

No Man's Rose: Challenging the Expectations of the Neo-Western Woman Through Serial Drama

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Abstract.

No Man's Rose is a neo-western, crime-drama series set within the shadow of the Watergate conspiracy, amidst the hardship of post-Vietnam recession, in 1970s Southern Nevada, USA. Inspired by the classic Western template of gunslinging outlaws, folkloric tales and lawlessness across the American Frontier, *No Man's Rose* brings a femicentric, mid-century modern, twist to the rugged landscapes once roamed by Butch Cassidy and Johnny Guitar.

No Man's Rose explores the role of strong, female protagonist, Rose Wilson, as she navigates a genre typically dominated by male perspective and masculine characteristics, whilst wrestling the moral ambiguity that comes with it. The accompanying essay to the screenplay, 'Challenging the Expectations of the Neo-Western Woman Through Serial Drama.', contextualises both *No Man's Rose*, as a series, and Rose, as a character, within the study of Women in Film and writing from the 'female gaze.'

The aims of *No Man's Rose* are not limited as a contribution to feminist film and television theory, but hopefully serves to create meaningful screen-time for women and marginalised groups in action, crime, and quasi-Western narratives. There has been a strong commitment throughout the writing process to represent BIPOC (black, indigenous, and people of colour) characters with diversity and cultural understanding in mind. *No Man's Rose* strives to show Native and Hispanic characters without perpetrating outdated and uneducated stereotypes commonly witnessed in Wild West media.

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Logline.

Neo-Western, crime drama following disgraced detective, ROSE WILSON, and alcoholic outlaw, FRANK DAVIS, who - when a beloved Sheriff is found dead - are thrown together to combat corruption, conspiracy, and violence in 1970s Southern Nevada.

Synopsis.

After seven years of dedicated service with the State Line Police Department, ROSE WILSON is the perfect example of a moral compass: honest, reliable, and fair. As the precinct's first, and most decorated, female detective, Rose's flawless arrest records and commendations have her first in line for promotion to Chief of Police.

That is, until a snap local election appoints one of Rose's mortal enemies as the new mayor of Stateline - the wealthy, viciously corrupt, coffee magnate, JOHN HERALD.

Convinced that Herald is hell bent on destroying both the town and the P.D, Rose's desperate need to expose his motives culminates in dismissal for gross misconduct. When – before press and precinct – she assaults the newly appointment mayor.

As Rose's mugshot circulates the local papers, and she struggles to process the loss of her illustrious career, alcoholic outcast FRANK DAVIS awakes in the neighbouring town of Goodsprings for another, regular, day – of nothing.

But when his father figure and mentor, SHERIFF WILLIAM MCCAMPBELL, sends out a distress call – Frank's world is turned upside down on the discovery of his abandoned body in the nearby valley.

As Frank frantically tries to keep it together, a chance encounter at a phonebooth brings the unsuspecting duo together. Rose discovers that Frank could bring her one step closer to tearing Herald down, whilst Frank realises Rose is the only person keeping him alive.

Nevertheless, with Frank's irresponsible behaviour, the persistent onslaught of bloodthirsty Hitmen, and Rose's reliable allies dwindling, the pair soon realise that the only way they can expose Herald's nefarious behaviour, and release his grip on the town, is if they work together to face State Line's demons, and their own, head on.

No Man's Rose

'EPISODE ONE: CENTREFOLD'

Written by

Georgina Bowley-Moriarty

FADE IN:

EXT. STATE LINE POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

SUPER: STATE LINE, 1973.

A muted orange sunrise peeks behind the boxy State Line Police Department building.

Sunrays ripple across the neatly parked car bonnets.

The mirrored glass of the precinct doors watches an AMC Gremlin, radio BLARING, glide into a space at the forefront.

ROSE WILSON (30s), confident, no-nonsense, seasoned detective, exits the compact car.

She straightens her smart, burgundy pantsuit, readjusts her yellow tinted aviators, and coolly heads inside.

INT. STATE LINE POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

The doors swing open.

Rose perches the aviators behind her fringe, haphazardly scrunches her hair into a high-pony and breezes through the freshly mopped, marble halls.

She pauses before a built-in, reception area and scans the wall-mounted pigeonholes for post.

'R. WILSON'

She delves into the mail slot, retrieving a stack of letters.

Rose rifles through the correspondence, as she shoulders through the double doors to reveal the bustling headquarters.

Rose reaches her Cole-modular, L-shaped desk and throws herself into a worn-out, scuffed, swivel chair.

She SLAPS the stack of letters onto the desktop as an officially stamped letter reveals itself.

Rose hurriedly tears open the seal, pulling out a neatly written fore-ward and a machine type document.

ROSE

Yes!

Suddenly, a hand appears from over Rose's shoulder and plucks the letter.

ROSE

Hey!

Rose swivels around to meet the excited gaze of SHÁNDÍÍN CLAH (20s) vivacious and chatty, straight talking, police administrator with deadly reflexes.

SHÁNDÍÍN

What?! Rose! Is this it?

Rose shushes Shándaín, who lowers her voice to a whisper.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Is this the thing? You know the...?

Rose grabs the letter back.

ROSE

Yes!

Rose opens out the letter as Shándaín hangs anxiously off the chairback, reading over her shoulder.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Yada yada yada... highly recommended for Chief... Rose!

Rose spins around, pushing an index finger to her lips.

ROSE

Shhh!

SHÁNDÍÍN

(whispers)

It is the board's recommendation that Rose Wilson hereby replaces the State Line Police Department's Chief of Police upon his--

ROSE

--his early retirement, week ending...

Rose and Shándaín simultaneously glance down to the perpetual calendar and back up to one another.

SHÁNDÍÍN

That's in two days!

Rose quickly folds the letter back into the envelope and presses it to her chest.

SHÁNDÍÍN

I knew it. I always knew it'd be you. I mean, you've got to be the first woman in the state of Nevada, right? And, what? You're 30?

ROSE

31.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Most Chiefs are ancient Rose, like literally about to die.

Rose laughs.

ROSE

You have got to keep it between us for now, until Friday - I mean, with the whole--

SHÁNDÍÍN

--Ugh, the Jeff thing.

Rose flops her head back into the chair and glances across to the lively photograph of herself and ex-partner, DETECTIVE JEFF WALKER (30s), in rookie uniforms.

Rose's arms are thrown around his neck in a piggyback. They're laughing.

ROSE

Yeah, the Jeff thing.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Well...

Shándíín leans over and pushes the frame facedown onto the desk.

SHÁNDÍÍN

... you won't need that on your new desk anyway.

ROSE

I guess...

Rose shrugs.

Shándíín swivels Rose around to face the Chief of Police office.

A retirement banner loosely adorns the doorjamb.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Look Rose. You've earned this. You know what my Shimá would say right?

Rose looks up at Shándíín.

SHÁNDÍÍN

We will be forever known by the tracks we leave.

ROSE

Shándíín, that's so beautiful--

SHÁNDÍÍN

--But also...

Shándíín gently rotates Rose's chair towards her, kneels and presses her palms together in prayer.

SHÁNDÍÍN

My daughter needs a new chair.

Rose laughs.

ROSE

Well, that must be a lesser-known proverb, right?

SHÁNDÍÍN

I cannot confirm nor deny the wisdom of the Great Spirit - but...

Shándíín grins.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Nothing fancy. Well, I mean, three years of dedicated service to yours truly... a little bit of leather wouldn't go amiss...

ROSE

You'll be getting a leather chair, alright? A spiny leather one, with one of those levers - you know the ones? And what are they called... casters?

Shándíín SQUEALS and CLAPS like an excited seal, drawing the confused attention of a couple of officers.

SHÁNDÍÍN

You're already the best, the best you-know- what... you know?

ROSE

Well, I cannot confirm nor deny...

Shándiín prods Rose's shoulder playfully.

Rose turns back to her desk and pulls a file from beneath the letter stack.

ROSE

But until then, from the best to the best
- could you fax and file this over to the
lab? Please and thank you.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Consider it done and done.

Shándiín plucks the file from Rose's hand and starts over towards her desk.

Rose looks down at the letter and smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. PIONEER SALOON, GOODSPRINGS - DAY

FRANK DAVIS (30s), a rugged addict with anxiety, insomnia and the occasional, stupefying, athleticism, sits unsteadily on an old oak barstool.

Propped up by his elbows, nursing a headache, he looks up from his coffee and grimaces, wagging his finger toward the portable AM/FM radio on the bar back.

FRANK

Turn it... turn it down man...

ALEJANDRO 'ALEJO' LOPEZ (30s), the saloon's humorous, good-looking, hard-working bartender, swirls a towel around a pint glass, brows furrowed with righteous indignation as he berates Frank.

ALEJO

Wild idea cabrón - have an early one
tonight, okay? I don't wanna see your...
your...

Alejo gestures exhaustedly at Frank's existence before turning the volume dial down on the radio.

ALEJO

This here, this you're doing now -
brooding.

FRANK

Hey, what? Come on, that was an early night.

ALEJO

Eh?!

Alejo slaps the tea towel against bar, whipping the tips of Franks fingers.

Frank pulls back, near toppling from his stool.

FRANK

Ow!

ALEJO

How was that early? You're still here! At, what? What time is it? Eight A.M?

Alejo turns to the bright red clock behind him.

ALEJO

Nine A.M!

FRANK

Look...

Frank pulls a small pill bottle of non-descript drugs from his inside pocket and empties a few tablets, of varying shape and size, into his hand.

FRANK

I guess I'm just early for tonight.

Frank laughs and takes a sip of his coffee to wash the tablets down.

FRANK

Ugh! What the hell is this...

As Frank throws the mug down, it slips from his fingers and spills all over a fresh, rolled up, newspaper.

ALEJO

Frank!

Alejo quickly grabs the newspaper, runs it to the sink and drapes the sopping pages over a couple of upturned pint glasses on the draining board.

The newspaper headline reads, 'FROM COFFEE EMPIRE TO TOWN MAYOR, HERALD WINS ELECTION.'

Pictured beneath the header is JOHN HERALD (50s), charismatic, violent, and ruthless tycoon, grinning, smoking a fat cigar.

Alejo gestures to Frank's top pocket.

ALEJO

You know they'll kill you, right?

FRANK

It's just medicine - it's all practically herbal, you know...

Alejo shakes his head and shuts off the radio.

ALEJO

You're so full of shit, bendejo - y'aint fooling anyone, you know he knows you fell off again?

Frank rubs his eyes and sits upright.

ALEJO

Look... I get it. Sitting here is easy, but, come on, you can't avoid the Sheriff forever. You gotta go clean. What you're doing to yourself... it's bad Frank.

FRANK

I... I know and I'm going to stop, he just gets so--

ALEJO

--so what? Helpful? Trying to save your life? Give you a future?

Frank throws his head back like a stropo teenager.

Alejo reaches over and prods Frank's jacket pocket, rattling the pills.

ALEJO

And, eh! You ain't selling them again, are you?

FRANK

No, well, not really... I ain't...

Alejo flicks the tea towel down, catching the tip of Frank's fingers again.

FRANK

Shit!

ALEJO
So, that a yes?

Alejo throws the tea towel over his shoulder and rests both elbows on the bar top.

ALEJO
We care about your Frank. You might not think you deserve a second chance, or third or fourth...

Frank rubs his face.

ALEJO
But you do. And we won't stop, because there's a Frank, somewhere, inside of that mangy husk you got going on there, that wants to do better.

Alejo tosses the tea towel to Frank.

ALEJO
You can start by clearing up this mess, eh?

Frank simpers, taking the tea towel and clearing up the spillage.

FRANK
You're a good friend, y'know?

ALEJO
I know.

Alejo laughs.

ALEJO
One of us must be.

FRANK
Hey!

Frank flips the tea towel at Alejo and he grabs it, handily.

ALEJO
Ah! Ah! You don't have the power here my guy.

FRANK
Well, y'know, if I do become Deputy...

Alejo rolls his eyes.

ALEJO
A big IF Frank.

Alejo gestures at Frank and his surroundings.

ALEJO
You gotta stop all this shit for
starters...

The saloon doors open.

Two HITMEN enter.

The taller, KABAR (30s), is ex-marine corp. Burly, stoic, observant. Affectionally named after his standard issue combat knife.

Kabar's shorter, stockier, counterpart is CORTEZ (40s).

Fistful of metal and an off-white shirt, Cortez's wry smile reveals the glimmer of gold teeth, the gaps of no teeth and the shadows of some teeth, all at the same time.

Frank and Alejo briefly turn to look at the Hitmen, who seat themselves in a booth.

FRANK
So, how 'bout... Hear me out now - just one more whiskey? Celebrate me turning a new leaf. Even put it in one of them, them, godawful coffees - like the Irish! Look at this face - I'm gonna do better. Starting now. Now, as in, after this whiskey.

Frank taps his cheek and grins.

ALEJO
I oughta bar you.

Alejo puts Frank's mug in the sink.

ALEJO
No.

Frank tuts.

He swivels around to face the Hitmen and unsteadily hops off the barstool.

He approaches the table.

ALEJO

Frank, come on...

FRANK

Don't mind me gentleman, just the new Deputy in town, here to keep the law and the order.

