tempo... driving.

ON LACY

She looks as comfortable up here as Billy does on a bull. Her hand wraps around the microphone.

Then she sees something.

HER POV

There in the front row. Billy. All alone. No posse. He sits there in the front row and he's there to listen. Guess he figured out what he had to do to get a girl like Lacy to give him a second glance.

LACY

takes that in. A beat. She walks back to the guitar player, says something in his ear. He nods. Looks at the band. The vamp changes. Over it, Lacy says

LACY

Thank you all so much. This one's
one of my own.

And she begins to sing. Pure and perfect cowpop. Infectious melody, clever lyrics... a song about the promise of love. *"I won't settle for anything less than love this time..."*

Thing is, she's singing just for Billy.

Thing is, he knows it.

By the time this song is over, Billy Bodeen will be ass-deep in love.

INT. BACK-STAGE - NIGHT

The between set crush. Billy makes his way through the crowd. Over the heads of the hangers out and on, he can see Lacy's dressing room door. He pushes his way to it. She's sitting and she looks up, sees him reflected in her mirrors. She smiles, reaches over and takes something from her dressing room table. The cell phone that was in the bear. She tosses it to him.

BILLY

Awe shit, you did get the flowers.

LACY

Does that sort of bullshit get you laid?

BILLY

All the time.

LACY

Really?

BILLY

Absolutely.

LACY

So many breasts around town, so few brains.

BILLY

(a nice long beat)

So now that I've met the brains, what does it take to get you to go out with me? I need to read you a book?

Lacy gives that a beat of her own. Then she smiles.

LACY

Naw. You already figured it out.

EXT. MR. CECIL'S BBQ - NIGHT

Texas BBQ on Pico. Lacy's having brisket. Billy's sticking to the chicken.

BILLY
How's the brisket?

LACY
Best this side of home. You want
some?

BILLY
Don't eat beef.

LACY
(getting it)
Respect?

BILLY
Something like that.

She smiles.

LACY
You don't mind?

BILLY
I brought you here.

She takes another bite. He just loves watching her.

BILLY
When did you start singing?

LACY
I always sang. I can't imagine not
singing. It would be like not
breathing.

Billy nods. Something he can identify with.

LACY
I got my first guitar when I was
six. My daddy gave it to me.

BILLY
He a musician?

LACY
He was a mechanic, he worked on
planes.

BILLY
You grew up in Texas, right?

LACY

A little bit of everywhere... but mostly. How'd you know that?

BILLY

Google. I read twenty-seven reviews of your first album before I found a biography. Pretty good reviews, mostly.

LACY

They called me "a critic's darling." Lasted about as long as one of your bull rides.

BILLY

(he smiles)

Who do you sing for?

LACY

"Sing for?"

BILLY

Your mom, your dad, the guy you didn't get in high school?

LACY

I got all the guys in high school.

BILLY

I bet.

LACY

My daddy, some I guess. You ride for anyone?

BILLY

(a half-smile)

Nope.

They're quiet, for a long beat.

LACY

That all you gonna give me?

BILLY

(that cocky smile)

I'm gonna show you.

EXT. BILLY'S TOUR TRUCK - NIGHT

We're moving along the side of this Big Rig. The words "Billy Bodeen, three time PBR Built Ford Tough champion." and a logo of a bull on fire emblazoned on the trailer. We can hear Billy's voice coming from inside the bus...

BILLY (O.S.)
Put your ass tight up here against
it. Squeeze on it...

OK...

INT. BILLY'S TOUR BUS - NIGHT

Lacy is on the back of a rickety old mechanical bull. Thing must be 30 years old; Billy's standing, facing her. Right now, he's rubbing his hand along her inner thigh. I should mention that this truck is a movable state-of-the art gym, with all sort of equipment as well as the mechanical bull. No expense spared. Very cool.

BILLY
You feel that?

LACY
Yeah...

BILLY
Those are the muscles that are
going to keep you locked on. You
sure you feel it?

He smiles. They both know they're doing the clay scene from "Ghost", but they don't give a shit, that's part of the fun.

LACY
I feel it.

BILLY
OK. So you've eased on down onto
him. He's in the chute. You can
feel all that power between your
legs.

LACY
(amused, but turned on)
Yeah...

BILLY
First you want to grab the rope...
You can't do this without a glove.

He reaches back, pulls a glove from the wall, where there are lots hanging.

BILLY

Here. We got to rosin you up.

He grabs some rosin, begins to rub it into the glove which is now on her hand.

BILLY

Now you want to take that glove and run it up and down along the rope, getting it all sticky.

(a beat)

I do it thirty-six times.

LACY

Why?

BILLY

That's a bull's standing heart rate.

LACY

You're a little superstitious.

BILLY

I like to do things right.

She wraps her hand around the rope and rubs it up and down suggestively.

LACY

Like this?

BILLY

Just like that.

(a beat)

Now we've got to tie you up.

He takes the rope and starts to wrap it around her hand, tying her to this mechanical bull the way a rider would tie himself to a bull. Billy slowly rocks the bull back and forth.

BILLY

Slowly, carefully... your ride is over when your hand comes off this rope.

He suddenly snaps the bull forward, forcing her to lose her balance, with her hand coming off the rope. He grabs her as she falls back and pulls her close. They're face to face.

LACY
You gonna kiss me, cowboy?

BILLY
Once.

And he turns to her and they kiss. As they kiss he unwinds the rope, lifts her off the mechanical bull and takes her in his arms.

And then they explode. They're all over each other. They can't get to it too quickly.

CLOSE ON THE FLANK OF A BULL

Rippling muscles. His brand. A couple of scars.

THE HAUNCHES

All that power.

THE EYES

All that fury.

CLOSE ON BILLY

checking out this bull like a driver checking out a car. There is a buzz... the buzz of a huge crowd.

EXT. COLORADO STATE FAIRGROUNDS - NIGHT

Billy is in the pens, in the bowels of the stadium, face to face with this bull. He studies the animal and the animal studies him. Billy sees whatever it is he's looking for. A faint smile.

The wranglers run the bull into the chute while Billy walks over. Couple of the guys from the circuit are there including a cowboy named EUGENE. He's with Hank, the guy who got thrown in the chute by the Beast.

EUGENE
You do your little, "I'm one with the bull" moment, Billy?

Billy just keeps walking. Eugene looks at Hank.

Billy climbs the rails to the chute. We can see the monogrammed spurs. "Bodeen" on each one. The bull is ready now. Billy lowers himself down. Ties himself on. Then he does something else. He reaches down under the bull's chest, gently.

Eugene is watching this. So is Hank.

BILLY

He closes his eyes and takes a beat, concentrating. A moment of meditation. ON THE TRACK, faintly, we hear a heartbeat.

Then Billy sits up, nods to the boys... the chute opens. The bull is airborne... and all our sound drains away...

And we're with Billy on a ride. What it means to be with Billy: We're calm. The eye of the storm. Like the opening, but this time we see the full poetry of the ride, the magnificence of 2,000 pounds of Brahma, the near balletic grace of Billy...

From his POV this is eight seconds of pure unadulterated peace... fluid, like riding a wave. His body dances in sync with the bull as if he were a part of the animal.

The clock ticks over another second.

The clock ticks another one.

Look at Billy ride!

And then the buzzer. He's gone the eight!

Billy dismounts. The sound of the crowd comes crashing back in. He stands, drawn as always towards the bull, he sees Lacy in the stands... For just an instant, he loses focus.

And in that instant, the bull charges.

Dozier is right there to come between Billy and the bull...

... but it stops Billy for just a moment. Nothing like that has ever happened to him before. As he doffs his hat to the crowd, he looks at Lacy again. They exchange a smile.

INT. BILLY'S TRUCK

Lacy slammed against a wall, Billy with her. They're going at each other again. A song of Lacy's comes UP ON THE TRACK and continues as we go to

EXT. SHORELINE AMPHITHEATER - MOUNTAIN VIEW, CALIFORNIA - NIGHT

Lacy on her "ride," playing to an appreciative crowd, in her zone as much as Billy is in his. The song is kicking, driving, sexy.

INT. SHORELINE AMPHITHEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Brad stands with Lefton, watching, smiling. THE SONG CONTINUES AS WE GO

EXT. ANOTHER STATE FAIRGROUNDS - NIGHT

A big swirling cloud of dirt. This bull's hindquarters have risen a good four feet in the air and plumes of dirt and gravel obscure our view... A moving dustball of Billy and this bull.

EXT. SHORELINE AMPHITHEATER - NIGHT

Lacy at the microphone. Really in it. Strumming hard.

EXT. STATE FAIRGROUNDS

The ride, the way it looks to Andy and Mike, sitting in the private box up front. The way it looks to the fans. Like a man hanging on for dear life on the back of a bucking Brahma bull. Billy's dismount is a slide over the bull's horns and he just keeps on going until he reaches the fence... then he turns, as always drawn towards the bull, even as Dozier moves in to distract the bull. Billy tosses his hat to an adoring crowd.

EXT. SHORELINE AMPHITHEATER - NIGHT

Lacy ends her song with a flourish and the roar of her crowd is right there to greet her. She comes off stage to find Brad and Lefton waiting in the wings. Brad still applauding.

Someone hands her water and a towel. As she towels off, Brad says to her

BRAD

(shaking his head)

I love the way you get a crowd all worked up... I got to spank myself for not noticing sooner. Nice set, Lacy, girl.

He reaches out to her with his fist.

BRAD

Tag team, darlin'. Now it's my turn.

She laughs and taps his fist as he rolls out on stage. She turns and watches Brad as he does his thing, rocking the crowd.

A ROADIE approaches with a cell phone.

ROADIE
You've got a call.

He hands the phone to Lacy. She smiles.

LACY
Hi.

She turns away from the wings to get away from the noise, starts backstage.

INT. COLORADO STATE FAIRGROUNDS

BACK BY THE LOAD OUT. Billy's got a towel of his own around his neck. (DURING THEIR CALL, INTERCUT AS NECESSARY, HIGHLIGHTING THE SIMILARITIES - WATER, TOWEL, SWEAT, ROADIES - OF THEIR BACKSTAGE LIVES.)

BILLY
How was your night?

