

TRAIN DREAMS (2025) |TRANSCRIPT

Based on Denis Johnson's beloved novella, *Train Dreams* is the moving portrait of Robert Grainier, a logger and railroad worker who leads a life of unexpected depth and beauty in the rapidly-changing America of the early 20th Century.

Train Dreams (2025)

Director: Clint Bentley

Screenplay: Clint Bentley, Greg Kwedar

Based on: *Train Dreams* by Denis Johnson

Release dates: January 26, 2025 (Sundance), November 7, 2025 (United States)

stars: Joel Edgerton, Felicity Jones, William H. Macy, Kerry Condon, Paul Schneider, Clifton Collins Jr., Will Patton, Alfred Hsing, John Diehl, Sean San Jose, David Paul Olsen, John Patrick Lowrie, Nathaniel Arcand, Eric Ray Anderson, Rick Rivera

Plot: Day laborer Robert Grainier (Joel Edgerton) is employed as a logger helping to expand the railways across America. Forced to spend prolonged periods of time away from his wife, Gladys (Felicity Jones), and their young daughter, Grainier struggles to make sense of his place in a rapidly changing world. As his story unfolds, he experiences great love, unspeakable loss and unique bonds, on a journey that is both distinct and universal.

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[insects chirping faintly]

[birds chirping faintly]

[wind whooshing gently]

[wildlife calling faintly]

[wildlife calling]

[woodpecker drumming]

[narrator] *There were once passageways to the old world, strange trails, hidden paths. You'd turn a corner and suddenly find yourself face-to-face with the great mystery, the foundation of all things. And even though that old world is gone now, even though*

it's been rolled up like a scroll and put somewhere, you can still

feel the echo of it.

[pensive music playing]

[tree creaking]

[branches snapping]

[thuds loudly]

[logger yelling] We're clear.

[loggers grunting]

[birds chirping]

[narrator] *His name was Robert Grainier, and he lived more than 80 years in and around the town of Bonners Ferry, Idaho. In his time, he traveled west within a few dozen miles of the Pacific, though he'd never seen the ocean itself, and as far east as the town of Libby, 40 miles inside Montana.*

[steam hisses]

[intriguing music playing] *When he was sent by himself to the town of Fry, Idaho, he was six, or possibly seven. He never knew for sure the year or day of his birth.*

[indistinct chatter]

[mooing]

[narrator] *How he had lost his original parents, nobody ever told him.*

[birds cheeping]

[bells chiming]

One of his earliest memories was that of observing the mass deportation of 100 or more Chinese families from the town.

Grainier was baffled by the casualness of the violence.

[door closes]

[intriguing music continues]

[man] Come on up here.

Please, young fella.

I've been cut behind the knee by this fella they call BigEar Al.

And I have to say, I... I know he's killed me.

[narrator] *There were other memories that he pushed from his mind any time they arose. He quit attending school in his early teens, and the next two decades passed without much direction or purpose. He felt that nothing much attracted his interest until, that is, he met Gladys Olding.*

[women speaking indistinctly]

[narrator] *Gladys introduced herself as if women did things like
that every day.*

Hello.

[narrator] *And maybe they did.*

Hello.

I, uh... I... I haven't seen you here before.

Oh, no, I've never, um... Uh...

First time?

My... My cousin, yeah, brought me.

Well, his wife is very much...

I'm... I'm Robert.

I'm... I'm Gladys.

Nice to meet you.

Nice to meet you.

[congregation singing hymn]

[narrator] *He found he suddenly had more interest in church than
he ever had before.*

♪ ...*fail you*

He promised ♪

♪ *Believe Him, and all will be well* ♪

[narrator] *Not three months later, they were inseparable.*

[Gladys] Right now, I could just about understand everything there is.

[chuckles softly]

What are you thinking about?

Well... [exhales]

[breathes deeply]

I was thinking that we ought to get married.

[chuckles]

What?

We are married.

[Robert breathes deeply]

All we need now is a ceremony to prove it.

[Robert chuckles softly]

[tender music playing]

And our cabin should have a window looking out towards the river.

[Robert chuckles softly]

[Robert] *Okay.*

[Gladys] *We'll need a dog.*

[Robert] *Mmm.*

[Gladys] *I always wanted a dog.*

[Robert] *Mmm. Okay.*

[Gladys laughing] Open the door. Come on.

Okay.

[Robert sniffles]

Hello. Come in.

What an amazing house you have here.

Can I come in?

[giggles]

[gasps] Look at this place.

[both laugh]

We'll have the bed right here. [laughs]

[Gladys] Facing here. And...

[Robert] Window?

[Gladys] Yeah, here.

Another here.

[Robert] *I want you to say my name one more time.*

I just love it when it comes from you.

[chuckles softly] The sound of it.

Robert.

[tender music continues]

[narrator] *All of a sudden, life made sense to Grainier, as if he'd been pulling hard the wrong way and was now turned around and headed downstream. The couple built a cabin on an acre of land, and there, alongside the Moyie River, began a little life together.*

[grains scattering]

[grunting]

[narrator] *In those years, Grainier's work took him far from home. He worked alongside men who came from faraway lands he'd never even heard of, places like Shanghai and Chattanooga.*

[indistinct chatter]

It was a comfort to him how easily they all fell in with each other, became temporary families. But then, in the summer of 1917, he worked a job building the Robinson Gorge Bridge for the Spokane International Railroad. He'd never taken up with a railroad crew before, and he wished he'd never had.

[man 1] All right, boys, he's right over here.

That young boy working on that beam.

[man 2] There he is.

[man 1] Go on. Get him.

Bring him on up here.

Hey, come on.

[yelling in Chinese]

[man 1] Bring him on up.

What'd he... What'd he do?

[man 1] Come on up. Come on up.

[grunting]

[yelling]

[man 3] Hold on.

[man 1] Hey, you.

Yeah, but what? what's he done?

[yelling] Hey!

One, two...

[yells]

[Robert groans]

[man 1] Get him up here! That's it.

Bring him up. Take him on out.

[grunting]

[yelling in Chinese]

[Robert] What'd he actually do?

[man] I don't even know.

[Chinese worker yelling] What? Hey.

[yelling continues]

[screaming]

[wind whooshing]

[somber music playing]

[exhales deeply]

[breathes deeply]

[somber music continues]

[workers clamoring]

[gun fires]

[man 1] Holy...

[man 2] Yo, what is he doing?

[workers laughing]

[man] You boys have shown this old river valley who's boss.

You helped save Spokane International.

Eleven miles it used to take to get around this gorge.

And you opened up a new part of the country.

I know it ain't the Great Pyramids of Egypt, but I think you boys
have done something pretty darn incredible.

[workers speaking indistinctly]

[narrator] *Many years later, a bridge made of concrete and steel
would be built ten miles upstream, rendering this one obsolete.*

[somber music playing]

[workers speaking indistinctly]

[man] Now, let's see if she holds.

[gun fires]

[workers yelling excitedly]

[train engine chuffing]

[chuffing continues]

[worker] Whoo!

[horn blaring]

[wheels clanking]

[workers cheering, applauding]

[somber music continues]

[gun firing in distance]

[bell ringing faintly]

[brakes hissing]

[panting]

[birds calling]

[exhales deeply]

[train horn blaring in distance]

[soft joyful music playing]

[bag thuds]

[exhales]

[snarls softly]

[yelps, giggles]

[Robert grunts]

[kissing]

[both breathing heavily]

[Gladys] I missed you.

[kisses]

I missed you.

[exhales]

[Robert] Hello.

[chuckles]

Oh, Gladys.

[Robert groans]

[Gladys breathes deeply]

[Gladys] Oh God.

God, yes.

Oh, shh. Shh.

I just got her to sleep.

Is she...

Go see her.

[Robert] She's just gotten so big.

[Gladys] Mmm.

[exhales sharply]

She's starting to look like you.

Mmm.

At least she's starting to favor one of us.

No broken fingers this time?

[Robert] I don't think so.

I didn't think you'd be home this soon.

I just couldn't stop walking until I got here.

[sniffles]

Look at that.

Oh.

I didn't expect that much after what you already sent.

We hit a soft stand at the end there.

[gentle music playing]

[exhales]

Whoa, whoa.

[bag rustles]

[buckle clinking]

[bottles clinking]

[Gladys chuckles]

[Robert sniffles]

Let's have a big dinner tonight.

Well, don't go to too much trouble.

[gentle music continues]

[Robert exhales]

[exhales deeply]

[Gladys chuckles softly]

[kissing]

[Gladys] No, come on.

Let me show you something.

[gentle music continues]

[Gladys] You see any of the same old guys?

[Robert] Yeah.

I saw a couple from the Oregon job.

They got good stories?

[Robert] Yeah. They got good stories, whether any of them are true or not.

[softly] She's watching the candle. Look.

[Gladys] Look at that. Can you see?

[gasps]

Isn't that nice?

[Robert] Hey, honey.

Yeah. [chuckles]

[baby crying]

[shushing]

[Robert] Mmm.

You want me to feed you?

[Gladys laughs]

[baby crying]

Hmm?

[Gladys] Give me some of that chicken.

Mmm...

Mmm...

[both laughing]

[baby crying]

[laughing]

[Gladys] Oh, come on.

Mmm.

[Gladys shushing]

[baby crying] She need to sleep?

Yeah.

[crying continues]

[Gladys humming]

[Robert] Oh.

Yes.

[Gladys continues humming]

[birds chirping]

What do you think?

It's a pretty funny-looking bassinet.

[Robert laughing]

[Gladys] It's a fish trap.

[laughing]

[baby cooing]

Oh.

Bassinet.

[gentle music continues]

[Robert groans]

[grunts]

[birds chirping]

[music fades]

[train horn blaring in distance]

[eerie music playing]

[whooshing]

[deep exhale]

[horn blaring]

[bell ringing rapidly]

[gasps]

[breathes deeply]

[Robert] Uh...

[inhales deeply]

Did she, uh, wake up?

[clears throat]

Was she crying?

Not too bad.

[Robert inhales sharply] She just woke up hungry.

[Robert] Mmm.

[inhales deeply]

Do you know what all her cries mean?

[exhales]

[Gladys chuckles]

Most of them, I guess.

How much does she know, do you think?

I don't know.

[Robert] Hmm.

As much as a dog pup?

Well, a dog pup can live on its own after its mama weans it away.

A baby couldn't just go off and live after it was weaned.

A dog knows more than a baby till the baby knows its words, and
not just a few words.

A dog raised around the house knows some words too...

[baby coos] ...as many as a baby at least.

What words?

[inhales deeply]

I just want to hear your voice.

Well, fetch and come.

Lay and sit and roll over.

[Robert chuckles softly]

Whatever it knows to do, it knows the words.

[wolves howling in distance]

Do you think that she knows that I'm her daddy?

Of course she does.

Deep down, she knows it... even if she doesn't know she knows it yet.

Don't worry.

You'll have plenty of time to be her daddy.

[joyful music playing]

[birds chirping]

[Robert exhales]

[exhales]

[inhales sharply]

[Gladys] Nice having you home.

[Robert] Hmm.

[Gladys] I don't want you to disappear.

Mmm.

There you go.

Yeah.

[chuckling] No. Don't eat it.

Does it smell nice?

[both chuckle]

[photographer] Sorry.

Just one more minute.

[joyful music continues]

Should I put my hand in my pocket?

What do you think?

[baby belches] Oop. [chuckles]

[Robert chuckles]

[narrator] *It seemed that as soon as Grainier felt used to being at home, logging season would come back around, and it was time to leave again.*

[adventurous music playing]

His work was populated with itinerant men, most without homes, without families. They moved from job to job, state to state, as the work dictated. And though little note was made of them in this world, they left a lasting impression on Grainier.

[stirring music playing]

He once worked alongside a man two full months without exchanging a single word.

[logger] So I said, "Buddy, I wasn't looking for that kind of gold."

[all laughing]

What about you, mister?

You ever been down to California?

Ain't there any place in this world a man can get some peace?

[music stops]

[grunts]

[narrator] *Those were the only words Grainier ever heard the man say. They remained with him always.*

[music resumes]

Another was Hank Healy, who made his home in the trunk of a tree.

[man] And it comforts me, you get what I'm saying?

I got a problem...

There was Apostle Frank, a faller who spoke about the Bible with such familiarity as to suggest he'd been there when it was all written down.

It's like that old boy Balaam in the Bible.