Frank looks back to Alejo and winks.

FRANK

So, what's your business here?

Kabar shoots Frank an icy stare.

FRANK

Woah. Loosen up big guy...

Frank turns to Cortez.

FRANK

He always like this?

Alejo shakes his head.

ALEJO

Leave the damn patrons alone Frank.

FRANK

Looks like he could do with a tequila or something.

The Hitmen ignore Frank.

FRANK

Oh. Ain't gonna talk, are we?

Frank steps back from the booth momentarily, before lunging forward, SLAMMING his hands down onto the table, as if conducting a police interrogation.

FRANK

Well, this just won't--

Before Frank can utter another breath, Kabar stands, takes Frank's arm, twists it behind his back and pushes his face down onto the table.

Frank turns his head to the side, eyes bulging as Kabar LANCES his combat knife into the wood, inches from his nose.

FRANK

Hey! Easy! Easy! I'm just messing with you!

Kabar increases the pressure on Frank's arm.

Frank winces.

FRANK

I'm not even a real lawman!

Alejo quickly skirts around the bar.

ALEJO

Okay, okay. I think you made your point! Frank...Frank...come on...

FRANK

It was a joke. I was joking. I know, I know, I'm not funny. Look we're all friends here just...

Alejo looks to Cortez hopefully.

Cortez inhales sharply through gritted teeth and nods to Kabar, who releases Frank, retrieves his impaled knife, and returns silently to his seat.

Frank raises his hands and backs away.

FRANK

Okay... I'm sorry. Okay...

Frank sheepishly returns to his barstool, followed closely by Alejo.

The walkie-talkie inside his jacket pocket CRACKLES.

FRANK

Shit.

DISEMBODIED VOICE

Can... Can... Hear... Me

Frank twizzles the aerial and sighs, before pushing down the red button to talk.

FRANK

Sheriff, is that you? Can't nobody tell a word you're saying. William?

Alejo grabs the walkie-talkie.

ALEJO
Here, let me just...

Alejo spins the volume dial.

ALEJO
Sheriff, what's your twenty?

SHERIFF WILLIAM
Vall... Here...

Frank sighs.

FRANK
I bet it's them goddamn cattle rustlers
again. I swear... I ain't chasing no more
goats around this week. They stink,
y'know? My goddam shoes are--

Alejo, ear pressed to the walkie-talkie, hushes Frank.

ALEJO
--;Cállate! I think he's over in the
Goodsprings Valley.

SHERIFF WILLIAM
Good... springs... now.

ALEJO
He might be outta gas or something.

Frank turns around to the CREAK of the saloon doors swinging.

The Hitmen have left.

FRANK
Hold up...

Another garbled radio message interrupts him.

ALEJO
Frank. Just head on out there.

Alejo leans over and grabs his car keys from behind the bar.

ALEJO
Take my car.

Alejo drops the keys into Frank's palm.

ALEJO
Go! Go on!

Frank grudgingly gets up from his stool.

FRANK
I'm going, I'm going.

ALEJO
I'll stay on the radio.

Frank waves his hand above his head as he exits through the saloon doors.

ALEJO (O.S.)
And don't you fucking scratch her!

EXT. PIONEER SALOON, GOODSPRINGS - DAY

The weathered Pioneer Saloon cuts a lonesome shape on the dust covered Goodsprings strip.

The blistering rays of the high sun cut through the Nevada skyline, illuminating the jagged contours of the Bird Sky Range.

Frank immediately tucks his head into the crook of his elbow, cursing the daylight as he clambers into Alejo's two-door, fire-truck red, Pontiac GTO.

He rifles through the glovebox, donning a pair of Alejo's tinted, bar-top shades, before starting the engine.

He pushes the radio on.

The road sign ahead reads: NV-161 GOODSPRINGS VALLEY.

CUT TO:

INT. STATE LINE POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Jeff and DETECTIVE GEORGE FEDLER (30s) enter the precinct.

Jeff is frustrated, brows furrowed, a coffee carton clutched in each hand.

Fedler follows closely behind. A slight man with a thick moustache and approachable demeanour, the Labrador to Jeff's alley cat.

Rose looks up from her paperwork as Jeff sets the cartons down in front of her with a sigh.

ROSE
Good morning detectives.

Fedler perches onto the corner of a neighbouring desk.

FEDLER

Morning.

JEFF

Rose, Good morning, I...

Jeff eyes the face down photo frame and deflates.

JEFF

Oh so, that's how, uh--

OFFICER HERNANDEZ (20s), a young, Hispanic, rookie, interjects, handing Rose her personal radio and a clipboard.

OFFICER HERNANDEZ

-- Det. Wilson, ma'am, your radio has been crackling over at reception.

Rose sighs and twizzles the aerial.

ROSE

Thanks Hernandez.

JEFF

Rose--

OFFICER HERNANDEZ

--I just need your signature for the sign out sheet and...

Rose takes her pen and scrawls her name onto the clipboard.

ROSE

Done!

Jeff stands, petulantly awaiting Hernandez departure.

JEFF

You know what, never mind.

He turns to walk away as Hernandez returns to his station.

Rose, oblivious to Jeff's restlessness, looks up from the radio.

ROSE

Hey! Wait... Jeff, thanks for the coffee...

Jeff stalls and meets Rose gaze, she smiles awkwardly.

JEFF

Rose there is something I need to--

Rose's radio crackles.

ROSE
I'm sorry, I need to take this, it's the
Sheriff's channel.

Rose jumps up from her desk.

Jeff raises his hands, exasperated, and walks away.

Rose pauses to pick her coffee, Fedler points to the left carton.

She nods gratefully and glances over to see Jeff SLAMMING his
filing cabinet door.

ROSE
Tell Jeff I'll catch him later, okay?

FEDLER
Gotcha.

Rose quickly approaches the vacant Chief of Police office and,
hands occupied, manoeuvres the door handle down with her elbow.

As the door closes behind her, Rose presses down the button on the
radio.

ROSE
William? Repeat your message, over.

CUT TO:

EXT. STATE LINE POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

A jet black, soft-top, Oldsmobile Ninety-Eight pulls up to the
front doors of the precinct.

THE SENTINEL (40s), a tall, square-jawed man, in a scuffed suede
jacket and dusty fedora, steps out from the driver's side.

He opens the back passenger door, cigar smoke billows out.

John Herald emerges, palm pressed atop his off-white Stetson,
sporting a navy leisure suit, black 'birth control' glasses and a
near-finished Gran Toro gripped firmly between his teeth.

The Sentinel closes the car door, as Herald extinguishes the
remaining stub of his cigar with one crushing stride of his leather
loafers.

Herald slides the dowdy GI frames to the bridge of his nose and
surveys the parking lot. He eyes Rose's AMC Gremlin and smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. NV-161, GOODSPRINGS - DAY

The NV-161 highway swirls with dust and dry grass, winding as far as the eye can see into the mountainous Nevada foothills.

The Pontiac CHUGS along at a reasonable speed, passing the occasional foraging rock pigeon and basking lizard.

INT. PONTIAC, GOODSPRINGS - DAY

Frank winds down the window to catch a sobering breeze.

Alejo's rosary beads, intertwined around the rear-view mirror, dangle loosely above the centre console.

He glances at the passing road sign:

'GOODSPRINGS VALLEY 1/2 MILE.'

EXT. GOODSPRINGS VALLEY - DAY

Frank follows the winding approach to the mountainous canyon.

The Sheriff's brown Camaro comes into view.

The warning lights are on.

The driver's side door is open.

Frank pulls the Pontiac in behind the Camaro and steps out.

FRANK

William?

Frank approaches the back of the Camaro; the engine is still running.

He pockets Alejo's sunglasses, raising forearm to brow to combat the high sun rising above the valley walls.

Frank SLAPS the boot of the car.

FRANK

You know, this is how you keep running
outta gas, ya can't just leave the engine
running while you sit out here...

Frank looks through the back window and sees William sat the driver's seat.

He slides his hand across the roof of the Camaro, before leaning through the driver door.

INT. CAMARO, GOODSPRINGS VALLEY - DAY

FRANK

So, what have you got me out here to...

Frank stops, slack jawed.

William is slumped, neck craned back into the headrest, a single gunshot wound to the left side of his head.

A pistol sits in his lap, loosely gripped by his right-hand.

FRANK

-- William?

William's walkie-talkie, gripped loosely by his right hand, blinks intermittently, a crackling voice echoes into his palm.

ROSE (O.S.)

Are... there... copy?

Frank crouches down to look inside the vehicle, his white-knuckled hand gripping the driver door.

He spots the clotted blood and brain matter, clinging to the felted roof, and heaves into the crook of his elbow.

FRANK

Shit... Shit... Oh my god...

Frank kneels, tentatively setting his shaking hand onto William's blood-spattered arm.

He closes his eyes.

FRANK

William... I... I'm so, I'm so
sorry...I...

The warm and damp sensation of blood on his palm shocks Frank back to reality.

His eyes burst open as he recoils his hand in horror, mistakenly wiping his chest, smearing blood across his shirt.

EXT. GOODSPRINGS VALLEY - DAY

Frank stands and staggers backward from the Camaro.

Looking down he notices the pool of William's blood and viscera, mixed in with the desert sand.

His jeans, tinted maroon.

Inhaling, exhaling, Frank spins around to the verge and vomits into the brush.

SCREECHING tyres in the distance rouse Frank from his retching.

He spots a powder blue, Ford, Mercury Monterey, cresting the dip of the valley ahead.

He looks over at William's body.

FRANK

Shit.

INT. STATE LINE POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Shándiín struggles through the reception area with a big stack of casefiles piled up in her arms.

As she plants her foot ready to kick open the main office door, a FIGURE darts ahead and holds it open.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Thank you! Oh, you are a--

Shándiín looks up and locks eyes with the Sentinel.

THE SENTINEL

--Ma'am.

Shándiín peers over his shoulder, noticing Herald standing centre stage in the foyer.

She briefly observes the CHIEF OF POLICE (60s), washed out, slender, but smartly dressed, appear from a side-door to heartily greet Herald with a firm handshake.

CHIEF OF POLICE

Mayor.

Shándiín hurries through the office, dumping the casefiles onto her desk.

She scours the room for Rose.

In the Chief of Police's office, Rose is leant forward in the Chief's oxblood leather wingback, cycling through the radio channels.

ROSE

William? William? Do you copy?

Exasperated, Rose knocks back the remainder of her coffee.

ROSE

Ugh!

She peers into the bottom of the coffee carton, wincing in disgust at the taste.

ROSE

Jeff must really hate me.

Rose admits defeat, standing to stuff her radio into the holster beside her gun.

She runs her hand along the Chief's desk.

ROSE

God it'll be nice to have space for all my
shit.

She glances down at the paperwork shuffled into loose piles.

A stamped letterhead catches her eye.

It reads:

'To the State Line Mayoral Offices.'

ROSE

As Chief of Police I fully endorse and
support the candidacy of the current State
Line--

Before Rose can continue reading, the office door swings open, it's Hernandez.

Rose jumps.

HERNANDEZ

--Sorry Ma'am, I was looking for the
Chief.

ROSE

He must've stepped out, can I...?

Hernandez leans forward and hands Rose a rolled-up newspaper.

HERNANDEZ

Nothing urgent, just figured it was one of
the last times I'd bring him his paper.

Rose smiles.

ROSE

I'll be sure he gets it.

As Hernandez leaves, Rose unravels the State Line Gazette and sees the headline:

'FROM COFFEE EMPIRE TO TOWN MAYOR, HERALD WINS ELECTION.'

ROSE

What the hell...

Rose scrunches the coffee carton in her hand and throws open the door, just as the rumble of APPLAUSE fills the main office.

Everyone in the building begins crowding around the double doors.

Rose slowly approaches her desk, tossing the empty coffee carton into the trash.

Still gripping the newspaper, she strains on tiptoes, to look over her colleagues.

Rose peers between the shoulders of two officers, spotting John Herald as he steps through the doorway, flanked by the Chief of Police and The Sentinel.

CHIEF OF POLICE

Here he is! Man of the hour - our newly elected mayor - John Herald.

Rose, discombobulated, throws the newspaper down onto her desk, covering her ears to drown out the incessant barrage of CLAPPING.

Shándaín, desperately swerves through the excited officers, making a beeline for Rose's station.

Stunned, Rose stares down at the newspaper, locking eyes with Herald's smug, grinning, front-page feature.

She staggers backward, palms clammy, her breath quickening as sweat emerges from her forehead.

Fedler glances back, concerned, he CLICKS thumb and finger to catch Rose's attention.

FEDLER

Rose? Hey! Rose? You good?

Rose scratches at her dry throat.

ROSE

That coffee...

Shándiín has manoeuvred partway through the office, dodging pulled out chairs and squeezing past distracted officers.

Herald beckons the crowd closer, causing a new wave of officers to block Shándiín's path.

HERALD

Now, I have a very special purpose here today: to announce my selection, and subsequent endorsement, of one of State Line's finest detectives. A detective who - and I'm sure we can all lament his departure - will replace our beloved Chief. A man who bequeaths the prestigious legacy and duty of upholding the State Line Police Department, to retire, and so he should - what a hard-working pillar, of our here community, he has been.