LACY
Crowd listened for once.

BILLY
Hey. I said I was sorry.

LACY
(a smile)
Yeah, you did.
(a beat)
How was your night?

BILLY
Had a couple of rides. Bulls were a little lazy... but that suited me tonight.

LACY
Billy...

BILLY
You miss me.

LACY
You cocky son of a bitch. And you miss me too.

BILLY

Yeah. I do.

LACY

What are you doing tomorrow?

BILLY

I train all morning. Then I'm doing a Wrangler jeans ad.

LACY

My little fashion model.

BILLY

Don't rub it in.

LACY

I think it's adorable.

BILLY

What about you? What are you doing?

LACY

Sleep til four in the afternoon, do some heroin, take a couple of groupies to bed...

(a beat)

I was thinking I might try to write a song.

There's a pause. Around them, their various loadouts are winding down. It's time to say goodbye and neither of them wants to.

BILLY

Did I mention that you missed me?

LACY

You're the last thing I think about.

BILLY

Good name for a song.

LACY

Yeah, it is. I'll see you soon.

As Lacy hangs up, Larry's standing there.

LARRY

Kind of a long ride you're taking on that one.

Lacy smiles slightly at that.

EXT. POODLES HILLTOP BAR - AUSTIN - NIGHT

Lacy taking Billy into this funky little honky tonk. She's excited.

LACY

He never plays out. Maybe once every five years. This guy, this is why I started writing music.

INT. POODLES HILLTOP BAR - AUSTIN - NIGHT

Guy Clark on stage, singing a heart-wrenching version of "Desperados Waiting for a Train." There's moving and then there's a song like this.

THE AUDIENCE

Appreciative, quiet, caught up in this simple, magnificent story of a boy and his first hero.

Lacy and Billy are right up front. Lacy knows the song by heart. Guy is nearing the end of the tale.

*"The day 'fore he died I went to see him
"I was grown and he was almost gone.
"So we just closed our eyes and dreamed us up a kitchen
"And sang one more verse to that old song
(spoken)
"Come on, Jack, that son-of-a-bitch is comin'*

Lacy looks over at Billy. She sees tears in his eyes. Damn it, that really gets to her. She squeezes his hand.

EXT. ST. LOUIS ARENA - DAY

Billy and Lacy coming into the arena with Andy and Mike.

BILLY

You go on and get a seat with these boys. I'll see you at the end of the day.

He gives her a kiss. Heads into the bowels of the stadium. Lacy watches him go. Andy watches her.

INT. LOCKER ROOMS - DAY

Billy doing his 36 swipes with the rosin on his rope. Eugene and the other cowboys are there.

HANK

(to Billy)

Did you hear the Beast put Butch Stone in the hospital last night up in Abilene? Eugene's looking at a world of hurt.

Billy stops, looks at Eugene.

EUGENE

Looks like I could use a little of your cosmic cowboy shit on me today.

BILLY

You'll do fine, Eugene. Just close you eyes and pretend you're on that girl from Cleveland.

Hank laughs. Billy looks Eugene in the eye.

BILLY

You're a good rider, Eugene.
You'll take him.

He gives Eugene a nod. Walks out of the dressing room.

EXT. THE PENS

As Billy comes out and finds his first bull. He stands, facing the animal, eye to eye. That ritual of his. He doesn't even notice the cowboys talking until he hears some, "Hey, beautiful, you come to see me?" kind of chatter. He turns and sees

LACY

watching him. She smiles, but his face has tightened.

BILLY

What're you doing back here?

LACY

I couldn't resist. I just wanted to see what you do.

He's looking at her like she's a total stranger.

LACY

Billy...

BILLY

(cold)

Go back out with Andy and Mike.
I'll see you after, like I said.

LACY

Don't talk to me like that.

He gently takes her elbow, walks her away from the pens.

BILLY

You're right. I'm sorry. I'll see
you after.

Not much of an apology. He backs away, back to the pens, not waiting for her to respond.

His bull waits in the chute now. Cowboys all around, getting ready. Billy does his wrap, and then he bends down as we saw him do before, over the bull. He listens.

There's a young BULL RIDER doing his stretches, sanding his gloves, watching Billy. The on-grounds DOCTOR is nearby. Stethoscope around his neck and cowboy hat on his head.

DOCTOR

I always wonder what that's all
about.

YOUNG BULL RIDER

He's looking for the bull's heart.

IN THE STANDS

Lacy and the boys take their seats.

IN THE CHUTE

Billy sits up, nods, and launches out of the chute.

This ride we see entirely from the stands.

What a ride. The ring announcer tells us it's his first of three today and Billy Bodeen is showing just what made him the PBR champion three years running.

Lacy, tensing up.

The buzzer! Billy is off the bull... and then he does that crazy thing he does... his inevitable pull towards the animal.

Dozier comes between Billy and the bull.

DOZIER

Nice ride. Your favorite monster's
coming up a little later.

EXT. BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE RODEO - DAY

Billy's done for the day, coming out towards his truck, which is parked down under the stadium. Andy and Mike are there, waiting with Lacy. Andy steps up, he's got business to discuss. Billy moves past him and goes right to Lacy. He scoops her up, a totally different guy than he was before his ride. He smothers her with kisses and apologies.

ANDY

Woa. Hey, lover, there's a Ford
shoot for the new Ranger this
afternoon, and you've got an ESPN
interview in an hour.

LACY

Busy man.

Andy shoots a look at Lacy. She notices. As they walk away, she says

LACY

(laughing a little)
I don't think he likes me.

BILLY

It's his job as my manager not to
like you.

LACY

Look, about before. "Don't come in
the dressing room before the show."
I get that. But that doesn't give
you license to treat me like shit.

BILLY

(still kissing on her)
You're right. You're right.

A beat. She smiles. She's forgiven him.

LACY

So, all of that, what you go
through, getting ready, training...
all for eight seconds.

BILLY

You have no idea how long eight
seconds is.

LACY

Don't I?

She leans over, kisses him. We see her fingers coming up slowly, a second at a time. When she gets to eight, she stops kissing.

BILLY

Why'd you stop?

LACY

You have no idea how long eight seconds is.

BILLY

Can I go another eight?

And they are in each other's arms. As they start into the truck, Andy shouts

ANDY

I need you back here in one hour!

Billy waves without turning around. From behind him, we hear the announcer. *"Three more rides to go. Some fine bulls and some fine riders."*

MIKE

Hey, Billy, Eugene's gonna ride the Beast.

Billy hesitates.

LACY

The Beast'll be there tomorrow. You come along with me now. I promise it ain't gonna hurt.

Lacy looks at Mike with a smile...

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Billy undressing Tracy slowly.

EXT. ARENA - DAY

Dozier's bumping chests with the other bullfighters.

DOZIER

Come on, Beast. Bring it on!

Eugene in the chute, pulling on his gloves. Getting ready.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

More clothes coming off. Soft kisses.

EXT. ARENA

Eugene climbs the rail as the Announcer lets us know that "Eugene Warrington is about to try his luck and skill on the still unridable Beast."

INT. THE TRUCK

Lacy and Dozier, doing what they do best. (We INTERCUT to them as needed through the rest of this scene.)

EXT. ARENA - DAY

Eugene, with a great deal of focus, lowers himself onto the Beast.

Like a football player, Dozier squats in readiness, watching as the chute opens...

... and it lasts about a second and a half before the Beast throws Eugene against the rails.

Eugene stumbles to his feet, as Dozier and the other bullfighters move in.

Sensing prey, the Beast turns... going right at Dozier.

Now Dozier must do his job. He runs in between the Beast and Eugene, getting the bull's attention by grabbing his ear.

Eugene crawls away to safety with the help of a couple of WRANGLERS.

Here comes the bastard again! He's too quick. He gets right up on Dozier. Instinct saves him as he drops flat in the dirt and **crawls under the Beast!**

The crowd goes wild. Half of them thrilled, half of them wanting blood.

Dozier makes it under the Beast and dives for the waiting barrel.

Before Dozier can get all the way into the barrel, the beast slams into it, thrusting Dozier in like a cannonball. He smashes his shoulder. But the bull isn't finished. He rears and drop-kicks the barrel.

NOW WE'RE INSIDE THE BARREL

looking out through the slats. At horns... at hooves... And at CRACKING WOOD! The barrel is getting slammed, tossed, and battered as if it's in the middle of a tornado. Crammed and in pain, all Dozier can do is wait it out and hope his buddies distract this monster. The sound is deafening! The Beast won't quit until Dozier's dead.

Suddenly it all stops!

There is quiet except for the anxious crowd and the announcer trying to be encouraging.

LOOKING OUT FROM INSIDE THE HOLE

The barrel is on its side. Faces appear as the other bullfighters squat down to see how badly hurt Dozier is.

BULLFIGHTER

Jesus!

INT. TRUCK

They are heavy into it when they hear the pounding on the door, Billy tries to ignore it, but the pounding continues. He hears Mike's voice. "Billy..."

He gets up, pulls on his pants, opens the door. Mike stands there. He looks upset.

MIKE

It's Dozier.

INT. INFIRMARY - NIGHT

We're on a episode of *Cheaters*. Some poor girl finding out her fiancé has been married for eight years.

Around the room are the cowboys who got hurt in today's rodeo. Guys with their legs torn open, smoking, drinking beers, while they get stitched up. Eugene has a dislocated arm and he's having his cheek sewed back on.

ON CHEATERS

The girl is losing it. Falling apart.

IN HIS BED

Dozier's eyes are watery. He has one arm in a shoulder-to-fingers cast.

Someone's stitching his face up, something which he finds annoying 'cause it gets in the way of him watching the show. He winces -- at what's happening on TV.

DOZIER

That poor little thing. She didn't see it coming at all.

He means it. He's sentimental. Mike is with him, watching.

MIKE

She's a chump then. It was plain as the nose on her face.

DOZIER

I'll take the nose clean off your face, you keep talking like that about that sweet little girl.

The door opens and Billy and Andy come in. Billy says his hellos as he comes through.

BILLY

Looks like he took a piece of you, Eugene.

EUGENE

I could feel it in the chute. The fucker's crazy.

BILLY

You hang in there, Eugene.

