

Bone Dry
original screenplay by
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1 EXT. FARM COUNTRY BAKERSFIELD CA - DAY

An aerial view shows the great circles and long strips of irrigated crops.

2 EXT. THE FARMSTEAD - LATE AFTERNOON

An older house, machine shed. Well-kept, freshly painted. A late model pickup and a small sedan are parked in front of the house.

3 EXT. GARDEN LATE AFTERNOON

SUPER: August

Mary Shepherd, 42, hair pinned back, dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, picks fresh vegetables from her garden, which is heavily mulched.

4 EXT. CORN FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

Joe Shepherd, 45, tall, slightly heavy, wearing bib overalls, short-sleeve shirt stained with sweat and heavy work boots, gets off his big green tractor and walks a field.

He rubs the powdery soil between his hands.

He looks worried.

5 INT. KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Mary prepares supper- roast beef, boiled potatoes, salad, Jello for desert.

Her daughter KRISTI, (8) and her son JOE JR (10) run in and out of the kitchen shouting and getting in her way.

MARY

Hey! Stop that! Kristi cut up these veggies. Junior, set the table.

6 INT. KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING

The family comes to the table. They fold their hands.

JOE

We thank thee O Lord for the bounty
we are about to receive through Jesus
Christ our Lord. Amen.

ALL

Amen.

Mary passes the food dishes around, and the family eats in silence.

JUNIOR
Mom, can I have some desert?

MARY
Clean your plate first.

JOE
Mind your mother, Mark.

MARY
How's it looking out there?

JOE
If we don't get rain this week there
won't be a crop. The irrigation
water we get just isn't enough.

MARY
My garden is still doing pretty well.

JOE
You can't use those methods on a
thousand acres.

7 INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Joe shuffles in and collapses in the recliner. An old grandfather clock that has been in the family for several generations tick-tock's in the background. He picks up the remote and turns on the TV to watch the weather.

WEATHERMAN
Tomorrow there's a 10% chance of
rain and an expected high of 102.

Joe turns off the TV and lights, leaves the room.

8 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joe comes in, strips down to his undies, and crawls into bed next to Mary.

Mary lies facing the other way.

JOE
'Night.

Joe kisses her on the cheek.

Mary opens her eyes, but she says nothing.

9 INT. KITCHEN - SUNRISE

SUPER: September

Nursing a cup of coffee, Mary watches a video on her iPad about the use of swales to capture rain water.

Joe comes in dressed for work, looks over her shoulder.

JOE

It's a bit too late for that.

Mary pours him a cup of coffee and then fixes his breakfast.

She sits down with him while he eats.

MARY

Did you hear about Johnny Johnson?

JOE

Yes.

MARY

You didn't say anything.

JOE

Nothing to say. We'll go to the funeral.

MARY

I hope you don't have those kind of thoughts.

Joe stares at his food.

MARY (CONT'D)

Do you?

JOE

No.

Joe finishes his food in silence, stands up, gives her a peck on the cheek, and goes out.

10 INT. MACHINE SHED - EARLY MORNING

Joe thumbs a well-worn copy of The Farmer's Almanac, then throws it in the trash barrel.

He climbs up on the tractor, and turns the key. He hears a CHATTERING sound.

JOE

Goddamn mother-fucking piece of shit!

He gets off the tractor, goes to the workbench, selects a couple of wrenches, goes back to the tractor, and pulls the starter.

He carries the starter back to the bench, fiddles with it.

JOE (CONT'D)

Crap.

11 EXT. FARM YARD - EARLY MORNING

Joe walks out of the machine shed and throws the starter in the back of the pickup.

12 EXT. HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Joe walks up to the screen door and peeks in, shielding his eyes.

JOE

Mary. I'm going to town.

MARY (O.S.)

OK. Will you be back by lunch?

JOE

Shouldn't take long.

13 EXT. IMPLEMENT DEALER - MID MORNING

Joe pulls up, gets out, takes the starter out of the bed.

14 INT. IMPLEMENT DEALER - MID MORNING

Joe comes up to the counter and lays the starter on it.

The PARTS MAN comes over.

JOE

Got one of these?

PARTS MAN

Probably. I'll check the computer.

The parts man goes to the computer.

PARTS MAN (CONT'D)

Still got that John Deere?

JOE

Yup.

PARTS MAN

What year?

JOE

Two-thousand-eight.

PARTS MAN
I got one. Be right back.

The part's man leaves and returns with a box.

PARTS MAN (CONT'D)
I'll just ring that up.

JOE
Uh, I need to talk to you about that.

Parts man waits.

JOE (CONT'D)
I need it, but I can't pay for it
right this minute. Can you give me
credit?

PARTS MAN
Let me ask the boss.

Parts man leaves and comes back.

PARTS MAN (CONT'D)
He says no. So many people in trouble
it's putting him at risk.

JOE
Damn! Sorry.

PARTS MAN
I know how it is.

Joe stands at the counter for a moment.

JOE
Hold onto that. I'll be back.

PARTS MAN
Okey dokey.

Joe leaves.

15 EXT. BANK - LATE MORNING

Joe parks and jumps out of the pickup.

16 INT. BANK - LATE MORNING

Joe walks in and goes to the manager's desk. DELBERT MUNSON,
(42), average height, slightly chubby. He has known Joe
since high school.