Herald grabs the forearm of the Chief and pulls him into a vigorous handshake.

CHIEF OF POLICE

I do appreciate that, John.

A CAMERAMAN appears from the side-lines and, FLASH, preserves the exchange.

Rose turns to face the gathering, stumbling forward, gripping the nearest desk for support.

Her vision blurring and heartrate increasing.

HERALD

This detective is a fine example of dedication, hard work and honesty.

As Rose staggers towards the wall of officers, Fedler intercepts.

FEDLER

What's going on? Are you okay?

ROSE

I need to get to, I need to -
move...move...

Rose pushes past Fedler and enters the thicket of uniforms.

HERALD

Well, I don't want to keep people from what they deserve, so, put your fine hands together for Detective Jeff Walker! Come on boy, come, and join me up here!

The precinct ERUPTS into applause once more.

Jeff steps forward, swamped with celebratory pats on the back, WHISTLING, CLAPPING and HOLLERING.

Shándaín watches in disbelief as Jeff approaches Herald.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Jeff?

Shándaín returns focus on reaching Rose, forging on through the wildly animate officers.

HERALD

Here he is! Everyone...

Herald greets Jeff with a solid SLAP on the back, before squeezing his shoulder victoriously.

HERALD

... your new Chief of Police. Jeff Walker!

ROSE

No... No... NO! NO! NO!

Rose frantically surfaces from the crowd.

The precinct falls silent.

Herald smirks.

Shándaín rushes through the officers behind Rose, narrowly missing the grab on her elbow as she lunges forward.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Rose!

ROSE

How could you!

Rose, frenzied, charges at Jeff.

JEFF

Rose, I...

Herald quickly steps before Jeff as Rose throws a heavily charged punch.

The precinct GASPS as one.

The Cameraman is fast, preserving the image of Rose's fist impacting Herald's nose, FLASH.

Rose freezes.

Shándaín gulps.

The Chief, avoiding eye contact, slinks away into the backdrop.

Herald steps forward, towering over Rose, blood dribbling down his top lip.

He licks his lips and smiles, blood filling the gaps in his teeth.

HERALD

Some wide eyes you got there girl - say,
are you high?

Rose, shocked, looks to Shándaín, Jeff, Fedler, the Chief.

The room awaits a response.

HERALD

I said, are you high? Sweating, punching,
look at your, your hands...

Rose looks down at her trembling hands and bloodied knuckles.

ROSE

I... I...

Herald grins.

HERALD

Get Detective Rose Wilson out of this
precinct.

The Sentinel grabs Rose by the elbow and begins to drag her away towards the exit.

ROSE

Get off me!

SHÁNDÁÍN

Wait! Wait! No! This is all a big
misunderstanding!

Shándaín catches up to The Sentinel and grabs at his fingers, trying to release his grip on Rose's arm.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Just, just, let her go...

The Sentinel pushes Shándaín backwards into a desk.

ROSE

Don't touch her!

Rose spits, fighting against The Sentinel's grip.

HERALD

Like a goddamn rabid dog.

Shándaín desperately looks to Jeff for help.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Jeff?

Jeff looks through Shándaín, to Rose.

JEFF

Wait.

The Sentinel stops, briefly releasing his grip on Rose.

Rose steps away from The Sentinel, straightening her jacket, awaiting Jeff's reprieve.

JEFF

Detective Wilson, your badge, and your gun.

Rose shakes her head.

ROSE

No, Jeff, no, this isn't...

Shándaín watches on in disbelief.

JEFF

Detective Wilson, either hand it over, or they will be forcibly removed from you.

ROSE

You can't be serious?

Rose looks around at the officers in the precinct.

ROSE

Is this how we're treating one our own now? Because this... this...

Rose points defiantly at Herald, her voice wavering between fear and anger.

ROSE
This criminal says so.

The officers look to Jeff.

ROSE
And you!

Rose points to The Chief stood silently in the corner.

ROSE
You're a coward. You're a damn coward! I told you this would happen! I fucking told you!

Rose lunges toward The Chief.

Herald flicks his wrist.

The Sentinel pulls Rose back by her ponytail.

Rose stabs her index finger at the Chief and SCREAMS.

ROSE
Is this what you wanted?

Herald, pissed, wipes his dripping nose against his sleeve.

HERALD
Be quiet now, I--

ROSE
--Don't you dare fucking tell me what to do, you piece of shit, two-bit gangster--

Herald laughs and crosses his arms.

HERALD
--Take her badge and gun. We've heard enough.

The Sentinel pulls Rose up by her wrist and begins tugging at her holster.

ROSE
Get off me!

Rose struggles against his grip, as he pulls the gun from her belt.

Fedler turns to Jeff.

FEDLER

Is this necessary--

JEFF

--Leave it.

Rose thrashes, headbutting The Sentinel.

Enraged, he wraps his arm around her neck and squeezes, Rose gasps for breath whilst he tears the detective shield from her belt.

Distressed, Hernandez steps forward.

HERNANDEZ

Stop! You're hurting her!

Shándiín promptly pulls him back.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Not now.

Rose, breathless, recovers as The Sentinel loosens his chokehold.

Herald CLAPS once, the precinct focused on his every move.

HERALD

Let this be a lesson going forward that I, as your newly appointed, elected official, will maintain a vested interest in the running of this department and will support Chief Walker here, in a zero tolerance on insubordination, particularly in the form of threatening, frankly hysterical, behaviour from, from, women, no less, and dirty cops like... like this.

Herald gestures to Rose.

Jeff expands his shoulders, lifts his chin up and stands tall.

JEFF

Everyone back to work.

Rose despairs as the crowd dissipates, leaving Shándiín, Hernandez and Fedler, nervously looking to Jeff.

JEFF

Escort Rose Wilson from the premises, she has no authorization to be here.

ROSE

No!

As The Sentinel drags Rose towards the door, Sháńdíín and Hernandez follow.

JEFF

You go with her, that's it for you.

Sháńdíín and Hernandez stop in their tracks.

Hernandez turns to face Jeff.

HERNANDEZ

This isn't fair.

JEFF

Life ain't fair kid. But hey, you know another P.D taking on brown, middle-school, drop-outs?

Hernandez steps toward Rose, who shakes her head.

ROSE

Not for me.

JEFF

See, she knows. Now it's your turn to be smart.

Hernandez deflates, sheepishly returning to his desk.

Sháńdíín, tears in her eyes, looks to Rose.

ROSE

Don't let them break you.

Sháńdíín shakily reaches out.

SHÁNDÍÍN

But...

ROSE

Don't follow me. Don't give them what they want. They won't get away with this!

Rose disappears through the double doors.

Herald rubs his hands together and turns to the Chief, then to Jeff.

HERALD

Cigar? Cigar?

CUT TO:

EXT. GOODSPRINGS VALLEY - DAY

Frank flounders beside William's corpse as the RUMBLING Ford engine echoes through the canyon.

FRANK

Why the hell... Who the hell... What the hell, what the hell do I do... William, this was your job, I don't, I don't know how to do this...

Frank notices the paperwork stacked beside William on the passenger seat.

He quicksteps around to the passenger side and tries the door.

It's jammed.

The bullet used to kill William is lodged into the door handle, seizing the lock.

Frank frantically pulls at the handle.

FRANK

Come on, come on...

As the distant REVVING intensifies, Frank reluctantly returns to the driver side.

He holds his breath and leans over the Sheriff's body to reach the paperwork.

INT. CAMARO - DAY

On the passenger seat is a stack of blood-spattered papers.

There is a fax printout displaying what looks like two grainy mugshots of young men in their 20s and 30s.

Beneath, William's handwriting reads: 'MISSING???'

The fax print is mostly clean, bar a few flecks of blood on the corners.

It is evident that something has been taken from the top of the stack.

Frank reaches out and snatches the top copy, crumpling it into his back pocket.

EXT. GOODSPRINGS VALLEY - DAY

Frank takes one last glance at William before gently closing the driver door.

He fumbles with the car keys as he hurriedly returns to the Pontiac.

Frank looks back up at the hilltop as the Ford REVS one final time, before speeding down into the foothills.

INT. PONTIAC - DAY

Frank pushes the key into the ignition.

The car won't start.

The sound of the Ford's SCREECHING tyres approaches.

Frank looks up to see a cloud of dust heading his way.

FRANK

Come on!

Panicked, Frank BANGS the steering wheel with his palm whilst frantically twisting the key back and forth in the ignition.

FRANK

Come on! Come on!

The Ford pulls up on William's Camaro, just as the Pontiac RUMBLES to a start.

As the Ford creeps closer, Frank recognises the driver, Kabar, and passenger, Cortez, as the Hitmen from the saloon.

Cortez raises his arm through the open window to reveal a pistol.

FRANK

Oh shit.

Frank ducks down as Cortez fires the gun, shattering the Pontiac passenger window and hitting the dashboard, narrowly missing Frank.

EXT. GOODSPRINGS VALLEY - DAY

Frank, pedal to the metal, speeds forward, swerving to miss William's Camaro, before high tailing into the valley.

Kabar quickly spins the Ford around and, in a vortex of dust, the Hitmen pursue Frank.

CUT TO:

EXT. JEAN - DAY

It's the early hours of the following day.

The sun rises on the sleepy town of Jean.

Shop shutters CLATTER and CLUNK as street VENDORS begin from their daily grind.

A NEWSPAPER VENDOR (50s), with a makeshift, cardboard box counter, stacks the day's press onto metal racks beside him.

A portable radio playing by his feet.

On the opposite side of the street, Rose is leant beside a singular, wall mounted, telephone booth, a shadow of her former self.

Her cheeks are strewn with the faint grey lines of wiped mascara.

Her ponytail has dropped into a loose knot, resting in the nape of her neck, supported by the oversized leather jacket covering her bedraggled pantsuit.

The telephone receiver, wedged between Rose's chin and shoulder, struggles against the outstretched cable as she presses her open notebook against the small, glass, side panel.

ROSE

And, when does the night shift start?

Rose scribbles into the notebook.

ROSE

Uh-huh. Okay. Nine-thirty. Okay. Uh-huh,
Oh-- on the highway? I do have a vehicle
Ma'am. I can start right away. And that's
\$2.30 per hour?

(exhales)

Oh, I'm sorry, it said in the-- Right,
\$1.60, and tips?

Rose squeezes the bridge of her nose.

ROSE

Dependent on experience. Okay, okay...

Rose slumps against the wall, defeated, slapping her notebook closed.

ROSE

Well, Ma'am, I don't have any waitressing experience, but I was a... No, wait, I was a -- Uh-huh, got it. No problem. Thank you for your time. I understand. You too Ma'am. Goodbye now.

Rose presses the switch-hook and returns the receiver.

She takes a deep breath and strikes out the final number written in the notebook.

Rose crosses over to the newsstand.

Mortified, she looks down at the latest print.

The Stateline Gazette Newspaper headline reads:

'NEW MAYOR RIDES P.D OF CROOKED COP!'

The cover photo shows Rose, wild eyed with a balled fist, retreating from the bloodied grin of John Herald's just-punched face.

Rose's ducks her chin down into her jacket and flicks through to the middle of the newspaper.

The centrefold headline reads:

'WHAT A CRAZY WOMAN! DETECTIVE ATTACKS PROMINENT COFFEE MAGNATE IN DRUG ADDLED RAGE!'

The Vendor rustles behind his precariously balanced boxes, before rising to look at Rose.

VENDOR

This ain't a library y'know.

ROSE

I'll take it.

The Vendor glances at the paper and back to Rose.

He struggles to contain both his excitement, and surprise, at Rose's unfortunate celebrity.

Rose pulls a handful of change from her pocket, counting the cents.

The Vendor waggles his finger, indicating Rose to stop counting.

VENDOR

On the house.

Rose looks up from the change.

VENDOR

Ain't every day you meet a centrefold.

The Vendor laughs as Rose sheepishly tucks the paper beneath her arm.

ROSE

Thanks.

Rose returns to stand beside the phonebooth.

She folds back the newspaper to focus on the report.

A photograph shows Herald, unharmed, self-satisfied, aware, cigar propped between his teeth.

Rose violently strikes Herald's face with her pen, before flicking through to the classifieds, vigorously parting the skewered pages.

The heading reads: 'Jobs & Opportunities.'

Rose drops a couple of coins into the telephone and dials out.

ROSE

Good morning. I'm calling about the -- I'm sorry, I know it's early but I'm very keen to... It will only take a -- then I will try again in a couple of hours. Sorry to have inconvenienced...

(under breath)

You've gone.

Rose rattles the change catch beneath the receiver - nothing.

ROSE

Dammit!

Rose trails down the page to the next listing.

The text reads: 'WAREHOUSE SECRETARY. PRIVATE. WELL PAID.'

Rose shrugs, prises the remaining coins from her pocket and dials.

ROSE

Last shot.

(waiting)

Good morning Sir! I'm calling about the job posting in the State Line Gazette for a Warehouse-- Uh-huh... Okay... Uh-huh...

Rose hopefully opens her notebook.

ROSE
\$2.00 per hour is -- yes, Sir, I would be
happy to -- of course, I can hold.

Rose nervously bites the tip of her pen.

SCREECHING TYRES sound in the distance.

