

By Way of Helena

by  
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Original Script

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FADE IN:

EXT. DOWNTOWN, HELENA, TEXAS, 1857 - MID DAY

It's a hot summer afternoon in downtown Helena, Texas. Once a Mexican trading post, Helena is a center for commerce along a major trade route. The sign at the edge of town reads: "un-Welcome to Helena - The toughest place on earth."

A dead mule smolders outside a blacksmith shop.

The air is full of dust, grime, and smoke.

Sickly Mexican orphans pick through a pile of waste outside a saloon.

A drunk Cowboy pulls a prostitute by her hair down an alley.

Two bloodthirsty MOBS stand in the middle of a dirt street lined with shops and brothels. Fiercely opposing each other, their contempt is fueled by the heat. One crowd is distinctly cosmopolitan, the other haggard and worn. In front of them stand two men, the leaders of the rival groups.

ABRAHAM BRANT (25) stands in front of the urbane crowd. He is very tall, well over six feet, and his thin frame is defined with lean muscularity. Alopecia, he is completely hairless, even devoid of eyebrows. His bald head and deep penetrating eyes give him a unique and unforgettable presence.

His opponent, JESSE KINGSTON (37) stands in front of the rough looking assemblage. A man of few words, he is short and squat, with handsome features hidden behind a thick beard and dozens of scars on his face and neck.

They square off between their respective posses and escalate the tension. Insults and threats fly between the impatient mobs.

ABRAHAM

Good afternoon, Jesse.

JESSE

Abraham.

Abraham looks over Jesse into the crowd behind him and smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABRAHAM

Looks like I've gone and got them  
all agitated.

His smile diminishes as he turns his gaze to Jesse.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Are you right with God, Jesse?

JESSE

You know I ain't got religion.

ABRAHAM

Do you not fear eternal hell?

JESSE

I ain't planning to see it just  
yet.

ABRAHAM

You've got a lively bunch there,  
Jesse. They reek of your  
inequities.

JESSE

They stink of a whole lot more  
than that.

SAUL EPHRAIM (45) slowly exits a brothel and makes his way onto the street. The crowds grow quiet by his presence. He licks and folds closed a cigarette and lights it.

He greets the two men with handshakes. He is well groomed, dressed in fine tailored clothing, medium height, and is fidgety and sweats profusely. He is pale and his eyes are wet and burn red from sickness.

SAUL

Good people of Helena. I am  
saddened on this day. Because  
today Helena loses one of its true  
sons. We have cleansed our city  
of Mexican filth but the infirmity  
left behind them has infected our  
civilities. These heathen hordes  
push their carts through our  
lands, running wild as niggers and  
injuns from here to San  
Antone...yet you have turned your  
contempt towards one another.  
Instead of uniting against these  
irritations, we stand here  
divided.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He looks upon the rival groups and a deep and angry scowl grows over his face.

SAUL (CONT'D)

This division ends now! On the challenge given Abraham Brant by Jesse Kingston are we assembled on this resolute day. In the form of a Helena Duel do we here decide who holds sway!

The mobs point and curse at one another, cheering on their leaders with macabre threats and taunts. Saul raises his arms and they grow quiet.

SAUL (CONT'D)

He who bleeds the dirt most red,  
his deeds will not be forgotten.  
But make no mistake, he who stands  
at the end of this noble duel,  
leads with absolution. He speaks  
my words, he commands my orders to  
all, and he answers only to me.

A beat.

SAUL (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, prepare yourselves.

Abraham and Jesse turn to their followers and strip down to their pants. Abraham's skin is clean and unblemished, his chest and arms defined with muscle.

Jesse's body is scarred with knife and bullet wounds and is caked with old dirt and sweat. HARLAND (40) gathers his clothes and pistol as he strips them off.

JESSE

You got d'at buckskin, Harland?

MAN

I do.

JESSE

Give it me.

Jesse takes it from Harland and tugs at it, testing the durability.

HARLAND

Watch ya self, Jesse. God made Abraham wid' the devil at his elbow.

Jesse ignores the warning.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JESSE  
Give me a pinch a baccey'.

Harland hands him a leather pouch full of dried tobacco which he stuffs into the side of his mouth.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
Where's my knife?

He hands it to Jesse who examines it closely. It is old and the three inch blade is covered with dry blood from a previous duel. Jesse thrusts it into the air and his supporters cheer wildly.

Abraham turns to them with a menacing smile. He holds up his knife, examining it in front of them. It is polished and sharp and the short blade reflects the sun's rays back into his ghostly eyes.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
Take care of my boy if I fall.

HARLAND  
I will, Jesse.

Jesse turns to face Abraham and the crowds once again grow quiet.

ABRAHAM  
God made this world, Jesse. And though he didn't fashion it for everyone, it still pains me to send you from it.

JESSE  
That's pretty talk Preacher, but hell ain't half full wid' men like you I dealt wid' fore'.

Jesse releases a stream of brown spit from his cheek and tugs at the buckskin.

SAUL  
Come forward, gentlemen.

The men meet at the center of the street. Saul gazes into each of their eyes approvingly. He takes the buckskin from Jesse and bounds the two men's left hands together tightly. They each give it a tug to meet his approval.

Saul takes them by the shoulder and spins them around in circles.

CONTINUED: (4)

SAUL (CONT'D)

You shall pour out each other's  
blood...and we will cover it with  
dust.

He releases their shoulders slowly and creeps  
methodically out of their way.

As soon as he is clear, Jesse thrusts forward, aiming to  
gouge Abraham's neck. He falls short and cuts his chest  
and arms. Abraham takes it unflinchingly. He jabs his  
knife under Jesse right armpit lifting him into the air,  
slamming him to the ground.

Jesse is hurt but manages to gouge his knife into  
Abraham's thigh and calf. He rolls from underneath  
Abraham, contorting the giant's arm, and momentarily  
pinning it.