Billy moves past him, over to Dozier's bed. Dozier does not look up at Billy and Andy.

DOZIER

You two sit quiet for a moment, we're just coming to the confrontation.

ON TV

Exactly. Joey Greco is bringing the girl to the club where her fiancé and his wife have just finished dancing.

BILLY

How you feeling, Hipshot?

DOZIER

(intent on the show)
Shhhh!

ANDY

We're trying to show you a little sympathy here.

MIKE

He hurts like hell, but he's not going to take his pain meds until the show is over. He's afraid he'll miss something.

The show has gone to commercial. Dozier mutes it and turns to Billy with a serious look on his face.

DOZIER

I never thought there was any such thing as a mean bull. I figure it's just instinct, you know. "Get the hell off my back..." but that sucker's out for blood.

(a beat)

You're getting the idea to ride that bull, aren't you?

Billy doesn't answer.

DOZIER

Don't.

He lets that sink in. The commercial has ended.

DOZIER

Your time's up. I got to see if Loretta is gonna be fool enough to take him back.

He turns the volume up.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Later. Lacy's asleep. Billy's not. He's got the volume down and he's on ESPN. A segment on bull-riding.

It's all about new bulls. And this part is all about the Beast, who has just been awarded "Newcomer of the Year" and the bucking bull awards in North Dakota. Ty Murray is being interviewed.

TY

The biggest wildcard in the sport is the bull. You never know. You might draw a little fellow with a bad attitude.

(MORE)

TY (cont'd)

I knew one old boy, rode Bodacious once when he was as mellow as a dairy cow. But this new bull, the Beast. You only have to look in his eyes. He's a killer. It's only a matter of time before this bad boy takes someone down.

Billy is so focused on the TV that he barely notices that Lacy is awake now. She's watching too. She wraps herself around him, as if she could keep him safe.

BILLY

Hey...

A light kiss. He smiles at her, then puts his head down on her chest. Listening.

LACY

What are you doing?

BILLY

Listening for your heart.

She smiles, really touched. She's falling for him. She holds him tighter... He holds her, but his eyes are still on the screen... on these the images of the Beast....

We hear her voice singing as we cut to:

CLOSE ON LACY

She's written a song off the line Billy thought was good.
"The Last Thing I Think About."

INT. TOUR BUS - DAY

Lacy singing for Brad and Lefton.

Larry nodding as Lacy sings. This one is gold. Lacy finishes. Brad sits. Lefton claps.

LEFTON

Goddamn. That a new one?

Lacy nods.

LEFTON

You've known the guy what, two weeks, you've already got that out of it. Marry him.

Brad hasn't reacted at all. Now he says

BRAD

I want to cut it as a duet.

LEFTON

A duet. Yeah... that makes sense...

BRAD

We got a day off next week, get us into Nashville... that is if you're up for it, Lacy girl.

Lacy seems to consider for a moment. Then she smiles.

LACY

Why the hell not?

Brad smiles.

BRAD

Tag team, darlin'

He puts his fist up. She taps it with hers. Brad smiles warmly at her.

EXT. THE WYOMING PLAINS - DAY

A Dodge Ram alone on a stretch of highway.

IN THE TRUCK

Billy and Lacy.

LACY

Where are we going?

BILLY

You'll find out.

(a beat)

So you and Brad Harkins are gonna record a duet.

LACY

Yeah.

BILLY

(fooling around)

So you slept with him.

LACY

I just might if you keep this up smartass. He's a very big star.

BILLY

Uh huh...

LACY

And he's very good looking.

BILLY

I could pull over. You could walk to Nashville.

LACY

Brad would send his jet.

He just smile.

LACY

I think you're shaking in your size elevens.

He shakes his head.

BILLY

I wear size twelves. Doesn't bother me at all.

LACY

Why not?

BILLY

Cause I'm a sexy, strong bullrider... who wears size twelves.

LACY

You think so? I see you more a loud-mouthed son of a bitch.

BILLY

That too.

He leans over, kisses her.

EXT. THE MOUNTAINS NORTH OF CHEYENNE, WYOMING - DAWN

The middle of nowhere. But the most beautiful part of nowhere. Billy is pulling them up outside an impeccably designed ranch nestled between stream and mountain.

There are stables and there's a pen and a bull ring. A couple of tough, battered Brahmas graze there right now.

They get out. Go the door. Lacy takes in the beauty. They knock and wait.

Finally, a woman in her thirties answers. If you think about it, she looks a lot like Billy.

She smiles. Throws her arms around him. A dog runs out. Big lab. When Billy and the woman are all done hugging, he says

BILLY

Clara. This is Lacy Dickenson.
Lacy, my big sister, Clara.

CLARA

I've heard a lot about you.

LACY

Really?

She's pleased.

INT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - NIGHT

The three sitting down to dinner. A lot of food. A big country dinner.

CLARA

I hate it. I don't watch. I cried when he was nine and got three stitches on his leg falling off a scooter.

LACY

He's crazy, all right.

BILLY

That's why you both love me.

CLARA

Have another biscuit.

Lacy is smiling at something.

Billy meticulously taking out the meat of the tomato slices in his meal.

LACY

What are you doing?

Billy's a bit embarrassed. Bashful. Bashful is pretty damn lovable on a guy like this.

CLARA

He doesn't like tomato seeds. Been like that as long as I can remember.

LACY

That's so cute.

CLARA

Isn't it?

LACY

Adorable.

Billy watches the two of them, laughing at him 'cause they love him. It makes him happier than he realizes.

EXT. WYOMING HILLS - DAY

As Billy and Lacy crest a hill on horseback. Billy is on a palomino. Lacy rides a dapple grey. Sheep graze in this field. Billy's dog runs alongside.

Lacy smiles and pushes her horse ahead of Billy.

Smiling, Billy gives chase.

Lacy is a fine rider... and she gives Billy a good race. But Billy is a rodeo star.

Soon their horses are neck and neck.

Lacy glances over at Billy. She's dead set on beating him.

But Billy does something unexpected. He takes himself out of the saddle, stands for a moment, balanced with one foot in a stirrup, then leaps from his horse onto Lacy's.

He winds up behind her on her saddle. He puts his arms around her.

She leans back into him and kisses him.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

The horses graze peacefully. Billy lies with his head in Lacy's lap. Billy's dog lies nearby.

BILLY

I bought the place with my first big prize money. I win a little more, I buy a little more land.

(MORE)

BILLY (cont'd)
Clara stays here for me, runs the
ranch.

He throws a stick for the dog.

BILLY
Go get it, Waylon.

The dog races after the stick. Lacy looks down at Billy.
He's watching his dog, trying to find the way to say
something.

BILLY
(finally)
I'm quiet with you. Like I am when
I ride.

LACY
What do you mean?

BILLY
(getting lost in his
thoughts)
It's quiet when I'm up there.
(a beat)
The rest of the time, there's all
this noise in my head. Things
don't make sense and I'm screaming
questions at myself, but up there,
it all gets real simple.

Billy's somewhere else. A beat. He shakes that off. He
turns and looks up at her.

BILLY
Sing something.

LACY
What?

BILLY
Sing me a song.

She hesitates.

BILLY
Come on. Sing me something.

A last moment of hesitation, and then she starts to sing.
One beautiful chorus of the song she played for Brad. He
watches, marvelling at the sheer beauty of it.

When she's finished, he says

BILLY

That the song you're gonna record
with Brad?

LACY

Yeah...

There's a long pause.

LACY

You don't like it?

BILLY

I love it. I bet it's gonna be a
big hit.

LACY

Come on, Billy. You've got
something to say, say it.

BILLY

When I pissed you off, and you sang
"Freebird," it just sounded like it
was coming from your heart. I hear
Brad on the radio, I don't think
your music sounds like his.

Lacy is a little afraid of this herself.

LACY

This is a very big deal for me, you
know that. This is my shot.

BILLY

I know. I just love your voice,
that's all.

LACY

You love my voice.

BILLY

Yeah.

LACY

You don't give a girl much, you
know that?

BILLY

What do you mean?

LACY

I love you, Billy.

He doesn't answer.

LACY
There's something you're supposed
to say now.

He tries to kiss her. She pulls away.

LACY
You can't say it, can you?

BILLY
Sure, Lace...

LACY
Sure, what?

She smiles, puts a finger to his lips.

LACY
I'm gonna give you a little time,
on that one, handsome. I'll tell
you why. Because you do love me.
(a beat)
Up until then, don't come talking
to me about "hearing my heart."

She gives him a gentle kiss. A DRIVING RHYTHM TRACK takes us
to

INT. BRADLEY'S BARN - DAY

One of Nashville's most venerable studios. Lacy and Brad are
putting down the vocal on her song. Anyone with half a brain
can see that Brad is singing for Lacy.

INT. THE BOOTH

Brad, Lacy, Lefton, and the engineer listen to a mix. Brad
loves it.

BRAD
That's the new single.

LEFTON
Definitely. We want something
ahead of the album. We can put
that out this week. The timing's
perfect. The song's perfect.

Brad turns to Lacy.

BRAD

OK, now, Lacy girl, someone's talking while you're singing this on the CMA's, you're not gonna throw your guitar at the him, or set him on fire, anything like that?

LACY

(smiling)

No...

BRAD

Just checking. Cause we're on to something here.

She smiles again.

BRAD

This is gonna be huge.

She nods.

BRAD

Great. We ought to go out and celebrate.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS - DAY

Billy has a kid on his lap. The mother and father on either side. A photo op. Billy autographing headshots, posing for photos. A long line of people waiting. Andy's sitting with him. They talk in between signatures and photos.

ANDY

It's an out of division contest. No title. But the prize money's there...

BILLY

And the Beast's gonna be on this one?

ANDY

I don't know which strings Jim Meeker pulled, but yeah, the Beast's gonna bring it.

BILLY

(a pause)

What if I don't draw him?

ANDY

This is Meeker's show. You're gonna draw him.

Billy nods. Signs another picture.

INT. THE DOO DROP IN - DALLAS - DAY

Bullriders draw the bulls before they ride. The names used to come out of a barrel, but now, a computer does the work. The riders often gather at a bar to get the results together.