ROSE
Hello, yes-- as soon as possible works for
me too.

The RUMBLE of a speeding car engine dominates the street.

ROSE
-- I'm sorry, Sir, I said I can start as
soon as --

Rose presses her finger into her right ear and pushes the phone
receiver further into her left ear.

ROSE
-- soon as...

Rose turns to see the dusty Pontiac, complete with a shattered
passenger window, grind to a halt before the phonebooth, the front
wheel cresting the curb.

Rose squints against the sun, unable to see the driver.

ROSE
No, I am a serious applicant, it's just
that...

Rose shields her eyes with her notebook and observes as Frank
unsteadily steps from the car, slapping the sides of his face and
blinking into focus.

ROSE
I am still here... What time was that?

Frank stumbles up the curb, making a beeline for Rose.

Rose stuffs her notepad into her pocket.

FRANK
Phone! Phone! I need that phone! Right
now!

Frank lunges forward to remove the receiver from Rose.

Rose shuffles backward, the telephone cable tangled around her
forearm.

Frank tugs at the cable.

ROSE
Excuse me, you can't just...

Rose looks Frank up and down.

ROSE
Is that... is that blood?

FRANK
Look little lady, I ain't got time to explain.

Frank gently takes Rose's hand and softly starts to peel her fingers from the telephone receiver.

The faint chatter of a MAN's voice is audible through the receiver.

Rose, taken aback, grips the receiver and pulls away.

ROSE
Get off!

FRANK
C'mon, just give me the...

Frank tugs at the telephone cable wrapped around Rose's arm, it unravels free.

Rose clutches the receiver to her chest.

ROSE
Go away!

Rose quickly raises the receiver to her ear.

ROSE
No, not you Sir. Please, just one moment...

Frank slips the receiver from Rose's grasp.

ROSE
Give that back!

Rose, on tiptoes, grabs at the phone.

The newspaper, clutched under her arm, falls facedown onto the ground, pitched like a tent on the skewer-pen.

ROSE
You can't just...

Frank lowers the phone to his ear.

FRANK
(into the receiver)
She'll call you back.

Frank returns the receiver.

ROSE
Who the hell do you think you are?

Rose tugs the side of Frank's shirt to get his attention, before eying the blood on her hands and wiping it back onto him.

ROSE
Is this your blood? Are you hurt? Where is
it coming from?

Frank squeezes his eyes shut tight and exhales.

FRANK
Enough with the damn questions already...

Frank leans against the booth, frantically rifling through his pockets dropping gum, receipts, tobacco.

FRANK
I just need, I just need to...

A small paper slip with numbers on floats to the ground.

FRANK
(under breath)
Where in all of god's goddamn gracious
green earth is...

Rose grabs the slip and offers it to Frank.

ROSE
Is this what you're--

He quickly plucks it from her grasp.

FRANK
--Yes! Yes! Thank you.

ROSE
Oh, so, you know manners?

Frank ignores her, rifling through his pockets once more.

FRANK

You got any change for this damn thing,
or?

Rose folds her arms, dumbfounded.

ROSE

Now hang on a minute... Are you high,
drunk, or just plain stupid?

Frank laughs and looks down at the newspaper spread out over the pavement.

He spots Rose's throw-down with Herald and glances back up at her.

FRANK

Well, I could ask you the same question.

Rose, wide eyed, swiftly kicks the newspaper onto the back page.

The deep HUM of the Hitman's Ford engine interrupts their shared moment of audacity.

They both turn to see the Ford REVVING at the end of the street.

The amber sunrays pierce through the sky, obscuring the windscreen, lending the Hitmen a sinister disguise.

Frank gulps.

Rose instinctively reaches for her holster, momentarily forgetting its absence, and instead pats her hip unsuccessfully.

ROSE

And... who are they?

FRANK

I don't know, but we need to go now.

ROSE

We? No. You? Yes.

Frank grabs Rose's forearm and pulls her towards the Pontiac.

The Vendor looks on.

Rose wriggles herself free from Frank's grasp.

ROSE

I have had one too many douchebag men lay
hands on me in the last twenty-four hours,
you better get your ass into that--

FRANK

--I'm sorry, but, but these are really bad men.

ROSE

Oh, and you're the good guy, right?

FRANK

Look, we ain't got time to...

Frank pauses momentarily to look at Rose before dropping into the driver's side of the Pontiac.

FRANK

I ain't gonna hurt you. You have my word.
But there's a very good chance they might
now that we're talking.

Frank struggles to start the Pontiac engine.

Rose is steadfast, she shakes her head.

FRANK

Okay, okay, don't say I didn't warn you.

The Pontiac starts and Frank SLAMS the door.

He reaches into his pocket, takes out his wallet, and leans across the passenger seat to see Rose peering through the shattered glass.

FRANK

And for the record, I ain't drunk.

A smile creeps onto Rose's face.

ROSE

Then, for the record, I ain't no little
lady.

Frank chuckles.

FRANK

I guess I deserved that.

ROSE

I guess you did.

They linger.

An intense REV from the distant Ford breaks their gaze.

FRANK

Take this!

Frank hurriedly throws Rose his wallet.

FRANK

If you're really that detective from the paper, find out who they are.

ROSE

Wait, what? Look, I'm not a detective anymore, that's just... wait a minute, this is you--

FRANK

-- Help me. Please.

Rose looks down at the wallet.

Frank reclines into his seat and adjusts the rear-view mirror.

He turns to Rose a final time.

FRANK

I need one more chance.

As Frank speeds away, Rose glances over at the Ford, hurtling full throttle down the Main Street.

On approach, the Ford reduces speed as it skirts the curb.

Rose locks eyes with Cortez, who slides his index finger across his throat and winks.

The Ford TEARS off.

Rose quickly pulls out her notepad and scrawls down the registration plate.

Handwriting reads: 'HC 259 PAR.'

Rose flips open Frank's wallet.

She pushes a worn and dusty driver's license from the card holder and runs her thumb across Frank's photograph.

The license reads:

'FRANK MICHAEL DAVIS. GOODSPRINGS. M. BRN. 5-11. 190.'

Rose tries to slide the license back down, but it gets stuck on a piece of folded card.

Rose wiggles the card free from the wallet and unfolds it.

ROSE
I, William McCampbell, Sheriff of
Goodsprings, Nevada, hereby appoint Frank
Michael Davis as Deputy Sheriff.

The signature and date are blank.

Frank has not committed to the appointment.

Rose flips the wallet closed around the cards and exhales.

ROSE
Goddammit William, you owe me.

She pulls out her car keys and jogs over to the Gremlin.

Rose starts the car and follows the black tyre marks on the road
ahead.

CUT TO:

INT. STATE LINE POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Shándaín is sat at her desk typing.

The main office door swings open and Jeff storms through.

Shándaín cranes her neck to peer over the chunky computer monitor,
before hunkering down to avoid eye contact.

JEFF
Get an APB out on a red Pontiac, last seen
in the Goodsprings Valley.

Jeff approaches Shándaín's desk and SLAMS his palm down onto the
monitor, Shándaín jumps to attention.

JEFF
Today!

She quickly recalls Jeff's request onto a notepad.

JEFF
The driver is an unidentified male. Wanted
in connection with a DOA, confirmation
awaiting autopsy--

SHÁNDÁÍN
--Homicide?

Jeff shrugs.

Shándaín quickly grabs the telephone receiver and punches in several numbers.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Attention all units. S. Clah issuing an APB for a RED PONTIAC. A RED PONTIAC. Last known location Goodsprings Valley. ATL on the driver. Male. Possible witness to a DOA in the Goodsprings Valley.

Jeff's holstered radio echoes Shándaín's transmission.

He briefly surveys the near-empty precinct.

He gestures to Shándaín not to hang up the receiver.

JEFF

Suspect fled the scene. Mental state unknown, potentially dangerous. Approach with caution. Restrain, or, you know...

SHÁNDÍÍN

Do we think he's the...?

Jeff stays silent.

Shándaín, concerned, lifts the receiver back to her ear.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Officers are advised to approach with caution. New information suggests our witness could be assailant. Mental state unknown. Consider appropriate force and restraint.

Jeff nods and walks off towards his office.

Shándaín stands.

SHÁNDÍÍN

Is there an ID on the body?

Jeff turns back.

JEFF

Oh, yeah. That old guy running Goodsprings, y'know? The Sheriff.

Jeff carries on towards his office.

Shocked, Shándaín slumps heavily into her chair.

As his door closes, she opens a Filofax on the desk, flicking through the cards before stopping at 'P.'

The card entry reads: 'Primm.'

Shándiín picks up the telephone and dials out.

CUT TO:

EXT. NV-161 - DAY

Frank speeds along the highway, bobbing and weaving between irate, HORN-HONKING, road users.

INT. PONTIAC - DAY

Frank glances down at the wing mirror, the Hitmen are gaining on him.

FRANK
Goddammit.

He looks ahead at the upcoming road sign, indicating a right turning.

The road sign reads: 'Sloan - 15 Miles.'

Frank takes a deep breath and yanks the handbrake, turning abruptly across both lanes of the highway, tyres SCREAMING as he skids onto the signposted dirt path.

The Ford follows.

As Frank lurches down the uneven terrain, he struggles to control the Pontiac.

An upcoming bend in the road, flanked by rockery and cacti, causes Frank to feather the brakes.

The Hitmen relish the opportunity to catch up.

As Frank rounds the corner, the Ford shunts the Pontiac.

Alejo's rosary beads SLAP against the windscreen, the beads fly off the string, bouncing around between the dashboard and windscreen.

FRANK
Oh, I'm sorry brother.

The Pontiac begins losing speed.

Frank looks down at the fuel gauge, the needle teeters above 'E'.

FRANK

No... No...

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The Ford attempts an overtake on the Pontiac.

The Pontiac rocks as the Oldsmobile scrapes down the right-hand side of the vehicle, attempting to push Frank off the road.

INT. PONTIAC - DAY

Frank briefly takes his eyes off the road to meet Kabar's piercing stare.

Frantic, Frank pushes the accelerator down to the floor and holds the lead on the Hitmen.

As Frank checks out the rear-view, Cortez leans out of the passenger window, pistol in hand.

FRANK

Not again.

Frank swerves as Cortez takes a shot at the Pontiac, shattering the passenger-side wingmirror.

Frank looks ahead to the upcoming bridge.

INT. AMC GREMLIN - DAY

Rose surveys the NV-161 - no sign of Frank or the Hitmen.

She glimpses the whirlwind of dust to her right and SCREECHES into a handbrake turn, narrowly avoiding a HONKING hatchback, to take the slip road towards Sloan.

Rose accelerates to catch up.

INT. FORD - DAY

Cortez slides back inside the car after unsuccessfully shooting at Frank.

Kabar glances into the rear-view mirror.

KABAR

Who the fuck is that?

Cortez looks back at the Gremlin, emerging from a cloud of dust behind them.

He leans over the passenger headrest, squinting to focus, as Rose comes into view.

CORTEZ
You again.

KABAR
Hey, ain't that?

Cortez quickly pulls a copy of the Stateline Gazette from the backseat and SLAPS the front page onto the centre console.

He TAPS the photograph of Rose with the muzzle of his pistol.

CORTEZ
She's our bonus for the year. Pull back.

Kabar releases his foot from the accelerator and hangs back behind the Pontiac.

Cortez racks the slide on his pistol.

INT. PONTIAC - DAY

The Pontiac lets out a labouring chuff as the speed begins to reduce.

Smoke creeps out from beneath the bonnet.

FRANK
Please, please, please...

Frank cringes on noticing the dangling, wing mirror, flapping against the side of the car.

As he readjusts the rear-view, he notices the Ford slowing down.

FRANK
What the hell?

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The subcompact Gremlin jolts and jumps as it edges further and further up the side of the Ford, fighting hard for an overtake against the tumbling gravel and brush.

INT. GREMLIN - DAY

Rose, arms rigid, grips the steering wheel as she aligns with the Ford.

ROSE
Come on baby.

Out of the corner of her eye Rose sees Kabar slide backward in his seat, revealing Cortez, propped up against the dashboard, pistol aiming straight at her.

Rose SLAMS on the brakes.

Cortez FIRES the pistol and misses.

INT. FORD - DAY

Kabar brakes, throwing Cortez into the windscreen.

CORTEZ
Stupid bitch!

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Rose reaccelerates, passing the incensed Hitmen and approaches Frank in the struggling, smoking Pontiac.

INT. AMC GREMLIN - DAY

Rose meets Frank's desperate gaze and nods.

Rose overtakes, heading towards the upcoming desert overpass.

INT. PONTIAC - DAY

Frank watches as the fuel gauge and speedometer simultaneously plummet.

FRANK
No, no, no, no, no...

As the car slows down, the loose rosary beads rattle against the windscreen.

FRANK
What is she doing? Hell, what am I doing?

Frank looks ahead at the overpass.

FRANK
Here goes nothing.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Rose reaches the bridge.

As the Ford gears up for the final overtake on the Pontiac, Frank jerks the handbrake, cranks the steering wheel to the right and pulls the car clockwise, blocking the bridge.

INT. GREMLIN - DAY

Rose quickly switches into reverse and careens backwards towards the Pontiac blockade.

