

INVESTOR'S EXCLUSIVE

THE WHICH WAY TREE

FIRST LOOK

INTRODUCTION

THE WHICH WAY TREE

“I don’t mean to scare you ma’am, but when I got there that cat had its eyes on your boy.”

Those were the chilling words that Elizabeth Crook heard from a deputy sheriff who had rescued her 14 year old son after a horrifying night in which he had gone missing during a camping trip in the rugged canyons of the Texas hill country. A writer can never anticipate where stories will come from, but the terror of that night—when her son was tracked by a mountain lion—turned out to be the inspiration for Elizabeth’s beloved and award-winning novel *The Which Way Tree*.

The book she wrote is not that story, exactly. For one thing, it takes place over a century earlier, a time in Texas when mountain lions were called panthers and partisan violence was rampant in a backwater of the Civil War. It is the story of a young mixed-race girl—the daughter of a slave—who with incredible force of will assembles an unlikely hunting party to track the panther that killed her mother and permanently scarred her own face, leaving her “cat marked.”

“I was captivated with this story of revenge and obsession,” says director Alberto Arvelo. “It is a story with the complexity of Moby Dick, the full-bodied characterizations of Mark Twain and, at its core, an existential quest to reconcile the ghosts of the past and the hopes of the present.”

“It is a beast
out of a nightmare.”





“With an unearthly scream,
she lifts the hatchet and throws herself
onto the beast.”

A woman with dark, curly hair is shown in profile, looking towards the right. The scene is bathed in a deep blue light, suggesting a sunset or twilight. In the background, a range of mountains is visible against a dark sky. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

“...she won’t ever
look all right.”

PREACHER DOB:

“Vengeance
belongs to the Lord.”

SAMANTHA:

“Only if he can
beat me to it.”

THE STORY

THE WHICH WAY TREE

We are in Texas during the dark and confusing years of the Civil War. On an isolated homestead, in the middle of the night, a panther (mountain lion) savagely attacks a family, mauling a young mixed-race girl named SAMANTHA and killing her mother. The girl is left scarred and traumatized. Determined to avenge her mother's death, Samantha enlists her half-brother BENJAMIN in an improbable attempt to track and kill the panther. Her obsession also ensnares LORENZO PACHECO, a charismatic Tejano outlaw; a haunted, compassionate preacher named DOBSON BECK; and ZECHARIAH, Beck's aged but unstoppable "panther dog."

But even as they set out to seek revenge, they are being trailed by CLARENCE HANLIN, a sadistic Confederate soldier with a lethal score to settle.

THE WHICH WAY TREE is a taut, pulse-pounding story of revenge and obsession, set in an unforgiving Texas wilderness.

THE FILMMAKERS

THE WHICH WAY TREE

ALBERTO ARVELO



Director Alberto Arvelo's credits include *The Liberator*, an epic in the tradition of David Lean about Simón Bolívar, which was shortlisted in the Foreign Film Category for the Academy Awards; *One Life And Two Trails* (1997); and *A House With A View Of The Sea* (2001), an official selection of the Cannes Film Festival that received 18 awards in more than 50 international festivals. In 2004 he directed *Habana Havana*, which won him a dozen international awards. He then adapted Edmond Rostand's classic French play "Cyrano de Bergerac" as *Cyrano Fernández*, starring Édgar Ramírez (2007). In 2010 Arvelo directed the documentary *Let The Children Play*, about the rise of Gustavo Dudamel as one of El Sistema's most prominent musicians. Music is a huge part of Arvelo's life, and in 2010 he directed the stage portion of a multimedia opera, *Cantata Criolla*, for the LA Philharmonic, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel and starring Helen Hunt and Édgar Ramírez. In 2015 Arvelo directed the stage and video art of Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, starring Bryce Dallas Howard. Currently, Arvelo is co-executive producer with Alejandro Iñárritu on the series *Aztlan*, for Legendary, based on a novel by Arvelo. A native of Venezuela, Arvelo currently lives in Los Angeles.