He thrusts his short blade into Abraham's lower back,  
searching for his kidneys. But Abraham is strong and  
manages to free his arm. Abraham looks down at his  
bloody body. A look of fascination stretches across his  
face.

They move around in circles. They thrust and cut one  
another repeatedly for several seconds.

Finally, Jesse thrusts his knife into Abraham's left arm,  
losing hold of the blade as he tries to pull it free.

His hands are too bloody to gain a grip on the handle.

Abraham waits for Jesse's attempts to retrieve the blade  
from his arm, then cuts him several times severely.

ABRAHAM

I walk a path from which I cannot  
stray. Today it goes through you,  
old man.

The dirt below them has turned into red mud. Jesse turns  
pale, and continues with futile attempts to retrieve his  
blade. Abraham cuts him quicker and faster in more vital  
places. Jesse staggers from loss of blood. Abraham  
stabs him several more times, toying with him, studying  
how much more his opponent can take.

Abraham pulls him closely, turning Jesse towards his  
followers. He controls him like a puppet and displays  
his control to the crowd, before stabbing his opponent in  
the neck, severing his throat.

Jesse grabs the wound and gasps for air. His body goes  
limp and he slides down Abraham's leg.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Abraham cuts the buckskin with his blade and Jesse's body falls dead into the painted mud below.

Abraham towers above all. He is covered in blood. The tempestuous crowd watches quietly as DAVID (3) pushes his way through the dejected mob. He walks slowly up to Jesse's body and kneels beside it.

The heat and light of the cloudless day beats down upon them. Abraham pulls the knife from his arm and drops it in front of the boy. The child looks up to study Abraham, but his face is hidden by the sun that sits high in the sky directly beside his head. The child squints, but cannot make out the figure's face.

FADE TO BLACK.

ROLL CREDITS

FADE IN:

INT. AUSTIN, TEXAS, GOVERNOR LAWRENCE SULLIVAN ROSS'S OFFICE - MORNING, 30 YEARS LATER

ROSS (50) sits at his desk mulling over paper work. The top of his head is bald and shiny, the sides bushy and thick. He sports a long goatee and mustache and is dressed in a black suit with a thick shawl around his neck. Behind his desk is an enormous map of the state of Texas.

On his walls hang old pictures of him dressed in Confederate Army and Texas Ranger uniforms as well as pictures of Comanche Indians. His military decorations are framed and neatly placed around the room alongside various military and Native American paraphernalia.

There is a knock on his door.

ROSS

Yes.

The door opens and THOMAS, a black butler dressed in a tuxedo, escorts DAVID KINGSTON (33) into the room. He is tall, six foot, well built and handsome. He is dressed in a Texas Ranger uniform, very similar to the one worn in the pictures of Ross. He has long, shoulder length hair and a thick, well trimmed beard.

BUTLER

Mr. Kingston, Sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSS  
Thank you, Thomas.

Thomas closes the door and exits the room.

ROSS (CONT'D)  
Major Kingston, it's a pleasure to  
make your acquaintance.

DAVID  
Likewise, Governor.

Ross moves from behind his desk and they shake hands. He  
digs through a box and pulls out two cigars. He offers  
one to David who accepts.

ROSS  
They're Dominican.

Ross strikes a match and lights them.

DAVID  
Thank you, Sir. It's a fine  
cigar.

ROSS  
How long have you been a Ranger?

DAVID  
Ten years.

ROSS  
And you enjoy it?

DAVID  
I've never done anything else.  
It's all I know, really.

ROSS  
You men distinguished yourselves  
honorably against the Cheyenne. I  
am no friend to the Redman either.  
It was the Comanche in my time.  
Either or, a contemptible form of  
man. Would you agree, Mr.  
Kingston?

DAVID  
Perhaps. Or perhaps they're  
misunderstood, your honor.

David looks around the room at the pictures of Indians  
and paraphernalia and medals.

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID (CONT'D)  
I do possess a small sense of  
compassion for them, Sir.

A beat.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
But duty is duty.

Ross flashes David a coy, fatherly smile.

ROSS  
Duty. What a word. It holds a  
different meaning to the  
uninitiated, than it does to men  
like you and I.

Ross pulls from his cigar and looks through David, losing  
himself in thought.

ROSS (CONT'D)  
But eventually, the blood we've  
spilled turns us blind. The war  
drums that pound deep within you,  
that give you a reason to wake up,  
will turn into the buzz of flies  
dancing on the eyeballs of  
dreamless men...men you sent to  
the far shores...under your  
knife... or under your command.  
It stays with you forever.

A beat.

ROSS (CONT'D)  
My heart has grown numb as yours  
will over time. There will be few  
in this world that you do not find  
contemptible.

Ross strikes another match to resuscitate his cigar.  
David studies him through the thick smoke of tobacco.

DAVID  
I understand you have a  
problem...with a dead Mexican.

EXT. PRESIDIO COUNTY, WEST TEXAS - MID DAY

A young MEXICAN MAN breathes heavily through panicked  
tears as he runs through branches of scrub oak and yucca,  
tearing his cloths and scratching his arms, feet, and  
face.

INT. AUSTIN, TEXAS, GOVERNOR LAWRENCE SULLIVAN ROSS'S  
OFFICE - SAME

ROSS  
Not 'a' dead Mexican, Mr.  
Kingston...dozens.

Ross flicks the ashes from the tip of his cigar into an ashtray.

EXT. PRESIDIO COUNTY, WEST TEXAS - SAME

A loud shot from a high-powered rifle echoes across Presidio County, Texas. A dark pink mist explodes from the head of the Mexican man as he falls dead into a bundle of cactus.

INT. AUSTIN, TEXAS GOVERNOR LAWRENCE SULLIVAN ROSS'S  
OFFICE - SAME

ROSS  
(continued)  
The latest, the nephew of Mexican  
General Ernesto Calderon.