JOE
Delbert, got a minute.

DELBERT
Sure. How are things going?

Joe sits down.

JOE
'Bout the same as everyone else.

DELBERT
Been a long time since we've had
such dry weather.

JOE
Yup. Can't sell anything if we can't
grow it.

DELBERT
So what's up?

JOE
I need a loan. Tractor broke down.

DELBERT
Sorry to hear that.

JOE
Can you help me out?

Delbert twiddles his pencil.

DELBERT
I wish I could.

JOE
You know I've always been good for
it.

DELBERT
Yeah, but you know you're already
over your line of credit. If it was
just my decision I'd do it but those
guys in LA don't give a shit. They'd
just as soon foreclose as give you
another dollar.

JOE
So no way.

DELBERT
No.

JOE
Thanks anyway. See you later.

Joe leaves the bank.

17 EXT. USDA FARM SERVICE AGENCY - LATE MORNING

A small building with a sign in front: "USDA Farm Service Agency, Kern County"

Joe drives up, gets out, goes in.

18 INT. USDA FARM SERVICE AGENCY - LATE MORNING

Joe goes up to the receptionist's desk.

JOE

Can I see Jim for a minute?

RECEPTIONIST

I'll see.

She leaves the front and returns a few seconds later.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Go on in.

19 INT. COUNTY AGENT'S OFFICE - LATE MORNING

Joe walks in. JIM THOMPSON(33), rangy, fit, greets him.

JIM

How's it going, Joe?

JOE

Not so good.

JIM

That's what I hear from everyone.

JOE

Any idea when they'll pay off on the crop insurance.

JIM

It's being discussed.

JOE

Sooner? Later?

JIM

Probably later. They're doing the Patriot Act and don't want to think about anything else.

JOE

How much later?

JIM

Couple of months.

JOE
I can't wait that long.

JIM
Most people can't.

Joe gets up and leaves.

20 INT. KITCHEN - NOON

Mary fixes LUNCH.

She looks at the clock.

She looks out the window to see if Joe is coming.

21 EXT. DRIVEWAY - NOON

Mary comes out the back door wiping her hands on her apron.

She sees the pickup truck.

MARY
Joe! Joe!

She heads toward the machine shed.

22 INT. MACHINE SHED - NOON

Mary pushes the big door aside and walks in.

She sees Joe hanging from a beam.

The other end of the rope is tied to the tractor.

MARY
Joe! Oh, Joe!

She runs to him and grabs his legs, trying to hold him up off the rope. She can't.

She collapses to the floor in a lump, wailing and wailing.

She recovers enough to reach into her apron pocket and pulls out her cell phone.

23 INT. NEIGHBOR'S KITCHEN - NOON

Barbara picks up.

INTERCUT:

MARY
Barbara! Barbara! Barbara!

BARBARA
What's wrong?

MARY
Joe, Joe, he...

BARBARA
What about Joe?

MARY
He's...he's hanging.

BARBARA
What do you mean, hanging?

MARY
He hung himself in the machine shed.

BARBARA
I'll call 911.

24 EXT. MACHINE SHED - DAY

The sheriff's car and the ambulance slide to a halt in the gravel driveway.

The sheriff runs in while the paramedics pull their gear.

25 INT. MACHINE SHED - DAY

The paramedics try to revive Joe while Mary, Barbara, and the sheriff watch from a distance.

The paramedics unhook the oxygen and defibrillator.

Mary slumps, Barbara's arm around her.

SHERIFF
I'm so sorry. He was a good man.

26 INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Friends and neighbors gather after the funeral.

The kitchen table is crowded with pot-luck dishes.

People stand in clumps talking quietly, casting glances toward Mary.

BARBARA
Maybe you should go somewhere else now.

MARY

Go where? This farm is all I have.
I grew up on it. I'm rooted here
just as much as the crops are.

BARBARA

Move to town?

MARY

We sold that house after my parents
passed.

BARBARA

Can you afford to stay here?

MARY

Can't afford not to stay. No point
trying to sell it while we're in a
drought. It's not worth much if you
can't grow crops.

27 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary meets with the agent who represents the life insurance
company.

MARY

Nothing?

AGENT

Not in the case of suicide.

MARY

We paid premiums for years.

AGENT

I know. But the policy excludes
suicide.

28 INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Mary stacks her purchases on the conveyor.

The clerk rings them up.

CLERK

Ninety-eight forty-two.

Mary swipes her credit card.

CLERK (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, that will put you over
the limit.

MARY

How much?

CLERK

About ten dollars.

Mary chooses items she can do without.

The clerk gives her the receipt.

Mary looks at the card before putting it in her purse.

29 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mary reaches to a high shelf and brings down the cookie jar.

She dumps it out on the kitchen table and counts the change.

30 INT. WELFARE OFFICE - DAY

Mary fills out the application and gets her first food stamps.

OFFICE WORKER

We'll let you know about the welfare payment. It's always a question mark when you have a major asset like a farm.

MARY

It's not much of an asset at the moment.

OFFICE WORKER

Don't I know. My husband says we'd be in a heap of trouble if I didn't have this job. It's hardly worth putting seed in the ground these days.