This particular "draw" has been orchestrated into a media event by Andy. The riders all gathered. Free Bud for everyone. The results coming up on a big screen over the bar. A rodeo announcer calls the names of the riders. They step up. Their "draw" comes up on the screen.

They step forward, stand in a spot with the other riders who've already drawn.

Billy walks in. Bulls and riders are matched on the screen. Nice graphics as bull meets rider. There's only three of each left and the Beast still hasn't been drawn.

Billy turns to Eugene in front of him.

BILLY

Looks like you're up, Eugene.

Eugene looks nervous. He looks at the screen. A GUY down the bar is calling bulls.

GUY DOWN THE BAR

Ripped Apart.

Eugene is relieved.

BILLY

(stepping up)

No one would have the luck to draw that sucker twice.

Eugene takes his place with the other riders.

ANNOUNCER

Next up, and we're honored to have him, three time PBR Built Ford Tough champion, Billy Bodeen.

Billy turns to screen. The graphic is going. A little animation of a rodeo bullfighter reaching into a barrel - the way they used to do it. Before the Bull's name has appeared, Billy says

BILLY

The Beast.

The guy down the bar looks at up and repeats what Billy just said, reading from the screen.

GUY DOWN THE BAR

The Beast.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Billy on his phone, calling Lacy. Intercut with her hotel room as needed.

BILLY

How's the recording going?

LACY

We're doing background vocals tomorrow. Brad wants the song to be his next single.

BILLY

No shit! You were right about this being your big break.

LACY

You don't have to worry. I think my "heart's" still intact.

BILLY

(a smile)

I found somebody else.

LACY

Is that right.

BILLY

Little Brahma bull by the name of the Beast.

LACY

You're riding the Beast?

BILLY

Tomorrow afternoon.

LACY
Damn, I'd like to see that.

BILLY
You'll catch the highlights on
ESPN. "Billy Bodeen tames the
Beast."

LACY
You be careful.

BILLY
What I'm gonna be is good.

INT. LOCKERS - CULLMAN ARENA - DAY

Billy, suited up and ready to ride, is doing his swipes of the rope. There are other riders here, one guy drinking a beer and complaining about the bull he drew, another on his knees. He has crosses on his gloves and he's praying to a wooden crucifix hanging from his locker. Billy focuses on this man as he prepares. Dozier is there with him, talking a mile a minute.

DOZIER
He's weighing in at a little under
2,000 pounds. He comes out of the
chute full throttle and it just
gets worse.

We start to INTERCUT. Dozier's voice continues (OVER).

EXT. THE PENS

THE BEAST

being run to the chute. Spoiling for a fight.

DOZIER (V.O.)
He'll land hard on his front feet
and then turn back under himself.
Try to take you down the well right
out of the chute.

EXT. RAMP - CULLMAN ARENA - DAY

Billy and Dozier headed for the chutes.

DOZIER
He's lean and he is mean. I hear
Meeker cross-bred him with a serial
killer out of the Midwest.

THE BEAST

slams against the sides of the chute angrily as he enters.

BILLY

climbs up into position.

BELOW HIM

The greyish white, seething back of the Beast.

Dozier is still giving Billy last minute advice while Billy gets ready to ride.

DOZIER

That doesn't play, he'll reverse
and buck, try to slide you up over
his spikes and once you're on the
dirt, he'll let you think he's
gonna gore you, but don't roll...
run...

BILLY

I got it Dozier. I got it.

BILLY

drops down onto the Beast's back. This bull is huge.

His flank man hands him his bull rope.

FLANK MAN

Wide as hell, isn't he?

He rubs his rosin-coated glove over the rope and when it's good and sticky he begins to wrap the "tail" of the rope around his hand.

Billy leans down now. His "find the heart" ritual. A beat. There's nothing there. He can't find it. We don't hear it.

DOZIER

(to himself)

That beast don't have heart.

If he does, Billy can't find it. He gives up, sits up and concentrates.

THE BEAST

slams against the sides of the chute. Billy steadies himself on the rail, focusing. A beat. He nods to the Gate Man.

The chute yanks open.

For a split of a split second, the Beast does nothing. Just long enough for Billy to blink in confusion.

BOOM!!! The Beast then explodes out the gate in a fury.

DOZIER

can't believe this. Looks at Andy.

DOZIER

He waited? How smart is this son
of a bitch?

Andy shakes his head as...

We come out of the chute with Billy. For a moment, we're his POV, a rearing, jolting, nauseating BLUR that takes in sky, crowd and dirt in a messy half a second.

THIS RIDE WE WATCH IN REAL TIME!

Billy keeps his eyes locked on the Beast's head, anticipating his moves.

The head ducks down. That means a buck coming. Billy leans back, pushing down with his roped hand.

The Beast's first buck is one of those mid-air hind quarter twists that no one can withstand.

Billy slides across the Beast's back until he's almost parallel to the ground as the bull begins a spin to the left.

BILLY'S POV

A whip. Dirt, gravel. The Beast's neck as he whirls around.

THE ARENA

The Beast spins, coming dangerously close to the railing. It's as if he were going to smear Billy against these rails.

THE JUDGES

moving to keep out of the way. They're as worried as everyone else.

THE CROWD

On their feet. Oh shit! Billy's going down.

BILLY

is trying to ride into the spin, but there's no quiet up here for him. This is not locking in. No zone. The Beast is keeping it so tight that if Billy falls, he'll be trampled.

DOZIER

Not working yet, just watching with Andy and Mike. And this hurts to watch.

BILLY

somehow rights himself, re-seats as the Beast gives another massive buck.

THE CROWD

goes crazy!

And so it goes.

The Beast bucks and slams viciously and Billy somehow holds on... the crowd is in agony. Cheering one moment, oeing the next.

Billy goes with the bull through a full spin to the left, then the Beast reverses, spinning to the right. Billy manages to hang on, pulling himself back on top of the bull.

Billy's friends are anxious. This might be Billy's greatest ride or the end of his career.

Jim Meeker is anxious too. He wants his bull to throw this punk.

WE SEE THE CLOCK

As the seconds tick by. Four. Five.

JUST BEFORE THE SIXTH SECOND

we go inside Billy's head again. The cool, quiet peace of his ride. The last seconds of peace Billy Bodeen will know for a very long time.

THE CLOCK

trips over to six.

THE CROWD

All standing now. Roaring.

DOZIER AND THE OTHERS

Hats off, cheering.

BILLY

only needs two seconds more.

THE BEAST

lowers his head to the ground. Billy sees this and leans in, but the bull doesn't try to flip him over his horns.

Instead, he slams his head back up!

BILLY

We're still in the quiet, slow motion calm of Billy's head FOR A LAST MOMENT and then...

... time speeds up to normal and sound comes rushing back in and the cheers of the crowd turn to screams of horror as...

The full weight of the Beast's enormous neck comes racing up...

BILLY'S POV

He sees that huge white neck for just a moment.

BILLY

The head-on collision with the bull's neck COMPLETELY CRUSHES EVERY BONE IN BILLY'S FACE.

AND THEN DARKNESS FOR A GOOD LONG MOMENT...

... until finally a distant voice... someone saying

LACY
Billy. Billy.

We're Billy's POV as his eyes open

INT. INFIRMARY - DAY

Lacy stands, looking down on him. She's got a warm smile, but her eyes are wet.

Billy's entire head is bandaged.

Lacy stares at him, she's trying hard not to show her true reaction to just how messed up he is.

LACY

Wow.

Billy can't talk. There's just a little slit for his mouth.

LACY

It's gonna be fine. It's gonna be
just fine.

EXT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - DAY

Mike, driving a minivan, parks out front. Clara comes out to meet them. Lacy steps out of the van as Mike and Dozier help the still bandaged Billy out.

Clara takes one look, bursts into tears and goes back inside.

Billy stands, looking out at his ranch. Lacy comes up. She takes his arm. He's been gored in the leg too. He walks with a serious limp.

INT. BILLY'S ROOM - DAY

Billy's watching a Braves game with Dozier and Mike.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lacy on the phone. She's pissed.

LACY

I'm not flaking out on you. This
is real life, Larry. Something
you're not all that familiar with.
(listens)
I'll call you in a couple of days.

She hangs up. She takes a beat, thinking about the opportunity that's waiting on her. Andy is there, watching her.

ANDY

Trouble back at the hacienda?

LACY

Yeah...

ANDY

Maybe you should get back...

LACY

What is it you don't like about me, Andy?

ANDY

I like you fine, Lacy. I think you're a hell of a singer.

LACY

Cut the crap. You have something you want to say to me?

ANDY

Billy's had three hundred and fourteen professional rides. Twelve championships of one kind or another. He never once got hurt before.

LACY

What? This is my fault?

ANDY

He never got hurt before. That's all I'm saying.

LACY

How much money did you make on that ride, Andy?

ANDY

It's not about that.

LACY

I'm glad to hear that, Andy. I'm really glad to hear it.

ANDY

What do you know about my job. You have no idea what I do.

LACY

Exactly. You're his career. I'm his life.

ANDY

That's bullshit. Billy and I have been together since...

Dozier's come in over this. He slams his hand down on the table.

DOZIER

Jesus Christ, would you two knock
it off?

They both look at him.

DOZIER

You two both love him. That's all
this is about.

He's right. They know it.

INT. BILLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Billy and Lacy on the bed, flipping channels. He's drinking through a straw. She's holding the drink. They land on CMT - the end of her video. The VJ talks over the last images, *"Brad Harkins dueting with Lacy Dickenson, a song that Lacy wrote. 'The Last Thing I Think About.'* We hear Lacy's gonna start working on her album down there in Nashville with Brad producing and we can't wait to hear it!"

Billy looks at her, gives her a thumbs up. Then he turns back to the TV.

INT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - STABLES - DAY

Lacy saddles the dapple gray. She's going for a ride. Billy's horse is in its stall. She looks at the horse sadly.

EXT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - DAY

As she leads her horse out of the stable, she sees Mike getting out of his truck. He's at the door, handing some DVDs to Andy.

INT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - MEDIA ROOM - NIGHT

Billy's got four huge flat screens in here and all four of them have different footage of the Beast in action. Andy's there, commenting on the footage.

ANDY

He breaks left out of the gate
eighty-two percent of the time.
Watch this Tell. Did you see it?