Sometimes God has to find strange ways to tell you what you need to hear.

Sometimes it's a donkey talking to you, sometimes it's a who knows.

I was in Nebraska once.

The Lord spoke to my heart, told me to go to Omaha.

When I got off the train, the sign said "Opelika."

I said, "Opelika?"

And that's when I knew my eyes were busted.

Praise God and hallelujah.

[panting] I think that's it.

You get what I'm saying in general?

Mmhmm.

So he touched his hip, God did.

And for the rest of Jacob's life, he walked with a bad limp.

See, Jacob was an allrounder.

Handled his affairs with no help from nobody.

But in the end, that's not what the...

[logger] Who's that?

Excuse me, gentlemen.

I'm sorry to interrupt you.

Is one among you called Sam Loving from New Mexico?

[loggers murmuring]

Alternatively known as, um...

[clears throat]

...Buckskin Sam in southern Arizona and parts of California.

I've been trying to find this man for a very long time to deliver a message to him.

[Apostle Frank grunting]

[panting]

[gun fires]

[groans]

[loggers] Oh.

Oh, shoot.

[Apostle Frank coughing, gasping]

[groaning]

[gasping, groaning]

[gun fires]

[logger 1] Jeez! Come on.

[logger 2] Goodness.

[logger 3] The hell?

That man shot my brother, Martin Brown, in cold blood in Gallup, New Mexico, August 5th, '93.

He killed him only because of the color of his skin.

If any of you take offense to what I've just done here, let's have it out before I leave this place.

I do not intend to spend the rest of my days looking over my shoulder.

[wildlife calling]

Very good, then.

[sighs]

I'm sorry to have interrupted your work.

Big trees.

Never knew trees could get this big.

[quirky music playing]

[man exhales deeply]

[narrator] *At the heart of the cut was a man named Arn Peebles, a gadabout of unknown origin whose real use was occasional but specific.*

[quirky music continues]

[birds calling]

You Minnesota boys might want to close your ears.

[loggers laughing]

[logger 1] Uh, kaboom. [laughs]

[logger 2] Told y'all it wouldn't work.

[loggers laughing, chattering]

[anticipatory music playing]

Don't touch that.

[logger 3] Yeah. We won't.

Don't even look at it crossways.

[logger 4] Not even looking.

[loggers murmuring, laughing]

[Robert chuckles softly]

[narrator] *He was the oldest man on most jobs, always yammering, staying out of the way of hard work.*

You let me at that hatchet if you boys need a break.

I get to chopping, you come to work in the morning, the chips won't yet be settled from yesterday.

I'm made for this summer logging.

I don't get my gears turning smooth till it's over 100.

That's good.

[thunder rumbling]

All this over a little rain.

In my day, we worked around the whole clock, not just when it suited you.

Back then, we'd riddle a bole with auger holes.

Sometimes we had to wait a week for a good wind to topple them behemoths.

And then they all came tumbling down at once.

Trees twice as big as any you're cutting around here.

I worked on a peak outside of Bisbee, Arizona, where we was only 11, 12 miles from the sun.

A hundred and sixteen degrees on the thermometer.

And every degree was a foot long.

[horse neighing]

[indistinct chatter]

And that was in the shade.

And there weren't no shade.

[logger] He's coming up. Here he comes.

[loggers speaking indistinctly]

[music stops]

[exploding]

[loggers] Oh!

[loggers chattering, laughing]

Whoo!

[all applauding]

♪ *If the Lord was a redwood* ♪

♪ *Would you try to cut Him down?* ♪

♪ *Or climb up His loving branches*

And look around? ♪

♪ *If the river was the tears*

Of those who have passed... ♪

[logger 1] Quit your singing!

I'm trying to sleep over here.

[logger 2] Arn, go to bed.

[logger 3] Stop singing!

Hey, Arn.

[Arn] I won't... I won't sing no more.

No, no, no.

You told Adrien that these tents are from the Civil War?

That's right. Union infantry.

After that, they went to the US Cavalry for the Indian campaigns.

These old things have served longer than the people they sheltered.

Rough canvas, but they'll probably be here long after we're gone.

[Robert] Hmm.

[Arn] What's keeping you awake over there?

Oh, uh...

Arn, do you... do you think that... the bad things that we do follow us through life?

I don't know.

I've seen bad men raised up and good men brought to their knees.

I reckon if I could figure it out, I'd be sleeping next to someone a lot better-looking than you.

What was that song that you were singing?

Uh, it... it don't have a name.

It just come to me.

[Robert] Why don't you sing a little more?

No, no. I... I don't want to upset the Minnesota boys.

Well, wait a minute. I...

Here.

[harmonica playing]

[birds chirping]

[narrator] *The crews began to move deeper into the forest with each job.*

[invigorating music playing]

There seemed to be no end to the world's appetite for lumber. So they worked from sunrise until suppertime, felling spruce, cedar, and tamarack, Doug fir, and white pine, utterly changing the face of the mountainside in the process. And while a good sawyer might correctly judge 99 times how a fall would go, the hundredth time might take its toll.

[loud thud]

[rumbling]

[loggers yelling]

[logger 1] Tree! Hey!

[logger 2] Help! Help!

[logger 3] Look out!

[logger 2] Help!

[neighing]

[logger 3] Get help!

[logger 2] Help!

Help!

There.

Now they won't just pass out of this world without nothing to show they was here.

[man] Well, hell.

[exhales]

I wish I could let us all lay off a day, but it's the company.

The war don't stop needing spruce just on account of a bad day for us.

[logger grunts]

[narrator] *Grainier worried more and more that something terrible was following him, that death would find him out here, far away from the only place he really wanted to be.*

Hey...

[Robert chuckles]

[Gladys gasps]

[Robert grunts]

[gasps]

What do you got?

[girl] I got a pine cone.

You got a pine cone?

[Gladys chuckles]

[Robert] Oh!

[Gladys laughing]

[Robert] I got a pine cone.

Should we go get the chicken?

[joyful music playing]

[chicken clucking] Oh, look, there's one.

Chicken right there.

Come here, chicken.

[Gladys] They're going inside.

They're going inside.

[Gladys laughing] They're going inside!

Chicken!

Chicken!

[Gladys] Chicken!

Chicken!

They're gonna sleep in your bed, and they're gonna eat your food.

[joyful music continues]

[Robert] *She's like a different person every time I see her.*

[speaking indistinctly]

[chuckling]

Feel like I'm missing her whole life.

[Gladys] *I feel it too. It's all going by so fast.*

[wildlife calling]

[clicking]

[Gladys] You want to shoot?

[Robert] No.

Only the deer want me to shoot.

Gladys.

[softly] Don't shoot.

Don't shoot me.

Keep making noise, and I will.

[laughs] There he is.

[gun fires]

[gun clicks]

[bullet casing clinks]

Good shot.

[owl hooting]

[Gladys] What if we came with you?

[Robert] Hmm?

Out to the cut.

To the cut?

Mmm.

What...

Well, I... I'd be helpful.

I... I could make some money washing clothes.

Now she's not so much to keep up with.

[exhales deeply] Well, I know you'd be helpful.

You told me some of the others have had their wives out there.

No, not *some* of the others, just that one old man.

What, and that young couple from California?

Dick Clinton disappeared after a week.

And then, besides, they didn't even have a little one.

It's, uh...

[inhales deeply]

It's really dangerous.

I'm just trying to find a way, is all.

[Robert sighs]

I know.

I know. I know. I know.

[pensive music playing]

[narrator] *Grainier tried to find work closer to home, picking up odd jobs where he could.*

[barn animals calling]

But the war was over, and good-paying work was hard to come by.

[inhales deeply]

[exhales]

Sorry to keep you waiting, Robert.

[Robert] Yeah, that's okay.

[man exhales] All right.

[box opens]

There you go.

All right. Appreciate it.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Uh, if you need anything, you know where to find me.

Mmm.

[door opens]

[narrator] *Money was tighter for them than it ever had been. And though he didn't know it then, he would always look back on this time in his life as his happiest.*

What do you got there?

Eggs.

[Robert laughs]

Eggs.

Yeah, that is kind of an egg.

There you go. [grunts] There you go.

[wolves howling]

[Robert] Tired, Katie? You ready for bed?

[Katie] Yeah.

[birds chirping]

[Robert] You're getting so big.

You're gonna be carrying me soon.

[Gladys grunting]

[breathing heavily]

[Robert moans softly, exhales]

[breathing heavily]

[pensive music continues]

[Gladys] *Maybe there's a better way.*

Maybe we turn our acre into a farm.

I could grow double what I do now.

And if we did that, and we saved up enough to start a little sawmill, maybe you could be home more.

Get a horse or a mule on credit, I guess.

Yeah, on credit for sure.

The sawmill would take a bit more doing, you know.

It's not so cheap, but...

Yeah. Well, I didn't say it wouldn't be.

No, but it's a good idea.

[chuckles softly] It is a good idea.

[Robert] Yeah.

[pensive music continues]

[birds tweeting]

[Gladys] Come on, Katie.

Will you say bye-bye?

Katie, watch this. Ready?

[birds chirping]

[both chuckle]

I'll just go.

Okay.

[Robert] Love you.

I'm gonna miss you.

I love you too. All right.

[pensive music continues]

[Robert whistles]

Come on, Kate. Say goodbye to Daddy.

Kate. Come on.

Katie, can you put that down?

[indistinct chatter]

[horse neighing]

Excuse me. Looking for the foreman.

[man] Just keep going that way.

Thank you.

[narrator] *He earned four dollars a day on most jobs, minus expenses for what the company provided.*

[horse neighing]

He and Gladys figured that after one more long stint in the woods, they'd have enough money to start building a sawmill back home.

[grunting, panting]

[grunting]

[creaking]

[crickets chirping]

[owl hooting]

Y'all going on to another job, or you quitting for the season?

[logger 1] Mmm.

[loggers murmuring]

I can't decide.

I ain't never happy when the job ends for some reason.

I just feel itchy inside.

That's 'cause it's rough work, gentlemen, not just on the body but on the soul.

We just cut down trees that have been here for 500 years.

It upsets a man's soul whether you recognize it or not.

[logger 2] I'll have \$200 in my pocket tomorrow morning.

Don't bother my soul. Not one damn bit.

That's 'cause you Minnesota fellas don't know nothing about history.

These trees are really that old?

[Arn] Why, some's older even.

This world is intricately stitched together, boys.

Every thread we pull, we know not how it affects the design of things.

We're but children on this earth, pulling bolts out of the Ferris wheel, thinking ourselves to be gods.

That's horseshit.

I've been to Washington too.

Cut all up through Canada and back down again.

There's enough logs for us to cut for 1,000 years.

And then when the last one's cut, well, first one will be growed up as big as anything around today.

I remember thinking the same thing when I was a young man... the very same thing.

[wolves howling in distance]

[fire crackling]

[animals calling]

You moving along, Robert?

Or packing up for home?

[Robert exhales]

I'm packing it up, going home.

I miss my wife and my little one.

[Arn] What's her name? Your missus?

Gladys.

Mmm.

Welsh. That's a highborn name.

That makes sense, if you knew her.

Those old names have power.

The ones that have them are blessed.

[Robert] Hmm.

You got family somewhere?

[inhales deeply]

My family is... everywhere there's a smiling face.

Never been somewhere I didn't have some family there.

Except for Kansas.

That state is a collection of savage lunatics.

[Robert laughs]

It's good having you around.

Not too many folks I cross paths with more than once in this life.

I see it as a blessing when they're brought back around.

[Robert] Ah.

[inhales deeply]

I don't know where the years go, Arn.

Well... if you figure it out, let me know.

I'd like to ask for a few back.

[narrator] *It looked certain Arn Peeples would exit this world in a puff of smoke with a monstrous noise. But he went out quite differently.*

[branch creaking, snapping]

[branch thuds]

[Arn groans]

[loggers exclaim]

Somebody get some help!

We need help!

[Robert] Who is it?

[logger] We got a man down!

[Robert] Hey, Arn!

[Arn groaning] Arn?

[logger] Widow-maker got him.

[Robert] Arn?

Hey, Arn? Can you hear me?

I'm all right. I just...

[splutters] Help me sit up.

Help me sit up.

All right. Slowly.

[grunting] Can we get a little water?

I saw my sister and her husband.

They was just here.

You know which way they walked to?

Arn...

