

RUSTLING

written by

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1

**EXT. SHEEP PADDOCK - DUSK**

1

CLOSE ON: The face of a teenage boy holding a rifle. This is HOSS (16). He calms his breathing. Steadying his hand.

A sheep looks back at him. A white woolled EWE. Innocent.

The boy shuts his eye to fire. Then stops. He pulls his chin away from the rifle - then the gun is immediately snatched away from him by a rough hand.

We see a wider shot, showing a man beside Hoss - FATHER. He aims the gun and fires, then proceeds quickly forward.

FATHER

Come on.

Hoss remains still, watching his Father walk away. Another figure approaches from behind him. A younger boy, BLUE (12). Hoss and Blue share an upset look.

2

**EXT. SHEEP PADDOCK - DUSK (MOMENTS LATER)**

2

CLOSE ON: The wool of that dead Ewe, as Father's bloodied hands take a knife through the gut of the animal.

The two boys stand behind, watching the man work.

Father stops cutting, finished. He stands.

FATHER

Get the legs, boy.

Hoss steps forward to help. Grabs two legs as Father grabs the others. They cart it off, up the slope, leaving Blue standing over the kill site. Blue tentatively moves forward to the butcher site. Kneels to inspect it.

3

**EXT. RURAL ROAD - BESIDE PADDOCK - DUSK (MOMENTS LATER)**

3

A beat up STATION WAGON still idling, next to the fence line. That Ewe carcass is slung over the fence, and Hoss and Father follow after it and take it to the rear of the car.

Father looks up and realizes.

FATHER

Where's your brother?

Hoss looks back over his shoulder to the paddock. Unsure.

FATHER (CONT'D)  
Go and get him. Quick.

Hoss nods, and moves back to the fence.

4 **EXT. SHEEP PADDOCK - DUSK (MOMENTS LATER)**

4

We follow in front of Hoss as he moves back into the paddock, going after Blue with purpose. He approaches and finds...

About ten yards past the kill site, Blue sitting in the grass staring calmly ahead at the unseen side of a water trough.

Hoss moves angrily toward the boy...

HOSS  
Blue. Hurry up.

Hoss reaches the boy and lifts him to his feet, but Blue brushes him off, and Hoss finally sees what he's seen...

A ONE WEEK OLD LAMB cowering beside the water trough.

Hoss stares back at the lamb in disbelief. Blue next to him staring too. Blue looks to him, pleading. Hoss considers that plea. Then abruptly pulls Blue away.

HOSS (CONT'D)  
Come on!

The orphaned lamb remains... thoroughly alone, as the boys disappear.

5 **INT. DINING TABLE - NIGHT**

5

Close on a plate that's piled with overcooked meat. Father's calloused hands work cutlery into the meat, taking a chunk of it to his mouth. He chews.

Across the table, Hoss shovels food in, desperately hungry. But he slows when he looks up and notices, Blue - just staring at his plate.

Father seems to notice.

FATHER  
We do it cause we got to. Remember that eh.

Hoss nods his acknowledgement of that. Shoots a stare Blue's way, and finally Blue starts to cut his meat.

Hoss looks nervously to Father, as the man chews more.

6 **INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

6

Two single beds. The boys, one in each. Moonlight coming in. We hear TV through the wall. Stillness. Until...

In the dark, one of the boys sits upright in bed. A moment later, the other too. Blue stares across the gap in the room at Hoss. Hoss sits out of bed and looks back - gesticulates, 'what?' Both boys are careful to be quiet.

Blue thinks. Then, he takes his finger to the condensation covered window. He starts to write on it...

Hoss watches the words form, just visible in the moonlight, 'we got to rescew it.'

Blue finishes the message. Hoss is not impressed - fixes the spelling on 'rescew' and admonishes Blue with a look.

But Blue still waits on an answer.

Hoss writes his own message. We catch the end of 'fuck' and read the entirety of an emphatically bold, 'NO'... Then see Hoss add multiple exclamation marks with vigour to the glass.

But Blue keeps staring back. Wanting permission.

Hoss leans in, for good measure...

HOSS  
(whispered)  
Don't be a fucking baby.

Blue's defiance wilts. Hoss lays back in bed. Blue remains upright in the dark for a moment, then he lays back down too.