31 EXT. NEIGHBOR'S FARM - DAY

Mary drives up, gets out, greets HANK FODNESS, 46. Hank wears bib overalls, short sleeve shirt, heavy boots scuffed and caked with mud.

MARY

How ya doing, Hank?

HANK

Fine. How about you?

MARY

Getting by.

32 INT. NEIGHBOR'S KITCHEN - DAY

Mary has coffee with her friend BARBARA FODNESS (45). Barbara is a somewhat overweight woman wearing a simple cotton dress.

BARBARA
How goes the battle?

MARY
Ups and downs.

BARBARA
How are you for money?

MARY
Tight.

Barbara goes to get her purse and brings out her wallet. She pulls out a couple of twenty-dollar bills and slides them across the table to Mary.

MARY (CONT'D)
I can't take money from you. You barely have enough yourselves.

BARBARA
We're a little better off than you. You've helped us in the past.

MARY
Thank you.

BARBARA
I can't imagine being without Hank.

MARY
Every day I wish...

BARBARA
Wish?

MARY
Wish I'd paid more attention. Wish I'd pushed a little harder to understand what he was going through. Wish he'd been more open to ideas I have. This didn't come up all at once. What will people do if it doesn't get better?

BARBARA
Don't know what to say, honey. We're all worried. My parents grew up in the Dust Bowl, and that was tough.

33 EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Hank stops by Mary's.

HANK

I just thought I'd see if there was anything I could get for you in town.

MARY

Thanks for offering, but nothing at the moment.

HANK

How you getting along?

MARY

Scraping by. I'm thinking about selling the machinery. Can't do anything with it.

HANK

Wouldn't bring much.

MARY

Yeah, I know, but it's just sitting there rusting.

34 INT. NEIGHBOR'S KITCHEN - DAY

Barbara and Mary sit at the table having coffee and cookies.

BARBARA

I couldn't tell you over the phone.

MARY

Tell me what?

BARBARA

I have cancer.

MARY

Does Hank know?

BARBARA

I'm going to tell him tonight.

MARY

Where is it?

BARBARA

Cervix. May have something to do with not being able to have kids. We always wanted them.

MARY

I'm so sorry to hear that. What're the odds?

BARBARA

They think they can treat it. I'm having surgery next week. A hysterectomy.

MARY

I'll pray for you.

BARBARA

I appreciate it.

35 INT. CAFE - DAY

SUPER: October

Mary works as a waitress.

At the end of her shift the owner wraps a steak for her.

OWNER

For the kids.

MARY

Thanks, I appreciate it.

36 INT. SCHOOLROOM - DAY

Mary stands before a room of children.

MARY

I'm Mrs. Remme, and I'll be your teacher while Miss Halvorson is out sick. Let's go to page fifty-eight of your math book.

37 INT. FARMHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Mary comes in and flips the light switch.

Nothing.

She goes to the kitchen table and stirs a pile of unpaid bills.

She opens a power bill which says "Shutoff Notice."

She throws down the bill and walks out the door.

38 EXT. MACHINE SHED - LATE AFTERNOON

She walks up to the machine shed.

It looms over her.

She pauses a moment then pulls the door open.

39 INT. MACHINE SHED - MOMENTS LATER

Mary comes in through the big door

She glances up at the beam, then walks over to a generator.

She grabs the handle and drags it out, closing the door behind her.

40 EXT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Mary plugs the generator into the house access point and starts it.

41 INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Mary flips on the light and prepares supper, humming to herself.

42 EXT. GARDEN - DAY

SUPER: November

Mary harvests crops from her garden.

Pulls up onions and garlic. Hangs them in the shed.

Pulls up tomato plants with fruit still on them. Hangs in shed.

Pulls carrots, puts in sand.

Digs potatoes, puts in sand.

43 INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Mary comes home and checks her mail.

An envelope from USDA has the crop insurance check.

She bites her lip, then cries.

44 EXT. FIELDS - DAY

Mary walks across the fields.

45 INT. NEIGHBOR'S KITCHEN - DAY

Mary and Barbara meet for coffee.

MARY

I got the crop insurance check.

BARBARA

I suppose that's good news of a sort.

MARY

Too late to do Joe any good.

BARBARA

If he'd just hung on a few more months.

MARY

If only he had talked to me.

Barbara remains silent.

MARY (CONT'D)

If only I had asked

BARBARA

Asked him what?

MARY

Oh, I don't know. Those guys are so closed down when it comes to their feelings.

BARBARA

Don't I know.

MARY

Oh, damn it to hell.

The women don't speak for awhile.

BARBARA

So, what are you going to do with the check?

MARY

What do you mean?

BARBARA

It gives you some options. Leave, stay.

MARY

First I have some bills. Then I can think about other things.

BARBARA

Why not just leave the farm?

MARY

And go where?

BARBARA

LA? San Diego?

MARY

That's not what I want.

BARBARA

What do you want?

MARY

To turn back the clock.

BARBARA

Besides that?

MARY

I want to build a future for me and
the kids. Get the land working again.

46 INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Mary watches a video about rain water harvesting.

Insert: A few seconds of a water harvesting video.

47 EXT. MACHINE SHED - MORNING

Mary walks around the building looking up at the edge of the
roof.

She uses a tape measure to get the length and width and makes
a calculation of the area.