He passes the ashtray to David who flicks the tip of his cigar into it.

EXT. PRESIDIO COUNTY, WEST TEXAS - SAME

A bloated body of a 20 year old Mexican man floats in a strainer of the Rio Grande face up. It is presumably the body of Calderon's nephew.

Two Mexican soldiers jump into the water and drag him from the strainer. A platoon of angry soldiers quietly watch them from the bank.

INT. AUSTIN, TEXAS, GOVERNOR LAWRENCE SULLIVAN ROSS'S  
OFFICE - SAME

ROSS (CONT'D)  
The General is causing quite a ruckus. He wants answers and he's more powerful than el presidente Díaz in some circles. He's even got President Cleveland crawling up my ass if you can believe it...Son of a bitch doesn't know dung from wild honey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He moves around his desk to the map of Texas.

DAVID

What exactly is it that you want  
from me, your Honor?

ROSS

There's a town out west in  
Presidio, County, called Mount  
Hermon.

Ross uses the map to emphasize the desolate location.  
It's in the far reaches of West Texas, near the Rio  
Grande.

ROSS (CONT'D)

The bodies are all turning up in  
the same strainer of the Rio  
Grande. Right here.

He points to a spot 5 miles southeast of Mount Hermon.  
Ross walks back towards David and leans on the front of  
his desk.

ROSS (CONT'D)

Major Kingston, have you ever  
heard of a man named Abraham  
Brant?

David is visibly surprised and disturbed by the question,  
but does his best to hide the sudden emotion.

DAVID

Only foolhardy stories. Tales  
once, from Helena, and the War.  
They call him the Preacher, I  
believe.

Ross smiles.

ROSS

Do not be so quick to dismiss,  
Major. I saw him once in Kansas,  
just before the war. Some  
ranchers near Wichita were paying  
50 cents for every Red scalp  
brought in along the Chisholm down  
to the Red River.

EXT. WICHITA, KANSAS, CITY STREET - FLASHBACK

ROSS (V.O.)

One day I see Abraham ride into town on this beautiful, white palomino stained blood-black from the scalps hanging off his saddle and mane. He led a dozen of the most severe looking men you've ever seen.

Abraham rides tall on his white palomino. A DOZEN MEN trail behind him as they move slowly down the street. They are covered in filth and grime and dark scalps hang from their saddles and horses.

People in town stop and fearfully watch them ride by. Abraham tips his hat to women and smiles at a young Ross who stares intently as they pass by.

INT. AUSTIN, TEXAS, GOVERNOR LAWRENCE SULLIVAN ROSS'S OFFICE - SAME

ROSS

They must've had a thousand scalps between them.

A beat.

DAVID

With all due respect-

ROSS

- A couple hours later I saw him again in the square.

EXT. WICHITA, KANSAS, CITY SQUARE - FLASHBACK

ROSS (V.O.)

He was preaching the word of God to half the town in a form of spirit I have never heard since.

A young Ross watches from the edge of the square. Abraham stands before an excited congregation in the middle of a captivating sermon.

ROSS (CONT'D)

And as God is my witness, I saw him lay his massive hands on a gimpy teenage girl, curing her affliction with his touch...like Jesus Christ himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Abraham stands before a PALE GIRL (15) who sits awkwardly in a wheelchair. He places his hands on her head and her body shakes violently.

INT. AUSTIN, TEXAS, GOVERNOR LAWRENCE SULLIVAN ROSS'S OFFICE - DAY

David smirks subtly in disbelief.

DAVID

Your honor. You'll lead me to believe he simply touched the girl and she walked?

ROSS

All the way to church, Mr. Kingston. He married her the next day.

David flashes a doubting grin before turning serious.

DAVID

I'm assuming he resides in Mount Hermon at the present.

ROSS

He is Mount Hermon, Major.

Ross stamps out his cigar into the ashtray.

ROSS (CONT'D)

What I ask of you could potentially be very dangerous, but I understand you're quite resourceful. I've been ordered to handle this quietly.

David looks over the map and back to the Governor.

DAVID

Whatever it is you ask of me, your Honor, I'll do it.

ROSS

You're to travel to Mount Hermon alone, under an assumed name, profession...you may want to shave your beard. Create your own story, I do not care to. There will be few who know of your mission.

David nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSS (CONT'D)

I'm not asking you to apprehend or 'deal' with this situation alone. Simply find out if Abraham Brant is at the root of these killings, and then get out. Wire me word as soon as possible.

DAVID

When do I leave?

ROSS

Immediately.

David stands and returns his hat to his head. He reaches out and shakes the Governor's hand.

INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

The wind pushes the curtains of the open window gently into waves. Fat rain drops speckle the window frame and a distant thunder echoes through the room.

David and MARISOL (25), David's wife, lie in bed covered in sweat. She is a beautiful Mexican woman, curvy, with flawless light-brown skin and black hair. Her big brown eyes, though alive with passion, strike in everyone who looks at her a sense of sadness.

DAVID (V.O.)

I don't know how long I'll be gone. It's best to not presume when I'll be back.

They lie naked half covered in white sheets and pillows. They caress and explore each other's bodies as if it was the first time.

DAVID (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You'll not hear from me for a while. There are no carriers where I'm going.

David lies in bed and watches as she combs her hair. Their eyes meet in the mirror and lock.

DAVID (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Wait here for me.

EXT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S HOUSE, PATIO - LATER

David stands along the rails, dressed only in pants, staring out into the rain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Marisol walks out, dressed only in his shirt. She wraps her arms around him, momentarily burying her face in his back.

MARISOL  
Can't I come with you?

A beat.

MARISOL (CONT'D)  
I am coming with you. I have to.  
I grow sick when you're away from  
me.

He turns to her and pulls her hair away from her face.