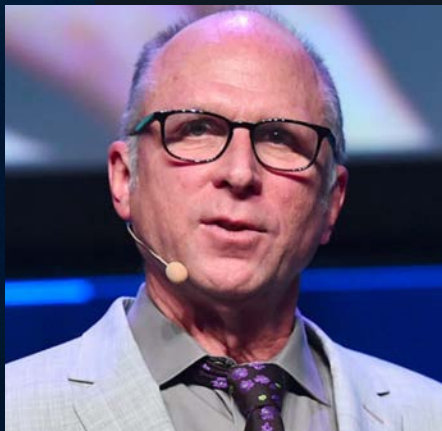
Link to Alberto Arvelo's film *The Liberator*: <http://vid.unitedtalent.com/libertador>

Director

THE FILMMAKERS

THE WHICH WAY TREE

BOB BERNEY



Producer

Bob Berney (Producer) is a leading figure in the world of global film distribution. He has been instrumental in the acquisition, marketing and distribution of some of the most acclaimed and successful independent films of the last two decades, including Memento, My Big Fat Greek Wedding, The Passion of the Christ, Pan's Labyrinth (3 Oscar Wins), La Vie En Rose (Oscar for Best Actress: Marion Cotillard), A Prairie Home Companion, and Manchester by the Sea. The smart, challenging and entertaining movies he has helped shepherd to the screen since 2000 have amassed more than \$1 billion in domestic box office, won multiple Academy Awards and made an enduring impact on the cultural landscape. Berney also co-founded and operated five of the most successful independent film distribution and marketing companies: Amazon Studios, Film District, Picturehouse, Newmarket Films and IFC Films. Under his leadership these companies helped films such as Y Tu Mamá También, The Young Victoria, Insidious, and Soul Surfer achieve financial success, and helped to garner an Oscar win for Charlize Theron in Monster, and an Oscar nomination for Keisha Castle-Hughes in Whale Rider. From 2015-2019, Berney was head of marketing and distribution for Amazon Studios, where he oversaw the distribution of more than 50 films including double Academy Award winner Manchester by the Sea, Oscar nominees The Big Sick and Cold War, and Oscar winner for Best Foreign Film: The Salesman. Berney is pleased to be producing The Which Way Tree as one of Picturehouse's upcoming releases.

Berney is based in Los Angeles. <http://www.picturehouse.com/>

THE FILMMAKERS

THE WHICH WAY TREE

ELIZABETH CROOK



Elizabeth Crook (Producer/Novelist/Screenwriter) is the author of the novel *The Which Way Tree*, and four other novels including *Promised Lands* and *The Night Journal*, which won the Spur Award for Best Long Novel of the West and the Willa Literary Award. Another novel, *Monday, Monday*, received the Jesse H. Jones Award from the Texas Institute of Letters and was named by Kirkus Reviews as a 2014 Best Fiction Book of the Year. Her novel *The Which Way Tree* was published by Little, Brown in February 2018. *The Which Way Tree* is her first screenplay.

Crook is based in Austin. www.elizabethcrookbooks.com

Producer / Author / Screenwriter

THE FILMMAKERS

THE WHICH WAY TREE

STEPHEN HARRIGAN



Producer/Screenwriter

Stephen Harrigan (Producer/Screenwriter) is the author of eleven books of fiction and non fiction, including the New York Times bestselling novel *The Gates of the Alamo*, as well as *A Friend of Mr. Lincoln*, *Remember Ben Clayton*, and the forthcoming *The Leopard Is Loose*. His most recent book is *Big Wonderful Thing: A History of Texas*. As a screenwriter, he has written many movies for television, such as HBO's *The Last of His Tribe*, TNT's *King of Texas*, and Hallmark Channel's *The Colt*, for which he was a finalist for both the Writer's Guild and Humanitas awards. Harrigan is also a writer at large for *Texas Monthly*, where his articles and essays have appeared for many years. He has been inducted into the Texas Literary Hall of Fame and is the recipient—along with Matthew McConaughey, Boz Scaggs and others—of the 2019 Texas Medal of the Arts.