EXT. OVERPASS - DAY

Frank bails out of the driver door as the Ford SLAMS into the passenger side of the Pontiac.

INT. FORD - DAY

Both Hitmen thrust forward.

The driver's side airbag inflates, throwing Kabar back into the headrest.

Cortez lets out a guttural CRY of anger, before kicking open the passenger door.

EXT. OVERPASS - DAY

Frank runs towards the rapidly reversing Gremlin.

Cortez fires, the bullet grazes Frank's arm.

Rose throws open the passenger door and Frank jumps in.

They speed away.

Cortez fires again.

The bullet gauges into the side of the Gremlin as it hightails across the bridge.

CORTEZ

Fuck!

Cortez returns to the Ford, kicking the bumper as he slumps back down into the passenger side.

INT. FORD - DAY

Cortez rips the photograph of Rose from the Gazette as Kabar, nose bloodied, groggily pulls the combat knife from his belt, and slashes the airbag.

CORTEZ

Reverse this piece of shit...
Now!

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION, SLOAN - DAY

An unlit, Cowboy neon sign is perched just off the roadside, solemnly waving hello, and goodbye, to the gas station patrons.

Rose, Frank, and the Gremlin are concealed, parked behind the Gas Station kiosk.

Rose and Frank exit the car.

ROSE

Are you okay to go get yourself cleaned up?

Rose gestures to the gunshot graze on Frank's upper arm.

ROSE

I need to make a call.

Frank nods, heading straight into the kiosk.

Rose walks over to the enclosed phonebooth at the side of the gas pumps.

INT. KIOSK - DAY

Ding.

An elderly CLERK stirs from behind the counter.

After lowering the VOLUME of the small television, propped precariously between an icebox and cigarette dispenser, he leans against the till to observe Frank.

Frank shops the basic selection, sizing up a dusty, souvenir 'Las Vegas' t-shirt against his chest.

CLERK

You'll want a large.

Frank smiles through gritted teeth.

FRANK

Thank you.

He circles the standalone shelving and grabs a bottle of whiskey, a box of plasters, a lighter and a bag of chips.

He drops them all onto the counter.

The Clerk adjusts his glasses to the tip of his nose and blinks.

CLERK

Quite the collection you got here.

As the Clerk rings up his purchase, Frank pats his jeans pockets.

FRANK

Hold on - wallet is with, uh, with, my...

Frank gestures out the front window to Rose, visible in the phonebooth.

CLERK

Sign of the times when the wife holds the wallet.

FRANK

Oh, she's not my--

CLERK

--Now, when I was courting my first wife back in '28...

Frank sighs.

INT. PHONEBOOTH - DAY

Rose delves into her coat pocket and discovers the very last of her change.

She drops a couple of quarters into the phone.

INTERCUT - PHONEBOOTH/STATE LINE P.D

As the telephone dials out, Rose observes Frank's interaction with the Clerk.

At the precinct, Jeff catches the receiver on the last ring.

JEFF

Stateline--

ROSE

--Shándiín, it's me, look I just need--

JEFF

--Rose?

ROSE

Jeff?

(pause)

I shouldn't have called.

JEFF

Wait...

Rose hunkers over the receiver, finger teetering over the switch-hook.

JEFF

Are you there?

Rose bites her lip in frustration.

JEFF

Rose?

An uncomfortable silence follows.

JEFF

It wasn't meant to go down like this.

Rose covers the receiver as she inhales deeply.

JEFF

Look, it wasn't my choice, I was trying to--

Rose explodes.

ROSE

--You want to talk about choice Jeff? You watched a known criminal, a criminal I was investigating, a criminal I bought to you Jeff, to you! Come into our workplace and attack me, me! Your partner! I...

Rose pushes her thumb and forefinger against the bridge of her nose.

JEFF

Rose, I--

ROSE

--Did you know?

JEFF

I can't really explain right now.

ROSE

Did you know about the promotion?

The Hitmen enter the main office, dishevelled and dirty, Kabar still nursing a bloodied nose.

Jeff beckons them over.

JEFF

I can explain it all. Meet with me.

Rose squeezes her eyes tight shut.

A couple of tears slowly trickle down her cheeks.

Cortez hands Jeff the picture of Rose from the paper and points to Kabar's nose.

Cortez opens his mouth; Jeff quickly hushes him.

JEFF

Where are you?

Rose nervously taps the receiver.

JEFF

Are you at home?

Frank gently opens the phonebooth door.

JEFF

I can get you back in here - let me come to you, where are you?

FRANK

Hey, do you still have my wallet?

Rose spins around, eyes wet with tears.

JEFF

Who's that?

Frank, concerned, places a hand on her shoulder.

FRANK

What's going on?

JEFF

Who is that?

ROSE

I, I have, I have, to go.

JEFF

No, no. Wait. Rose. Wait.

Rose listens hesitantly.

JEFF

You don't know everything.

ROSE
I need to go.

Jeff shakes his head and looks at the Hitmen.

JEFF
Wait! Just tell me where you are I can--

ROSE
--It's too late.

JEFF
Rose! You put this phone down and it's
over between--

ROSE
--Goodbye Jeff.

Rose gently replaces the receiver and turns to Frank.

ROSE
It's no-one.

Rose exits the phonebooth.

JEFF
Dammit!

Jeff slams the receiver down.

JEFF
Why the hell was she there?

Cortez arches his back into a stretch.

CORTEZ
She a problem?

Jeff looks down at the newspaper mugshot of Rose and slams his fist
onto the table.

JEFF
Fuck!

The Hitmen share an awkward glance.

Jeff scrawls Rose's address onto a post-it note.

JEFF
Find her.

KABAR
What about the witness?

JEFF

You find Rose, you get him. She'll protect him, it's what she does - she's like a dog with a goddamn bone.

Jeff lifts the newspaper scrap to the light.

JEFF

Who are you working?

Cortez cracks his knuckles and takes the post-it.

CORTEZ

And...

Jeff runs his finger over Rose's mugshot.

JEFF

Don't worry, you'll get paid.

The Hitmen nod and head towards the door.

JEFF

But I want her alive.

Kabar scoffs disapprovingly, scrunching his scabby nose.

CORTEZ

And the witness?

Cortez runs his tongue along his gold-plated incisors.

JEFF

No change. Do whatever you want with him.

Kabar rubs his palms together.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION, SLOAN OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Rose reaches into her pocket and hands Frank his wallet.

ROSE

Here. You should probably keep hold of this, it's got some pretty important stuff in.

FRANK

Do you want to talk about this Jeff guy?

ROSE

I'm hungry.

Rose approaches the kiosk.

Frank paces ahead to open the door for her.

She smiles.

INT. KIOSK - DAY

Ding.

Rose and Frank enter the kiosk.

The Clerk rises to the countertop once more.

As he reaches for the remote to lower the television volume, Rose calls out.

ROSE

Wait!

The Clerk stops in his tracks.

Rose steadily walks towards the television.

A well-coiffed, suited, NEWS ANCHOR (40s) reads the headlines.

Across the bottom of the screen a banner reads:

'MURDER IN THE VALLEY? GOODSPRINGS SHERIFF FOUND DEAD.'

NEWS ANCHOR

The body of William McCampbell was discovered this morning on the outskirts of Goodsprings. Sources reveal cause of death to be a gunshot wound to the head, whilst--

Rose grips the neck of her shirt.

ROSE

--William?

FRANK

Wait. You know William?

ROSE

I...

NEWSCASTER

Detectives with the State Line Police are seeking a potential witness and, or suspect, seen fleeing the area in - what could have been, the last moments of

McC Campbell's life. Locals are advised to be on the lookout for a white male, last seen driving a red Pontiac through the Goodsprings Valley.

Rose looks to Frank.

Horrified, she paces backward.

FRANK

No, no...

Frank reaches out.

ROSE

Stay away from me.

FRANK

No, this isn't what it looks like.

ROSE

Why is that all anyone has to say?

Rose exits the kiosk.

Frank follows.

CUT TO:

INT. PIONEER SALOON, GOODSPRINGS - DAY

Alejo stares down at the radio in disbelief as the RADIO HOST reads the hourly headline.

Herald and The Sentinel enter the saloon, Alejo is unaware, too engrossed in the bulletin.

RADIO HOST (V.O.)

The burning wreckage of the Pontiac has now been located on the NV-161 overpass, prompting a city-wide manhunt as the police track down the witness, turned suspect, in this ongoing murder inquiry.

Alejo grabs a pint glass from the bar and throws it at the back wall of the saloon.

ALEJO

Frank!

Alejo looks over at the shattered glass and then down at the brush and dustpan.

He punts the dustpan across the floor towards the wreckage.

HERALD (O.S)
Some anger you got there boy.

Startled, Alejo turns to look at Herald.

The Sentinel takes a seat in a booth as Herald approaches the bar.

ALEJO
Sorry, I didn't see you there.

HERALD
This Frank fella sounds like a piece of work.

Herald sits on Frank's stool and scans the spirits behind Alejo.

He points to a bottle of whiskey.

Alejo takes the bottle and a single glass.

HERALD
And for yourself.

Alejo picks up another glass and pours them both a drink.

HERALD
Now, tell me why this here Frank has got you in such a state.

Alejo nervously slides the half-full glass of whiskey toward Herald, as The Sentinel watches on.

HERALD
Don't mind my associate there, we're all friends here.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Rose hastily approaches her car.

Frank is in pursuit.

FRANK
They're after the wrong guy! I, I, don't even own a gun!

Panicked, Frank runs his fingers through his hair as he jogs to catch up with Rose.

FRANK

You have to believe me. I just found him like that. He was already dead.

Rose continues towards the driver's side of the Gremlin.

FRANK

I think the people who are chasing me killed William. William is... was... he was the only person I had.

Frank extends his hands helplessly.

FRANK

Please, please, don't leave me here.

Rose pauses before opening the car door and looks back at Frank.

He's trembling, he doesn't look like a cold-blooded killer.

FRANK

I, I don't know why or who, or what is happening, but I know William is dead and I'm being chased, and you! You, for some reason, you came back for me.

Frank inhales violently.

FRANK

And I'm scared and... Oh my god, I think... I think.... I think I'm having a heart attack...

Frank grips his throat and chest.

Rose closes the car door and calmly places a hand under Frank's elbow.

ROSE

Breathe.

Frank lunges, palms forward, onto the car bonnet, taking in breath after breath.

FRANK

I can't, I can't do this.

He kneels, sliding down the hood of the Gremlin, before turning into a squat, back pressed up against the number plate.

Rose kneels beside him as he wrestles with a panic attack.

ROSE
Listen to me. Frank, isn't it?

Frank nods.

ROSE
Breathe in through your nose Frank.

Frank inhales.

ROSE
And out through your mouth...

Frank exhales.

ROSE
And again...

Frank pulls his knees into his chest and buries his head.

FRANK
I can't do this.

Rose grips Frank's shoulder and lowers herself to his level.

ROSE
Listen, I'm so sorry Frank. I know, I
really know, how this feels...

Frank lifts his head and locks eyes with Rose.

ROSE
But if you want my help, you're going to
have to tell me everything - and I mean
everything - that you know.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE ONE.

No Man's Rose

Series Bible

- Episode One: 'Centrefold.'
- Episode Two: 'The Silver State.'
- Episode Three: 'Don't Drink the Coffee.'
- Episode Four: 'Dear Hearts and Gentle People.'
- Episode Five: 'EA-2148.'
- Episode Six: 'For What it's Worth.'

Episode One: 'Centrefold.'

It's 1973 and another sunny day in the California-Nevada border town of State Line.

Carefree, seasoned detective, ROSE WILSON, arrives at the local Police Department to discover her hotly anticipated promotion to Chief of Police has been fully endorsed by the board. It should be a great start to the day, first woman *and* youngest detective to make Chief in the *whole* state. Rose is practically putting State Line on the map of true progressive history.

Well, she would've been but, unlucky for Rose, before the sun has even risen above the precinct, the newspaper announces that her archenemy JOHN HERALD - the *allegedly* corrupt, coffee import magnate, who's narrowly avoided her handcuffs for years - has just been elected Mayor of State Line. *How?*

It's the 70s! When you've got a whole heap of money and you decide you want to take over an unincorporated town completely unopposed, you kind of get exactly what you want. As the news sends shockwaves through the P.D, Herald and his bodyguard, THE SENTINEL, have the audacity to arrive at the precinct and retire the current CHIEF OF POLICE early. *What?*

Well, that's exactly the type of control that the mayor of an unincorporated town has. Even worse, after an obnoxiously long and rousing speech, Herald bestows Rose's rightful title to her estranged partner, Detective JEFF WALKER. As you can imagine, it doesn't go down well and Rose, completely out of character, punches Herald in the face – right in front of press and precinct. Geez. Was it something in the coffee? Or just something he said?

Meanwhile, at the weathered and worn-down Pioneer Saloon in the neighbouring town of Goodsprings, struggling addict FRANK DAVIS starts yet another day at the bar, flanked by his humorous, bartending friend ALEJANDRO 'ALEJO' LOPEZ. Whilst the duo bicker over Frank's flagrant drug use and irresponsible attitude, a mysterious pair of Hitmen, KABAR and CORTEZ, seat themselves within earshot, sharing ice-cold stares.