MARISOL (CONT'D)  
I won't do it again. I can't.

EXT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S HOUSE, FRONT YARD - MORNING

David is clean shaven. He hands a box of bagged sugar and flour to Marisol, who packs it away neatly into a wagon. It is full of food and supplies needed for the journey ahead.

ARGOS, their beautiful black and brown German Shepherd sits inquisitively on the porch watching them pack, before he notices Governor Ross has arrive.

David helps Marisol off the wagon and the couple meet him in the middle of the yard. Governor Ross is taken aback by her beauty.

DAVID  
Governor Ross, this is my wife,  
Marisol.

ROSS  
Es un placer.

She giggles at his use of Spanish and takes his extended hand.

MARISOL  
El placer es mio.

DAVID  
To what do we owe the visit, your Honor?

He shoots David an awkward look to which Marisol immediately responds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARISOL

Excuse me gentlemen. I must  
finish packing and see to the  
horses. Good day, Mr. Ross.

ROSS

Buen dia, Mrs. Kingston.

The Governor politely watches until she is out of range.  
His face turns into a scowl.

DAVID

Yes, she's coming with me.

ROSS

This is not a good idea!

DAVID

She understands what she's getting  
into. She's a strong woman. And  
it will be less conspicuous.

A beat.

DAVID (CONT'D)

It's just the way it's going to  
be.

Ross sees there is little sense in arguing.

ROSS

Very well, Major. I came by to  
urge caution. Do not squat on  
your spurs for one moment.  
Abraham Brant is a mystic. He  
makes the worst of the world look  
like a prayer meeting...and speaks  
in a way...a man would be a fool  
not to believe him.

David nods his head and responds with a grin.

DAVID

I will keep that in mind, your  
Honor.

Ross sees the cynicism in David's face and changes his  
tone.

ROSS

Do you have all of your possibles?

David turns to the wagon. Marisol is watering the  
horses.

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID  
We're all set, Sir.

Ross hands David a sealed envelope.

ROSS  
Report in to Fort Davis before you head south into Presidio County. Give this to Colonel Bedlow when you arrive. He will extend you every courtesy.

DAVID  
Thank you, Governor.

ROSS  
Very well then. Contact me as soon as you can.

DAVID  
I will.

ROSS  
God bless you. Both of you.

They shake hands. David watches as Ross walks off.

EXT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S HOUSE, FRONT YARD - MORNING

Marisol sits on the wagon waiting patiently to leave. Argos basks in the sun, his nose to the cool breeze.

INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S BEDROOM - MORNING

All of the furniture is covered in sheets and drapes. David opens his drawer and pulls out a box. From the box he pulls out a small knife, with a three inch blade. It is stained by time and the blood of his father that has never washed off.

He examines it momentarily, searching his memory for that day, before wrapping it in a thick cloth and burying it in his satchel.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF AUSTIN - MORNING

Their wagon makes its way along a worn dirt road. At the top of a rolling hill, Marisol glances back towards Austin, lying quietly in the distance.

She bundles herself up in wool blanket as a chill breeze cuts across her face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Argos jogs in front of the horses, navigating their way down the scenic trail.

EXT. TEXAS HILL COUNTRY - AFTERNOON

They move through the beautiful Texas Hill country. The trail is surrounded on all sides by lush rolling hills of Elm, Oak, and Mountain Cedars that have turned the color of winter. Dried sage brush, honeysuckle vine and other vegetation dot the country with countless brown and gold colors.

David steers the horses and wagon along the trail as Marisol draws him in her journal with a charcoal pencil. She intensely studies his striking features, shading the contours of his face and neck with her delicate finger. She reaches and touches his smooth chin and cheeks with the back of her hand.

Argos sleeps in the back of the wagon on a bundle of blankets.

EXT. TEXAS HILL COUNTRY NIGHT - NIGHT

They make camp in a clearing next to a cliff. A small fire illuminates their faces. Marisol rests between David's legs, resting her head on his stomach.

David stares up into the cold, starry night, listening to her angelic voice as she sings a Spanish song a capella.

Argos lies by the fire, sound asleep.

EXT. FREDERICKSBURG, TEXAS - DAY

Their wagon moves along the trail past a sign that reads 'FREDERICKSBURG - HOME OF THE SOCIETY FOR PROTECTION OF GERMAN IMMIGRANTS.'

INT. FREDERICKSBURG HOTEL - EVENING

Marisol soaks in a hot bath, washing her smooth skin with a soapy piece of pumice. David stands by the window, staring out into the bustling street.

DAVID

I like this place.

Marisol closes her eyes and takes a deep breath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARISOL

Me too.

David turns and smiles at her.

DAVID

Maybe after all this is over, we  
can come back...settle here.

MARISOL

Quizas. (maybe)

EXT. TEXAS TRAIL - MORNING

As their wagon moves West, the landscape slowly begins to change. Thick fields of grass and shrub turn to rock and weeds. The rolling hills give way to sharp spurs and cuts in short, jagged mountains speckled with juniper and live oak.

EXT. TEXAS TRAIL - EVENING

David and Marisol camp next to the Pecos River. The brown water flows with little energy, cutting slowly through the West Texas desert. The vegetation is sparse here, the minerals in the sharp rocks glow in the cool sand as the sun pushes to the edge of the sky.

Marisol sits on a blanket a few feet from the water, petting a contented Argos. She laughs as she watches David fight to remove a small catfish from the hook of his fishing line.

EXT. TEXAS TRAIL - NIGHT, A FEW HOURS LATER

They stand on the bank looking out onto the river. David stands behind Marisol, wrapping her up warmly in a blanket.

MARISOL

You smell like fish.

They laugh as he puts his hands over her nose.

MARISOL (CONT'D)

Did your father teach you to catch  
them?

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVID

He wasn't around to teach me anything.