[narrator] *He had a number of dizzy spells and grew dreamy and forgetful over the next few days, forgetting even his own name before it was all done.*

[birds calling]

You hear that?

[melancholy music playing]

Beautiful, ain't it?

Just beautiful.

What is, Arn?

All of it.

Every bit of it.

[music intensifies]

[crickets chirping]

[old logger] Arn Peeples was my friend.

He... He said that a... a tree was a friend... if you let it alone.

But the second the blade bit in, you had yourself a war, and the tree was a killer.

But he wasn't messing with that tree.

It was... It was just a snag.

So, I...

I... I don't know what meaning to take from that.

In Jesus's name...

[loggers] Amen.

Amen.

[narrator] *Though Grainier had seen death often, he'd never lost someone so close to him.*

[wildlife calling]

He began to feel a dread that the snag had been meant for him, that some punishment was seeking him.

[foreboding music playing]

[wheels squealing]

[deep exhale]

[sounds stop abruptly]

[Gladys] *Robert?*

[passengers murmuring]

[passenger 1] What is that?

Oh dear God.

[passengers murmuring]

Come look at this.

Where is that?

[passenger 2] Are we heading over there?

[passenger 3] That's not far off.

Wow.

[passenger 4] Wow.

[passenger 5] Hey.

What is that?

[brakes hissing]

[people clamoring]

[dogs barking]

[train horn blowing]

[coughing]

[people clamoring]

[bell ringing]

Mary!

Mary, have you... have you seen Gladys?

No?

Gladys!

[tense music playing]

[music intensifies]

[fire crackling]

[Robert] Gladys!

[whimpering]

[coughing]

[breathing heavily]

[panting]

[somber music playing]

[blowing]

[fire blazing]

[exhales sharply]

[coughing]

[coughing]

[coughing]

[huffs]

[fire whooshing]

[music intensifies]

[music stops abruptly]

[wind whooshing]

[breathing heavily]

[metal clanking]

[wind whooshing]

[breathing shakily]

[wind whooshing]

[inhales sharply]

[somber music playing]

[door opens]

[footsteps approaching]

[objects clattering]

[narrator] *For nearly two weeks, he searched every town in the region, looking for Gladys and Kate.*

[melancholy music playing]

Four-fifty.

[narrator] *Finding them nowhere, he went back to his acre to await their return.*

Hey... Oh, hold on.

This is for you.

Thank you.

[Robert clears throat]

[door opens]

[door closes]

[coins clinking]

[melancholy music continues]

[Robert exhales]

[leaves rustling]

[bear growling]

[exhaling]

[chuffing]

[bear growling]

[inhales deeply]

[exhales]

[somber music playing]

[thunder rumbling]

[rain pattering]

[inhales sharply]

[gasps]

[grunts softly]

[exhales]

[thunder rumbling]

[Robert laughing, speaking indistinctly]

[mimics buzzer]

Water!

Water?

[laughs]

[clicks tongue]

You gonna water the plants for Mama?

[fire crackling]

[train horn blaring in distance]

Don't you think it's too much?

[Robert sniffles]

How did... How did they deserve that?

Mmm?

Why?

[yelling] Why?!

[exhales sharply]

[sniffles]

[exhales]

[exhales deeply]

[wind whooshing]

[man humming]

[exhales loudly]

Hello, Robert.

You hungry?

[breathing heavily]

[Robert munching]

[inhales deeply]

[man] I didn't know what I'd find out here.

You wouldn't believe the stories they're telling about you in town.

I'll pay you back for all this. I promise.

I didn't ask you to.

Well, I sure do appreciate you coming up to check on me.

Let's take a walk.

[Robert sniffles]

[Robert exhales]

Ooh, ooh, ooh.

[hammer clicks]

[gun fires]

[gun clicks]

[bullet casing clinking]

[Gladys] *This is a good spot for a cabin. Do you like how I say your name?*

[fire whooshing]

Robert.

[water sloshing gently]

They're...

Th...

They're...

[breathing deeply]

They're just not coming back.

[inhales deeply]

[sobbing]

[continues sobbing]

[groaning]

[sobs, sniffles]

[sobbing]

[sniffles]

I'm sorry.

[sniffling, groaning]

[sobbing]

I'm... I'm sorry.

[sobs, sniffles]

I don't know what came over me.

[continues sobbing]

Skin him.

[knife swishes]

[somber music playing]

[bird twittering]

[exhales]

[narrator] *Grainier raised a leanto at his home site, and there he lived through the rest of the summer, fishing for speckled trout and hunting for a rare and flavorful mushroom the Canadians called morel, which sprang up on ground disturbed by fire. Though he confessed it to no one, he held some faint hope that Gladys and Kate might somehow return. And he wanted to be ready for them if they did.*

[sniffing]

Hey! [clicks tongue] Get out of there.

[dog barks]

[sniffing]

Where'd you all come from?

[puppy whimpering]

Who do you belong to?

Hello?

Shouldn't y'all be in town?

You look like town dogs.

Come on. [clicking tongue] I hope you all like fish.

[water splashing]

All right. Close your eyes. Ready?

[whimpering]

[Robert laughing]

All right, you're free. Come on.

Are these puppies really yours?

What are you doing all the way out here?

Huh?

How much do you know?

You roll over?

And sit?

Fetch?

[bird cawing]

[chopping]

[grunting]

[Katie babbling]

[Gladys] *Katie!*

[breathing shakily]

[Gladys] *See that?*

[Katie babbling]

[grunting softly]

[grunting]

[Robert] What kind of dog do you think they are?

I don't know.

They appear quite wolfish.

Aren't they?

I mean, maybe, uh... maybe Red Dog got with a wolf out there somewhere on her own, you know?

No, that's impossible.

Why not?

Only a he-wolf ever mates.

And that's the chief of the wolf pack.

[Robert] Uh-huh.

And the she-wolf he chooses to bear his litter is the only one that ever comes into heat.

What... What if Red Dog was in heat?

He chooses only one.

Well, what if... what if she encountered the chief wolf at the exact moment?

You know what I mean?

Would he not take her just for the newness of the experience?

"Newness of the experience"?

Yeah.

[chuckles]

[both laugh]

What?

“Newness of the experience.”

[laughing]

[man chuckles]

[whines] Can you howl? Huh? Can you howl too?

Huh? Can you howl?

[melancholy music playing]

Hey, buddy.

Hey. Hey, little one.

Hey.

[music continues]

[narrator] *With Ignatius Jack's help, he raised the four walls of the cabin precisely where the old ones had stood.*

Red Dog?

[clicks tongue]

[narrator] *He could not bring himself to rebuild the bedroom.*

[howling in distance]

[exhales, sniffles]

[narrator] *In that year, a great comet appeared in the sky, which many said signaled the end of days. But after two weeks, it faded away as quietly as it had come.*

[pensive music continues]

[birds chirping]

The rebuilt cabin looked much like the first one. But the emptiness of the place at times overwhelmed him.

[birds chirping]

Years passed, and he found himself still waiting. Though at this point, he couldn't say for what.

[chair creaking]

[music fades]

[train chuffing]

[train horn blowing]

[bell ringing]

[insects, birds chirping]

[engine whirring]

[pensive music playing]

[indistinct chatter]

[man] Get your asses up on that stand of white pine!

I want every one of those trees down this mountain before I wake up on the Lord's day!

After that, I'm docking each one of you one dollar a day!

Let's go!

[indistinct yelling]

Let's go!

[stalling]

Hey. Watch out, old man.

Let me see that thing.

Go get a crosscut or something.

[stalling]

I just don't know what...

[chainsaw whirring]

[chainsaw whirring]

[tree creaking]

[thuds]

[logger] Look out! Look out! Look out!

[loggers speaking indistinctly]

[chopping]

[logger 1] Look out, boys!

[groaning]

[loggers laughing]

[grunts]

[logger 2] Hey, let me know if you want some water.

[groans] You'll be okay.

[logger 4] Need some help up?

[laughs]

[exhales]

[sniffles]

[indistinct chatter]

You mind if I warm up a minute?

[Robert] Mmm.

[groaning]

[continues groaning]

Billy?

Yeah.

[Robert] Is that you?

Yes. Do I know you?

Yeah, we cut together in Salmo-Priest a few years back.

I'm... I was a friend of Arn Peeples.

I'm Robert.

[chuckling] Oh, yes.

Hi, Robert.

[Robert chuckling] It's good to see you.

You too.

I mean, I can't believe you're still out here.

I can barely keep up at my age.

Ah, well, I just look after the steam donkey and keep it watered and greased.

Not much else I can do, but it's a living.

Mmm.

[Billy] Mmm.

Say, Billy, do you think it's a little different now out here?

I don't know if it's different or if it's always been this way.

Maybe I was rougher and just like these boys.

I, uh, just don't remember it.

[chuckling] Well, uh, that is the age-old question, ain't it, friend?

That is the question.

[Robert] Yeah.

Say, how is... how is Arn?

How... How is...

I ain't seen him in, gosh... at least a year, maybe longer.

Yeah. Uh, no.

Yeah. I... I ain't seen him either.

Ah. Ain't that how it goes?

[Billy grunts]

[Billy grunts gently]

Let me help you.

Here.

[Billy] My hands are not working today.

Here.

[groans]

[Robert] I got you.

[somber music playing]

[Billy] Thank you.

[Robert] Yeah. No problem.

[narrator] *And with that, Grainier was finished as a logger.*

[birds chirping]

[insects chirping]

[inhales sharply]

[exhales]

[grunts gently]

[breathing heavily]

[exhales deeply]

[exhales shakily]

[inhales deeply]

[exhales]

[narrator] *The last few years, he expected some great revelation about his life would descend upon him.*

[melancholy music playing]

[Gladys] What's that?

[Katie crying]

[both howling]

[babbling]

[howling]

[giggles] Can you do that?

[narrator] *But as of yet, none had. And he was beginning to doubt that one ever would.*

[Red Dog barking, panting]

[Robert laughing] Hey.

[laughing]

[inhales deeply, kisses]

[birds chirping]

Not been doing the weeding, huh?

[grunts]

[horse neighing]

[dog barking]

[narrator] *These days, there was plenty of work in town for anybody willing to get around after it. He came into possession of a pair of horses and a wagon, by a sad circumstance, however.*

[Robert panting]

Avery?

[narrator] *Avery Pinkham's heart condition would have been easily diagnosed and cured had he been born a generation later.*
Mr. Pinkham!

[dramatic music playing]

[narrator] *Grainier contracted with the Pinkhams to buy the horses and wagon for \$300 in installments. And he kept himself busy as a freighter of sorts. The hauling itself was a ticket to a kind of show, composed of the follies and endeavors of his neighbors.*

[women chuckling]

Y'all comfortable back there?

Yes.

[women chuckling]

[narrator] *The work put him in closer contact with them than he had been in years. And yet, he only felt more alone. No?*

[munching]

[horse snorts]

[wildlife calling]

[insects, birds chirping]

[Gladys] *Be gentle with the rabbits.*

[Katie giggling]

[Gladys] *They don't know you're not gonna hurt them. Katie.*

[wind whooshing]

[footsteps approaching]

[carriage approaching]

Miss, uh...

Miss Thompson?

Claire. You must be Robert.

Uh, yes, ma'am.

Nice to meet you.

Yeah. You too. [chuckles softly] Nice to meet you. I was looking for you at the train station.

Oh yeah, I waited a few minutes for you before I decided to start walking.

Yeah, I'm really sorry.

It took me a little while to get these ladies going this morning.

And, uh... [sucks teeth] ...would you still like me to take you up to your lookout?

Oh, if it's not too much trouble.

No, of course. Jump up.

You wanna...?

Yep.

[Robert] Oh, okay.

All right.

All right. Ready?

All right. [clicks tongue]

[horses neighing]

[hooves clopping]

[Robert] What parts are you from?

Oh, I've been all over.

But I lived a long time over in Montana. Noxon.

I've never seen Montana.

Oh, beautiful country.

Yeah, worth the trip.

[horse snorts]

[Robert snuffles]

They told me about you, you know?

Who's they?

People who recommended you.

[Robert] Mmm.

And what did they say?

That you were different.

Ain't everybody different?

[Claire chuckles softly]

No.

[Robert exhales sharply] Mmm. Hmm.

It's a good thing to be different.

As far as I see it, anyway.

I'm so happy to be here.

This valley is special.

Used to all be under a glacier, you know?