Harrigan is based in Austin. <https://www.stephenharrigan.com/>

THE FILMMAKERS

THE WHICH WAY TREE

EDGAR JOHNSTON



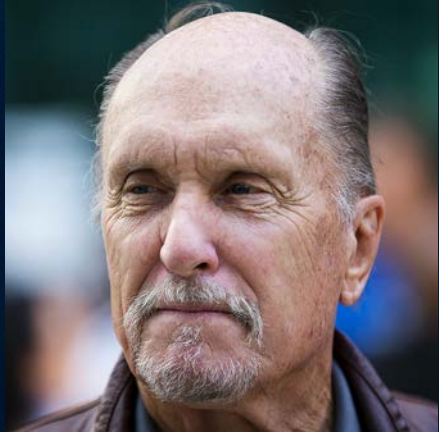
Producer/Casting Director

Edgar Johnston (Producer/Casting Director) has been casting films for decades. He has worked with filmmakers such as Oliver Stone, Steven Spielberg, Ron Shelton, Phillip Noyce, Robert Duvall, and David Byrne. He first served as a location casting director in his native Texas, where he did the location casting for *Born on the Fourth of July*, *True Stories*, *Talk Radio*, *Full Moon in Blue Water*, etc. He then moved to LA to be a Casting Exec at Disney/Touchstone Studios where he oversaw the casting of such films as *Newsies*, *Three Men and a Little Lady*, *Billy Bathgate*, and *Paradise*. As an independent casting director, his film credits include *The Trip to Bountiful*, starring Geraldine Page, whose performance in the film won an Academy Award for best actress. Johnston also cast (and served as an associate producer on) *The Apostle*, an Oscar nominee which won Film Independent Awards for Best Film, Best Director (Robert Duvall), and Best Actor (Robert Duvall). Other credits include Warner Brothers' *Tin Cup*, Sony's *Hollywood Homicide*, New Line's *Secondhand Lions*, as well as *A Night In Old Mexico* and Karen Leigh Hopkins' *Miss Meadows*.

Johnston is based in Los Angeles.