Billy is pretty bandaged. All we can really see is his eyes.

ANDY

His left ear. It twitched twice,
just before he broke.

(MORE)

ANDY (cont'd)

He doesn't do that unless he's gonna break. And look at this.

He fast forwards the set to his right.

ANDY

This was the ride where he broke Clint Fletcher's ribs. You see that? That little short step before the turn to the inside...

Billy looks at this beast who put him away. Andy keeps talking. We're looking at Billy's eyes, through the bandages. As Andy continues, Billy gets up and walks out of the room.

ANDY

I've talked to Eugene, to Justin McBride, to Paolo Crimber... they all say the same thing. The Beast's got moves. If you study him, I mean really study him... there's patterns here. He can be ridden... You can beat this son of a bitch!

Andy turns. Billy's gone.

EXT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - NIGHT

LATE. All the lights are out but for one.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lacy asleep, by herself. She stirs, reaches over in her sleep. The space beside her is empty.

She walks downstairs.

EXT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT

Billy stands on the porch looking over at the pen and the rink, where his bulls pace.

Lacy is in the doorway watching him. He doesn't notice her at all.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lacy's got her guitar out and a notebook. She's working on a song. A knock at the door. Billy comes in.

She puts her guitar down. He takes her notebook and her pen and writes.

She looks at what he's written. "Go make your record. I've got plenty of nurses. Go!"

She looks at him. He nods his head.

He takes another piece of paper, writes again. Hands it back. "I love you."

She reads the words. There. He's said it.

LACY
(a gentle smile)
I told you you did.

INT. BRADLEY'S BARN - DAY

Lacy, Brad, Larry, going over songs for the album. Listening to her guitar vocal demos of some songs. Brad is way into it, making this record.

BRAD
We'll put strings on the ballad,
Some synth pads, one of those
thousand voice choirs to really
bring it home. I want to do the
tracks with Shania's studio band,
get a little more edge...

He's going a mile a minute and Lacy looks a little overwhelmed.

BRAD
Good, right?

LACY
(hesitates a beat)
I heard it a little more stripped
down...

LARRY
This is the main room, Lacy, not
the lounge. This is how it's done.

BRAD
And I've got some demos for you to
hear.

LACY
Demos?

BRAD

Couple of guys that wrote my last three number ones. They're unbeatable.

LACY

I write my own songs, Brad.

BRAD

Sure, honey, that's not what I meant.

LARRY

It just helps the odds if we salt the pot a little.

BRAD

We don't have to talk about that right now, Lace. What do you say we leave Larry here to mind the store, we head on over to the Sunset Grill and get some dinner?

LACY

(hesitating again)

Sure.

INT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - TV ROOM - NIGHT

Billy with Andy and the boys, watching baseball. Clara comes in.

CLARA

Phone for you.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Billy holds the phone to his bandaged ear.

LACY

I know you can't say anything. I just wanted to know you were there.

Silence. He can't say anything.

LACY

I love you, you baby. I'll be there when the bandages come off.

EXT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - DAY

A five series BMW out front. The doctor must be here.

INT. BILLY'S ROOM - DAY

Andy, Dozier and Mike watch the DOCTOR removing bandages. We can see hints of a bruised mess around cheeks and chin.

DOCTOR
Fourteen hours of reconstructive
surgery to try to undo eight
seconds of foolishness.

The doctor continues to unwrap the bandages. Dozier notices someone at the door.

DOZIER
Hey, superstar.

LACY

Just in time. She smiles. The doctor continues to unwrap.

Now we can see the monster underneath. One day soon, Billy Bodeen will look pretty much like Billy Bodeen... but that day is still a ways away. Right now, he looks like shit.

His lips curl into something his muscles must think is a smile and he says to Lacy

BILLY
Hi, honey.

Lacy tries to look as if this isn't a shock. But Billy can see it in her eyes.

He gets up, limps over to the dresser mirror. When he sees himself, he whistles, or something close. It's hard to make much of a sound through that mouth.

BILLY
How long before I start to look
human?

DOCTOR
Take another couple of weeks for
the swelling to drop. You're
looking at two, three months before
you'll start to really see any
difference.

BILLY
(catching Lacy's eye in
the mirror)
(MORE)

BILLY (cont'd)
 Hell, you should have stayed in
 Nashville. Left me here to rot in
 my ugliness.

LACY
 You do look like shit...

She can say that and sound like she loves him. She grabs him
 by the waist. Pulls him towards her.

LACY
 Maybe now we can...

He braces for the pain in his groin.

Looks at the bandages where he got gouged.

LACY
 How long before those come off?

The guys all laugh. A beat.

BILLY
 What do you say we have a real
 dinner? You know what I want?

She looks at him.

BILLY
 A big old honking steak!

LACY
 (amused)
 A steak?

BILLY
 That's right. And a beer. Hell, a
 whole lot of beer.

INT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A great big steak sits on a plate. Billy is carving into it
 viciously. He takes his first bite of real food since the
 accident, and his first bite of beef in a long time.

Lacy, Dozier, Andy, Mike and Clara all there.

DOZIER
 How's that taste?

BILLY
 Like vengeance.

He smiles a still very crooked, swollen smile.

ANDY

Speaking of vengeance, how'd you like to go watch some old boys put down some bulls?

Billy looks at him.

ANDY

We're going to Wind River tomorrow. Little rodeo they've got down there. You're the guest of honor.

Billy takes a beat.

BILLY

(mutters)
Sounds good.

He takes another bite of his steak. It hurts. He pushes the plate away.

BILLY

My mouth's still too damn sore.

The others sit in a now uncomfortable silence. After a beat, Dozier turns to Lacy.

DOZIER

We must have heard your song on the radio a hundred times since we been up here. Sounds real good every time.

LACY

Thanks.

(a beat)

I brought some rough mixes of six of the songs if you guys want to hear them after dinner.

INT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - MEDIA ROOM

Speakers blast one of Lacy's songs. Very perfect. Sounds like it belongs on country radio. It finishes. They're all there, Clara, Billy, his crew. Dozier gushes.

DOZIER

That's fantastic.

MIKE

Look out Gretchen, goodbye Shania.

ANDY
 (grudgingly)
 That's real nice, Lacy.

LACY
 Thanks, boys.

Everyone's waiting for Billy to say something.

BILLY
 (reluctant)
 I didn't care for it much.

LACY
 You want to tell me why.

BILLY
 It sounded like what I hear on the
 radio.

LACY
 Yeah. That's pretty much the idea.

BILLY
 And that's what you want?

He looks at her. The others shift uncomfortably.

BILLY
 What the hell do I know? That bull
 probably shattered my eardrums.

Lacy doesn't answer.

EXT. WYOMING RODEO - DAY

Amateur. Mid-level. Right now it's calf roping. The
 announcer here is of the big booming voiced variety.

IN THE STANDS

Billy, Lacy and Billy's friends. Billy looks uncomfortable
 out in public, but he's with his pals, and they seem to make
 everything alright.

ANNOUNCER
 In the stands with us here today,
 folks give a warm Cheyenne welcome
 to three time PBR Finals winner
 Billy Bodeen.

The crowd goes wild. At Dozier and Mike's urging, Billy gets
 to his feet and tips his hat.

ANNOUNCER

Glad to see you, Billy. Hope
you'll be out of the stands and
back in the arena soon.

More applause. Billy makes Lacy stand. Wanda Carlyle makes
her way to their seats.

WANDA

You boys found your way here all
right?

ANDY

Thanks for the tickets, Wanda.

WANDA

Any time.
(smiles at Billy)
Shit, Billy, you look good as new.
And you, misds Top Forty, when are
you gonna let me put you in some
Wranglers?

She takes a beat. Smiles.

WANDA

Hi, Lacy, I'm Wanda.

They shake hands. (As this conversation continues, we might
notice that Billy is focused on a young rider preparing for
his ride.)

ANDY

So you sponsor one of these kids?

WANDA

Hell, we sponsor them all. Never
know where you're gonna find the
next Billy Bodeen.
(to Billy)
We miss you out there, Stud. When
are you gonna bless the arena with
your ride again?

DOZIER

Wearing your pants of course.

WANDA

Goes without saying.

DOZIER

You know I'm always available for
an endorsement.

WANDA

I'll be sure to keep that in mind.

ANNOUNCER

This next event is something we think you'll really enjoy, Billy. LETS GET READY TO TUMBLE! IT'S BULL-RIDING TIME!

WE COME IN ON BILLY

He looks... nervous. He takes a hip flask from his pocket. Takes a deep pull. Lacy notices.

ANNOUNCER

Our first rider. Dale Hancock, sitting on Last Rites. Good luck, Dale, and don't get self-conscious, just cause Billy Bodeen's watching you.

IN THE CHUTE

DALE HANCOCK might be eighteen - this time next year. He tips his hat to Billy.

BILLY

still nervous, gives him a one finger salute.

DALE

cinches up.

BILLY

looks as if he were the one about to ride.

DALE

nods to the Gate Man.

BILLY

Tense.

DALE

The chute opens and out he comes. Last Rites is a good bull, maybe 1700 pounds. He begins a bucking clockwise spin. Dale holds on valiantly.

BILLY

watches, tense. His hands squeeze the flask he's holding and now drops it. Dozier nudges Andy. Look at that.

DALE

is starting to fall.

BILLY

This is really tearing at him.

DALE

Hanging on, but not for much longer. That huge Brahma hump beneath him ripples and surges...

Billy stands and heads quickly down the aisle and out of the arena, even as Dale is thrown and the bullfighters run in to distract the bull.

EXT. GRANDSTAND - DAY

Billy stands by the concessions, gulping for air, trying to catch his breath.

Someone slides up beside him. Lacy.

LACY

You all right, honey?

Billy nods. Definitely not all right. He fumbles in his pocket for his flask.

LACY

Let's go home.

He shakes her off angrily. Then looks at her.

BILLY

Don't show me that.

LACY

What?

BILLY

Pity.
(a beat)
Shit.

He turns and we watch him walk into the distance.

INT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - NIGHT

Billy walks towards us now, up the hall towards the media room. He's holding a bottle of tequila.