Three thousand feet of ice.

When it broke, it just flooded the whole region.

Carved out all these valleys.

That's where all those lakes come from.

Can you imagine if you were back here then?

This big block of ice, thousands of feet tall, and just the cracks and the freezing-cold water.

It must have felt like the world was coming to an end.

[Robert] Hmm.

That's where all those myths come from, you know?

All those flood stories.

All those different religions all over the world.

It's just the same story, different slants.

Hey, I didn't mean to be disrespectful to anything you believe or anything like that.

I just, you know...

No, no, no.

I just find it fascinating.

Can't help it when I'm in a place like this. It's just...

[tender music playing]

The world's an old place.

Yeah.

Probably nothing it hasn't seen by now.

[horses snorting]

[narrator] *Claire had worked in Europe as a nurse in the Great War. Now she was employed by the newly created US Forest Service as part of an effort to manage timber cuts and prevent forest fires.*

Oh, uh, thank you.

It was nice to meet you, Robert.

Thank you for the ride.

It was very nice to meet you too.

Yeah. Okay.

Uh... [clears throat] Oh.

There you go.

Thank you.

You don't need a hand?

Nope.

No? Okay.

Take care now.

[wildlife calling]

[inhales sharply]

[exhales]

[wind whooshing]

[exhales deeply]

[sneezes]

[sniffles, exhales]

Did I scare you?

Oh boy. [sniffles]

[breathes deeply]

[gulps, exhales]

[exhales deeply]

[coughing]

[grunts, sniffles]

[grunts, sniffles]

[retching]

[retching]

[exhales]

[Red Dog panting]

[Robert breathing deeply]

[clears throat]

[exhales]

[door creaking]

[soft clinking]

[ominous music playing]

[fire whooshing]

[deep exhale]

[eerie whoosh]

[sounds stop abruptly]

[Gladys] *Robert.*

[train horn blowing in distance]

[eerie music playing]

[door creaking]

[inhales shakily]

[exhales]

[eerie music playing]

[breathing shakily]

[exhales sharply]

[chuckles softly]

[fire whooshing]

[Gladys gasps]

[Gladys] Katie!

[inhales shakily]

[whimpering, panting]

[whooshing]

[Gladys coughing]

[breathing shakily]

[Gladys] It's all right.

[Katie crying]

[Gladys] Just gonna put a blanket over...

[panting]

[grunts]

[groans]

[sobbing quietly]

[somber music playing]

[Katie] Mama...

[breathes deeply]

[footsteps treading]

[melancholy music playing]

[grunts gently]

[melancholy music continues]

[melancholy music continues]

[sniffles]

[grunts gently]

[wind whooshing]

[grunts]

[exhales]

[wind howling]

[match striking]

[melancholy music continues]

[music fades]

Miss Thompson?

Are you up there?

[bird cawing]

[Robert panting]

[Claire] Robert?

[Robert] Oh.

[Claire] What a surprise.

[chuckles]

[chuckles] How are you?

Good.

Yeah. I hope I didn't startle you.

No. Not at all.

[chuckling] I was just heading out for an afternoon survey, and...
and I heard you call.

[Robert] Oh, yeah.

[chuckles] Yeah, I... [chuckles] Did you... [chuckles] I was just passing through and thought I'd just, you know, check on you.

[Robert] Doesn't get spooky up this high?

No. I think it's peaceful.

I watch the clouds form and the light change, and I get paid to do it.

It's a gift.

[chuckles softly] Mmm, yeah, I can see that.

How'd you come to this?

I saw a flyer for the job opening just when I needed it.

Here, fire weed.

Oh, thank you.

I had to get a recommendation from a family friend.

In his words, "Claire Thompson is absolutely devoid of the timidity normally associated with her sex."

"She possesses more than adequate work ethic..."

[Robert chuckles]

“...and is unafraid of anything that walks, creeps, or flies.”

[Robert laughs]

[sipping] Hmm.

How is it?

[Robert] Mmm.

It's good. Thank you.

[Robert exhales]

Everything looks so small from up here.

[Claire] Yeah.

You want to take a look?

[birds chirping]

[Robert] Everything grows so fast.

Mmhmm.

You can barely tell a fire came through here.

It's like it didn't even happen.

Were you here when it came through?

[exhales]

No.

I wasn't.

But, uh... my wife and... and my baby, uh...

[inhales shakily]

Yeah. They, uh... They didn't make it out.

Oh, Robert.

Yeah. You see, sometimes it... it...

[inhales deeply]

It feels like the sadness will just eat me alive, but... sometimes it just... It feels like it... it happened to somebody else.

But no, I wasn't here.

[clicks tongue]

Uh, not when, uh...

Not when... when I should have been, I guess, and when... when, uh, they needed me the most.

I hear them sometimes.

Out there in the woods.

Just talking and laughing.

Yeah.

I don't even want to turn my head because I'm afraid... that I'll scare them away.

So I just listen... until they fade away somewhere else... wherever those things go.

Never told anybody else that.

You think that makes me sound crazy?

[chuckles softly]

Yeah. I lost my husband too, a little over a year ago.

It took him a long time.

And when it was over, it was like there was a... a hole in the world.

I had more questions than answers, like no human had ever died before.

[scoffs] When you go through something like that, nothing you do is crazy.

You just go through what you go through.

[Robert] Mmm.

In the forest, every least thing's important.

It's all threaded together, so you can't tell where one thing ends and another begins if you really look at it.

The little insects you can't even see, they play a role as vital as the river.

[exhales sharply]

The dead tree is as important as the living one.

There must be something for us to learn from that.

What if you got nothing left to give?

Hmm? What then?

Mmm...

The world needs a hermit in the woods as much as a preacher in the pulpit.

[Robert chuckles]

[breathing shakily]

[voice breaking] Yeah. Yeah.

Is that what I am?

A hermit?

Well, I mean, I believe we both are, in our own ways.

Just waiting to see what we've been left here for.

[crickets chirping]

[exhales]

[soft thudding]

[owl hooting in distance]

[Robert exhales]

[clattering]

[suspenseful music playing]

[door creaking]

[Robert inhales]

[exhales]

[suspenseful music playing]

[grunts gently]

[Robert exhales]

[exhales]

[clears throat]

[girl whimpering]

[exhales]

[girl whimpering]

[Robert exhales deeply]

[gasps]

[narrator] *Though he knew it must be impossible, the thought overwhelmed him that his daughter had returned.*

Katie?

[girl moaning weakly]

Kate.

Katie?

Oh, Kate.

[whimpering]

[Robert] Okay.

[Robert panting]

[hopeful music playing]

[breathing shakily]

Okay.

[breathing heavily]

Okay.

Oh my God.

Honey, your leg's broken.

This is gonna hurt, just for a moment.

[girl yelps]

[Robert grunts]

[exhales]

[Robert] Okay.

[breathing heavily]

[grunts]

Katie.

[somber music continues]

No.

[breathing heavily]

[chuckling]

[inhales sharply, chuckles]

[footsteps approaching]

[Robert breathing heavily]

Okay.

[exhales]

[exhales]

[breathing heavily]

You want to get some water, honey?

Yeah.

All right.

Up.

Wow.

What did you do?

What did you do that for?

[Katie] Water!

[giggles]

[Robert laughs]

[Katie laughs]

[grunts]

[exhales]

Byebye.

[Katie] Bye-bye.

[Robert] Bye-bye.

[music fades]

[Robert breathing heavily]

[gasps]

[grunting]

Katie?

Kate?

[melancholy music playing]

Kate!

Kate!

[melancholy music continues]

[narrator] *Seeing Kate again felt as real as anything else in his life, even as he wondered if it had really happened to him. He*

spent many days and evenings wandering the forests and fields of the region, looking for any sign of her. Though he found none, he spent the rest of his days waiting so he would be there if she ever came back.

[melancholy music continues]

[Robert exhales]

[breathes deeply]

[thunder rumbling]

[narrator] *In his later years, Grainier rode the Great Northern from time to time into Spokane.*

[vehicles passing by]

He wandered the city without much direction or purpose, as if looking for something he had misplaced a long time ago.

[bell tolling]

[John Glenn] *Roger, zero G, and I feel fine. Capsule is turning around. Oh, that view is tremendous.*

What is that fellow doing?

[John Glenn] *Roger, capsule... He's in outer space.*

I could see the booster during turnaround just a couple of hundred yards behind me. [Robert] Huh.

[John Glenn] *Roger... So is that...?*

That's us.

[John Glenn] *Roger. Understand go for at least seven orbits.*

[Robert] Huh.

[man] *...a camel spit gold from his teeth. Gold!*

Witness Sun Tzu, the holy man from the far, far east.

Sun Tzu, the holy man, will read your dreams.

Experience the world-famous Bittler Sisters, or better yet, pay you a dime to see a monster.

You. You.

Come here. Come here.

Yeah. Cast the stone aside.

Inside this theater, the mysteries of the world flit about like bats and insects.

Here, all the answers to everything.

You buy a ticket...

[narrator] *That night in the theater, he took in a curiosity show that promised a vision of a monster but was only a boy in a costume.*

[somber music playing]

[breathing shakily]

[narrator] *He saw his face in a mirror for the first time in nearly a decade. He could see now the toll that the years had taken. He felt that he was only just beginning to have some faint understanding of his life, even though it was now slipping away from him.*

[birds chirping]

Just four dollars, see the world as only the birds do.

[plane engine whirring]

[uplifting music playing]

[engine whirring]

[pilot] Hey, you'd better hold on to something.

Huh?

[engine roaring]

[uplifting music continues]

[Gladys] *Robert.*

[music continues]

[Arn] Beautiful, ain't it?

Just beautiful.

[narrator] *When Robert Grainier died in his sleep sometime in November of 1968, his life ended as quietly as it had begun. He'd never purchased a firearm or spoken into a telephone. He had no idea who his parents might have been, and he left no heirs behind him.*

[plane engine roaring]

But on that spring day, as he misplaced all sense of up and down, he felt, at last, connected to it all.

[music intensifies]

[music fades]

[birds chirping]

["Train Dreams" by Nick Cave plays]

[woodpecker drumming]

♪ *I seen a grizzly big as a house* ♪

♪ *Walk across an open plain* ♪

♪ *Heard of a boy called Elvis something* ♪

♪ *His voice could drive*

Young girls insane ♪

♪ *I've seen a man from a mile away* ♪

♪ *Shoot a bobcat through the brain but* ♪

♪ *Lately I've been having dreams* ♪

♪ *Crazy dreams I can't explain* ♪

♪ *A woman standing*

In a field of flowers and ♪

♪ *A screaming locomotive train* ♪

♪ *Crazy dreams that go on for hours* ♪

♪ *And I can't begin*

To tell you how that feels ♪

[melodic vocalization]

♪ *I've seen an elk with twisted antlers* ♪

♪ *Throw bright lightning across the sky* ♪

♪ *Seen a man with a broken curse* ♪

♪ *Leap from a bridge and try to fly* ♪

♪ *Seen a boy who was a dog* ♪

♪ *Who became a man who forgot to die* ♪

♪ *Lately I've been having dreams* ♪

♪ *Crazy dreams I can't explain* ♪

♪ *A woman standing*

In a field of flowers and ♪

♪ *A screaming locomotive train* ♪

♪ *Crazy dreams that go on for hours* ♪

♪ *And I can't begin*

To tell you how that feels ♪

[melodic vocalization]

♪ *The space that connects me*

Where I am now ♪

♪ *To the place where I'll one day be ♪*

♪ *It's measured in the words*

That we speak ♪

♪ *And the strange and wondrous things*

I've seen ♪

♪ *It's measured in truth,*

It's measured in love ♪

♪ *Measured in a tendency to pain ♪*

♪ *Measured by a girl*

In a field of flowers ♪

♪ *A screaming dream of a midnight train ♪*

♪ *This has been going on for years ♪*

♪ *Years and years and years and years* ♪

♪ *I can't begin to tell you*

How that feels ♪

[melodic vocalization]

[song fades]

[Arn] ♪ *If the Lord was a redwood* ♪

♪ *Would you try to cut Him down?* ♪

♪ *Or climb up His loving branches*

And look around? ♪

♪ *If the river was the tears* ♪

♪ *Of all those who've passed* ♪

♪ *Would you try to dam it up* ♪

♪ *Or let it pass?* ♪

[harmonica playing]

[harmonica playing ends]

RAIN DREAMS (2025) |

TRANSCRIPT

Based on Denis Johnson's beloved novella, *Train Dreams* is the moving portrait of Robert Grainier, a logger and railroad worker who leads a life of unexpected depth and beauty in the rapidly-changing America of the early 20th Century.