48 INT. FARM OFFICE - MORNING

Mary sits in front of her computer.

She uses a spreadsheet to calculate how much water she can
harvest from the roof.

Insert: 2400 square foot shed, 200 cubic feet, 7.5 gallons
per cubic foot, 1500 gallons per inch of rain, 6 inches of
rain per year yielding 9,000 gallons.

Junior comes in.

JUNIOR

What are you doing, Mom?

MARY

I'm calculating how much rain I can catch off the machine shed. It's about 9,000 gallons.

JUNIOR

Is that enough?

MARY

It's enough to expand my garden.

49 INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Mary watches a video on installing gutters and storing water. She looks up prices and makes a list of what she'll need. She calls Barbara.

Intercut:

MARY

I have a favor to ask.

Barbara and Hank are in their kitchen. Barbara puts her phone on hands-free mode.

BARBARA

Anything, honey.

MARY

I need Hank to help me put gutters on my machine shed.

HANK

Why the heck would you want to do that?

MARY

To catch rain.

HANK

Just when are you expecting this rain?

MARY

I don't know. I just want to be ready when it does.

Hank looks at Barbara.

HANK

Is she alright?

Barbara shrugs.

HANK (CONT'D)

Mary, what made you think of this crazy idea?

MARY

I saw something on YouTube about this. It made sense to me. People all over the world do it.

HANK

Is this really what you want to spend the insurance money on?

MARY

One of the things.

HANK

You have other ideas like this?

MARY

Not yet.

HANK

Maybe I should come over tomorrow and see what you have in mind.

MARY

OK. Thanks.

50 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Hank and Mary sit at the table with cups of coffee. Her iPad is propped up in front of them.

HANK

That's an interesting video, but I just don't see the point. Most years we don't get enough rain to grow anything but sagebrush and cactus. How much do you expect to get from this?

MARY

In a normal year, nine thousand gallons.

HANK

Whenever normal returns. It's not that much. Why bother?

MARY

You did hear that they're cutting back on irrigation water on the San Joaquin, didn't you?

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

If it doesn't rain we'll all be hitting the road like a bunch of Oakies. If it does rain I'll have something to work with. Let's go outside for a minute.

51 EXT. GARDEN - MORNING

Hank and Mary squat at the edge of the garden.

Mary pushes back the mulch.

MARY

Feel this.

Hank touches the damp ground with his hand.

MARY (CONT'D)

I haven't watered this for more than two weeks, and it's still doing fine. With more water I can enlarge this garden and grow more than we can eat, and I can sell the surplus.

HANK

You've got guts, girl.

MARY

My mother always said that in our family the men were strong and the women were stronger.

HANK

She was a tough old bird. Everybody knew she was the brains in your family. What about the rest of the farm?

MARY

I have no idea. I just need to start with this.

HANK

It still seems pointless, but it's your neck.

MARY

Will you help me?

HANK

I guess so.

52 EXT. MACHINE SHED - DAY

Hank and Mary climb ladders to install the gutters.

Junior hands them pieces of the gutters and other parts as they need them.

Kristi brings out a pitcher of lemonade.

With all the gutters in place, they attach the downspouts.

HANK

How big a pond do you think you'll need?

MARY

I'd like to capture about six months worth of rain from this roof. Fifteen feet across and three feet deep should do it.

HANK

You worked all that out?

MARY

It's not that complicated.

HANK

I'll come back tomorrow to dig it.

53 EXT. MACHINE SHED - DAY

Hank finishes digging the pond.

He turns off the tractor and climbs out of it.

HANK

Don't you need some kind of liner for this?

MARY

Be right back.

Mary goes into the machine shed and returns dragging a big piece of clear plastic.

MARY (CONT'D)

It's not the best thing but it'll have to do for now.

They stretch the plastic over the pond and throw some dirt over the corners to anchor it.

They add flexible sections to the downspouts so they will run into the pond.

MARY (CONT'D)

Thanks a lot Hank. I owe you.

HANK

Least I could do.

Frank drives the tractor up onto the trailer.

He gets into the pickup and starts it.

Mary comes up to the window.

MARY

Thanks a lot. I couldn't have done
it by myself. Say hi to Barbara.

Frank drives away.

54 INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Super: December

Mary and the kids decorate a small Christmas tree.

Later:

They have Christmas dinner.

Insert: A place setting in front of Paul's empty chair.

After dinner the kids open up a few small presents.

55 EXT. FARMYARD - DAY

Hank drives in, parks, goes up to the door, knocks.

Mary comes out.

HANK

How ya doing?

MARY

OK. Got some projects going.

HANK

Anything in the pond yet?

MARY

Got some nice dust. They got some
rain up towards Chico so maybe we'll
get some too.

HANK

I'm going into town and thought I'd see if there is anything I can bring back for you.

MARY

No, I'll be going in to work at the cafe tomorrow so I can get anything I need.

HANK

OK. See you later.

Hank drives away.

56 INT. CAFE - DAY

In the background, Mary passes an order to the cook and picks up some plates to be served.

In the foreground, two farmers talk.

Farmer 1 gestures toward Mary.

FARMER 1

Heard what she's up to?

FARMER 2

Who?

FARMER 1

Mary.

FARMER 2

No, what?

FARMER 1

I was talking to Hank the other day and he was telling me about some crazy ideas she has for catching rain from her machine shed.