INT. MEDIA ROOM

Billy hits the remote, puts on the Beast footage. Watches for a minute... freezes a shot of the bull, a blurred close-up of his head.. Of his glaring eye.

Holding his tequila bottle for support, he walks right up to the big screen and stares at that frozen, brutal eye.

EXT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - STABLES - DAY

Lacy cinches the saddle on the dapple grey and leads it out of its stall. She's about to mount when Clara comes up. Clara takes a beat.

CLARA

He's gonna get mean.

LACY

Mean?

CLARA

(a beat - explaining)

He was nine when our momma died. Aneurism. She was there one minute, gone the next.

LACY

I'm sorry.

CLARA

I'm sorry too. It broke our daddy down and he put himself together nasty. The liquor didn't help. He tried to beat the world into submission... and us along with it, just trying to make sense out of what that world had taken from him.

She lets Lacy think about that. Lets her point sink in.

CLARA

(finally)

That eight seconds is all Billy's got. And now he doesn't have it any more.

Lacy thinks about that. Cinches her saddle.

EXT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - DUSK

Sun's gone down. Last of the day. Lacy's coming in from the stables.

INT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT

Dark. A glow from the media room. She turns on the lights. She heads for the media room.

INT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - MEDIA ROOM

The monitors are all on to the Beast.

Lacy comes in. Billy is asleep on the couch, a bottle in his hand.

Lacy takes the bottle, sets it on the table. Covers him with a throw. She picks up the remote to shut the monitors off and stops, staring at the images of the Beast. Her competition. She lies down next to him under the blanket, takes another look at the Beast, and shuts the monitors off.

EXT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - DAY

Lacy just finished with a morning ride, walking back to the house. There's a brand new Dakota parked out front.

INT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - DAY

Lacy comes in to find Brad and Billy having a beer. Billy has clearly already had several. Brad stands. He's glad to see Lacy.

BILLY

Look who came to visit.

LACY

Hey, Brad.

BRAD

(a beat)

I was just telling Billy how good he looked.

BILLY

And I was telling him he's full of shit.

BRAD

(to Lacy)

How about you, Lacy girl? You doing all right?

LACY
I'm OK. How's everybody?

BRAD
The band's good. They all send
their regards.

There's a pause, the subtext here being, "They all want to know when you're coming back."

LACY
Can you stay for dinner?

BRAD
I don't know if I can sit at the
table with a woman who's got the
number one song in the country.

He pulls out Billboard, folded open to the charts.

INT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Billy and Clara and Brad and Lacy talking shop.

BRAD
... and as soon as you get back,
we're ready to go. Shouldn't take
more than a couple of weeks...
Larry wants us out on the road
right away. We've got a number one
single to promote.

Lacy laughs. Billy is drunk and he's not enjoying himself.

BILLY
You ever tried to ride a bull,
Brad?

BRAD
Me. No way.

BILLY
Too much of a pussy, right?

CLARA
Billy...

BRAD
(won't bite)
Pretty much, yeah.

There's a silent beat. No one thinks that's funny.

BILLY

You ever hear anyone say how a bull
is like a woman?

BRAD

No, not really...

BILLY

Well it's bullshit! A bull is
nothing like a woman. You'll hear
these old boys talking on about
that. You got to ride them down,
all that... but the thing of it is,
it's a totally unnatural act... do
you see what I'm saying? A bull,
unlike a woman, is not meant to be
ridden.

OK, he's trying to piss Lacy off and he's succeeding. She
gets up. He's got an untouched meal in front of him and a
bottle of Rebel Yell on the table.

Lacy picks up his plate. She's pissed off. She dumps the
plate in his lap.

LACY

You're done. Go clean up.

BILLY

Hell did you do that for?

LACY

Your done.

She gathers the other plates and walks to the kitchen.

BILLY

"Done." Hell, honey, I haven't
even started.

He scrapes the food onto the floor and puts his feet up on
the table.

BILLY

You want to watch some home movies,
Bradley?

BRAD

I think I'll help Lacy with the
cleaning up.

Billy gives him a squirrely look.

BILLY
That's all right. You do that.

Brad hesitates a moment, then heads after Lacy.

Billy and Clara sit for a moment.

CLARA
Nice going.

IN THE KITCHEN

Lacy throws the plates in the sink where they shatter. Brad comes in. He hesitates, puts a hand on her shoulder.

BRAD
You come back to Nashville. Finish the album. Come out on the road with me. Be with people that care about you. Be doing something you were meant to do.

She stands there, looking down into the sink.

LACY
I'm in love, Brad.

He takes her by the shoulders. Looks her dead in the eye.

BRAD
Hell, don't you think I know that?
(a beat)
I just don't see any reason for that bull to wreck two lives.

EXT. BILLY'S WYOMING RETREAT - NIGHT

Lacy outside, saying goodbye to Brad. He drives off in his truck. She turns.

Billy is in the doorway, bleary eyed.

BILLY
Why didn't you go with him?

She starts to speak. Billy throws down the nearly empty bottle of Rebel Yell. It smashes against the ground.

LACY
Watch it, Billy.

BILLY

You get on out of here. You can write another song. "He broke his face so I broke his heart." Some shit like that.

She looks at him. She's had enough.

LACY

What are you, the first person who ever got hurt?

BILLY

What's that supposed to mean?

LACY

You're scared! You're scared to get back up on a bull. You've got every right to be. Fine. But stop feeling sorry for yourself.

BILLY

Don't tell me what I am! No one asked you to come back here.

LACY

(gets in his face)

That's the Goddamned problem! You didn't ask. You'll never ask. You just suffer in silence and bring everyone down with you!

BILLY

WELL THEN GO! GET YOUR "SELL-OUT" ASS OUT OF HERE! Who are you to tell me I'm scared?

(a beat)

At least I don't lie to the world about who I am!

LACY

Don't go down that road.

BILLY

Go on, get on out of here and go play *Brad's* music.

LACY

Shut up.

BILLY

Go on down there and suck on the dick of success.

LACY HITS BILLY SQUARE IN HIS BRUISED FACE!**LACY**

YOU SON OF A BITCH!

Full of anger, Billy slams her against the gate. He's holding her. Hand at her chin. He brings his fist up. An angry beat and then he realizes what he was about to do. He brings his fist down. Lets her go. He pushes against the railing.

BILLY

I'm sorry.

LACY

Yeah, you are.

She pushes past him, walks away. We hear a car door slam. A car starts, screech off. He looks up, staring across the pen. His eyes suddenly focus on one of his bulls.

A long beat, then Billy gets up and heads for the pens.

IN THE CHUTES

Billy getting one of his training bulls into the chute. Slipping, muddy, drunk. Finally, he gets the bull in the chute.

He climbs the rail. He hangs up there, looking down at the bull's back. His heart is pumping. His hands are trembling. His whole body is shaking.

Billy looks and looks. He leans forward, his body trembling more...

... but he can't do it!

And then he starts to sob.

EXT. JACK DUNLAP'S SCHOOL OF RODEO - DAY**CLOSE ON A WOODEN DOOR**

Someone knocking. A long beat. The door opens.

Jack Dunlap stands there facing

BILLY

Billy's holding a bottle. He looks like shit. Behind him we can see a bit of New Mexico's striking desert.

BILLY

I need you to get me up on a bull
again, Jack.

INT. BRADLEY'S BARN - DAY

A driving, up-tempo song. Everyone in the booth digging it. The band digging it. Brad and Lacy are singing this duet. A song that makes you feel good. The last song Lacy wants to sing. PUSH IN on her face. She's smiling and absolutely miserable.

EXT. JACK DUNLAP'S SCHOOL OF RODEO - DAY

No flash. Just pens and horses, steers, bulls. Where Cowboys come to learn their art.

INT. BARN - DAY

Jack and Billy stand there. Billy looks around.

BILLY

Where's the gym?

JACK

You want to get strong, bail hay.
(a beat)

I want every one of these bails on
the other side of the barn by lunch
time.

He turns and walks out. Billy takes a beat, then starts to bail.

EXT. JACK DUNLAP'S SCHOOL OF RODEO

LATER. Jack sitting on the porch, smoking, having a beer. He looks up. Billy, shirt off, covered in sweat, stands by the barn holding his pitchfork.

INT. BARN

Jack comes in with Billy. The bails are all neatly stacked on the far side of the barn.

JACK

(yawns)

Now put them back where they were.

He turns and walks out of the barn.

EXT. OMAHA, NEBRASKA FAIRGROUNDS - DAY

Lacy is doing a soundcheck in this big, empty arena. They're working it out. Stopping to ask for more monitors, to bring up the harmony etc.

Brad is there, watching from the twentieth row, shouting his own comments to the sound man.

Larry Lefton comes hustling in from somewhere. He's got a bottle of champagne and his Blackberry out.

The band stops.

Larry reads from his Palm Pilot.

LEFTON

And the CMA nominations are...
 For Record of the Year: "The Last
 Thing I Think About."
 For Duet of the Year: "The Last
 Thing I Think About."
 For Song of the Year: "The Last
 Thing I Think About."

Whoops and hollers. Lacy's trying to look happy. Lefton starts pouring glasses. He offers one to Lacy.

She heads off the stage, up the main aisle of the arena and out. Brad watches her go.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS - DAY

Lacy walks through this crowded county fair. Kids on rides. Farmers with prize pigs. Giant corn. New inventions.

She stops by a corral where a high school rodeo is in progress. She goes over, leans against the fence.

High school boys, some as young as thirteen, ride steers. You've got to start somewhere, right?

Like little leaguers doing every shuffle, scratch and spit they've ever seen a major leaguer do, these kids have all the moves.

She's watching this boy ride now. An announcer tells us his name is Toby Martin and he's riding a steer out of the Billings Ranch in Willow.

Toby has a good ride. Lacy watches, lost in her thoughts.

IN THE CROWD

Brad has come to find her, but when he sees her, sees what she's watching, he just stands there, leaving her to nurse her aching heart.

EXT. JACK DUNLAP'S SCHOOL OF RODEO - DAY

A barrel on four ropes hung between some trees. Jack's got a cowboy at each rope.

JACK
Climb on.

BILLY
I haven't done the barrel since I was thirteen.

JACK
Climb on.

BILLY
Jack.