Train Dreams (2025)

Director: Clint Bentley

Screenplay: Clint Bentley, Greg Kwedar

Based on: *Train Dreams* by Denis Johnson

Release dates: January 26, 2025 (Sundance), November 7, 2025 (United States)

stars: Joel Edgerton, Felicity Jones, William H. Macy, Kerry Condon, Paul Schneider, Clifton Collins Jr., Will Patton, Alfred Hsing, John Diehl, Sean San Jose, David Paul Olsen, John Patrick Lowrie, Nathaniel Arcand, Eric Ray Anderson, Rick Rivera

Plot: Day laborer Robert Grainier (Joel Edgerton) is employed as a logger helping to expand the railways across America. Forced to spend prolonged periods of time away from his wife, Gladys (Felicity Jones), and their young daughter, Grainier struggles to make sense of his place in a rapidly changing world. As his story unfolds, he experiences great love, unspeakable loss and unique bonds, on a journey that is both distinct and universal.

Train Dreams (2025) | Transcript

[insects chirping faintly]

[birds chirping faintly]

[wind whooshing gently]

[wildlife calling faintly]

[wildlife calling]

[woodpecker drumming]

[narrator] *There were once passageways to the old world, strange trails, hidden paths. You'd turn a corner and suddenly find yourself face-to-face with the great mystery, the foundation of all things. And even though that old world is gone now, even though it's been rolled up like a scroll and put somewhere, you can still feel the echo of it.*

[pensive music playing]

[tree creaking]

[branches snapping]

[thuds loudly]

[logger yelling] We're clear.

[loggers grunting]

[birds chirping]

[narrator] *His name was Robert Grainier, and he lived more than 80 years in and around the town of Bonners Ferry, Idaho. In his time, he traveled west within a few dozen miles of the Pacific, though he'd never seen the ocean itself, and as far east as the town of Libby, 40 miles inside Montana.*

[steam hisses]

[intriguing music playing] *When he was sent by himself to the town of Fry, Idaho, he was six, or possibly seven. He never knew for sure the year or day of his birth.*

[indistinct chatter]

[mooing]

[narrator] *How he had lost his original parents, nobody ever told him.*

[birds cheeping]

[bells chiming]

One of his earliest memories was that of observing the mass deportation of 100 or more Chinese families from the town. Grainier was baffled by the casualness of the violence.

[door closes]

[intriguing music continues]

[man] Come on up here.

Please, young fella.

I've been cut behind the knee by this fella they call BigEar Al.

And I have to say, I... I know he's killed me.

[narrator] *There were other memories that he pushed from his mind any time they arose. He quit attending school in his early teens, and the next two decades passed without much direction or purpose. He felt that nothing much attracted his interest until, that is, he met Gladys Olding.*

[women speaking indistinctly]

[narrator] *Gladys introduced herself as if women did things like that every day.*

Hello.

[narrator] *And maybe they did.*

Hello.

I, uh... I... I haven't seen you here before.

Oh, no, I've never, um... Uh...

First time?

My... My cousin, yeah, brought me.

Well, his wife is very much...

I'm... I'm Robert.

I'm... I'm Gladys.

Nice to meet you.

Nice to meet you.

[congregation singing hymn]

[narrator] *He found he suddenly had more interest in church than he ever had before.*

♪ ...*fail you*

He promised ♪

♪ *Believe Him, and all will be well* ♪

[narrator] *Not three months later, they were inseparable.*

[Gladys] Right now, I could just about understand everything there is.

[chuckles softly]

What are you thinking about?

Well... [exhales]

[breathes deeply]

I was thinking that we ought to get married.

[chuckles]

What?

We are married.

[Robert breathes deeply]

All we need now is a ceremony to prove it.

[Robert chuckles softly]

[tender music playing]

And our cabin should have a window looking out towards the river.

[Robert chuckles softly]

[Robert] *Okay.*

[Gladys] *We'll need a dog.*

[Robert] *Mmm.*

[Gladys] *I always wanted a dog.*

[Robert] *Mmm. Okay.*

[Gladys laughing] Open the door. Come on.

Okay.

[Robert sniffles]

Hello. Come in.

What an amazing house you have here.

Can I come in?

[giggles]

[gasps] Look at this place.

[both laugh]

We'll have the bed right here. [laughs]

[Gladys] Facing here. And...

[Robert] Window?

[Gladys] Yeah, here.

Another here.

[Robert] *I want you to say my name one more time.*

I just love it when it comes from you.

[chuckles softly] The sound of it.

Robert.

[tender music continues]

[narrator] *All of a sudden, life made sense to Grainier, as if he'd been pulling hard the wrong way and was now turned around and headed downstream. The couple built a cabin on an acre of land, and there, alongside the Moyie River, began a little life together.*

[grains scattering]

[grunting]

[narrator] *In those years, Grainier's work took him far from home. He worked alongside men who came from faraway lands he'd never even heard of, places like Shanghai and Chattanooga.*

[indistinct chatter]

It was a comfort to him how easily they all fell in with each other, became temporary families. But then, in the summer of 1917, he worked a job building the Robinson Gorge Bridge for the Spokane International Railroad. He'd never taken up with a railroad crew before, and he wished he'd never had.

[man 1] All right, boys, he's right over here.

That young boy working on that beam.

[man 2] There he is.

[man 1] Go on. Get him.

Bring him on up here.

Hey, come on.

[yelling in Chinese]

[man 1] Bring him on up.

What'd he... What'd he do?

[man 1] Come on up. Come on up.

[grunting]

[yelling]

[man 3] Hold on.

[man 1] Hey, you.

Yeah, but what? what's he done?

[yelling] Hey!

One, two...

[yells]

[Robert groans]

[man 1] Get him up here! That's it.

Bring him up. Take him on out.

[grunting]

[yelling in Chinese]

[Robert] What'd he actually do?

[man] I don't even know.

[Chinese worker yelling] What? Hey.

[yelling continues]

[screaming]

[wind whooshing]

[somber music playing]

[exhales deeply]

[breathes deeply]

[somber music continues]

[workers clamoring]

[gun fires]

[man 1] Holy...

[man 2] Yo, what is he doing?

[workers laughing]

[man] You boys have shown this old river valley who's boss.

You helped save Spokane International.

Eleven miles it used to take to get around this gorge.

And you opened up a new part of the country.

I know it ain't the Great Pyramids of Egypt, but I think you boys have done something pretty darn incredible.

[workers speaking indistinctly]

[narrator] *Many years later, a bridge made of concrete and steel would be built ten miles upstream, rendering this one obsolete.*

[somber music playing]

[workers speaking indistinctly]

[man] Now, let's see if she holds.

[gun fires]

[workers yelling excitedly]

[train engine chuffing]

[chuffing continues]

[worker] Whoo!

[horn blaring]

[wheels clanking]

[workers cheering, applauding]

[somber music continues]

[gun firing in distance]

[bell ringing faintly]

[brakes hissing]

[panting]

[birds calling]

[exhales deeply]

[train horn blaring in distance]

[soft joyful music playing]

[bag thuds]

[exhales]

[snarls softly]

[yelps, giggles]

[Robert grunts]

[kissing]

[both breathing heavily]

[Gladys] I missed you.

[kisses]

I missed you.

[exhales]

[Robert] Hello.

[chuckles]

Oh, Gladys.

[Robert groans]

[Gladys breathes deeply]

[Gladys] Oh God.

God, yes.

Oh, shh. Shh.

I just got her to sleep.

Is she...

Go see her.

[Robert] She's just gotten so big.

[Gladys] Mmm.

[exhales sharply]

She's starting to look like you.

Mmm.

At least she's starting to favor one of us.

No broken fingers this time?

[Robert] I don't think so.

I didn't think you'd be home this soon.

I just couldn't stop walking until I got here.

[sniffles]

Look at that.

Oh.

I didn't expect that much after what you already sent.

We hit a soft stand at the end there.

[gentle music playing]

[exhales]

Whoa, whoa.

[bag rustles]

[buckle clinking]

[bottles clinking]

[Gladys chuckles]

[Robert sniffles]

Let's have a big dinner tonight.

Well, don't go to too much trouble.

[gentle music continues]

[Robert exhales]

[exhales deeply]

[Gladys chuckles softly]

[kissing]

[Gladys] No, come on.

Let me show you something.

[gentle music continues]

[Gladys] You see any of the same old guys?

[Robert] Yeah.

I saw a couple from the Oregon job.

They got good stories?

[Robert] Yeah. They got good stories, whether any of them are true or not.

[softly] She's watching the candle. Look.

[Gladys] Look at that. Can you see?

[gasps]

Isn't that nice?

[Robert] Hey, honey.

Yeah. [chuckles]

[baby crying]

[shushing]

[Robert] Mmm.

You want me to feed you?

[Gladys laughs]

[baby crying]

Hmm?

[Gladys] Give me some of that chicken.

Mmm...

Mmm...

[both laughing]

[baby crying]

[laughing]

[Gladys] Oh, come on.

Mmm.

[Gladys shushing]

[baby crying] She need to sleep?

Yeah.

[crying continues]

[Gladys humming]

[Robert] Oh.

Yes.

[Gladys continues humming]

[birds chirping]

What do you think?

It's a pretty funny-looking bassinet.

[Robert laughing]

[Gladys] It's a fish trap.

[laughing]

[baby cooing]

Oh.

Bassinet.

[gentle music continues]

[Robert groans]

[grunts]

[birds chirping]

[music fades]

[train horn blaring in distance]

[eerie music playing]

[whooshing]

[deep exhale]

[horn blaring]

[bell ringing rapidly]

[gasps]

[breathes deeply]

[Robert] Uh...

[inhales deeply]

Did she, uh, wake up?

[clears throat]

Was she crying?

Not too bad.

[Robert inhales sharply] She just woke up hungry.

[Robert] Mmm.

[inhales deeply]

Do you know what all her cries mean?

[exhales]

[Gladys chuckles]

Most of them, I guess.

How much does she know, do you think?

I don't know.

[Robert] Hmm.

As much as a dog pup?

Well, a dog pup can live on its own after its mama weans it away.

A baby couldn't just go off and live after it was weaned.

A dog knows more than a baby till the baby knows its words, and not just a few words.

A dog raised around the house knows some words too...

[baby coos] ...as many as a baby at least.

What words?

[inhales deeply]

I just want to hear your voice.

Well, fetch and come.

Lay and sit and roll over.

[Robert chuckles softly]

Whatever it knows to do, it knows the words.

[wolves howling in distance]

Do you think that she knows that I'm her daddy?

Of course she does.

Deep down, she knows it... even if she doesn't know she knows it yet.

Don't worry.

You'll have plenty of time to be her daddy.

[joyful music playing]

[birds chirping]

[Robert exhales]

[exhales]

[inhales sharply]

[Gladys] Nice having you home.

[Robert] Hmm.

[Gladys] I don't want you to disappear.

Mmm.

There you go.

Yeah.

[chuckling] No. Don't eat it.

Does it smell nice?

[both chuckle]

[photographer] Sorry.

Just one more minute.

[joyful music continues]

Should I put my hand in my pocket?

What do you think?

[baby belches] Oop. [chuckles]

[Robert chuckles]

[narrator] *It seemed that as soon as Grainier felt used to being at home, logging season would come back around, and it was time to leave again.*

[adventurous music playing]

His work was populated with itinerant men, most without homes, without families. They moved from job to job, state to state, as the work dictated. And though little note was made of them in this world, they left a lasting impression on Grainier.

[stirring music playing]

He once worked alongside a man two full months without exchanging a single word.

[logger] So I said, "Buddy, I wasn't looking for that kind of gold."

[all laughing]

What about you, mister?

You ever been down to California?

Ain't there any place in this world a man can get some peace?

[music stops]

[grunts]

[narrator] *Those were the only words Grainier ever heard the man say. They remained with him always.*

[music resumes]

Another was Hank Healy, who made his home in the trunk of a tree.

[man] And it comforts me, you get what I'm saying?

I got a problem...

There was Apostle Frank, a faller who spoke about the Bible with such familiarity as to suggest he'd been there when it was all written down.

It's like that old boy Balaam in the Bible.