7 **EXT. RURAL ROAD - MORNING**

7

The sun rising over this land. It's backcountry. Rough. Nearly uninhabited.

8 **EXT. RURAL HOUSE - MORNING**

8

A decrepit weatherboard home. The land overrun by junk. That station wagon parked up here.

We find an open bedroom window, and parked underneath it... a crappy BMX bike. Footsteps in the wet grass here too.

**INT. BEDROOM - MORNING**

CLOSE ON the bedstand that sits between these boys. There's a photograph of a woman - these boys' mother.

Hoss wakes. Looks across to Blue's empty bed. Notes the slightly ajar window. He steps his legs out of bed. Freezes. Bends to pick something up. Bringing his hand back up with what he finds... blades of grass.

He quickly examines the floor. We see - there are piles of grass everywhere. Hoss immediately lowers himself to the ground. Sees...

Blue laid out under his bed. Looking out at Hoss - guilty.

Hoss quickly searches the rest of the room, and finds... at the end of his bed, tucked around the corner, that baby lamb.

Hoss turns into a mix of anger and astonishment. It takes him a while to act. But eventually...

He hauls Blue out from under that bed. Slams the boy down on the top of the bed. Raises his fist.

Blue winces. Frightened.

Hoss furious - lets it out with a half dozen violent punches... Not into the boy, but into the mattress top.

HOSS  
(hushed)  
What have you done?

Blue's shaken. Apologetic.

But then we hear - coughing from beyond the walls. Footsteps too. Father is up. The boys remain still. Trying to stay silent. The footsteps stop outside the door. The man's shadow shining under the crack in the door.

FATHER (O.S.)  
(through door)  
Up. Now.

The boys remain silent. Then...

FATHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
I'm going out. You're in charge  
boy.

Father's footsteps depart from outside the door. The two boys a touch relieved. But Hoss remains hovering over his brother. He looks to Lamb. Seeing this new predicament.

10           **INT. HALLWAY - DAY** 10

ANGLE DOWN HALLWAY - Seeing a closed door. We hear thuds. We see the closed door shake. Again, more violently. Then...

It opens, and Hoss emerges with Lamb in his arms.

Blue comes out after him, but Hoss roughly pushes him back into the room with one hand.

Hoss reemerges and makes his way from here. Determined.

11           **EXT. RURAL HOUSE - DAY** 11

Hoss strides away from the house, Lamb in hand. Blue charges him. But he falls off - hardly making a dent in Hoss' stride.

Hoss continues.

Blue gets up and charges again, this time putting enough of a shove in so that it snaps Hoss' attention to him.

HOSS  
Don't follow me!

But Blue keeps coming.

HOSS (CONT'D)  
Don't come!!

The anger in that halts Blue finally. Hoss continues away with the lamb under his arm. Blue remains back, watching.

12           **EXT. PADDOCK - RURAL HOUSE - DAY** 12

Hoss arrives here with Lamb in his arms, the house distant behind. He takes a knee behind an old piece of machinery.

He pulls Lamb's legs out from under it, making it lay on its side. He reaches to his pocket and pulls out... a pocket knife. He tries to pull out the blade, but has to use two hands, allowing Lamb to stand up...

Hoss drops the blade. Re-presses Lamb to the ground. Then picks the blade up once more. Takes it to the animal's neck.

Hoss breathing hard. Trying to find the courage to do this - but never going to have it. He hears a twig snap behind him.

Hoss turns to see Blue standing behind with a piece of timber raised in his hands, ready to swing it at his brother's head. Hoss remains still, not bothered by the threat.

BLUE  
I won't let you.

Hoss considers his options.

HOSS  
It's just a lamb.

HOSS (ALT)  
You should've left it there.

BLUE  
It's my friend.

BLUE (ALT)  
It was its mum.

Hoss considers that. Stifling his anger.

13

**INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY**

13

A TV plays nearby. In front of it, Lamb grazes on more piles of grass that are sprinkled over the ratty carpet. Blue sits beside the animal, feeding it bits of grass. Hoss, in a chair watches over them - not happy about this.

HOSS  
You're getting that shit  
everywhere, dick.

BLUE  
He likes it.

HOSS  
They all do idiot.