THE FILMMAKERS

ROBERT DUVALL



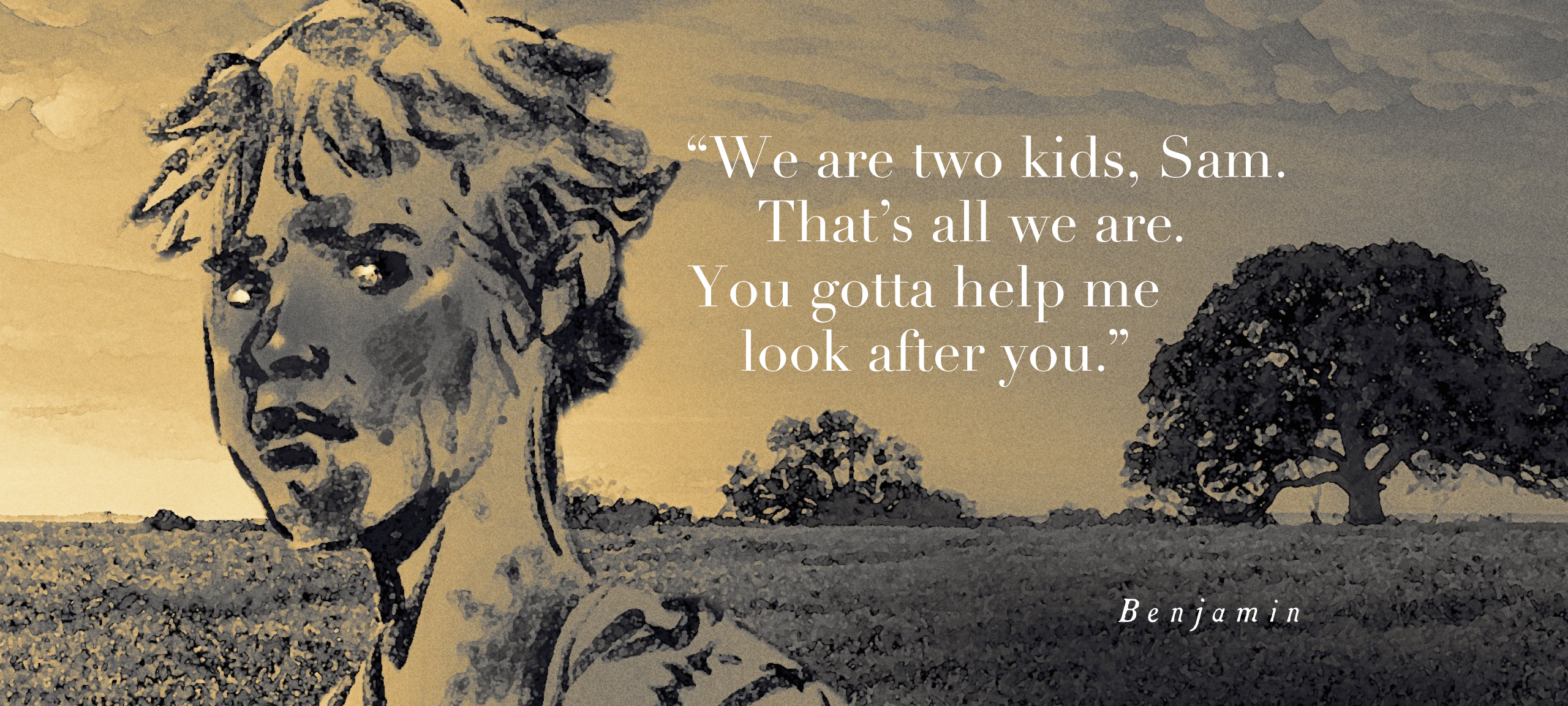
Executive Producer / "Doctor Gibson"

Robert Duvall (Executive Producer, 'Dr Gibson') is one of the great American actors, having starred in classics such as Tender Mercies, The Godfather, The Godfather 2, Apocalypse Now, To Kill A Mockingbird, Network, Open Range, Lonesome Dove, A Civil Action, The Conversation, and The Great Santini. In addition, he's Produced 12 movies (five of which he wrote and directed) including The Apostle, A Night in Old Mexico, Crazy Heart, Get Low, Broken Trail, A Family Thing, and Angelo My Love. He also Co-Produced Tender Mercies, for which he won both the Academy Award and the Golden Globe Award for 'Best Actor'.

A young girl with curly hair is shown from the chest up, looking out over a sunset over the ocean. The sky is a mix of orange and blue, and the water is dark blue. The girl's face is the central focus, with her eyes looking slightly to the right. She has a serious expression.


“Look at my face.
Look at it! I got
nothin’ to live for
but killin’ the panther
that done this to me.”

S a m a n t h a



“We are two kids, Sam.
That’s all we are.
You gotta help me
look after you.”

Benjamin




“That dog is the only one
of you that’s
never treated me bad.”