She pulls him in tighter.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Te amare' por siempre, Marisol.

EXT. FORT DAVIS - MORNING

Snow drifts around the air as if it cannot find the ground as David and Marisol pass through the gates of Fort Davis. Argos sits tall between them, studying the new surroundings.

A PLATOON from the 9th US Calvary maneuvers past them. The soldiers stare at Marisol with an insatiable lust and throw scowls at David as they ride by.

The Davis Mountains lying west of the fort cast shadows onto the rooftops of its wooden structures. They pass several depleted buildings: officer quarters, enlisted quarters, storehouses, and a hospital.

As they pass a guardhouse a group of jailed, decrepit APACHES holler at them and raise their fist through the steel bars of the window. David studies them disapprovingly.

Outside a building with no name, several scantily looking Mexican prostitutes wave at David and invite him in. Marisol stares at them sadly.

The camp is bustling with American troops and Mexican workers. The wagon finally makes it to the edge of the fort and stops at a house designated: COLONEL BEDLOW, COMMANDER, 9TH CALVARY, FORT DAVIS, TEXAS.

They are greeted immediately at the door by BEDLOW and his wife, SARAH. They both speak with heavy New England accents.

INT. BEDLOW LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

They sit chatting in the living room. A heavy set Mexican maid enters from the kitchen and hands them all hot chocolate.

Bedlow stands a head shorter than David, with a bushy mustache and thinning hair. He is heavy set and his physical movements and jittery eyes give the impression he is a bit mad.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sarah is pretty but aged, with thick black hair and dark blue eyes. She too appears a bit off-kilter.

BEDLOW

It seems you've brought with you  
the snow.

SARAH

We can't remember the last time we  
saw snow.

BEDLOW

I take it the journey here has  
been tolerable.

DAVID

Yes, Sir. It has actually been  
quite pleasant.

SARAH

(to Marisol)

How long have you two been  
married?

MARISOL

Six years. Though it feels we've  
been apart for most. My husband's  
duties keep him away too often.

SARAH

Such is the life of a soldier.  
And how did you meet?

BEDLOW

Easy Sarah, they have just  
arrived.

SARAH

I don't see the-

MARISOL

-It's okay. My father was a drunk  
and a swindler. He was left for  
dead after cheating at cards in  
San Antonio when I was seventeen.  
David saw him back to health.

DAVID

It was not as noble as she makes  
it sound. I-

MARISOL

-As payment, I was betrothed to  
him by my father. I did not  
object.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She looks at David and smiles.

SARAH

Arranged marriage? How unorthodox. But why should I be surprised by anything in this...country.

Sarah pulls out a handkerchief and covers her nose and mouth with it.

There is a long beat as they stare at one another silently.

DAVID

I have an official letter for you, Sir. From the Governor.

BEDLOW

Wonderful! Let's speak in my office. Ladies, excuse us.

David and Bedlow politely bow to the women on their way out.

INT. BEDLOW OFFICE - DAY

BEDLOW

The governor wired me before you arrived. Your reputation precedes you, Major. You could do well for yourself in the Army. Rid yourself of this Abraham Brant problem. I know many influential men and with my recommendation-

DAVID

-No thank you, Sir. I'm a Texas man, not a federal man. I'm afraid I'd find the Army uniform as uncomfortable as a wet blanket.

Bedlow shows his displeasure. He opens the letter and begins to read. His hands shake and his eyes dart around the paper nervously. David curiously studies his expression, then his office.

On the walls hang terrible oil and acrylic paintings of Indians, Cowboys, and a portrait of Bedlow with some children.

BEDLOW

My wife's. She can't paint for shit, but it calms her nerves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He opens a drawer and pulls out a flask of whiskey. He pours it into his hot chocolate and takes a long drink.

He points to the letter.

BEDLOW (CONT'D)  
The Governor says that I am to begin making preparations to close this post.

He goes to the window and stares up into the sky. His lips begin to quiver.

BEDLOW (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
You brought the snow.

DAVID  
Excuse me, Sir.

BEDLOW  
Thank you...God.

DAVID  
Sir?

BEDLOW  
Don't you see, Major? I'm dried up like jerky. This land. This fucking command. It's a gift of switches and ash...given to punish me...five years and no reprieve...

He slams his fist on the table angrily.

BEDLOW (CONT'D)  
One cannot rule where there is no law! Do you understand? I could burn it all fucking down! Then they would see.

He calms himself and loosens his collar. David studies him apathetically. Bedlow takes another drink to gather himself. He picks up the letter.

BEDLOW (CONT'D)  
You go to Mount Hermon. Your punishment?

A beat.

DAVID  
Can you tell me how far the town lies from here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEDLOW  
It is a one way trip.

DAVID  
Sir, please.

BEDLOW  
The wrath of God lies sleeping  
there.

David becomes annoyed.

DAVID  
Sir! How far?

BEDLOW  
Three days! Three days, Major.

A beat.

DAVID  
The Governor assured me you would  
see that we are re-fit and  
provided lodgings for the night.

Bedlow grabs a sheet of paper and begins to scribble.

BEDLOW  
Take this to the Quarter Master.  
He will see to everything you  
need.

David takes the paper and turns to walk out.

BEDLOW (CONT'D)  
And Major. Keep a close eye on  
your pretty brown wife while  
you're here. There's a reason for  
the whores. I have no doubt you  
saw them on your way in.

INT. FORT DAVIS LODGINGS - EVENING

David sits in bed writing in his black leather journal.  
Marisol sits at the end of the bed, working the leather  
of the saddles. Argos sleeps curled up on the floor  
below David.

MARISOL  
Mrs. Bedlow trembled when I asked  
her about Mount Hermon.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARISOL (CONT'D)  
She turned pale when I asked her  
about Abraham. She said he was an  
evil angel...Strangely beautiful.