JACK
Do what I tell you, damn it.

Billy hesitates, then moves to climb on the barrel.

Jack nods slightly to one of his cowboys. The cowboy jerks the rope. Billy hangs on, no problem.

All four cowboys move at once, the two on the left jerking up while the two on the right pull down... a simulated spin.

Billy hangs on perfectly. He gets off, looks at Jack.

BILLY
I know how to do this, Jack.

Jack smiles.

JACK
That's the first lesson.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

Billy and Jack having dinner. Beans and pork chops. Jack is drinking a beer. Billy's got a 7-Up.

JACK

What's that girl of yours, the singer... what does she think about you riding?

BILLY

I pretty well butchered things beyond the point where my line of work would be the issue.

JACK

Hey. Not if she loves you. If she loves you, you may very well get another chance to screw things up.

He downs his beer, helps himself to another from the cooler next to him.

BILLY

What do we do tomorrow?

JACK

We go for a little stroll.

EXT. WHEELER PEAK TRAIL - DAY

New Mexico's highest peak is about 15 miles round-trip. If you're incredibly well conditioned, you might be able to do the hike in a day. Billy, wheezing and out of breath, follows Jack as he jogs effortlessly up the trail.

EXT. WHEELER PEAK - DAY

The view as they say, was worth the climb. Jack is enjoying it. Billy looks like he's going to faint. But once he's caught his breath, he takes a moment and starts to admire the view.

He's looking at the vastness. Beautiful. Stretches on forever. Jack studies him. Billy's thinking about Lacy and Jack knows it.

INT. NASHVILLE'S FINEST OUTFITTER - DAY

Lacy is getting her CMA outfit. She's not of the glitter and gown variety. She's going classic Sweetheart of the Rodeo cowgirl. She's going to look just beautiful.

The DRESSMAKER is chatty, wants to gossip.

DRESSMAKER

So you and that Billy Bodeen still an item or what?

Lacy looks at her in the mirror.

DRESSMAKER

Don't mind me. I've got a kind of dull occupation. I just pass the time is all.

Her smile is enough to tell Lacy that she's a nice person, doesn't mean any harm.

LACY

We're sort of... stalled, I guess you would say.

DRESSMAKER

Never recovered from that hit he took, did he?

LACY

I guess not.

DRESSMAKER

My first husband was a long haul trucker. One night, a deer comes out of nowhere, bolts across the road. My husband, he was a prick, but he loved animals. He hits the brakes. Turns the truck on its side and it jackknifes. The cab spins into the oncoming traffic. Collides with a pick-up. He walks away from the accident with just some scratches and a sprained ankle, but he was no good after that. Couldn't even get on the bumper cars at an amusement park unless he'd had a six pack under his belt.

LACY

That why you broke up?

DRESSMAKER

Nah. I was sleeping with his boss. Him not working, he was around the house more and he picked up the phone at an inappropriate time.

She works at pinning Lacy's hem for a moment.

INT. JACK DUNLAP'S SCHOOL OF RODEO - DAY

Billy training. Jack watching.

EXT. JACK DUNLAP'S SCHOOL OF RODEO - DAY

Billy on a mechanical bull. His ride coming back. His ease. But then of course, this is a machine, not an angry animal determined to hurt him.

EXT. WHEELER PEAK TRAIL - DAY

Billy jogging next to Jack. Now Jack stops. He stands and watches as Billy makes it to the peak.

EXT. WHEELER PEAK - DAY

Jack and Billy and the view.

JACK

I remember when you first started riding.

BILLY

I was hanging round that ranch out of Beaumont, doing odd jobs.

JACK

I came out to buy a couple of bulls, found you riding steers like there was no tomorrow.

BILLY

There wasn't one for me back then.

JACK

How about now?

He gives Billy a moment to think about that.

JACK

Sooner or later, it's time to leave the dance. When you got to go home, it's nice to have one to go to.

BILLY

I've got to know if I can get up before I walk away, Jack.

They're quiet and then Jack says

JACK

I know that, I'm just saying. Now you've got another place where you can be quiet.

(a beat)

(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)
 There's a local in Otero tomorrow.
 (smiles)
 Tomorrow, you get back up on a
 bull.

EXT. OTERO FAIRGROUNDS - NIGHT

Local rodeo. Four hundred people there, max. It's a little league stadium, and there are outdoor lights.

BILLY,

in full riding gear, has one of his ropes wrapped around the railing bar and he's doing his thirty-six with the rosin.

DOZIER (O.S.)
 I think you just did thirty-seven.
 You don't want to mess up your
 superstition....

Billy turns. Dozier, Andy and Mike have all showed up for this. They're all glad to see each other. Hugs and how's it goin's. Billy notices that Dozier is in full bullfighter garb.

BILLY
 What's this?

DOZIER
 I'm your bullfighter.

Billy looks at him.

DOZIER
 Only way I could get floor seats
 for your big comeback.

Billy smiles.

BILLY
 See you out there.

Dozier nods, heads off. Billy starts for the chutes. As he walks, he hears the announcer.

ANNOUNCER
 We've got a treat for you all
 today. Coming back for his first
 ride since his run in with the
 Beast, three time PBR Built Ford
 Tough champion, Billy Bodeen.

The crowd CHEERS. A good-sized bull is run in from the pens with a couple of his cowboys.

Billy looks at the bull. He climbs up.

Jack's there. He's got the bull rope waiting.

Billy looks down at the back of that bull.

Dozier's on the field, in his crouch. There are a couple of local bullfighters here, just cowboys doing something on a Friday night.

Andy and Mike are by the rail, standing to watch the ride. Jack comes over to join them.

Billy. In the chute, hesitating.

Dozier watches his friend.

DOZIER

C'mon buddy. Do your eight.

Another long beat.

ANDY

Maybe we should call this off.

JACK

Give him a moment.

IN THE CHUTE

Billy takes a last moment. Then, he eases down onto on the bull.

ANNOUNCER

You want to talk about heart. You want to talk about courage. Here's one idol who hasn't fallen. Billy Bodeen, folks! Billy Bodeen!

Now, Billy bends to feel the bull's heart. Then he comes back up with a smile. He's found it. He steadies himself and nods to the wrangler and the chute opens.

We come in all full of noise and action.

JACK, ANDY, MIKE

All watching, sensing that this is going to work.

DOZIER

In the field, moving to position himself, watching Billy ride at the same time.

BILLY

It's not there for him. He's fighting the bull, out of synch.

The sounds of the crowd cheering, the Bull's movements, its bells clanging, all ringing in his head. It's not quiet up here.

THE CLOCK

clicks to two seconds.

Billy's hand on the rope.

The bull bucking.

The guys watching.

The small crowd cheering as they come to their feet!

The clock rolls to six seconds...

His friends are on the fence, cheering, waving their hats.

The buzzer sounds.

Billy leaps to the ground.

He hesitates... then walks away from the bull!

Dozier sees that. He smiles.

DOZIER
(to himself)
I'll be damned.

Mike, Andy and Jack hurry into the ring to meet Billy. Dozier joins them. He's done it. The four of them come together for a big celebratory hug.

JACK
Now you can go home.

Billy smiles.

INT. SIR REHEARSAL STUDIO - NASHVILLE - DAY

Brad and Lacy rehearsing for the CMAs. They're just finishing the song. As it ends, they hear one person clapping.

BILLY (O.S.)
"Freebird!"

Lacy looks up. Sees Billy standing there. She can't help but smile.

Brad looks at Lacy a beat, then turns to the band.

BRAD
Let's take five.

The band files off, leaving Lacy alone with Billy. Before Brad leaves, he takes a moment to say to Billy

BRAD
You're a lucky man. I hope you know that.

And he follows the band out of there.

Billy and Lacy stand awkwardly for a moment.

BILLY
How've you been?

LACY
All right.

BILLY
You're getting all rehearsed and everything for the show?

LACY
This weekend. We leave for Vegas in the morning.

Billy nods. Another beat.

BILLY
I rode again.

LACY
I know.
(explaining)
Dozier called me. So you really did it?

BILLY
Yeah. I had to bail a lot of hay to get there.

LACY
(gently)
What are you talking about?

BILLY
Nothing.

Billy smiles. They're quiet for another long moment. It's uncomfortable.

BILLY
Look, I like loving you... I mean,
I love you, Lacy and I want to be
with you.

He pulls her to him and they kiss. For a long time.

BILLY
I was terrible, wasn't I?

LACY
You were awful.

BILLY
I'm sorry.

LACY
Shut up.

She kisses him again. Holds him like she'll never let him go.

INT. TULSA, OKLAHOMA - BULL DRAW - DAY

Dozier, Andy, Mike. Drinking, talking shop. Watching the draw.

ANDY
Who do you like?

DOZIER
That kid out of El Paso is really
coming up.

ANDY
He's got a couple of moves, yeah.

Jimmy Meeker comes over to them. He's real pleased with himself. He stands for a minute.

MEEKER
Hear your boy's all done.

Andy doesn't answer.

MEEKER

Can't say I blame him.

Andy looks him right in the eye.

ANDY

Take your gloating ass down the bar, Meeker, or you're gonna be watching your bull from a hospital bed.

Wow. Who knew he had it in him? Dozier claps him on the back.

DOZIER

Andy, old son, let me buy you a free beer.

He grabs two Buds from the bar.

Mike hasn't said anything. You think back, he hasn't talked much since Billy's accident. Now he says a very heartfelt

MIKE

Shit.

Andy and Dozier look at him.

MIKE

It was always Billy, you know? That's how I knew I was all right. Cause I knew someone who could make time stand still. I knew a man who, for eight seconds, could tame the world.

Andy and Dozier just stare at him. Last guy they thought would go poetic. Finally, Dozier says

DOZIER

I thought you just liked hanging around him for the women...

And Mike smiles sadly.

Then, someone sees something over by the door. There's a commotion. Dozier looks over there... and he smiles.

BILLY BODEEN AND DICKENSON

have just come into the bar.

People tell each other that Billy's here. A few people say "hellos" but mostly there's a sort of awed silence.

Billy and Lacy comes over to Billy's friends.

DOZIER

Look who's back together again.
You married yet? Where are the
kids?

Andy smiles.