Hanlin



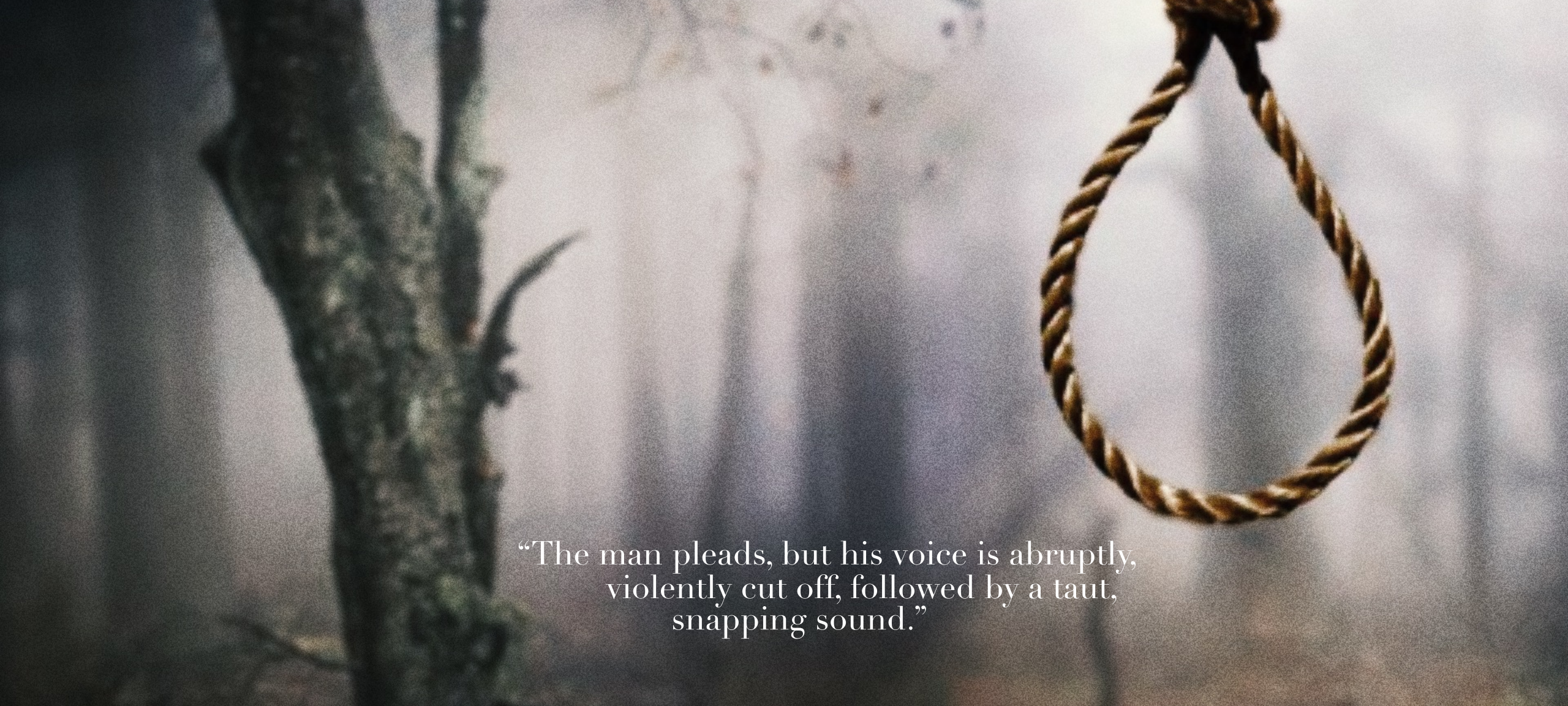
“We stand in a crossways place,
and the Lord has given us
a Which Way tree, to show us
the way is onward.”

Preacher Dob



“It is a lost cause,
and a good one.
I am for it.”

Pacheco

A close-up photograph of a thick, braided rope tied in a knot, hanging from the top right. The rope is a golden-brown color and has a textured, twisted appearance. The background is out of focus, showing a dark tree trunk on the left and a lighter, hazy area of foliage or sky. The overall mood is somber and ominous.

“The man pleads, but his voice is abruptly,
violently cut off, followed by a taut,
snapping sound.”

“There is only the unabating creaking
of the tree limbs as the bodies twist
in the breeze.”





“The eyes of the panther
are shining through the
darkness; watching, waiting.”

A dark, atmospheric forest scene. The image is dominated by the silhouettes of tall, thin trees against a misty, blue-green background. In the foreground on the left, a large, gnarled tree trunk curves across the frame. The overall mood is mysterious and suspenseful.

“Are we tracking the panther
or is he tracking us?”

FROM THE DIRECTOR

THE WHICH WAY TREE

What caught my mind about *The Which Way Tree* is the complexity that lies beneath a seemingly traditional tale. I was captivated by this story of revenge and hope, integrity and madness, light and darkness.