DAVID  
Pay no attention to the Bedlows.  
They're mad.

MARISOL  
Still, I wonder what he looks  
like?

DAVID  
Like a man, Marisol.

A beat.

MARISOL  
Read it to me.

She slowly stops treating the saddles as they lock eyes.

DAVID  
Battle cries of native pride, the  
war drums beat today...

Marisol moves to the window and blows out the candle.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Bullets cracking, cannons  
clapping, through thick smoke we  
parley...

She blows out the candle on the dresser.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Vengeant fingers pull cold  
triggers, leaving dead along the  
way...

She lowers the lantern on the desk and crawls into bed  
embracing him.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Arteries hemorrhage and enemies  
pillage, for a waiver from hell we  
pray.

He blows out the candle on the night stand and the room  
goes black.

## EXT. MARFA PLATEAU - MORNING

David combs the horses as they drink from a stream trickling down the wall of a short cliff. Argos lies in the shade of the wagon, licking a pile of thin snow.

Marisol finishes drawing a picture of a man that looks astonishingly like Abraham. David pauses to roll a cigarette and stares at a cloud of smoke rising into the winter sky, just south beyond the plateau.

## EXT. A MILE OUTSIDE OF MOUNT HERMON - DAY

THREE MEN sit stationary on horseback on top of small hilltop at the edge of long clearing. David spots them and pulls the wagon to a stop. He watches them, his eyes are sharp and piercing.

## EXT. A MILE OUTSIDE OF MOUNT HERMON - MINUTES LATER

David and Marisol approach the three men. Dressed in fine clothing, they sit on new saddles and carry polished rifles. A look of suspicious alertness is branded on their faces.

DAVID

Hello, Gentlemen.

They nod to him and tip their hat to Marisol.

DAVID (CONT'D)

We saw the smoke. Thought we'd see to some lodgings and rest the horses.

Two of the riders, DALE and MONTE, look towards the man in the middle for direction. His name is ISAAC. He is the same size as David. Clean shaven, there is nothing extraordinary about him.

ISAAC

There's nothing out here, except the railroad. What brings you this way?

DAVID

No real reason. Just the beaten path.

Isaac studies David. He spits the chew from his cheek.

ISAAC

You need to see the Preacher.

## EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREETS - LATER

Marisol and David follow the riders. They pass HOOT'S saloon at the edge of town. TWO WOMEN sit on rocking chairs on the front porch. One of them, a beautiful red head with fair skin, catches David's eye. They share a moment before David sheepishly looks away.

They continue into Mount Hermon. It is moderately sized, with pristine homes and establishments. There is no trash in the streets. The people are well dressed, and faintly scowl at the couple as they pass by. Marisol nervously grabs David's arm.

They stop in the middle of town at a white building. MOUNT HERMON HALL is chiseled above the door. Isaac quietly escorts them inside.

## INT. ABRAHAM'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Isaac leads them into Abraham's study in the back of the hall. It is dimly lit, save for his desk, which glows from the flame of two lanterns. Abraham writes in Latin into a large book. Thirty years has aged him little.

The three stand before him quietly. Marisol becomes noticeably distressed as she realizes her drawing is distinctly similar to the real Abraham.

His eyes remain focused on his work.

ABRAHAM

Denique vos supervenio. (Latin -  
Finally, you have arrived.)

He looks up from his pages and smiles at David and Marisol as though he's seen them before.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

We have guests?

ISAAC

They're seeking 'temporary'  
lodging.

ABRAHAM

Then they shall have it. Welcome  
to Mount Hermon.

He moves around his desk. David extends his hand and reaches into his memory for some familiarity. The men study one another, surveying the other's mettle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVID

My name is David Locke. This is my wife Marisol.

Abraham smiles and kisses her hand.

ABRAHAM

I am Abraham Brant. You've met my son, Isaac.

David and Isaac exchange neutral glances.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

He says welcome.

Abraham throws Isaac a dissatisfied look.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREETS - DAY

Abraham escorts David and Marisol to their lodgings. The townspeople bow and wave to Abraham as they pass. He rides next to their wagon on his white palomino.

ABRAHAM

I am the town mayor and acting peacekeeper when there is need, but I am unfailingly the town's ethereal counselor. Tell me, are you a religious person, Marisol?

MARISOL

I am spiritual, but I do not like religion.

ABRAHAM

Who does? And you, David?

David looks to Abraham and nods to Marisol.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

The Almighty mulls and portions his gifts in a manner peculiar only to himself, and he has saw it fit to bestow our town with good fortune.

As they continue through town, citizens of Mount Hermon step outside of their homes and shops to greet Abraham and dubiously study the newcomers.

DAVID

(sarcastically)

It seems very hospitable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABRAHAM

You'll find Mount Hermon has  
everything you need. Blacksmith,  
doctor, apothecary...

He turns to study David.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

You're a drinking man aren't you,  
David?

David shrugs his shoulders and glances at Marisol, who  
stares intensely at him, gauging his response.

DAVID

On occasion.

ABRAHAM

There's a brothel on the edge of  
town full of fine...whiskey.

He turns his glance towards Marisol.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Though I doubt you need venture to  
the second floor of any bordello.

Marisol breaks his gaze and looks away. Argos appears  
from the wagon and moves between David and Marisol. She  
grabs hold and hugs him.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

What is your dog's name?

DAVID

Argos.

Abraham laughs and studies the dog.

ABRAHAM

He must be faithful.

They arrive at a house on the southern edge of town. It  
is a new cabin made of trunks of live oak with a front  
and back yard and patio. A small privy sits next to the  
house in a small garden.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Here we are. Unpack your plunder.  
If you need anything at all, do  
not hesitate.

DAVID

All we need now is some rest.  
Thank you, Abraham.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Abraham tips his hat and bids them good night. David watches him ride off with a mixed look of bewilderment and calculated emotion.

INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S CABIN - NIGHT

The couple unpack their essential belongings. A fire burns in the bedroom adding to the light of lanterns placed about the room.

David feels around the walls and the windows.

DAVID

There's not even a draft.

Marisol moves about the room rearranging things.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Are you hungry? I can prepare something.

She continues at her task, unresponsive. She opens her book and peaks at her drawing of Abraham.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Marisol?

She shakes her head and does her best to hide her anxiety.

DAVID (CONT'D)

What is it?

MARISOL

It's nothing.

DAVID

The house?

MARISOL

No...it's fine.

He consoles her with a sympathetic smile. She laughs softly.

MARISOL (CONT'D)

It's just that...I get the feeling...like he knows us.

David is surprised by her comment but does his best to hide it and comfort her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVID

No one knows us. We're tired and  
it's been a long trip.

David feels her forehead with the back of his hand.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You're warm. You need to sleep.

He pulls the sheets down and helps her into bed. Her eyes are heavy and tired. She kisses his hand.

DAVID (CONT'D)

We won't be here long. I promise.

She nods and rolls away from him, closing her eyes.

INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S CABIN - MORNING

David is up early. Marisol lies in a deep sleep in the same position as the night before.

David places a plate of food into the kiln and sets a kettle of coffee on its surface. He places a handful of desert marigolds onto the bed next to her, along with a note.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREETS - MORNING

David rides through the street orienting himself to the town. For the moment no one stirs. He is alone with the beautiful pink dawn.

The quiet is broken by the sound of hooves. He rides upon Abraham, Isaac, Dale, Monte, and THREE MEN wearing very high-end, tailored suits and top hats, riding on fine quarter horses. It is obvious they are not from Mount Hermon.

ISAAC

What are you doing out here?

David shrugs his shoulders and looks over the men.

DAVID

Just riding.

ABRAHAM

How did you find the cabin? Did you sleep well?

DAVID

It was fine. Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABRAHAM  
And Marisol?

David studies his earnestness.

DAVID  
She's a bit laid up.

MONTE  
Ain't that the dribblin shits?

He spits. David looks at him coldly, before brushing him off with a slight grin. He turns his gaze to the strangers.

A long beat as they measure one another. Abraham smiles at David.

ABRAHAM  
Isaac, you go ahead without me today. Mr. Locke is going to join me for breakfast.

ISAAC  
I thought we was gonna-

ABRAHAM  
(to the Strangers)  
-Isaac will see to all of your arrangements.

Abraham turns a fierce gaze to his son.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Happy hunting, Gentlemen.

Isaac whistles to his horse and the group rides out.

INT. ORPHA'S DINER - MORNING

ORPHA and her husband, HORACE, cook in the back of the diner. The room is filled with empty tables and chairs. Abraham and David are the only patrons.

ABRAHAM  
You must forgive our friends, their charming qualities don't come shining through right at the outset.

DAVID  
It's alright. I'm thick skinned.

CONTINUED:

ABRAHAM

I can tell. You strike me as an  
accomplished man, David.

DAVID

I've managed to fool you, too.

Abraham laughs as Orpha brings him a plate of food and refills David's coffee. David nods to her thankfully. She walks off unresponsive.

ABRAHAM

But a man in search of something.

David shrugs his shoulders.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

We're all looking for something,  
David. God, war, a home,  
...revenge.

David struggles not to react.

DAVID

You don't strike me as the type of  
man to hide his meaning in  
vocabulary.

Abraham smiles and nods.

ABRAHAM

Indeed.

David drinks from his cup of coffee, staring over the  
brim at Abraham.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

So why are you here?

DAVID

We became restless and felt like  
it was the perfect time to move  
on...head nowhere particular.  
Figured we'd know to stop when we  
got there.

ABRAHAM

Welcome to *nowhere particular*.

David and Abraham share a subtle laugh.

Two men from the town, JEDIDIAH and CLEM, walk in and sit  
at a table a few feet from them. They stare coldly at  
David as they pass. Abraham catches it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID

Not the warmest welcome I've ever received.

ABRAHAM

We're all protective of our little oasis.

Abraham nods to the two men. They return his greeting.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

So how long will you be staying in our quaint town?

DAVID

Not sure. Just a few days.

ABRAHAM

Perhaps I can convince you to stay a while?

David smiles suspiciously.

DAVID

Why is that? You've just met me.

ABRAHAM

I know people. I can tell that you're a man one can tie to. And perhaps I can help you find what you're looking for.

A beat.

DAVID

I'd have no trade in this town.

ABRAHAM

A spot for the town Sheriff has just opened up this very moment.

David and Abraham share another laugh.

DAVID

I get the feeling there isn't a strong demand for a law man in Mount Hermon. And I have no experience.

ABRAHAM

We're all subject to a guardian until the time set by our Holy Father.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

We're virtuous people, David, but we are also men and sin is always crouching at our door. Be our guardian.

DAVID

I think you already have that covered.

Abraham laughs.

ABRAHAM

And Marisol would flourish here.

David's face grows immediately grows protective and serious. He shakes his head.

DAVID

How so?

ABRAHAM

I'll pay you and free lodgings.

David studies him with a cunning smile.

DAVID

That's not the issue-

ABRAHAM

-Then it's settled.

Abraham slams his hands onto the table approvingly and laughs. David has no time to fake an objection.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

(to Jedidiah and Clem)

Jedidiah, Clem, meet your new sheriff.

A confused look crosses their face. They smile cordially and tip their hat to David.

INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S CABIN - MORNING

Marisol is out of bed and moving slowly about the kitchen. Argos sits in the doorway watching her. She looks rested and much improved.

There is a knock on the door. She opens it and finds five women all carrying plates of food and gifts standing on the front porch. They are: ESTER (45), BEATRICE (34), PHILOMENA (55), ANNE (25), AND LORENA (30).