Hoss leans back into his seat and tries to keep his focus on the TV. But it's hard. He keeps coming back to looking down at Blue feeding that Lamb.

BLUE  
I thought of a name.

Hoss tries to ignore the boy.

BLUE (CONT'D)  
I'm calling it Lamb.

Hoss trying to watch TV - unable to ignore the boy and Lamb.

HOSS  
He won't ever let you keep it.

Blue tries to block that out, keeping focused on Lamb. But it becomes impossible to ignore.

BLUE  
Well I'll run away then.





Blue hides a grin. Thinking his brother may be on board.

BLUE  
Somewhere with grass. Was thinking  
Africa, but then I thought there's  
lions there. So maybe, England, or  
Mongolia.

Hoss nods. Still sullen. Looks about the car.

HOSS  
Best get this fixed good then eh?

BLUE  
Yeah.

The two of them sit in silence some more. Then Hoss  
notices... On the dash... A pile of picked daisies.

HOSS  
What are those for?

BLUE  
(re: Lamb)  
He wouldn't eat them. They need  
water.

Hoss considers that - frustrated by it.

18      **EXT. PADDOCK - RURAL HOUSE - DUSK**

18

Hoss ties a rope around the machinery here, with the other  
bit around Lamb's neck. Blue too, clutching those daffodils.

BLUE  
Are you gonna ask him?

HOSS  
Maybe

A beat of silence.

BLUE  
Mum would've let us keep it.

Hoss silently considers that. Hurting somewhere deep inside.

19      **INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

19

Hoss lies awake in bed. Blue fast asleep in the bed one over.  
We hear a vehicle approaching outside and headlights spray  
through the window. Hoss quietly sits up.

20      **INT. DINING TABLE - NIGHT**

20

Father sits chewing a piece of meat from a plate in front of him. A beer with him too. He's got a glazed over eyes - drunk. He stops chewing when he notices...

In the middle of the table, a little glass of water with those daisies in them. His eyes fix on them, as we hear a chair being pulled out... Hoss sitting opposite the man.

Father looks from the daisies to Hoss. They sit in silence for a moment. Then...

FATHER

What are they?

HOSS

He picked them.

Father has to hold back his disdain at that. Hoss remains, waiting to find the courage to speak. But before he can...

FATHER

Well get rid of em. Don't need them  
do we?

Hoss thinks. Then nods.

Father finishes his beer and presses his chair back. Leaves.

FATHER (CONT'D)

I'm going to bed.

Hoss remains silent.

21      **EXT. RURAL HOUSE - NIGHT**

21

Hoss marches away from the house light behind - a silhouette in the night. He turns on a torch to guide his way.

22      **EXT. PADDOCK - RURAL HOUSE - NIGHT**

22

The torch laid on its side, shines out onto... Hoss sitting in the grass beside Lamb.

He plucks a piece of grass and feeds it out to Lamb. Then he strokes Lamb. He picks up Lamb. Then clutches the animal to himself - desperate to feel the affection.

We see the boy is crying. He puts Lamb down. Then reaches to his pocket. Again pulls out that pocket knife and flicks the blade out.

He looks Lamb over. Conflicted. Then he leans over on his front, and takes the knife, and stabs it into...

The grass in front of him. He starts to cut into the turf. Lamb oblivious nearby.

23      **INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

23

CLOSE ON: the bedside drawer, that photograph of the mother catching the moonlight out the window. We hear and start to make out... The window behind opening.

Blue stirs in his bed, waking to...

                                HOSS  
                                (hushed)  
                                Blue. Wake up.

Reveal Hoss' head poking through the window. Blue rubs his eyes and looks to his brother, confused...

                                BLUE  
                                Are we running away?

A beat of silence from Hoss. Then...

                                HOSS  
                                No.

Blue stares back at his brother, confused.

24      **EXT. RURAL LAND - MORNING**

24

The valleys are filled with fog on this morning.

25      **INT. DINING TABLE - DAY**

25

CLOSE ON: Father's half-finished plate of meat here from the night previous. Out of shot we can hear a knocking.

26      **EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

26

ANGLE DOWN HALL - Father finishes knocking at the closed bedroom door.

                                FATHER  
                                Up. Now.

He lingers there for a moment. Then moves off... We hear his footsteps stop.