After making an ass of himself antagonising the new patrons, Frank gets a distorted radio call from the beloved town Sheriff, WILLIAM MCCAMPBELL. As Alejo discerns the Sheriff's location in the Goodsprings Valley, the Hitmen make their exit with unnerving coincidence.

Out of the bar and into the valley, Frank discovers the Sheriff's stationary car and William's lifeless body inside. As he struggles to contain his distress, and stomach contents, the Hitmen stalk the valley and descend on a terrified Frank – who panics, grabbing a couple of mysterious fax copies from the Sheriff's passenger seat.

Whilst Frank spends the night hiding from two seemingly ruthless killers, Rose processes her alienation from the P.D in the healthiest way possible – by avoiding going home, ignoring her friends and family, and waiting until the crack of dawn to call up every classified job ad in town. What could possibly be wrong with that?

Well, once Rose finds a serious advert, Frank stumbles into town with his blood-soaked jeans and bad attitude, embroiling the tarnished ex-detective in a dangerous pursuit, a near-death experience, and a tell-all panic attack behind a run-down gas station.

Episode Two: 'The Silver State.'

Herald arrives at a deserted mine-shaft entrance only to reveal a brand new, top secret, testing facility.

Plucky police administrator and confidant to Rose, SHÁNDÍÍN CLAH, finds it difficult adjusting to Jeff's new appointment. Distrustful of the P.D's motivations, and the overall involvement of the shady John Herald, Shándíín snoops around for evidence – unaware that DETECTIVE GEORGE FEDLER, Jeff's new partner, is following her.

After agreeing to help Frank, Rose discovers her house has been trashed by someone looking for information. Luckily, the intruders failed to find Rose's secret hiding spot. With her home compromised, the pair haul out to Moonshine Motel and Casino where Rose introduces Frank to owner, and father figure, MR PRIMM.

Back at the Pioneer saloon, on the heels of Frank destroying his beloved Pontiac in a car chase with CORTEZ and KABAR, Alejo looks to have been beaten and struggles to hold it together after a visit from Herald and The Sentinel.

Meanwhile, Shándíín creates an intense confrontation between Herald and Jeff after unknowingly taking an incriminating file from The Chief of Police's desk. Fedler continues to observe from afar.

At Moonshine, Rose neglects to tell Primm about her trashed house and suggests that their stay at the motel is solely for Frank's safety.

Primm reveals a long-time acquaintance with the Sheriff and Rose attempts to get Frank to open-up, by divulging her own relationship with William. In doing so, she delves into her casefiles and brings Frank up-to-speed on her previous investigation into Herald.

Rose believes Herald isn't as squeaky clean as the town believes and that he's been running an experimental, underground drug racket which somehow ties into his import/export of coffee. In fact, Rose is adamant that her explosive exit from the P.D wasn't *just* because punching the new mayor in the face was bad – but that her coffee had been spiked with his drugs. Farfetched? *Frank thinks so.*

Although Rose is adamant that the Sheriff knew something which could blow the case wide open, the pressure for information overwhelms a bereft Frank and he lashes out – creating quite the scene in the casino and seriously offending Rose.

Frank ends the tumultuous day on a heart-to-heart with Mr Primm, where Primm reveals Rose's heart-breaking family loss and unconventional upbringing, leading Frank to disclose his own failings as a son and friend.

Disappointed in his behaviour, Frank calls in a favour from long-time friend, and ex-Las Vegas P.D toxicologist, DOC, to arrange a urine drug test for Rose. He also, *finally*, looks at the fax print-out from the Sheriff's car which reveals two young men who have been reported missing.

Episode Three: 'Don't Drink the Coffee.'

Back in the secret testing facility Herald oversees a drugs trial with horrific results for the participant.

At Moonshine, Frank convinces Rose to meet Doc, with a little help from Mr Primm, and apologises for his behaviour. They share a care-free car journey reconciling over music.

Meanwhile, a worried Shárdíín visits her mother for advice, revealing both her desire to be more than an administrator and her frustration at the visible corruption within the P.D. Sneaky Det. Fedler briefly abandons his surveillance of Shárdíín after a cryptic pager message leads him to the desolate Mojave phone box.

After administering a urine test, Doc encourages Rose and Frank to return to Goodsprings and search William's house for clues. Doc believes Rose's theory that William was holding back on information - which ultimately got him killed.

Alejo is unhappy to see Frank back in town and gives him the cold shoulder. Frank, being Frank, believes Herald has turned Alejo against him when he notices Alejo's injuries and a carton of Herald Corporation brand coffee on the bar. Instead of reaching out to Alejo, he makes the rift in their friendship bigger.

Rose, on the other hand, has found some useful intel at William's house. A photograph, with the inscription 'EA-2148', and evidence of a safe deposit box in Searchlight. Excited by the prospect of a serious lead, Rose tries to call Shárdíín. Unsuccessful, she leaves an answerphone message about meeting with Frank and continuing the case against Herald. Unlucky for Rose, Jeff intercepts the message at Shárdíín's desk and takes the opportunity to deploy the Hitman back to Goodsprings.

Jeff searches the police database for Frank, recognising him as an unwitting pawn in Rose's dismissal - Frank sold Jeff the drugs used to spike Rose's coffee on the morning of her dismissal. Jeff rifles through Rose's desk for clues on how she knows Frank, but instead finds a box of matches from the Moonshine Motel and Casino.

Rose arrives at the saloon amidst a blazing row between Frank and Alejo, leading Frank to storm out and get high, and Rose to question Alejo about their friendship.

The Hitmen make their arrival in Goodsprings, taking Frank by surprise, and a fight ensues until Rose leaves the saloon to find Frank and fends off the Hitmen long enough for the pair to abscond. Unaware of the fight outside, Alejo decides to patch things up with Frank - but instead finds evidence of a scuffle and the fax printouts, fallen from Frank's pocket, showing the missing men. Alejo calls a reliable contact at the newspaper for information.

Rose and Frank fight off the Hitmen through the desert, leaving Rose KO'd and Cortez dead.

Fedler *stumbles* across a male whose injuries are consistent with Herald's testing facility. He executes him with a suppressed pistol and discards the body. The victim was one of the missing persons from the Sheriff's fax.

Jeff watches Mr Primm from the car park of Moonshine.

Episode Four: 'Dear Hearts and Gentle People.'

After getting KO-d by Kabar, Rose wakes up at Doc's and is concerned by Frank's absence. Doc reveals the outcome of the urine test, and they are both surprised to see no traces of drugs. Doc suggests that Rose stops internalising her anger towards Herald.

Shándíín, unaware that Jeff has intercepted Rose's messages, goes to Rose's home to see if she can find her. Upon noticing that Rose's home has been burglarised, she calls Mr Primm. Fedler follows.

Meanwhile, Frank has a crisis of conscience in the desert after recognising Jeff's photograph in the newspaper. He destroys his remaining drugs and decides to come clean to Rose about what he has done.

Alejo's contact at the newspaper alleges that pressure from within State Line P.D is why there have been no missing persons reported to the public. They refuse to get involved or share evidence to support their claims.

Rose confides in Doc about her drug addict parents and why she is so passionate about releasing State Line from Herald's grip, but it feels impossible. Doc shares a story from her time with the Las Vegas P.D which inspires Rose to keep going.

Kabar returns to Herald's facility and angrily drops Cortez's gold teeth on the desk. Herald orders The Sentinel to accompany him from now on.

Shándíín arrives at Moonshine to learn that Primm has already left with Jeff. Fedler catches up to her and reveals himself as an *alleged* undercover Drug Enforcement Agent. They both search Rose's room for clues and find a connection to the Pioneer Saloon. They set off for Goodsprings.

Frank returns to Doc's and tells Rose he must get something off his chest. Misreading the situation, Rose kisses Frank, but is swiftly rebuffed as he struggles to confess his connection to Jeff.

Embarrassed, Rose turns her attention to the Sheriff's safe deposit box in Searchlight, insisting that they must get there soon to find out what else he knew. Doc puts the feelers out with her contacts at the Las Vegas P.D about the meaning of 'EA-2148'.

Arriving in Goodsprings Shándíín and Fedler meet with Alejo, who tells them about Rose and Frank's plan to visit Searchlight. Upon noticing Alejo's fax copies behind the bar, Fedler excuses himself, prompting Shándíín to express her distrust of Fedler to Alejo.

Rose and Frank suffer an awkward car journey on the road to Searchlight, whilst Doc discovers evidence suggesting that Herald Corporation is funded by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA).

After receiving a one-sided phone call, the ex-Chief of Police commits suicide. HERNANDEZ, a rookie cop, is shown supporting a rescue team in retrieving a decomposing body found by hikers in the desert.

Episode Five: 'EA-2148.'

Jeff takes an unsuspecting Primm to breakfast in Searchlight to find out what he knows about Rose's investigation, however Primm is unrelenting, choosing to question Jeff instead.

Rose and Frank also arrive in Searchlight, where Frank recognises Kabar's car at the local Motel. They decide to split, Rose leaving for the bank, and Frank scoping out the Motel.

Fedler reconvenes with Shándaín and Alejo, and the trio agree to drive out to Searchlight to find Rose and Frank.

The ex-Chief of Police's suicide is reported on the radio.

Frank has walked into a trap and succumbs to a brutal beating from Kabar over Cortez's death. He is shocked, however, when The Sentinel claims they didn't kill the Sheriff.

Primm realises Jeff is jealous of Rose and asks him why he chose to get involved with Herald, after everything Rose has uncovered about him over the years, which touches a nerve.

Hernandez learns that the body found in the canyon belonged to the real George Fedler, who was reported missing to the Sheriff days before his murder. Both the real George Fedler and the Sheriff died by a single gunshot wound with a suppressed pistol.

Rose finally reveals the contents of the Sheriff's safe, learning that 'EA-2148' was the codename of a human experiment with hallucinogenic drugs, sanctioned by the U.S Army Chemical Corps in the 1950s. The lead biological warfare scientist on the programme was John Herald and his goal was to control the populace by hiding drugs in everyday products – like coffee. Before Rose can leave with the safe contents, Jeff arrives with Mr Primm.

The Sentinel is notified that Rose has reached the bank and a bloodied Frank is dragged along by Kabar.

Rose questions Jeff, as he extols the virtues of Herald's plan, claiming that State Line could be involved in innovative scientific discovery. If the people knew, they just wouldn't understand – but it's not too late for Rose to get on board.

When Rose tells Jeff he is a disgrace to the uniform for bringing corruption to the P.D and allowing non-consensual human testing to occur, Jeff holds Primm at gunpoint, offering his safe exchange for the deposit box contents.

As The Sentinel arrives with Frank, Jeff delights in telling Rose about Frank's drug deal. Rose is disappointed in Frank but committed to Mr Primm's safety.

After Jeff fails to get a rise out of Rose, he unravels, leading to a bloody fight over the evidence. Shándaín, Fedler and Alejo arrive to a terrifying shoot-out in the Searchlight bank, leaving Jeff dead, having been shot in the head by Rose following a vicious struggle, and both Primm and Kabar with life-threatening injuries.

The Sentinel leaves with Kabar and the contents of the Sheriff's lockbox, unaware that Frank managed to swipe a piece of damning evidence about Herald's murky past.

Episode Six: 'For What it's Worth.'

After the events at Searchlight, word is out that Rose killed Jeff.

Herald offers a bounty, demanding State Line P.D brings Rose in by any means necessary.

Hernandez desperately attempts to contact Rose by retracing her movements from her home to Moonshine.

Rose, Frank, Fedler and Alejo hole up at Docs, whilst Shárdíín anxiously waits for Primm to come out of surgery.

Doc believes that to maintain an operation like this, Herald must have a warehouse hidden somewhere in the desert, and that the Sheriff's photograph is their biggest clue. Rose remembers an earlier job advertisement and believes that could be the key to uncovering Herald's lair.

Frank issues a heartfelt apology to Rose before revealing the copy of the 'EA-2148' trial he took from the lockbox and Herald's former ID as a biological warfare scientist.

Back at the warehouse, a disgruntled Herald orders terrified workers to begin packaging his drug-laced coffee for shipment around State Line and the neighbouring towns, despite his colleague's insistence that the trials are incomplete.

Doc and Rose plan to trace a call to the warehouse to narrow down Herald's location.

At State Line P.D, Hernandez is shown identifying the body, discarded by Fedler, as a missing person from Sheriff William's investigation.

Frank and Alejo head to the outskirts of Goodsprings, whilst Fedler escorts Rose to the phonebooth at the Pioneer Saloon.

Fedler apologises to Rose for not standing up for her at the precinct and asks about her plans for the human trials evidence. She asks how he knows about 'EA-2148' but is interrupted by the go-ahead from Doc to begin the call tracing.

Doc's tech-savvy ally attempts to help them trace the location of the warehouse telephone line, but the scheme fails when The Sentinel realises Rose's plan.

Whilst sat in the hospital waiting room for Primm, Shárdíín makes the connection between the Hitman's number plate and the whereabouts of Herald: it's a zip code.

After speaking with Shárdíín, Doc dispatches Frank and Alejo to the Paradise Mine in the Goodsprings Desert and calls the Vegas P.D for back-up.