The themes of this film speak to today's realities. There is not only the underlying racial conflict experienced by Samantha, but the challenges of millions of people throughout the world who, like the displaced Tejano outlaw Lorenzo Pacheco, find themselves constricted by walls and borders. Then there is the inherent decency of Preacher Dob, a haunted and conflicted character who nonetheless represents the best of what America can be. These two men—Pacheco and Dob—follow the obsessive voice of an outcast girl, realizing that her obsession can lead them each to redemption.

The panther of course is both a mythical nightmare and a real threat. He will be seen at first only in sparing glimpses, because nothing is more terrifying than the invisible, nothing more fearsome than a creature pursuing us that we cannot see.

My vision for this film lies in offering the audience a journey that features raw, cruel, and inspiring reality. The camera will be almost an intruder into a world that will seem utterly real and without artifice. The Texas Hill Country, in some ways as much an antagonist as the panther, will be a leading figure in this story. It is a perilous but beautiful landscape that reflects the bold dreams and desperate struggles of our characters.

-Alberto Arvelo



THE WHICH WAY TREE

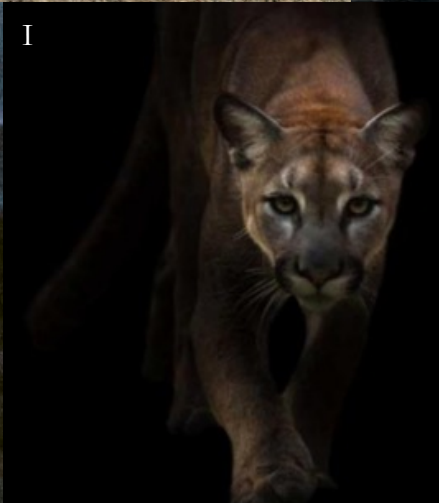
DIRECTOR'S VISION





THE WHICH WAY TREE

LOOK & FEEL





THE WHICH WAY TREE

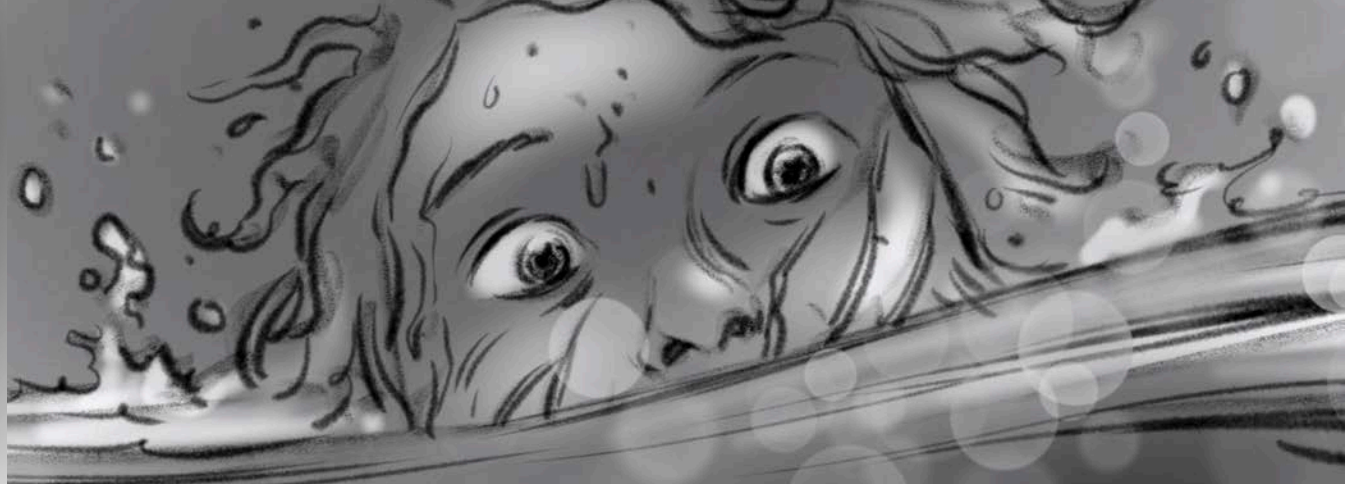
SETTING





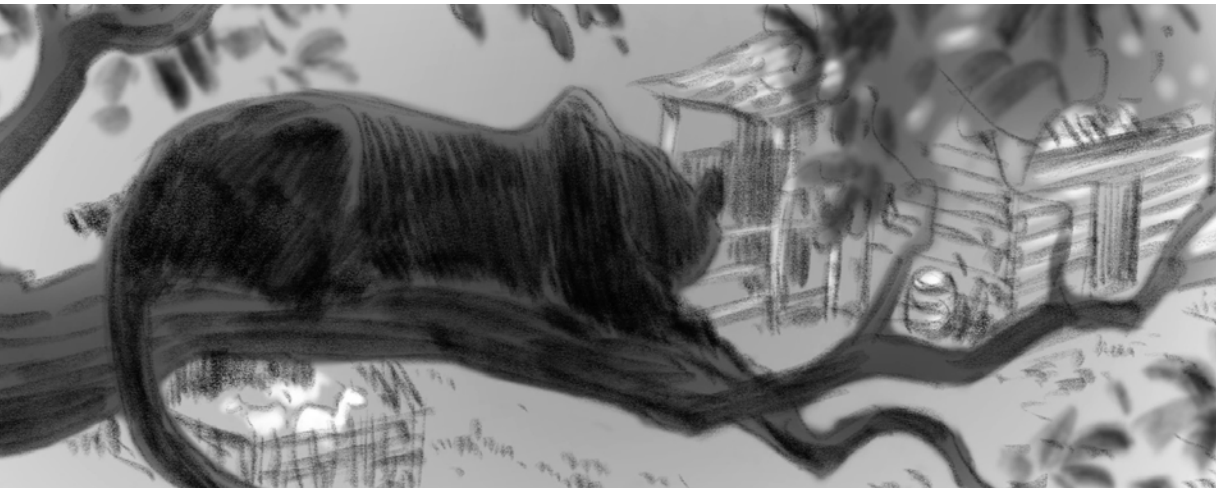
THE PANTHER
ANIMATED STORYBOARD SEQUENCE

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THE FLOOD
ANIMATED STORYBOARD SEQUENCE

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PICTUREHOUSE