FARMER 2

Don't say.

FARMER 1

I guess losing her man could have messed up her mind a bit.

FARMER 2

Suppose so.

Mary approaches the table and lays a penny in front of Farmer 1.

FARMER 1
What's that for?

MARY
Your farm.

FARMER 1
It's worth a lot more than that.

MARY
Only if you can grow a crop.

57 INT. FARM OFFICE - DAY

Super: January

Mary looks out the window and sees that it is raining.

58 EXT. MACHINE SHED - DAY

Wearing rubber boots and a poncho, Mary walks up to the pond and sees water flowing from the roof.

She walks out onto the field and sees water running off the field.

She squats and stops the flow with her hand for a moment.

59 INT. FARM OFFICE - EVENING

She goes to YouTube and searches "farming in the desert" and eventually stumbles onto the topic of "permaculture."

Her face lights up.

She searches Google for "permaculture Bakersfield" and finds the web page for the Pheasant Run Farm.

She reviews the courses they offer and signs up.

60 EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Mary plants new rows in her garden.

She mulches the new area with hay.

She uses water from the pond to water them.

61 EXT. QUAIL SPRING FARM - DAY

Mary attends a class about permaculture.

After class, she goes up to the instructor, DAN HOWORTH, 55, to ask a question.

MARY

Do you have any experience with larger pieces of land, say a thousand acres?

DAN

A thousand acres? It'll take awhile to discuss that. Care to go someplace for a snack?

MARY

Sure.

62 INT. CAFE - EARLY EVENING

Dan and Mary sit at a table with coffee and pie.

DAN

So where exactly is your place?

MARY

East of Wheeler Ridge.

DAN

Do you have a creek on your land?

MARY

No. Just a few low spots where the water runs when it rains.

DAN

That's just as well. There's a lot of red tape involved in diverting a creek, but no problem if you're just catching rain.

MARY

Do you think you could come out and take a look?

DAN

I have some clients out there I need to see next month. I can call you.

Mary writes down her number.

63 EXT. FARMYARD - MORNING

Super: February

Dan drives up in his pickup and knocks at the door.

Mary comes to the door.

DAN

Good to see you again.

MARY

You too. I'll be out in a sec.

Mary comes out and they walk out to the machine shed.

64 EXT. FARM - MORNING

They stand by the pond.

DAN

That'll hold quite a bit of water.

MARY

I figure about four thousand gallons.
It helps with the garden but I'd
like to get the whole farm working
again.

Mary and Dan walk across the fields.

DAN

The land is never flat unless people
make it that way. You've got a lot
of potential here.

Dan points to a low spot.

DAN (CONT'D)

Right in here you have at least a
hundred acres that all drains down
to that point. You'd get millions
gallons just on this area.

MARY

Should I dig a pond down there?

DAN

You could do that but you're better
off catching the water higher up and
let it seep slowly downhill.

MARY

With swales?

DAN

Ah, you listened in class.

MARY

I sure did. It wasn't cheap.

DAN

Do you remember how to find the
contour lines?

MARY

Yes.

DAN

But you haven't done it yet.

MARY

I have a lot on my plate.

DAN

I can help you get started.

65 INT. MACHINE SHED - MORNING

Dan and Mary rummage through a stack of old lumber.

MARY

A lot of people around here think I'm crazy when I talk about this.

DAN

A lot of people would rather die than change.

MARY

That's pretty cynical.

Dan pulls three pieces of one-by-two out of the stack.

DAN

That may be a little extreme, but I have seen people die rather than trying alternative treatments.

Dan lays the boards out on the floor in the shape of an "A."

MARY

I wish my husband had been more flexible.

Dan finds a bucket of bolts on the workbench and sorts out what he needs.

DAN

I'm sorry. We're getting a little morbid. It creeps up on me sometimes.

He sets up the drill.

Grabs a level that hangs on a nail.

He drills holes and bolts the frame together.

Then he attaches the level to the horizontal member with zip ties.

66 EXT. FARMYARD - AFTERNOON

Dan and Mary come out of the machine shed.

Dan carries the A-frame.

DAN

Do you remember how to do this?

Mary takes the A-frame and moves one end around until she finds the level.

MARY

Like this?

DAN

Yup. Now all you need is some stakes and you're ready to go.

MARY

I have some bamboo I use in my garden.

DAN

That'll do.

Dan and Mary exchange big smiles.

DAN (CONT'D)

I have to get to my next appointment. I'll call you the next time I come this way.

MARY

Thanks for coming.

Dan gets in his pickup and drives away.

67 EXT. FIELD - MORNING

Mary and the kids walk across a field.

Mary carries the A-frame and a hammer. The kids have their arms full of bamboo stakes.

MARY

This looks like a good spot. You can put down the stakes.

Mary stands up the A-frame and moves one end until she finds the level.

MARY (CONT'D)

Junior, hold this while I drive some stakes. Kristi, bring me two stakes.

Kristi brings the stakes, Mary pushes them into the ground.
Mary stands up and pauses for a moment, shielding her eyes.

MARY (CONT'D)
Guess it doesn't matter which way I
go.

She swings the A-frame around and finds the next level point.
The line of stakes grows to several hundred feet long.