Upon hearing the radio communication from Doc, Fedler absconds in Rose's car, leaving her stranded in Goodsprings.

As Herald begins to clear out the warehouse, hidden beneath a dilapidated mine front, Frank and Alejo descend on the scene.

Fedler assembles a sniper rifle in the valley overlooking the mine.

Hernandez reaches Goodsprings and delivers Rose to Paradise, dropping the bombshell about Fedler's identity on the way.

At the mine, Rose wrestles with her anger towards Herald, holding him at gunpoint before letting him live, so that he can pay for his crimes in prison.

A convoy of Vegas P.D officers arrive to clear out the mine of workers and goods.

As Rose rejoices in Herald's arrest, Herald is shot dead by Fedler before he reaches the police car.

Fedler drives away in Rose's car with the evidence of Herald's trials on the passenger seat.

A month later:

Rose leaves flowers on an unmarked grave, assumed to be Jeff's, before joining Frank and Alejo at Moonshine.

They celebrate as Shándíín wheels in a recovering Primm, recently discharged from hospital.

Rose reveals her reinstatement at State Line P.D as a detective, whilst a sober Frank details his wishes to reopen the Goodsprings Sheriff's office in William's honour.

Rose steps outside for air to discover her car has returned.

On the passenger seat she finds the 'EA-2148' casefile, redacted by the United States Government, and a copy of her endorsement for Chief of Police.

Challenging the Expectations of the Neo-Western Woman Through Serial Drama.

The concept for *No Man's Rose* was first established as an undergraduate, feature film, pitch in pursuit of recreating the classic cinema template of gunslinging outlaws, frontier folktales and horseback lawlessness. The idea was to bring a new type of hero to the rugged landscapes of Wild West America, in the form of strong female protagonist, Rose Wilson.

'After discovering her marriage is rooted in fortune, not love, a bereft daughter rallies a posse of female outlaws to avenge her birth right and exact retribution against a gang of violent gunslingers.'

(No Man's Rose Logline, York Research Proposal, 2020)

Thematically, the main plot of *No Man's Rose* would develop the subjects of 'tragedy, betrayal and revenge' experienced by Rose, whilst the subplot would address 'the underlying tensions owing to power, gender and corruption' (Bowley-Moriarty, 2020) commonplace in nineteenth century America. The tropes of the Western genre built a solid story around Rose near immediately, with the expectations for her character prefabricated before she'd even been written into the script. It isn't that hard to find strong women, especially suffering strong women, in Western settings. There is a wealth of fictional, and non-fictional, women who have inspired many on-screen stories¹. It is, however, difficult to find a strong female lead whose character goes against the stylised gender roles defined by the traditions of Western genre. Women whose entire identity doesn't revolve around being 'wife' or 'lover', or whose screentime isn't spent dazzling with romantic, novelty skills, like

¹ Martha Jane Canary (Calamity Jane), Pearl Heart, Annie Oakley, Myra Maybelle Shirley Reed Starr (Belle Star), to name a few. (McConnell, 2020)

sideshow sharpshooter *Annie Oakley* (1935), or falling prey to the cliché, damsel in distress, ‘good-badman’² trope, suffered by Sierra Nevada Jones in *Cattle Queen of Montana* (1954).

In *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), Sundance’s lover, the attractive schoolteacher Etta Place, bore minimal resemblance to the real-life, outlaw gang member of the same name. Realistically, actress Katharine Ross’ portrayal barely scratched the surface of the gritty, rifle-wielding, enigma once sought by The Pinkerton Detective Agency³. Instead, Etta Place’s character was reduced to the romantic sidepiece, donning virginal white prairie dresses, tousled hair, and smoky eyeliner⁴. It is a telling trait of 50s and 60s cinema, that the femininity sought by male audiences of the time had to be soft and glamorous, reservedly fierce, yet still inferior to the *real* masculine hero of the hour⁵. Equally, it was no surprise that Joan Crawford’s performance as leading lady Vienna, *Johnny Guitar* (1954), was also ill-received by critics. Crawford’s character was not only wild-eyed, short-haired and, at times, boldly dressed, but also held a position of authority and relative autonomy. *Variety*⁶ scathingly tore down Crawford’s portrayal of Vienna, writing that *Johnny Guitar* ‘proves the actress should leave saddles and Levis to someone else and stick to city lights for a background’ (Variety, 1953).

Similarly, Grace Kelly’s depiction of pacifist, Quaker, Amy Fowler Kane, drew equally divisive criticism after her character pulled the trigger, heroically saving her husband’s life in

² Peter Stanfield’s ‘The Western 1909-14: A Cast of Villains’ (1987) introduces the ‘good-badman’ term as a ‘protagonist, initially established as bad, to perform a selfless act, thereby transforming himself into a hero.’ (p.109)

³ ‘American independent police force that was founded in 1850 by Allan Pinkerton.’ (Britannica, 2023)

⁴ On women’s appearance on screen, Mulvey (1975) argues that the ‘determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure,’ with women ultimately ‘coded for strong visual and erotic impact’ and their ‘to-be-looked-at-ness’ (pp.808-809).

⁵ In ‘Women and Men in Film’, Bielby and Bielby (1996) discuss the ‘devaluation of female talent on-screen’ and ‘institutionalization of male dominance’ in the film industry from as early as the 1930s. (pp.248-251)

⁶ Entertainment business news. (<https://variety.com>)

the final scenes of *High Noon* (1952). *High Noon* was already a controversial production, owing to director Fred Zinnemann's unorthodox characters and narrative themes of gender, politics, and race⁷, so the further absence of 'a superior male hero' and 'genteelly supportive female' (Graham, p.251, 1980) left viewers with a considerably subverted format of the traditional Western film. Yet, despite contention from critics⁸, Zinnemann's challenging take on the genre earned preservation as a 'culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant' piece of cinematic history (NFR, Library of Congress, 2023).

After taking the roles of Wild West women into consideration, and further fleshing out Rose Wilson as a character, she began to feel out of place within the saddles and dust of the turn-of-the-century, Arizona desert. It became startlingly obvious that Rose had become the antithesis of the traditional genre. The choices Rose was set out to make no longer felt fresh or inspiring: being indebted to a 'nefarious saloon owner', 'exonerating a falsely accused native' and befriending a mysterious Cowboy with a saviour complex (NMR Outline, 2020), all felt outdated and overdone⁹. As the script developed, Rose's independence, moral ambiguity, and contemporary values, were no longer subtle enough to hide behind the simple façade of a bereft daughter in the Old West. The aesthetic was there, but the sentiment wasn't.

At the outset it felt as though Rose's commonality with Etta Place, Vienna and Amy Fowler Kane had pigeon-holed her into the role of a provocative female character, created

⁷ In the 'Fred Zinnemann: Interviews' (2004) Gabriel Miller looks at how Zinnemann wanted his characters to be consistent with '*human* behaviour' not '*generic Western hero* behaviour', alongside 'man's conflict of conscience.'

⁸ Louis Giannetti (1976) reflects on the 'low esteem in which Zinnemann's film is presently held by critics' in 'High Noon.' (p.2)

⁹ Western genre analyst Jane Tompkins argues that 'when women are objectified as a motivation for furthering a male-oriented plot, they lose their importance in the Western atmosphere, and their emotions become irrelevant.' (Girard, p.41, 2012)

for controversiality and diversity in a Western film. However, after evaluating the core of Rose's character needs, it was clear that Rose, like her predecessors, had simply outgrown the old narrative. By design, *No Man's Rose* had trickled into the sub-genre of revisionist¹⁰ Westerns. Earlier character studies inspiring Rose revealed qualities commonly found in Neo-Western¹¹ film and television which embodied 'modern variations of Western themes' (Collider, 2022). These character's included skilled mercenary, Fennec Shand (*The Mandalorian*, 2019), justice seeking FBI Agent, Millie Morris (*Hunters*, 2020) and cynical Police Detective, Mare Sheehan (*Mare of Easttown*, 2021). All of these women are reactive, unconventional, and strong willed, working independently, or at least in tandem with their on-screen male counterparts.

Rose's character evolution triggered a complete rehaul of both the format and setting of *No Man's Rose* and as the script moved through the sub-genres of revisionist Westerns, the narrative clearly needed to change too. It was important that the new direction still exemplified the original values of *No Man's Rose*. Values of justice, independence, and retribution, told through a strong female lead. So, the decision was made to transport the story away from the glistening 'Golden Age of the Western'¹² to the crumbling 'Golden Age of Capitalism'¹³, rebirthing the characters into a more contemporary, retrospective, setting with looser rules and higher stakes. Where the early drafts of *No Man's Rose* demanded a historical, late nineteenth century backdrop, as seen in *High Noon*, or other Western staples

¹⁰ In James Phillips' 'Cinematic Thinking: Philosophical Approaches to the New Cinema' (2008), Robert Altman defines revisionist Western, or anti-western, as turning 'Western conventions on their sides, including male dominance and the heroic standoff; gunplay is a solution only after reputation, wit, and nonviolent coercion fail; and law and order do not always prevail.' (p.55)

¹¹ 'Neo-Westerns adopt the conventions of Western storytelling but incorporate new values, transplanted to other settings.' (Wikipedia, 2022)

¹² 'Between 1940 and 1960.' (The Atlantic, 2014)

¹³ 'For some twenty years after the Second World War.' (Marglin and Schor, 1992)

such as *Gunfight at the O.K Corral* (1957) and *3:10 to Yuma* (1957). The move to a Neo-Western drama reimagined the script into a retro aesthetic: a 1970s landscape chasing the visuals¹⁴ of Fincher's *Zodiac* (2007), framing¹⁵ of Gonzales *Fargo* (2014) and palette¹⁶ of The Coen Brother's *No Country for Old Men* (2007). As Rose's life reformed amidst the hardship of the post-Vietnam recession¹⁷ and the shadow of the Watergate scandal¹⁸, the change in scenery coughed up new inspiration, and challenges, reviving the narrative vein of crime-drama into a refreshing, complex, and engaging new plot.

'Neo-Western, crime drama following disgraced detective, ROSE WILSON, and alcoholic outlaw, FRANK DAVIS, who - when a beloved Sheriff is found dead - are thrown together to combat corruption, conspiracy, and violence in 1970s Southern Nevada.'

(No Man's Rose Logline, Treatment, 2021)

To create a convincing world in which the updated plot could thrive, it became important that *No Man's Rose* borrowed elements of real-life in the 1970s to give plausibility, and context, to the collective of heavily fractured and vulnerable people, and places, featured in the script. Unlike a modern-day setting, the progression of key information throughout the series relies on 'old-fashioned' methods of communication and media, such as faxes, newspapers, radios, payphones, and televisions. The lack of advanced technology gives the characters enough tools to remain capable, but also allows for hurdles which maintain their curiosity and peak their investigative skills. Inspired by similarly managed series, namely

¹⁴ 'All the formal elements become quasi-hypnotic...it lulls you into a different world and takes what was real and makes it symbolic.' Guillermo Del Toro on David Fincher's *Zodiac*, (Sharf, 2017)

¹⁵ DP Dana Gonzales' process, 'I am not a fan of photography but a fan of feelings, sympathy, empathy, tenderness, and sorrow.' (Forbes, 2018)

¹⁶ The film relies on 'monochromatic colour grading' using 'tans, browns, and yellows' throughout. (BEM, 2022)

¹⁷ 1973-1975 (Statista, 2022)

¹⁸ 1972-1974 (Britannica, 2023)

David Fincher's *Mindhunter* (2017) and Ryan Murphy's *Ratched* (2020), the added tension of each character receiving vital information at different times, brings *No Man's Rose* all the benefits of crime-drama pacing, without the delays of Old West telegrams and horseback travel.

The key locations in the series are crafted as microcosms of 1970s America, each creating steppingstones of complications for Rose to overcome. State Line, Goodsprings, Paradise and Searchlight are all genuine locations in Clark County, Nevada. Their rugged, isolated, and dusty lands reflect the Western atmosphere *No Man's Rose* had originally cultivated, and additionally, these real locations bring with them their unique existence as unincorporated¹⁹ towns and communities. How *far* could the meaning of 'unincorporated' be pushed? What is the *caveat* to freedom and independence from local government? Is there *any* form of infrastructure, and if so, *who's* building it? In exploring these questions, and contextualising fiction with reality, the narrative was able to flourish into areas of conspiracy, corruption, and crime – with reasonable evidence - without appearing paranoid, delusional or farfetched. This tweak on the staples of Western film firmly placed *No Man's Rose* into the Neo-Western genre²⁰.