ANDY

I thought I'd never say this, but
it's good to see you again, Lacy.

LACY

You like me now. Now that he's
retired.

ANDY

Makes it a little smoother, yeah.

MIKE

So what the hell are you doing
here.

BILLY

I haven't missed a draw in ten
years... I always like to know
who's gonna be hurting my friends.

All attention turns to the huge screen at the far end of the room. There's an MC here with a microphone.

A world famous Rodeo Announcer.

ANNOUNCER

First up is a new boy out of
Abilene. Let's see who Tyler Brown
is gonna ride.

The graphics spin. A green eighteen year old draws a bull called Little Squirt. There's applause. Some comments.

Billy and Lacy are happy, enjoying themselves. Laughing with Billy's friends.

ANNOUNCER

And next, a new rider out of El
Paso. Guillermo Seguin. Step on
up, Guillermo.

GUILLERMO takes a step forward. Young guy. Looks cocky. The graphics spin. The cowboys hoot and holler.

BILLY

He's gonna take it this year.

ANDY

With you out of the way, he just might.

Guillermo draws a bull called White Lightning.

The announcer checks the third name. He looks surprised.

ANNOUNCER

This is a mistake folks, cause this fella here's retired. Awe, hell, just want to say his name... Billy Bodeen.

The cowboys go wild. Dozier slaps Billy on the back.

ANDY

Must have forgotten to pull your name off the computer.

BILLY

I guess so.

ANNOUNCER

What do you say, folks, for old time's sake, we see who Billy would have drawn.

Everyone likes that idea. He looks at Billy.

ANNOUNCER

Do you mind?

Billy nods to the announcer. The announcer pushes whatever he pushes to make the graphic spin on the giant screen.

Billy watches the screen. What he sees makes him burst out laughing. Wonder what just happened.

His friends all look at the screen now too. It's a surprise to them at first, but pretty soon, they are laughing too.

ANNOUNCER

The Beast! Damn, Billy, it's a good thing you retired.

Everyone raises their beers. Everyone's laughing... except Lacy. She's watching

BILLY

Billy just stares into space. Something in him shifts.

BILLY
(to himself)
I'm gonna take the ride.

Andy looks at him.

ANDY
What did you just say?

It's Billy's moment of truth. He simmers. Finally, he looks at the announcer.

BILLY
I'm gonna take the ride.

The crowd goes nuts.

Dozier downs his beer and tightens his lip as Billy steps up to join the other riders.

Lacy watches for a moment, then she turns and sadly walks out.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Billy sits on his bed, wrapping and unwrapping his bull rope around his hand. He's focused. Knows what he's going to do.

There's a knock at his door. He gets up. Opens it. Lacy is standing there. He holds the door to let her in.

LACY
(a moment)
I don't want you to do it.

BILLY
I know.

LACY
But you're gonna do it.

A beat. Billy looks at her sadly. He has no choice.

BILLY
I have to.

She wants to say more... but what can she say? Instead she grabs his face, kisses him passionately, as if she claiming him.

They fall back onto the bed, slide out of their clothes and begin to make love. It's deep, it's passionate.

As they near their climax, we're on Lacy... And we see tears in her eyes.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Lacy and Billy in bed. Lacy lying, her back to Billy. Billy leans over, kisses her on the cheek. We see now that her eyes are open. She's awake. Billy gets up, pulls on his clothes. Lacy rolls over and watches him. She is clearly about to say something... but then she lets it pass.

Billy snaps on his shirt and, no idea that she's awake, turns and heads out the door.

INT. STADIUM - DAY

Billy walks among the stalls. The HANDS, feeding, cleaning, getting ready. Billy finds the Beast's stall.

THE BULL

is calm. No fire at all. He looks at Billy and Billy looks at him... Somehow, this bull at rest seems even more powerful... and both of them seem to know what's coming next. Man and beast are still for a moment... at peace.

INT. STADIUM - DAY

A bullfighter sticks his face right in ours and blows a noise maker. As he runs off, we see Dozier, also in his bullfighter outfit and also working the crowd.

IN THE SEATS

Andy, Mike and Lacy.

This is the full spectacle. Crowded. Noisy. Bullfighters and shouting and all the excitement. Another of those "Let's Get Ready to Rumble" announcers.

ANNOUNCER

And now, the featured event of the day, the bull riding competition. Starting us off, a new rider out of Colorado Springs, Tyler Brown, riding Little Squirt.

Out of the chute comes Tyler on a good looking bull. He has himself a nice ride. Goes the eight. Gets away clean.

As Dozier runs into distract the bull, we move past the judges to the chutes, where the Beast, no longer looking calm, is being run in. He slams against the slide of the chute. Caged fury. As bad as it gets.

IN A BROADCAST BOOTH

Jack is doing the broadcast for this.

JACK

Next up, we've got a storybook rivalry. A rider and the bull who nearly killed him. My old friend, Billy Bodeen, trying his luck once more time against the Beast.

IN THE STANDS

Lacy reaches for Andy's "all access" pass.

LACY

Do you mind?

Andy takes a beat. A little nod.

ANDY

Sure. Go ahead.

She smiles a little at that... then heads off for the bowels of the stadium.

BILLY'S BUCKLE

His third, the one for this year's World Finals. He fastens it around his waist.

His spurs are good.

His chaps are fine.

Billy walks down the run into the arena. The stadium Announcer begins his build up. *"Coming back to the arena, back from a life threatening ride and about to ride the Beast, the same bull that did the damage... Three time winner of the PBR Built Ford Tough finals, a cowboy's cowboy..."*

THE CROWD

Goes insane!

IN THE STANDS

Andy and Mike watch.

OVER TO THE SIDE

Meeker.

THE JUDGES

Tense.

DOZIER

Even tenser.

IN THE BOOTH

Jack, doing his broadcast.

JACK

I have to tell you this, folks. I was with Billy last week when he made his first ride since his run in with the Beast and I'll tell you what. Billy Bodeen is one of the finest riders of all time... he's a heck of a lot better than I ever was.

BY THE CHUTES

Billy reaches the chute. He takes a beat and then begins to climb up.

We hear a cowboy yelling, "Hey lady, you can't go in there." We see Lacy running along the length of the chutes, trying to make it to Billy.

BILLY

hasn't seen her yet. He hesitates just a moment, then lowers himself onto the Beast. The bull SNORTS.

Billy starts to wrap the bull rope slowly around his hand.

THE RING ANNOUNCER

has been going on this whole time.

ANNOUNCER

Let's welcome him back and let him know how proud we are to see him ride again... Billy Bodeen.

The crowd goes nuts!

BILLY

leans down to look for the heartbeat. He can't find it.

BILLY

(to himself)

C'mon. Where are you?

Then he hears her.

LACY

Billy... wait...

He turns and now he sees her, running down the chutes towards him.

LACY

Billy...

She stops. She knows now what she really knew all along. There's no stopping this ride. She looks up into Billy's eyes... suddenly he feels the pumping the Beast's heart, full and strong. Billy smiles.

Lacy smiles back.

Billy sits up.

Her eyes on him, quietly, to herself, Lacy says

LACY

Come home to me.

Billy nods to the Gate Man.

The chute opens.

And we are into Billy Bodeen's last ride.

The Beast pulls out every trick he knows, invents a few more. The spin, the reverse, the buck, the twist, the body roll.

And Billy hangs on through it all. Focused... but still not able to find the zone...

IN THE RUN

Lacy is walking away. She can't even bring herself to watch.

JACK DUNLAP

He can't broadcast. He takes his headset off and closes his eyes.

DOZIER

moves around the arena, ready to step in as needed.

THE BEAST

whips, trying to take Billy down inside, where he can be trampled.

LACY

Almost out of the arena now.

BILLY

hangs on barely.

BILLY'S POV

The sky. The stands. The dirt.

AND THEN IT HAPPENS

Billy finds his way back -- ALL THE SOUND DRAINS FROM OUR PICTURE. AND TIME SEEMS TO STAND STILL.

And we are back with Billy where we were on that first ride.

IN THE ZONE

Where all is quiet. Where all is beauty and grace. Where every single thing in life makes sense.

THE BEAST

goes airborne again. Magnificent, but knowing he's not going to throw Billy this time.

THE CROWD

can feel it.

LACY

hears the exultation of the crowd. She stops, just as

THE CLOCK

kicks over to eight seconds.

SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY

We can hear the buzzer sound.

BILLY

He knows he's done it. But he's not ready to dismount.

DOZIER

Watches, knowing he's gone past the buzzer.

THE CROWD

All on their feet now, screaming, cheering.

And then finally, Billy begins to free his hand from the rope.

And then...

The Beast does exactly what Dozier said he would do on Billy's first ride. He drops his head and Billy is flipped over his horns and onto the ground.

BILLY

hits the ground impossibly hard as the Beast charges...

ANDY AND MIKE

This is bad and they know it.

DOZIER

races to get between the two of them, but he can't get past the Beast's huge hind legs.

He is kicked back against the fence for trying.

WE'RE STILL IN THE QUIET, SLOW MOTION CALM OF BILLY'S HEAD FOR A LAST MOMENT

as he looks up...

LACY

hears the tone of the crowd change. She drops to her knees and starts to cry.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NIGHT

The CMAs. We're on stage. Vince Gill is introducing nominee for *Song of the Year*, *Record of the Year*, *Duet of the Year*, Brad Harkins and Lacy Dickenson, singing their new single "I Still Love You."

There's the band, complete with elaborate string section. Brad and Lacy up front. They've kicked off the intro and it sounds larger than life. And then, just before they should come in singing, Lacy looks at Brad. She shakes her head.

He looks at her. The band vamps, not sure what's going on.

A last beat. Brad understands. He bring his fist up in their "tag team" gesture. She smiles. Touches fists with him. Brad backs away.

IN THE WINGS

Everyone is going nuts. Larry Lefton. Stage managers. Everybody. What the hell is going on?

ON STAGE

Brad motions to the band to fade slowly into silence. They do... and it's just Lacy, strumming her guitar.

Lacy hesitates for a moment, then she steps to the microphone and she begins to sing. Her beautiful voice lifts into the air.

And this one... you can't hear a thing but her heart.

FADE OUT.