Sometimes God has to find strange ways to tell you what you need to hear.

Sometimes it's a donkey talking to you, sometimes it's a who knows.

I was in Nebraska once.

The Lord spoke to my heart, told me to go to Omaha.

When I got off the train, the sign said "Opelika."

I said, “Opelika?”

And that’s when I knew my eyes were busted.

Praise God and hallelujah.

[panting] I think that’s it.

You get what I’m saying in general?

Mmhmm.

So he touched his hip, God did.

And for the rest of Jacob’s life, he walked with a bad limp.

See, Jacob was an allrounder.

Handled his affairs with no help from nobody.

But in the end, that’s not what the...

[logger] Who’s that?

Excuse me, gentlemen.

I’m sorry to interrupt you.

Is one among you called Sam Loving from New Mexico?

[loggers murmuring]

Alternatively known as, um...

[clears throat]

...Buckskin Sam in southern Arizona and parts of California.

I've been trying to find this man for a very long time to deliver a message to him.

[Apostle Frank grunting]

[panting]

[gun fires]

[groans]

[loggers] Oh.

Oh, shoot.

[Apostle Frank coughing, gasping]

[groaning]

[gasping, groaning]

[gun fires]

[logger 1] Jeez! Come on.

[logger 2] Goodness.

[logger 3] The hell?

That man shot my brother, Martin Brown, in cold blood in Gallup, New Mexico, August 5th, '93.

He killed him only because of the color of his skin.

If any of you take offense to what I've just done here, let's have it out before I leave this place.

I do not intend to spend the rest of my days looking over my shoulder.

[wildlife calling]

Very good, then.

[sighs]

I'm sorry to have interrupted your work.

Big trees.

Never knew trees could get this big.

[quirky music playing]

[man exhales deeply]

[narrator] *At the heart of the cut was a man named Arn Peeples, a gadabout of unknown origin whose real use was occasional but specific.*

[quirky music continues]

[birds calling]

You Minnesota boys might want to close your ears.

[loggers laughing]

[logger 1] Uh, kaboom. [laughs]

[logger 2] Told y'all it wouldn't work.

[loggers laughing, chattering]

[anticipatory music playing]

Don't touch that.

[logger 3] Yeah. We won't.

Don't even look at it crossways.

[logger 4] Not even looking.

[loggers murmuring, laughing]

[Robert chuckles softly]

[narrator] *He was the oldest man on most jobs, always yammering, staying out of the way of hard work.*

You let me at that hatchet if you boys need a break.

I get to chopping, you come to work in the morning, the chips won't yet be settled from yesterday.

I'm made for this summer logging.

I don't get my gears turning smooth till it's over 100.

That's good.

[thunder rumbling]

All this over a little rain.

In my day, we worked around the whole clock, not just when it suited you.

Back then, we'd riddle a bole with auger holes.

Sometimes we had to wait a week for a good wind to topple them behemoths.

And then they all came tumbling down at once.

Trees twice as big as any you're cutting around here.

I worked on a peak outside of Bisbee, Arizona, where we was only 11, 12 miles from the sun.

A hundred and sixteen degrees on the thermometer.

And every degree was a foot long.

[horse neighing]

[indistinct chatter]

And that was in the shade.

And there weren't no shade.

[logger] He's coming up. Here he comes.

[loggers speaking indistinctly]

[music stops]

[exploding]

[loggers] Oh!

[loggers chattering, laughing]

Whoo!

[all applauding]

♪ *If the Lord was a redwood* ♪

♪ *Would you try to cut Him down?* ♪

♪ *Or climb up His loving branches*

And look around? ♪

♪ *If the river was the tears*

Of those who have passed... ♪

[logger 1] Quit your singing!

I'm trying to sleep over here.

[logger 2] Arn, go to bed.

[logger 3] Stop singing!

Hey, Arn.

[Arn] I won't... I won't sing no more.

No, no, no.

You told Adrien that these tents are from the Civil War?

That's right. Union infantry.

After that, they went to the US Cavalry for the Indian campaigns.

These old things have served longer than the people they sheltered.

Rough canvas, but they'll probably be here long after we're gone.

[Robert] Hmm.

[Arn] What's keeping you awake over there?

Oh, uh...

Arn, do you... do you think that... the bad things that we do follow us through life?

I don't know.

I've seen bad men raised up and good men brought to their knees.

I reckon if I could figure it out, I'd be sleeping next to someone a lot better-looking than you.

What was that song that you were singing?

Uh, it... it don't have a name.

It just come to me.

[Robert] Why don't you sing a little more?

No, no. I... I don't want to upset the Minnesota boys.

Well, wait a minute. I...

Here.

[harmonica playing]

[birds chirping]

[narrator] *The crews began to move deeper into the forest with each job.*

[invigorating music playing]

There seemed to be no end to the world's appetite for lumber. So they worked from sunrise until suppertime, felling spruce, cedar, and tamarack, Doug fir, and white pine, utterly changing the face of the mountainside in the process. And while a good sawyer might correctly judge 99 times how a fall would go, the hundredth time might take its toll.

[loud thud]

[rumbling]

[loggers yelling]

[logger 1] Tree! Hey!

[logger 2] Help! Help!

[logger 3] Look out!

[logger 2] Help!

[neighing]

[logger 3] Get help!

[logger 2] Help!

Help!

There.

Now they won't just pass out of this world without nothing to show they was here.

[man] Well, hell.

[exhales]

I wish I could let us all lay off a day, but it's the company.

The war don't stop needing spruce just on account of a bad day for us.

[logger grunts]

[narrator] *Grainier worried more and more that something terrible was following him, that death would find him out here, far away from the only place he really wanted to be.*

Hey...

[Robert chuckles]

[Gladys gasps]

[Robert grunts]

[gasps]

What do you got?

[girl] I got a pine cone.

You got a pine cone?

[Gladys chuckles]

[Robert] Oh!

[Gladys laughing]

[Robert] I got a pine cone.

Should we go get the chicken?

[joyful music playing]

[chicken clucking] Oh, look, there's one.

Chicken right there.

Come here, chicken.

[Gladys] They're going inside.

They're going inside.

[Gladys laughing] They're going inside!

Chicken!

Chicken!

[Gladys] Chicken!

Chicken!

They're gonna sleep in your bed, and they're gonna eat your food.

[joyful music continues]

[Robert] *She's like a different person every time I see her.*

[speaking indistinctly]

[chuckling]

Feel like I'm missing her whole life.

[Gladys] *I feel it too. It's all going by so fast.*

[wildlife calling]

[clicking]

[Gladys] You want to shoot?

[Robert] No.

Only the deer want me to shoot.

Gladys.

[softly] Don't shoot.

Don't shoot me.

Keep making noise, and I will.

[laughs] There he is.

[gun fires]

[gun clicks]

[bullet casing clinks]

Good shot.

[owl hooting]

[Gladys] What if we came with you?

[Robert] Hmm?

Out to the cut.

To the cut?

Mmm.

What...

Well, I... I'd be helpful.

I... I could make some money washing clothes.

Now she's not so much to keep up with.

[exhales deeply] Well, I know you'd be helpful.

You told me some of the others have had their wives out there.

No, not *some* of the others, just that one old man.

What, and that young couple from California?

Dick Clinton disappeared after a week.

And then, besides, they didn't even have a little one.

It's, uh...

[inhales deeply]

It's really dangerous.

I'm just trying to find a way, is all.

[Robert sighs]

I know.

I know. I know. I know.

[pensive music playing]

[narrator] *Grainier tried to find work closer to home, picking up odd jobs where he could.*

[barn animals calling]

But the war was over, and good-paying work was hard to come by.

[inhales deeply]

[exhales]

Sorry to keep you waiting, Robert.

[Robert] Yeah, that's okay.

[man exhales] All right.

[box opens]

There you go.

All right. Appreciate it.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Uh, if you need anything, you know where to find me.

Mmm.

[door opens]

[narrator] *Money was tighter for them than it ever had been. And though he didn't know it then, he would always look back on this time in his life as his happiest.*

What do you got there?

Eggs.

[Robert laughs]

Eggs.

Yeah, that is kind of an egg.

There you go. [grunts] There you go.

[wolves howling]

[Robert] Tired, Katie? You ready for bed?

[Katie] Yeah.

[birds chirping]

[Robert] You're getting so big.

You're gonna be carrying me soon.

[Gladys grunting]

[breathing heavily]

[Robert moans softly, exhales]

[breathing heavily]

[pensive music continues]

[Gladys] *Maybe there's a better way.*

Maybe we turn our acre into a farm.

I could grow double what I do now.

And if we did that, and we saved up enough to start a little sawmill, maybe you could be home more.

Get a horse or a mule on credit, I guess.

Yeah, on credit for sure.

The sawmill would take a bit more doing, you know.

It's not so cheap, but...

Yeah. Well, I didn't say it wouldn't be.

No, but it's a good idea.

[chuckles softly] It is a good idea.

[Robert] Yeah.

[pensive music continues]

[birds tweeting]

[Gladys] Come on, Katie.

Will you say bye-bye?

Katie, watch this. Ready?

[birds chirping]

[both chuckle]

I'll just go.

Okay.

[Robert] Love you.

I'm gonna miss you.

I love you too. All right.

[pensive music continues]

[Robert whistles]

Come on, Kate. Say goodbye to Daddy.

Kate. Come on.

Katie, can you put that down?

[indistinct chatter]

[horse neighing]

Excuse me. Looking for the foreman.

[man] Just keep going that way.

Thank you.

[narrator] *He earned four dollars a day on most jobs, minus expenses for what the company provided.*

[horse neighing]

He and Gladys figured that after one more long stint in the woods, they'd have enough money to start building a sawmill back home.

[grunting, panting]

[grunting]

[creaking]

[crickets chirping]

[owl hooting]

Y'all going on to another job, or you quitting for the season?

[logger 1] Mmm.

[loggers murmuring]

I can't decide.

I ain't never happy when the job ends for some reason.

I just feel itchy inside.

That's 'cause it's rough work, gentlemen, not just on the body but on the soul.

We just cut down trees that have been here for 500 years.

It upsets a man's soul whether you recognize it or not.

[logger 2] I'll have \$200 in my pocket tomorrow morning.

Don't bother my soul. Not one damn bit.

That's 'cause you Minnesota fellas don't know nothing about history.

These trees are really that old?

[Arn] Why, some's older even.

This world is intricately stitched together, boys.

Every thread we pull, we know not how it affects the design of things.

We're but children on this earth, pulling bolts out of the Ferris wheel, thinking ourselves to be gods.

That's horseshit.

I've been to Washington too.

Cut all up through Canada and back down again.

There's enough logs for us to cut for 1,000 years.

And then when the last one's cut, well, first one will be growed up as big as anything around today.

I remember thinking the same thing when I was a young man... the very same thing.

[wolves howling in distance]

[fire crackling]

[animals calling]

You moving along, Robert?

Or packing up for home?

[Robert exhales]

I'm packing it up, going home.

I miss my wife and my little one.

[Arn] What's her name? Your missus?

Gladys.

Mmm.

Welsh. That's a highborn name.

That makes sense, if you knew her.

Those old names have power.

The ones that have them are blessed.

[Robert] Hmm.

You got family somewhere?

[inhales deeply]

My family is... everywhere there's a smiling face.

Never been somewhere I didn't have some family there.

Except for Kansas.

That state is a collection of savage lunatics.

[Robert laughs]

It's good having you around.

Not too many folks I cross paths with more than once in this life.

I see it as a blessing when they're brought back around.

[Robert] Ah.

[inhales deeply]

I don't know where the years go, Arn.

Well... if you figure it out, let me know.

I'd like to ask for a few back.

[narrator] *It looked certain Arn Peeples would exit this world in a puff of smoke with a monstrous noise. But he went out quite differently.*

[branch creaking, snapping]

[branch thuds]

[Arn groans]

[loggers exclaim]

Somebody get some help!

We need help!

[Robert] Who is it?

[logger] We got a man down!

[Robert] Hey, Arn!

[Arn groaning] Arn?

[logger] Widow-maker got him.

[Robert] Arn?

Hey, Arn? Can you hear me?

I'm all right. I just...

[splutters] Help me sit up.

Help me sit up.

All right. Slowly.

[grunting] Can we get a little water?

I saw my sister and her husband.

They was just here.

You know which way they walked to?

Arn...