MARY (CONT'D)
I guess that's enough for one day.
Kids, let's go have supper. We've
earned it.

68 EXT./INT. NEIGHBOR'S FARM - MORNING

Mary drops off the kids.

MARY
You're on chemo?

BARBARA
Yeah.

MARY
I thought the hysterectomy was going
to take care of it.

BARBARA
They found signs that it had spread.

MARY
Oh. So how's it going?

BARBARA
It's rough, but they say it improves
my five year survival chances.

MARY
That's their idea of curing you?

69 EXT. MACHINE SHED - MORNING

Mary and BEN REYNOLDS(35), the county agent walk around her
storage pond.

BEN
I've heard of people doing this in
third-world countries, but not around
here.

MARY

America is getting to be a third-world country pretty fast.

BEN

That's true, but the law says you can't impair the water rights of people downstream.

MARY

I talked to an engineer at the Water Resources Board. He said there's no problem if we're just catching rain water.

BEN

I hadn't heard that.

MARY

Check it out.

BEN

I will. I hope you're right, because we need to do something.

70 INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

SUPER: March

The phone rings.

Intercut:

MARY

Hello?

DAN

Mary, it's Dan.

MARY

Oh hi. How are you doing?

DAN

Fine. I just wanted to let you know I'll be out that way next week. Thought I'd stop by.

MARY

What day?

DAN

Thursday after lunch. Is that convenient for you?

MARY

Sure.

DAN

See you then.

MARY

OK.

71 INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Mary tidies up.

She puts fresh sheets on the bed.

She takes Paul's picture off the nightstand and puts it in the drawer.

72 EXT. FARMYARD - MORNING

Dan parks his pickup near the house.

Mary comes out to greet him.

DAN

Making any progress?

MARY

I have some contours marked. I just need to figure out how to get the digging done.

DAN

Maybe you can rent a back-hoe.

MARY

Not cheap. Money's tight.

DAN

How did you get the pond dug?

MARY

My neighbor helped me with the pond.

DAN

Can you ask him again?

MARY

It seems like a lot to ask.

73 EXT. FIELD - MORNING

Dan and Mary view her rows of stakes.

DAN

Once the swales fill you can plant grass on the downhill side.

MARY

What's the good of that?

DAN

You won't have enough water to grow corn, but you could feed some cattle. There's a good market for grass-fed beef.

MARY

First I have have the swales.

DAN

They don't have to be big to work. Shovel-deep is enough.

74 INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - EVENING

Dan sits at the table sipping a glass of wine while Mary makes dinner.

MARY

How long have you lived in Hopwood?

DAN

About ten years.

MARY

Where were you before?

DAN

Silicon Valley for many years.

MARY

Why did you leave?

DAN

My company offered me a package.

MARY

Package?

DAN

A special deal to retire early.

MARY

Were you married?

DAN

She died of cancer two years ago.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)
I tried to get her to do some
alternatives but she thought her
doctor knew best, end of story.

They eat, clean up, then sit sipping wine.

DAN (CONT'D)
Where are the kids?

MARY
At the neighbor's for the night.
Would you like to stay?

DAN
Yeah, I would.

75 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary and Dan lie in bed naked, kissing.

She breaks the kiss.

She rolls over, opens the nightstand drawer, and takes out a
condom.

Insert: When she gets the condom we see part of Paul's
picture.

DAN
I guess you're ready.

She opens the condom and rolls it on him.

MARY
I've been ready ever since you called.

76 INT. NEIGHBOR'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Mary comes in.

MARY
How were the kids last night?

BARBARA
They were good. How was your night?

MARY
Nice.

BARBARA
Any future in it?

MARY

Probably not. He's not likely to move here and I'm not going to give up the farm. But I got what I needed.

BARBARA

When I'm gone you should get together with Hank.

MARY

You aren't going anywhere.

77 EXT. GARDEN - MORNING

Mary harvests a large basket of greens.

78 INT. CAFE KITCHEN - DAY

Mary comes in with the basket of greens.

Her boss inspects them.

BOSS

How much do I owe you?

MARY

What do you think they're worth?

BOSS

From the wholesaler, twenty dollars or so. From you, how about thirty dollars? These are special.

MARY

Fine.

Later the boss puts a small sign in the window: "Now serving Mary's finest organic salad greens."

79 EXT. NEIGHBOR'S FARM - MORNING

Hank looks toward Mary's place and sees her working in the field with a shovel.

He walks over.

80 EXT. MARY'S FIELD - MORNING

Hank walks up.

HANK

What the heck are you doing?

MARY

Digging swales.

HANK
Digging what?

MARY
Ditches to catch rain.

HANK
Why not just pump it?

MARY
Our well has been dry for a long
time. How's yours?

HANK
Not good for much.

Hank looks down the long row of stakes in the ground.

HANK (CONT'D)
You intend to do all that?

MARY
Yup.

HANK
No need for that. Wait here.

81 EXT. NEIGHBOR'S FARM - DAY

Hank attaches the plow to the tractor and drives to Mary's field.

82 EXT. MARY'S FIELD - DAY

Hank gets off the tractor and walks up to Mary.

HANK
Which side do you want the dirt to
pile up on?

MARY
Downhill.

HANK
OK.

Hank gets back on the tractor, drives to the end of the row of stakes, and starts plowing a furrow.