The locations are significant in creating a nuanced undercurrent of political and social commentary, whilst also adding structure and drive to both narrative and character arcs. State Line is a metaphorical representation of the bubbling distrust for government

¹⁹ Unincorporated '...means it does not have a local government' and 'communities exist "by tradition."' (Denton, Navarro, Rocha, Bernal & Zech, 2021)

²⁰ 'The basic objection to Western films... is that they are untrue to the facts of American Western History.' (Folsom, p.196, 1967)

institutions²¹, the growing negative attitude towards President Nixon²² and the public condemnation of the Vietnam War²³. State Line displays some elements of the basic Western plot, a combination of the 'Empire' and 'Revenge' story²⁴, as the town is gradually overtaken by the perfect storm of men in positions of uninhibited power and control, using the unincorporated status for personal and financial gain. From the moment John Herald arrives in State Line, it is clear he is a nod to the classic western villain²⁵. Donning an 'off-white Stetson', 'sporting a navy leisure suit', black 'GI frames' and 'a near-finished Gran Toro gripped firmly between his teeth' (*Episode One: Centrefold.*), his archaic appearance is a time capsule of outdated values and practices. It makes sense then that State Line is introduced as the place that makes and breaks Rose, offering a stark reflection on the rarity of women in high-ranking positions²⁶ and the immediacy with which that privilege could be removed without recourse (*Episode One: 'Centrefold.'*).

Following Rose's dismissal from the State Line Police Department, State Line is mostly inaccessible, throughout the rest of the series, to any characters who represent 'the good'. The only exceptions are made to native police Administrator, Sháindín Clah, and Hispanic rookie Officer, Hernandez, who are forced to stay through racially motivated intimidation²⁷.

²¹ 'Trust in government began eroding during the 1960s, amid the escalation of the Vietnam War, and the decline continued in the 1970s with the Watergate scandal and worsening economic struggles.' (Pew Research, 2022)

²² Nixon's presidential approval ratings dropped '4.1 points per month from late January to early October 1973, from 67% to 30%.' (Medium, 2018)

²³ 'Anti-war activism was spurred by the deep sense that the war was cruel and anathema to America's moral identity.' (Humanities, 2020)

²⁴ Frank Gruber identified seven basic Western plots in 'The Pulp Jungle' (1967).

²⁵ 'The villain's manner of dress singles him out from the rest of the community... alludes to his position in society as a member of the mercantile class.' (Stanfield, p.107, 1987)

²⁶ In 1972, 'Tanya Padgett, Martha Parks, and Tommie Stewart were sworn in as full police officers in Ann Arbor, MI, one of the first cities in the country to take this step after changes in employment law in 1972 made it illegal for police departments to discriminate on the basis of gender.' (Cops, 2023)

²⁷ Jeff asks Officer Hernandez, 'you know another P.D taking on brown, middle-school, drop-outs?' (p. 34, No Man's Rose)

Rose's later reinstatement as a State Line P.D Detective in *Episode Six: 'For What it's Worth.'*, and the implication that she finally received her commendation for Chief of Police, is bittersweet. Does she feign gratitude and allow the institution which betrayed her to regain control over her career? Or, following the trauma and outcome of her investigation into Herald, continue to push back against the system? The moment of closure, as Rose reunites with friends and loved ones, almost affords the characters the coveted reprieve to 'ride into the sunset'. However, as with the superficially romantic resolution for our quasi-revisionist heroine Amy Fowler Kane²⁸, Rose is left with a demoralising outlook of Nevada and the harsh reality that her investigation is never going to be over – it's just getting started. The closing location of *Episode Six*, the Moonshine Motel and Casino, is purposefully neutral to reflect this moral conflict.

Goodsprings, the neighbouring community, balanced by the supervision of well-loved Sheriff, William McCampbell, casts a comparatively humble shadow beside the boiling pot of villainy brewing in State Line. The death of the Sheriff, revealed concurrently with Rose's dismissal (*Episode One: 'Centrefold'*) instils the loss of control by 'the good' from the outset, and introduces Rose to her semi-deuteragonist²⁹, Frank Davis. Unlike the traditional Western trope of a courageous, masculine cowboy counterpart, oozing rugged charm and firing first, Frank Davis barely even scratches the surface as an anti-hero. Frank is deeply flawed and hedonistic, yet self-aware enough to know that his lifestyle, and outlook, is wrong, 'Look at this face - I'm gonna do better. Starting now. Now, as in, after this whiskey.' (p.14, *Episode One: 'Centrefold'*). Rose and Frank meeting is a pivotal point of progression

²⁸ Critic Gwendolyn Foster (1994) exemplifies Zinneman's decision to 'displace the notion of the female as commodity' in *High Noon*, letting the Fowler-Kane's 'ride off into the sunset' with the 'grave acceptance of the current state of American values.' (p.80)

²⁹ 'The second most important and present character in a story.' (Masterclass, 2023)

for both character's development. Their partnership is interesting as it can be interpreted as both fateful, given that both of their lives have just fallen apart and they now need each other to survive, and fated, because Sheriff Williams kept them unknown to one another until his death brought them together. Their return to Goodsprings (*Episode Three: 'Don't Drink the Coffee.'*) marks a serious development in their relationship, as a violent encounter with the Hitmen leaves Rose dependent on Frank. It could be argued that in 'saving' Rose, our heroine, Frank is adhering to the traditional role of a western hero, but in essence, Rose's impact on Frank's character is emerging, as her initial investment in his wellbeing pays off, and he begins to consider someone other than himself. The continued dichotomy of flipped Western gender roles teamed with the blistering Cold War sentiment, of 'the good' vs 'the bad', allows Rose's character to evolve into a 'Neo Western Woman' who isn't solely a 'fantasy of female power' requiring 'the intervention of a strong male hand' (Hallett, 2011), but encompasses the female gaze³⁰ in creating a less passive and objectified heroine³¹.

Rose faces the toughest battles against her former life, and long-time foes, in Paradise and Searchlight. Peripherally, these towns are relatively unknown territories to Rose, but she understands that in navigating and understanding their significance, she can progress her metamorphosis from town pariah to exonerated woman (*Episode Four: 'Dear Hearts and Gentle People.'*). Paradise is a paradox. Introduced as John Herald's haven, a covert laboratory containing his *magnum opus* (*Episode Two: 'The Silver State.'*), this nightmarish

³⁰ Coined by feminists, in response to Laura Mulvey's theory on classic Hollywood film, alluding to 'the right of women to adopt the active and objectifying gaze' traditionally associated with men, 'undermining the dominant cultural alignment of masculinity with activity and femininity with passivity'. (Oxford Reference, 2023)

³¹ In *Women in Film*, Carroll (1990) analyses Mulvey's view that on-screen, women are the 'stuff of ocular spectacle' often accused of slowing down the narrative. (p.351)

human testing facility feeds on the United States' history of controversial experiments³², the political³³ and social paranoia³⁴ of the 1970s, and the public's post-war sentiments of displacement and abandonment by their government³⁵. It is fair to conclude that the events in Paradise unify the beginning and the end of Rose's character arc, containing both the root cause of her downfall, Herald, and the burden of proof needed to restore her reputation, the laboratory.

Searchlight can be interpreted as an allegorical landmark. A beacon of discovery and truth where multiple characters, not just Rose, are exposed to the genuine nature of others, the cost of justice and the repercussions of their actions (*Episode Five: 'EA-2148.'*). The events in Searchlight (The bank shoot-out and Jeff's subsequent death at the hands of Rose, *Episode Five: 'EA-2148.'*) were considerably difficult to navigate, with consideration to the female gaze and Rose's character arc. It would have been very easy to place Rose on the typical path of violence and vengeance, like The Bride (*Kill Bill*, 2003) or Mattie Ross (*True Grit*, 2010), and simply have her vanquish those who had ruined her life. Therefore, it became important that Rose's story didn't just succumb to the archetypical, Hollywood³⁶ mould of 'female victim' and that the depiction of violence throughout the series was poignant and, unlike a lot of typical series of the Western, Crime and Action genre, didn't capitalise on the exploitation of female suffering.

³² Such as the Edgewood Arsenal Human Experiments and MK Ultra, programmes which spanned the 1940s-1970s. (Wikipedia, 2022)

³³ The rise in public interest concerning huge political conspiracies, such as JFK's assassination (Fox, n.d) and Watergate (American Archive, 2019).

³⁴ The early 1970s saw a rise in popularity for dystopian film, *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), and neo-noir revival, *Klute* (1971), which wrestled subjects of power and paranoia.

³⁵ 'Perhaps this war has broken the rules of history... the American soul has been marked missing in action, only to return safely home to begin anew.' (Time, 1973)

³⁶ Film studies professor Dr Lisa Coulthard observes that 'the production code in Hollywood created strict rules about what could and could not be shown' and pre-1980s female fight scenes were 'slaps or light touches... not to be taken seriously.' (Balanesco, 2022)

One of the primary inspirations to create a clear distinction between female-on-male violent action scenes and male against female, or male-on-male scenes, has been the representation of feminine rage through modern horror film and the fresh perspective on the 'Final Girl'³⁷. Studies have highlighted that the female viewer enjoys when a 'film posits a mystery that must be solved' and 'may be more apt to enjoy gore and violence when employed in conjunction with... intellectually stimulating narratives' alongside a 'relatable, onscreen representation of femininity' (Vosper, 2014). In researching writing from the female gaze it became apparent that the horror genre helped solidify the rationale between violence and gender in *No Man's Rose* and, instead of fetishizing Rose's suffering at the hands of dangerous men, Rose's brushes with violence are presented as either her choice or through complete necessity³⁸.

Rose's decision-making process and reliance on thorough research into her 'enemy', to demonstrate her actions are reasonable, is comparable to that of female protagonist Margot in recent comedy-horror *The Menu* (2022). Margot's success in survival is solely down to her independent ability to use, understand and piece together information that she has observed and extracted throughout the film. Unlike the unravelling guests and sadistic, deranged, host Chef Slowik, Margot's use of judgement gives her the ability to outwit the Chef and escape her impending, deadly, predicament, only resorting to violence when all other options are exhausted. Similarly, following the philosophy of contemporary director Ana Lily Amapour, on subverting the traditional power dynamics of film (*A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, 2015), Rose's ultimate use of violence in *No Man's Rose* is more symbolic of

³⁷ 'A female protagonist who uses her wits and survival skills, fighting and clawing her way to victory over a killer.' (Clover, 1993)

³⁸ 'A cursory survey of cinematic representation since the 1940s shows that films frame a woman's aggression as contiguous with her sexuality in a variety of different ways.' (Loreck, p.54, 2016)

liberation and freedom, than the gratuitous bloodshed often warranted from a Western film³⁹. Thus, drawing Rose, once more, under the coveted umbrella of the Neo-Western heroine.

There are several parallels, in the first episode alone, which highlight the double standards of stereotypical gender dynamics often seen in film and television. Frank, for example, is an addict, who frequently acts irrationally and is shown to be unreliable. Yet, despite this, he is ultimately allowed to do so because of the societal pressures placed on him to be a 'better man' - a trope echoed constantly in traditional Western character arcs. Similarly, barback Alejo treats Frank with empathy because of his struggles, and it is implied that the Sheriff has also given Frank multiple opportunities to get clean and get his life on track (*Episode One: Centrefold.*). Despite these attitudes towards men, from men, the tolerance for Rose to act out is low and reflective of how controversial seeing feminine rage on-and-off screen is.

Rose's control of emotion, and ability for rational thought, is thrown into question after the initial accusations from Herald, where he attempts to pen Rose as hysterical and drug-addled, instead of a woman standing up for herself and the community she serves (*Episode One: 'Centrefold.'*). Despite Rose temporarily believing Herald could be right, that her anger *had* to have been drugs or a mental breakdown (*Episode Four: 'Dear Hearts and Gentle People.'*), she gradually rejects the idea that the anger is misplaced, refusing to dismiss her intuition, and continuing forward to unravel the true gravity of the conspiracy in State Line.

³⁹ Such as the often macabre, chilling, spaghetti westerns of Lucio Fulci, *The Four of the Apocalypse* (1975) and *Massacre Time* (1966).

This ingrained idea, particularly within the Western genre⁴⁰, that women should remain small and quiet, or only show anger when they have been severely wronged first⁴¹, is an overplayed trope which *No Man's Rose* was determined to avoid. In Rose's case, her anger stems, first and foremost, from the injustice and corruption trickling into State Line and the Police Department. It is fair to infer that her own personal strife, losing her job, home, and reputation, comes secondary in her quest to right Herald's wrongs and, even then, as briefly discussed, her struggles aren't magically resolved once Herald and his laboratory are gone.

Navigating Rose Wilson from western stereotype to neo-western heroine has been both challenging and rewarding. Despite the initial contention with series themes, Rose became, as intended, a strong female protagonist with fears and feelings, which are raw and identifiable. Through all the blood, sweat and tears, often with little recourse, and regardless of how Rose had been treated, she helps - because despite her role as a fallible heroine, Rose's inherent goodness is infallible. There was never a need to romanticise her story or create a love interest, because Rose had a mission, a goal that she wanted to achieve. No number of glossy heroes, or quick fixes, could replace the hope and belief in her own strength to survive. To that end, I feel successful in creating a character which contains all the nuances of a Neo-Western heroine, without the overplayed tropes and stereotypes which diminish the female gaze.

⁴⁰ 'Traditionally Western movies have not granted women much strength, respect, or importance except as they serve to support the stronger male roles.' (Graham, p.243, 1980)

⁴¹ Lecturer Dr Janice Loreck writes, 'there's a real curiosity in viewers to think... what women are capable of, in extreme circumstances, because we live in very controlled societies and there are solid understandings of what the different genders are capable of.' (Balanesco, 2022)

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Declaration.

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work, and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

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