[narrator] *He had a number of dizzy spells and grew dreamy and forgetful over the next few days, forgetting even his own name before it was all done.*

[birds calling]

You hear that?

[melancholy music playing]

Beautiful, ain't it?

Just beautiful.

What is, Arn?

All of it.

Every bit of it.

[music intensifies]

[crickets chirping]

[old logger] Arn Peebles was my friend.

He... He said that a... a tree was a friend... if you let it alone.

But the second the blade bit in, you had yourself a war, and the tree was a killer.

But he wasn't messing with that tree.

It was... It was just a snag.

So, I...

I... I don't know what meaning to take from that.

In Jesus's name...

[loggers] Amen.

Amen.

[narrator] *Though Grainier had seen death often, he'd never lost someone so close to him.*

[wildlife calling]

He began to feel a dread that the snag had been meant for him, that some punishment was seeking him.

[foreboding music playing]

[wheels squealing]

[deep exhale]

[sounds stop abruptly]

[Gladys] *Robert?*

[passengers murmuring]

[passenger 1] What is that?

Oh dear God.

[passengers murmuring]

Come look at this.

Where is that?

[passenger 2] Are we heading over there?

[passenger 3] That's not far off.

Wow.

[passenger 4] Wow.

[passenger 5] Hey.

What is that?

[brakes hissing]

[people clamoring]

[dogs barking]

[train horn blowing]

[coughing]

[people clamoring]

[bell ringing]

Mary!

Mary, have you... have you seen Gladys?

No?

Gladys!

[tense music playing]

[music intensifies]

[fire crackling]

[Robert] Gladys!

[whimpering]

[coughing]

[breathing heavily]

[panting]

[somber music playing]

[blowing]

[fire blazing]

[exhales sharply]

[coughing]

[coughing]

[coughing]

[huffs]

[fire whooshing]

[music intensifies]

[music stops abruptly]

[wind whooshing]

[breathing heavily]

[metal clanking]

[wind whooshing]

[breathing shakily]

[wind whooshing]

[inhales sharply]

[somber music playing]

[door opens]

[footsteps approaching]

[objects clattering]

[narrator] *For nearly two weeks, he searched every town in the region, looking for Gladys and Kate.*

[melancholy music playing]

Four-fifty.

[narrator] *Finding them nowhere, he went back to his acre to await their return.*

Hey... Oh, hold on.

This is for you.

Thank you.

[Robert clears throat]

[door opens]

[door closes]

[coins clinking]

[melancholy music continues]

[Robert exhales]

[leaves rustling]

[bear growling]

[exhaling]

[chuffing]

[bear growling]

[inhales deeply]

[exhales]

[somber music playing]

[thunder rumbling]

[rain pattering]

[inhales sharply]

[gasps]

[grunts softly]

[exhales]

[thunder rumbling]

[Robert laughing, speaking indistinctly]

[mimics buzzer]

Water!

Water?

[laughs]

[clicks tongue]

You gonna water the plants for Mama?

[fire crackling]

[train horn blaring in distance]

Don't you think it's too much?

[Robert sniffles]

How did... How did they deserve that?

Mmm?

Why?

[yelling] Why?!

[exhales sharply]

[sniffles]

[exhales]

[exhales deeply]

[wind whooshing]

[man humming]

[exhales loudly]

Hello, Robert.

You hungry?

[breathing heavily]

[Robert munching]

[inhales deeply]

[man] I didn't know what I'd find out here.

You wouldn't believe the stories they're telling about you in town.

I'll pay you back for all this. I promise.

I didn't ask you to.

Well, I sure do appreciate you coming up to check on me.

Let's take a walk.

[Robert sniffles]

[Robert exhales]

Ooh, ooh, ooh.

[hammer clicks]

[gun fires]

[gun clicks]

[bullet casing clinking]

[Gladys] *This is a good spot for a cabin. Do you like how I say your name?*

[fire whooshing]

Robert.

[water sloshing gently]

They're...

Th...

They're...

[breathing deeply]

They're just not coming back.

[inhales deeply]

[sobbing]

[continues sobbing]

[groaning]

[sobs, sniffles]

[sobbing]

[sniffles]

I'm sorry.

[sniffling, groaning]

[sobbing]

I'm... I'm sorry.

[sobs, sniffles]

I don't know what came over me.

[continues sobbing]

Skin him.

[knife swishes]

[somber music playing]

[bird twittering]

[exhales]

[narrator] *Grainier raised a leanto at his home site, and there he lived through the rest of the summer, fishing for speckled trout and hunting for a rare and flavorful mushroom the Canadians called morel, which sprang up on ground disturbed by fire. Though he confessed it to no one, he held some faint hope that Gladys and Kate might somehow return. And he wanted to be ready for them if they did.*

[sniffing]

Hey! [clicks tongue] Get out of there.

[dog barks]

[sniffing]

Where'd you all come from?

[puppy whimpering]

Who do you belong to?

Hello?

Shouldn't y'all be in town?

You look like town dogs.

Come on. [clicking tongue] I hope you all like fish.

[water splashing]

All right. Close your eyes. Ready?

[whimpering]

[Robert laughing]

All right, you're free. Come on.

Are these puppies really yours?

What are you doing all the way out here?

Huh?

How much do you know?

You roll over?

And sit?

Fetch?

[bird cawing]

[chopping]

[grunting]

[Katie babbling]

[Gladys] *Katie!*

[breathing shakily]

[Gladys] *See that?*

[Katie babbling]

[grunting softly]

[grunting]

[Robert] What kind of dog do you think they are?

I don't know.

They appear quite wolfish.

Aren't they?

I mean, maybe, uh... maybe Red Dog got with a wolf out there somewhere on her own, you know?

No, that's impossible.

Why not?

Only a he-wolf ever mates.

And that's the chief of the wolf pack.

[Robert] Uh-huh.

And the she-wolf he chooses to bear his litter is the only one that ever comes into heat.

What... What if Red Dog was in heat?

He chooses only one.

Well, what if... what if she encountered the chief wolf at the exact moment?

You know what I mean?

Would he not take her just for the newness of the experience?

“Newness of the experience”?

Yeah.

[chuckles]

[both laugh]

What?

“Newness of the experience.”

[laughing]

[man chuckles]

[whines] Can you howl? Huh? Can you howl too?

Huh? Can you howl?

[melancholy music playing]

Hey, buddy.

Hey. Hey, little one.

Hey.

[music continues]

[narrator] *With Ignatius Jack's help, he raised the four walls of the cabin precisely where the old ones had stood.*

Red Dog?

[clicks tongue]

[narrator] *He could not bring himself to rebuild the bedroom.*

[howling in distance]

[exhales, sniffles]

[narrator] *In that year, a great comet appeared in the sky, which many said signaled the end of days. But after two weeks, it faded away as quietly as it had come.*

[pensive music continues]

[birds chirping]

The rebuilt cabin looked much like the first one. But the emptiness of the place at times overwhelmed him.

[birds chirping]

Years passed, and he found himself still waiting. Though at this point, he couldn't say for what.

[chair creaking]

[music fades]

[train chuffing]

[train horn blowing]

[bell ringing]

[insects, birds chirping]

[engine whirring]

[pensive music playing]

[indistinct chatter]

[man] Get your asses up on that stand of white pine!

I want every one of those trees down this mountain before I wake up on the Lord's day!

After that, I'm docking each one of you one dollar a day!

Let's go!

[indistinct yelling]

Let's go!

[stalling]

Hey. Watch out, old man.

Let me see that thing.

Go get a crosscut or something.

[stalling]

I just don't know what...

[chainsaw whirring]

[chainsaw whirring]

[tree creaking]

[thuds]

[logger] Look out! Look out! Look out!

[loggers speaking indistinctly]

[chopping]

[logger 1] Look out, boys!

[groaning]

[loggers laughing]

[grunts]

[logger 2] Hey, let me know if you want some water.

[groans] You'll be okay.

[logger 4] Need some help up?

[laughs]

[exhales]

[sniffles]

[indistinct chatter]

You mind if I warm up a minute?

[Robert] Mmm.

[groaning]

[continues groaning]

Billy?

Yeah.

[Robert] Is that you?

Yes. Do I know you?

Yeah, we cut together in Salmo-Priest a few years back.

I'm... I was a friend of Arn Peeples.

I'm Robert.

[chuckling] Oh, yes.

Hi, Robert.

[Robert chuckling] It's good to see you.

You too.

I mean, I can't believe you're still out here.

I can barely keep up at my age.

Ah, well, I just look after the steam donkey and keep it watered and greased.

Not much else I can do, but it's a living.

Mmm.

[Billy] Mmm.

Say, Billy, do you think it's a little different now out here?

I don't know if it's different or if it's always been this way.

Maybe I was rougher and just like these boys.

I, uh, just don't remember it.

[chuckling] Well, uh, that is the age-old question, ain't it, friend?

That is the question.

[Robert] Yeah.

Say, how is... how is Arn?

How... How is...

I ain't seen him in, gosh... at least a year, maybe longer.

Yeah. Uh, no.

Yeah. I... I ain't seen him either.

Ah. Ain't that how it goes?

[Billy grunts]

[Billy grunts gently]

Let me help you.

Here.

[Billy] My hands are not working today.

Here.

[groans]

[Robert] I got you.

[somber music playing]

[Billy] Thank you.

[Robert] Yeah. No problem.

[narrator] *And with that, Grainier was finished as a logger.*

[birds chirping]

[insects chirping]

[inhales sharply]

[exhales]

[grunts gently]

[breathing heavily]

[exhales deeply]

[exhales shakily]

[inhales deeply]

[exhales]

[narrator] *The last few years, he expected some great revelation about his life would descend upon him.*

[melancholy music playing]

[Gladys] What's that?

[Katie crying]

[both howling]

[babbling]

[howling]

[giggles] Can you do that?

[narrator] *But as of yet, none had. And he was beginning to doubt that one ever would.*

[Red Dog barking, panting]

[Robert laughing] Hey.

[laughing]

[inhales deeply, kisses]

[birds chirping]

Not been doing the weeding, huh?

[grunts]

[horse neighing]

[dog barking]

[narrator] *These days, there was plenty of work in town for anybody willing to get around after it. He came into possession of a pair of horses and a wagon, by a sad circumstance, however.*

[Robert panting]

Avery?

[narrator] *Avery Pinkham's heart condition would have been easily diagnosed and cured had he been born a generation later.*
Mr. Pinkham!

[dramatic music playing]

[narrator] *Grainier contracted with the Pinkhams to buy the horses and wagon for \$300 in installments. And he kept himself busy as a freighter of sorts. The hauling itself was a ticket to a kind of show, composed of the follies and endeavors of his neighbors.*

[women chuckling]

Y'all comfortable back there?

Yes.

[women chuckling]

[narrator] *The work put him in closer contact with them than he had been in years. And yet, he only felt more alone. No?*

[munching]

[horse snorts]

[wildlife calling]

[insects, birds chirping]

[Gladys] *Be gentle with the rabbits.*

[Katie giggling]

[Gladys] *They don't know you're not gonna hurt them. Katie.*

[wind whooshing]

[footsteps approaching]

[carriage approaching]

Miss, uh...

Miss Thompson?

Claire. You must be Robert.

Uh, yes, ma'am.

Nice to meet you.

Yeah. You too. [chuckles softly] Nice to meet you. I was looking for you at the train station.

Oh yeah, I waited a few minutes for you before I decided to start walking.

Yeah, I'm really sorry.

It took me a little while to get these ladies going this morning.

And, uh... [sucks teeth] ...would you still like me to take you up to your lookout?

Oh, if it's not too much trouble.

No, of course. Jump up.

You wanna...?

Yep.

[Robert] Oh, okay.

All right.

All right. Ready?

All right. [clicks tongue]

[horses neighing]

[hooves clopping]

[Robert] What parts are you from?

Oh, I've been all over.

But I lived a long time over in Montana. Noxon.

I've never seen Montana.

Oh, beautiful country.

Yeah, worth the trip.

[horse snorts]

[Robert snuffles]

They told me about you, you know?

Who's they?

People who recommended you.

[Robert] Mmm.

And what did they say?

That you were different.

Ain't everybody different?

[Claire chuckles softly]

No.

[Robert exhales sharply] Mmm. Hmm.

It's a good thing to be different.

As far as I see it, anyway.

I'm so happy to be here.

This valley is special.

Used to all be under a glacier, you know?