LATER: All the swales have been plowed.

MARY
Thanks a lot, Hank. I owe you.

HANK
No problem. Our families go back a
long ways on this land.

Hank leaves.

83 EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

SUPER: April

Hank stops by on his way into town.

He knocks on the kitchen door.

She comes out.

MARY
Hi, Hank.

HANK
How's it going?

MARY
As good as can be expected. The
cafe is buying my greens.

HANK
Need anything from town.

MARY
I'm OK, thanks.

HANK
I wish we'd get some damn rain.

MARY
Anything would help.

HANK
Makes me wonder if we wasted our
time plowing those ditches.

MARY
Swales.

HANK
Whatever.

MARY
It's an act of faith. When it does
rain I'll get to keep it.

84 INT. CAFE - MORNING

Two farmers sit at a table having coffee.

FARMER 1
That Mary is at it again.

FARMER 2
Now what?

FARMER 1
She's got little ditches scratched
all over her land. Even got Hank to
help her.

FARMER 2
Don't say.

Hank overhears this conversation from another table and comes
over.

HANK
Those aren't ditches. They're swales.

FARMER 2
Swales. Swallows.

HANK
She may be wrong, but I've seen some
of the videos about this.

FARMER 1
So why haven't you done it?

HANK
I want to see it work.

FARMER 2
Let us know when it does. If it
ever does.

HANK
I will.

85 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: May

Mary tosses and turns, unable to sleep.

She turns on the radio and finds Coast To Coast.

RADIO HOST
If you haven't heard by now, we all
pray for our Coast family every week.
Regardless of your religion, or lack
of religion, we know that prayer
works, so put in your requests on
our Fast Blast page.

She gets out of bed.

86 INT. FARM OFFICE - NIGHT

Mary comes in and turns on the computer.

She goes to the Coast to Coast AM web page.

She types in a Fast Blast: "Please ask your audience to pray for rain for Bakersfield."

87 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Several days later, Mary looks out her window and sees that a light rain is falling.

She puts on her mud boots and rain parka and goes out.

88 EXT. FIELD - DAY

Mary walks out to the swales and sees that they are filling up.

She takes a picture with her phone and sends it to Hank.

89 EXT. FIELD - DAY

Mary walks along the swales scattering grass seed at the bottom edge.

90 EXT. FIELD - DAY

SUPER: July

A few head of cattle grazes on knee high grasses. The cattle are contained by a solar-powered electric fence.

91 INT. BANK OFFICE - DAY

Delbert makes a call.

92 INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

RON THOMPSON, 59, the county sheriff, picks up.

INTERCUT:

DELBERT

I've got the foreclosure papers on Mary Remme. When can you serve them?

SHERIFF

How about tomorrow?

DELBERT
Sounds good.

93 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The sheriff drives toward Mary's farm and finds the driveway blocked by pickups.

He stops and gets out.

SHERIFF
Morning, gents. How's it going?

HANK
Just fine, sheriff. Thanks for giving us a call.

SHERIFF
No problem. Where's the coffee?

They get the sheriff a cup.

The sheriff raises his cup for a toast.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
Fuck those guys in LA.

ALL
Amen!

Lots of laughter.

HANK
Why don't you guys come up to the house. I've got a case of cold ones.

FARMER 1
Sounds good to me.

The pickups parade up to Mary's house. The sheriff brings up the rear.

94 EXT. FIELD - DAY

The farmers walk Mary's fields sipping on cans of beer.

HANK
Does this still seem like a dumb idea?

FARMER 1
No. Maybe you could help me do this on my land.

95 INT. BANK OFFICE - DAY

The sheriff hands the foreclosure notice to the banker.

SHERIFF

Sorry, Del, I did the best I could.
Road was blocked. This might be
legal but it's not right.

DELBERT

I get that. Somebody called and
said if I foreclosed on her I wouldn't
want to live here anymore.

SHERIFF

Probably true. Did they threaten
you physically?

DELBERT

No.

SHERIFF

We were here before those idiots in
LA, and we'll still be here when
they're gone.

96 INT. LOAN MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

The manager's office has a view of downtown LA. He picks up
his phone and selects a number.

INTERCUT:

MANAGER

Why haven't you served the papers
yet.

DELBERT

We tried to, but all the neighbors
blocked the road and the sheriff
couldn't get there.

MANAGER

Why didn't he arrest them?

DELBERT

They hadn't committed any crime.

MANAGER

Interfering with a law officer is
not a crime?

DELBERT

You don't know how things are out
here.

MANAGER

I know we have the right to foreclose on her and we want it done.

DELBERT

What are you going to do? Foreclose on the entire valley? Then what? It's not like foreclosing on a house in the city. You can't just sell it to someone else. It takes a lot of knowhow to work this land, and these people have it.

MANAGER

I see your point, but we can't wait forever. I'm taking heat from my boss on this. You need to give me something to work with.

97 INT. LOCAL BANK OFFICE - DAY

Delbert hangs up and selects a number.

DELBERT

I got another call from my boss today about your foreclosure.

MARY

It's not my foreclosure.

DELBERT

You know what I mean.

MARY

Yeah, I do.

DELBERT

I can't hold him off much longer without putting my job at risk. I need a good reason for holding off.