PICTUREHOUSE (Distributor) is a Los Angeles based independent film marketing and distribution company led by CEO Bob Berney and President Jeanne Berney. The company acquires, markets, and theatrically distributes films from the U.S. and around the world. Formed in 2005, Picturehouse was created by Time Warner to acquire and produce exceptional independent films and to distribute the feature productions of its HBO and New Line Cinema subsidiaries. Berney, who had played an instrumental role in the acquisition, marketing and distribution of some of the most acclaimed and successful films of the era, including *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and *The Passion of the Christ*, was tapped to run the company. In short order Picturehouse released an array of acclaimed and commercially successful features including Robert Altman's *A Prairie Home Companion*, Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (3 Oscars), Olivier Dahan's *La Vie en Rose* (Oscar for Best Actress: Marion Cotillard) and Sergei Bodrov's *Mongol* (Oscar nominee for Best Foreign Film). In 2008, Time Warner's consolidation resulted in Warner Bros. exiting the indie film world to concentrate on big-budget 'tentpole' releases, prompting the closure of marketing and distribution operations at both New Line Cinema and Picturehouse. Five years later, Berney and his wife Jeanne, a seasoned film marketing executive, acquired the Picturehouse logo and trademark from Warner Bros. and relaunched the label as an independent theatrical distribution company. Initial releases include *Big Stone Gap*, starring Ashley Judd; *Gloria*, with Sofia Espinosa; *The Guest*, starring Dan Stevens; *Metallica Through The Never* and, most recently, Marco Pontecorvo's *Fatima*, starring Sonia Braga, Harvey Keitel, Joaquim de Almeida, and Goran Visnjic.