Three thousand feet of ice.

When it broke, it just flooded the whole region.

Carved out all these valleys.

That's where all those lakes come from.

Can you imagine if you were back here then?

This big block of ice, thousands of feet tall, and just the cracks and the freezing-cold water.

It must have felt like the world was coming to an end.

[Robert] Hmm.

That's where all those myths come from, you know?

All those flood stories.

All those different religions all over the world.

It's just the same story, different slants.

Hey, I didn't mean to be disrespectful to anything you believe or anything like that.

I just, you know...

No, no, no.

I just find it fascinating.

Can't help it when I'm in a place like this. It's just...

[tender music playing]

The world's an old place.

Yeah.

Probably nothing it hasn't seen by now.

[horses snorting]

[narrator] *Claire had worked in Europe as a nurse in the Great War. Now she was employed by the newly created US Forest*

Service as part of an effort to manage timber cuts and prevent forest fires.

Oh, uh, thank you.

It was nice to meet you, Robert.

Thank you for the ride.

It was very nice to meet you too.

Yeah. Okay.

Uh... [clears throat] Oh.

There you go.

Thank you.

You don't need a hand?

Nope.

No? Okay.

Take care now.

[wildlife calling]

[inhales sharply]

[exhales]

[wind whooshing]

[exhales deeply]

[sneezes]

[sniffles, exhales]

Did I scare you?

Oh boy. [sniffles]

[breathes deeply]

[gulps, exhales]

[exhales deeply]

[coughing]

[grunts, sniffles]

[grunts, sniffles]

[retching]

[retching]

[exhales]

[Red Dog panting]

[Robert breathing deeply]

[clears throat]

[exhales]

[door creaking]

[soft clinking]

[ominous music playing]

[fire whooshing]

[deep exhale]

[eerie whoosh]

[sounds stop abruptly]

[Gladys] *Robert.*

[train horn blowing in distance]

[eerie music playing]

[door creaking]

[inhales shakily]

[exhales]

[eerie music playing]

[breathing shakily]

[exhales sharply]

[chuckles softly]

[fire whooshing]

[Gladys gasps]

[Gladys] Katie!

[inhales shakily]

[whimpering, panting]

[whooshing]

[Gladys coughing]

[breathing shakily]

[Gladys] It's all right.

[Katie crying]

[Gladys] Just gonna put a blanket over...

[panting]

[grunts]

[groans]

[sobbing quietly]

[somber music playing]

[Katie] Mama...

[breathes deeply]

[footsteps treading]

[melancholy music playing]

[grunts gently]

[melancholy music continues]

[melancholy music continues]

[sniffles]

[grunts gently]

[wind whooshing]

[grunts]

[exhales]

[wind howling]

[match striking]

[melancholy music continues]

[music fades]

Miss Thompson?

Are you up there?

[bird cawing]

[Robert panting]

[Claire] Robert?

[Robert] Oh.

[Claire] What a surprise.

[chuckles]

[chuckles] How are you?

Good.

Yeah. I hope I didn't startle you.

No. Not at all.

[chuckling] I was just heading out for an afternoon survey, and... and I heard you call.

[Robert] Oh, yeah.

[chuckles] Yeah, I... [chuckles] Did you... [chuckles] I was just passing through and thought I'd just, you know, check on you.

[Robert] Doesn't get spooky up this high?

No. I think it's peaceful.

I watch the clouds form and the light change, and I get paid to do it.

It's a gift.

[chuckles softly] Mmm, yeah, I can see that.

How'd you come to this?

I saw a flyer for the job opening just when I needed it.

Here, fire weed.

Oh, thank you.

I had to get a recommendation from a family friend.

In his words, "Claire Thompson is absolutely devoid of the timidity normally associated with her sex."

"She possesses more than adequate work ethic..."

[Robert chuckles]

"...and is unafraid of anything that walks, creeps, or flies."

[Robert laughs]

[sipping] Hmm.

How is it?

[Robert] Mmm.

It's good. Thank you.

[Robert exhales]

Everything looks so small from up here.

[Claire] Yeah.

You want to take a look?

[birds chirping]

[Robert] Everything grows so fast.

Mmhmm.

You can barely tell a fire came through here.

It's like it didn't even happen.

Were you here when it came through?

[exhales]

No.

I wasn't.

But, uh... my wife and... and my baby, uh...

[inhales shakily]

Yeah. They, uh... They didn't make it out.

Oh, Robert.

Yeah. You see, sometimes it... it...

[inhales deeply]

It feels like the sadness will just eat me alive, but... sometimes it just... It feels like it... it happened to somebody else.

But no, I wasn't here.

[clicks tongue]

Uh, not when, uh...

Not when... when I should have been, I guess, and when... when, uh, they needed me the most.

I hear them sometimes.

Out there in the woods.

Just talking and laughing.

Yeah.

I don't even want to turn my head because I'm afraid... that I'll scare them away.

So I just listen... until they fade away somewhere else... wherever those things go.

Never told anybody else that.

You think that makes me sound crazy?

[chuckles softly]

Yeah. I lost my husband too, a little over a year ago.

It took him a long time.

And when it was over, it was like there was a... a hole in the world.

I had more questions than answers, like no human had ever died before.

[scoffs] When you go through something like that, nothing you do is crazy.

You just go through what you go through.

[Robert] Mmm.

In the forest, every least thing's important.

It's all threaded together, so you can't tell where one thing ends and another begins if you really look at it.

The little insects you can't even see, they play a role as vital as the river.

[exhales sharply]

The dead tree is as important as the living one.

There must be something for us to learn from that.

What if you got nothing left to give?

Hmm? What then?

Mmm...

The world needs a hermit in the woods as much as a preacher in the pulpit.

[Robert chuckles]

[breathing shakily]

[voice breaking] Yeah. Yeah.

Is that what I am?

A hermit?

Well, I mean, I believe we both are, in our own ways.

Just waiting to see what we've been left here for.

[crickets chirping]

[exhales]

[soft thudding]

[owl hooting in distance]

[Robert exhales]

[clattering]

[suspenseful music playing]

[door creaking]

[Robert inhales]

[exhales]

[suspenseful music playing]

[grunts gently]

[Robert exhales]

[exhales]

[clears throat]

[girl whimpering]

[exhales]

[girl whimpering]

[Robert exhales deeply]

[gasps]

[narrator] *Though he knew it must be impossible, the thought overwhelmed him that his daughter had returned.*

Katie?

[girl moaning weakly]

Kate.

Katie?

Oh, Kate.

[whimpering]

[Robert] Okay.

[Robert panting]

[hopeful music playing]

[breathing shakily]

Okay.

[breathing heavily]

Okay.

Oh my God.

Honey, your leg's broken.

This is gonna hurt, just for a moment.

[girl yelps]

[Robert grunts]

[exhales]

[Robert] Okay.

[breathing heavily]

[grunts]

Katie.

[somber music continues]

No.

[breathing heavily]

[chuckling]

[inhales sharply, chuckles]

[footsteps approaching]

[Robert breathing heavily]

Okay.

[exhales]

[exhales]

[breathing heavily]

You want to get some water, honey?

Yeah.

All right.

Up.

Wow.

What did you do?

What did you do that for?

[Katie] Water!

[giggles]

[Robert laughs]

[Katie laughs]

[grunts]

[exhales]

Byebye.

[Katie] Bye-bye.

[Robert] Bye-bye.

[music fades]

[Robert breathing heavily]

[gasps]

[grunting]

Katie?

Kate?

[melancholy music playing]

Kate!

Kate!

[melancholy music continues]

[narrator] *Seeing Kate again felt as real as anything else in his life, even as he wondered if it had really happened to him. He spent many days and evenings wandering the forests and fields of the region, looking for any sign of her. Though he found none, he spent the rest of his days waiting so he would be there if she ever came back.*

[melancholy music continues]

[Robert exhales]

[breathes deeply]

[thunder rumbling]

[narrator] *In his later years, Grainier rode the Great Northern from time to time into Spokane.*

[vehicles passing by]

He wandered the city without much direction or purpose, as if looking for something he had misplaced a long time ago.

[bell tolling]

[John Glenn] *Roger, zero G, and I feel fine. Capsule is turning around. Oh, that view is tremendous.*

What is that fellow doing?

[John Glenn] *Roger, capsule... He's in outer space.*

I could see the booster during turnaround just a couple of hundred yards behind me. [Robert] Huh.

[John Glenn] *Roger... So is that...?*

That's us.

[John Glenn] *Roger. Understand go for at least seven orbits.*

[Robert] Huh.

[man] *...a camel spit gold from his teeth. Gold!*

Witness Sun Tzu, the holy man from the far, far east.

Sun Tzu, the holy man, will read your dreams.

Experience the world-famous Bittler Sisters, or better yet, pay you a dime to see a monster.

You. You.

Come here. Come here.

Yeah. Cast the stone aside.

Inside this theater, the mysteries of the world flit about like bats and insects.

Here, all the answers to everything.

You buy a ticket...

[narrator] *That night in the theater, he took in a curiosity show that promised a vision of a monster but was only a boy in a costume.*

[somber music playing]

[breathing shakily]

[narrator] *He saw his face in a mirror for the first time in nearly a decade. He could see now the toll that the years had taken. He felt that he was only just beginning to have some faint*

understanding of his life, even though it was now slipping away from him.

[birds chirping]

Just four dollars, see the world as only the birds do.

[plane engine whirring]

[uplifting music playing]

[engine whirring]

[pilot] Hey, you'd better hold on to something.

Huh?

[engine roaring]

[uplifting music continues]

[Gladys] *Robert.*

[music continues]

[Arn] Beautiful, ain't it?

Just beautiful.

[narrator] *When Robert Grainier died in his sleep sometime in November of 1968, his life ended as quietly as it had begun. He'd never purchased a firearm or spoken into a telephone. He had no idea who his parents might have been, and he left no heirs behind him.*

[plane engine roaring]

But on that spring day, as he misplaced all sense of up and down, he felt, at last, connected to it all.

[music intensifies]

[music fades]

[birds chirping]

["Train Dreams" by Nick Cave plays]

[woodpecker drumming]

♪ *I seen a grizzly big as a house* ♪

♪ *Walk across an open plain* ♪

♪ *Heard of a boy called Elvis something* ♪

♪ *His voice could drive*

Young girls insane ♪

♪ *I've seen a man from a mile away* ♪

♪ *Shoot a bobcat through the brain but* ♪

♪ *Lately I've been having dreams* ♪

♪ *Crazy dreams I can't explain* ♪

♪ *A woman standing*

In a field of flowers and ♪

♪ *A screaming locomotive train* ♪

♪ *Crazy dreams that go on for hours* ♪

♪ *And I can't begin*

To tell you how that feels ♪

[melodic vocalization]

♪ *I've seen an elk with twisted antlers* ♪

♪ *Throw bright lightning across the sky* ♪

♪ *Seen a man with a broken curse* ♪

♪ *Leap from a bridge and try to fly* ♪

♪ *Seen a boy who was a dog* ♪

♪ *Who became a man who forgot to die* ♪

♪ *Lately I've been having dreams* ♪

♪ *Crazy dreams I can't explain* ♪

♪ *A woman standing*

In a field of flowers and ♪

♪ *A screaming locomotive train* ♪

♪ *Crazy dreams that go on for hours* ♪

♪ *And I can't begin*

To tell you how that feels ♪

[melodic vocalization]

♪ *The space that connects me*

Where I am now ♪

♪ *To the place where I'll one day be* ♪

♪ *It's measured in the words*

That we speak ♪

♪ *And the strange and wondrous things*

I've seen ♪

♪ *It's measured in truth,*

It's measured in love ♪

♪ *Measured in a tendency to pain* ♪

♪ *Measured by a girl*

In a field of flowers ♪

♪ *A screaming dream of a midnight train* ♪

♪ *This has been going on for years* ♪

♪ *Years and years and years and years* ♪

♪ *I can't begin to tell you*

How that feels ♪

[melodic vocalization]

[song fades]

[Arn] ♪ *If the Lord was a redwood* ♪

♪ *Would you try to cut Him down?* ♪

♪ *Or climb up His loving branches*

And look around? ♪

♪ *If the river was the tears* ♪

♪ *Of all those who've passed* ♪

♪ *Would you try to dam it up* ♪

♪ *Or let it pass?* ♪

[harmonica playing]

[harmonica playing ends]