MARY

Let me think about it. I'll come see you tomorrow.

98 INT. BANK OFFICE - DAY

Mary meets with Delbert.

MARY

Do your bosses understand what happens to places after foreclosure?

DELBERT

I don't think they care.

Mary turns on her phone and brings up pictures.

MARY

Do you remember the Sandersons?

DELBERT

Yes, of course. We did business for many years.

MARY

This is what their place looks like now.

She shows him pictures of a house with broken windows, plumbing torn out.

INSERT: Photos shown on phone.

MARY (CONT'D)

Nobody can live there now without a lot of fixing.

DELBERT

I see that. What's the point?

MARY

If they take my place the same thing will happen and it will be worth even less.

DELBERT

I think they just want the land to sell to the corporations.

MARY

That's not all. I'm selling produce from my garden and I have some steers feeding on the grass I planted.

Mary shows him more pictures.

DELBERT

That'll help a lot. Send me those too.

MARY

Thanks. Please do your best. This farm is my whole life.

99 INT. NEIGHBOR'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Mary visits Barbara.

MARY

How's it going with the chemo?

BARBARA

They say they're doing the best they can, but there are still swollen lymph nodes that worry them.

MARY

What does that mean?

BARBARA

A smaller chance that I'll live through this.

MARY

You're going to be around for a long time.

BARBARA

I hope so, but if I die I hope you'll get together with Hank.

MARY

Don't even think that, Barb!

BARBARA

Just being realistic. If I'm not here I can't think of anyone else I'd rather have replace me.

MARY

You need to concentrate on getting better, not dying. I've had enough of that for one year.

100 INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

Mary makes a call.

101 INT. BANK - DAY

Delbert picks up.

INTERCUT:

MARY

Have you heard from your boss?

DELBERT

He's thinking about it. He said they had more property than they need right now.

MARY

That helps.

DELBERT
Anything else?

MARY
I was thinking it might help if you
came out to see what I'm doing.

DELBERT
In regard to what?

MARY
Making the land productive again.

DELBERT
No one else is talking about that.
Just gloom and doom everywhere I go.

MARY
Just come out and see.

DELBERT
OK. Tomorrow?

MARY
See you then.

102 EXT. FARM YARD - MORNING

Delbert drives up and gets out of his car. Mary comes out
of the house.

DELBERT
Nice day.

MARY
Yeah. Too nice. It should be
raining.

DELBERT
I'd wave my magic wand if I could.

MARY
If wishes were raindrops. Anyway,
let me show you.

Mary leads Delbert to the garden.

103 EXT. GARDEN - MORNING

They stand overlooking the garden.

DELBERT
I had no idea. This is impressive.

MARY

I'm making about five hundred dollars a month selling what we don't eat ourselves. Not a lot but everything helps.

DELBERT

You could expand this if you had the water.

MARY

They say the El Nino might be strong this year.

DELBERT

And you'll be ready.

MARY

Yup. I have something else to show you.

104 EXT. FIELD - MORNING

Mary and Del walk along a swale, inspecting the grasses.

MARY

Hank helped me make these. It was an act of faith but it paid off.

DELBERT

It hasn't rained for a month and this still looks good.

Del looks down the long swale and over the whole field.

DELBERT (CONT'D)

Other people should be doing this.

MARY

Some are. I've just got a head start. What would your boss say about this?

Del takes more pictures.

DELBERT

If he has any brains, he'll see what this means.

They walk back to the house.

105 EXT. FARM - MORNING

They pause at Del's car.

DELBERT

No promises, but I'll do what I can.

Del drives away.

106 INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Delbert's manager calls him.

Del talks to his manager.

INTERCUT:

MANAGER (V.O.)

What am I looking at?

DELBERT

A small miracle, if you ask me.

MANAGER (V.O.)

Doesn't change much, if you ask me.
She still can't pay what she owes.

DELBERT

True, but I think it means she will
be able to pay if we give her some
time.

MANAGER (V.O.)

How much time?

DELBERT

You do understand that this can't be
done overnight and we still need
rain?

MANAGER (V.O.)

I do. I'll need proof of progress
to keep her in workout status.

DELBERT

She really wants to keep that land,
so I think we can rely on her.

107 INT. EXAM ROOM OF COMMUNITY HOSPITAL - DAY

The doctor leaves the room to check her test results.

She takes a bottle of pills out of her purse and dumps them
in her hand.

She swallows all the pills and lies down on the table, curling
up in a fetal position.

A little later, the doctor comes in and tries to rouse her.

He checks her pulse and shakes his head.

108 INT. MJ'S KITCHEN - EVENING

SUPER: July

Hank comes over for dinner.

MARY
How was your day?

HANK
Got some things done. I think about
her all the time.

MARY
I know.

109 INT. BANK OFFICE - DAY

Del calls Mary.

DELBERT
Good news.

MARY
What?

DELBERT
My manager thinks you're making good
progress, so you get to keep your
workout status. And he wants to pay
you to give talks about what you are
doing.

110 INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Mary sits on her bed with her back to the window.

She gazes at the picture of her dead husband.

MARY
Damn you.

Outside, a horn HONKS.

111 EXT. FARM YARD - EVENING

Mary opens the door of Hank's pickup.

He smiles.

She climbs in and they drive off.