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARISOL  
Can I help you?

PHILOMENA  
Welcome to Mount Hermon, Marisol.

ESTER  
We heard you weren't feeling well.  
We brought you and David some  
food.

MARISOL  
Thank you, but who told you -

The women begin to file by her and move into the house.

LORENA  
-And we just had to meet the wife  
of the new Sheriff.

MARISOL  
Sheriff?

BEATRICE  
Did you have a long journey here?

MARISOL  
-Yes, but-

ANNE  
-You're even more beautiful than  
was spoken of you.

Marisol watches them as they set their food down and  
arrange the kitchen. They walk in and out bringing in  
pots, pans, dishes, and blankets. Argos sits under the  
table growling lowly to himself.

MARISOL  
Who spoke?

BEATRICE  
The town. Abraham.

ESTER  
Not sure how much need there is in  
this town for a sheriff, but  
Abraham thought it well.

MARISOL  
Sheriff? But I don't know you-

CONTINUED: (2)

LORENA

-How rude of us! I'm Lorena,  
that's Beatrice, Ester, Philomena,  
and Anne.

Philomena and Anne hug Marisol and kiss her on the cheek.  
Marisol hesitantly reciprocates.

PHILOMENA

You look like a Spanish angel.

MARISOL

No, I'm very tired. I must look-

ANNE

Abraham speaks very highly of you  
and David.

A beat.

ANNE (CONT'D)

He foresaw you coming. Did he  
tell you?

BEATRICE

You will do well in this town,  
Marisol.

Marisol is overwhelmed with the speed and persistence of  
the women, but does her best to act welcoming.

PHILOMENA

Let's eat. It will do us all well  
to get to know you better.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS - AFTERNOON

David moves about slowly on his horse. His eyes move  
from searching the ground to studying a map.

He keeps to the low ground and skirts the mountain  
ridges.

He dismounts his horse and finds a handful of spent  
shells. He smells them and puts them into his pocket.

He arrives at the Rio Grande and looks out. The setting  
sun and a potpourri of colorful clouds reflect off the  
slow waters before retiring into the cold night.

INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S CABIN - NIGHT

David ties up his horse. Argos sits on the front patio patiently waiting for his master. He follows him inside.

Marisol sits at the table in the kitchen staring into space.

David leans in to kiss her.

DAVID  
Feeling better?

MARISOL  
Where have you been?

DAVID  
I found the strainer, where the bodies are being found.

MARISOL  
They came and brought food and moved things around-

DAVID  
-Who came?

MARISOL  
And they knew things.

DAVID  
Marisol, who came?

MARISOL  
All of these women. Beatrice and Lorena and-

DAVID  
-What did they want?

MARISOL  
They said you were the new Sheriff, that Abraham foresaw us coming.

David shakes his head.

DAVID  
No, Marisol. I mean yes, he asked me to be Sheriff, but it's only until I can find out what's going on. And then we'll leave as fast as we came.

CONTINUED:

She stands and pulls him into her, holding him tightly. Her lips quiver.

MARISOL

He frightens me.

DAVID

He's a man, Marisol, not a crystal gazer. And these people, they're just a bit off the reservation.

MARISOL

I was so scared. I just let them in. I was frozen.

He kisses her face and neck.

DAVID

There's nothing to be afraid of.

He pulls out the shells he found earlier in the day.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I found these out a mile or so from the strainer. They're 45 millimeter shells. Probably from a Winchester. It might be something.

She nods.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You okay?

MARISOL

Yes.

DAVID

If you want to leave, take the wagon and wait for me at Fort Davis.

She shakes her head.

MARISOL

No...I'd never leave you.

He rubs his hands over her face. He lifts her up as she wraps her legs around his waste. They kiss passionately before he carries her towards the bedroom.

## EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREETS - MORNING

David walks down the street on his way to the town jailhouse. Folks are slightly more cordial, tipping their hats and nodding, but certainly not welcoming as he passes by. He reciprocates in kind.

## INT. JAILHOUSE - MINUTES LATER

The jailhouse is pristine as all the other buildings in town. Nothing hangs on the walls but a few sets of keys.

There is a single cell, a couple of tables, a desk, a cot, and an armory. David rifles through the drawers of the desk. They are empty.

He grabs the keys hanging on the wall and opens up the armory. There are several different types of polished rifles, including a 45 Winchester.

David picks it up and studies it. He tests the lever action and smells the chamber. He puts it back into the Armory and locks it up.

## EXT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S FRONT YARD - DAY

Marisol is rearranging the wagon, pulling out needed items and setting them off to the side. Argos sits in the front of the wagon watching her from the seat.

MARISOL

(to Argos)

What are you hungry for tonight,  
Argos? Chicken?.

She scratches his head as he wags his tale.

MARISOL (CONT'D)

Of course we have to find a  
chicken.

Argos lets off a deep, slow growl and sits up.

MARISOL (CONT'D)

What is it, Argos?

She turns to find Abraham watching her from the back of the wagon.

She jumps and lets out a quick, chilled scream.

CONTINUED:

ABRAHAM

I know where you can find a whole  
nest of cocks.

He laughs.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

I'm terribly sorry to have  
frightened you, Marisol.

She calms and catches her breath. She laughs to mask her  
fear and looks away from his penetrating gaze.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Can I give you a hand with  
anything?

INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S CABIN - MINUTES LATER

Abraham sits at the table in the kitchen watching  
Marisol. She grabs a cup and pours him some coffee.

MARISOL

Milk? Sugar?

ABRAHAM

No, thank you. I like it strong  
and dark.

She places the coffee in front of Abraham and sits at the  
other end of the table.

There is an uncomfortable, silent moment between them.

MARISOL

Are you married, Abraham?

ABRAHAM

My wife is in Heaven.

MARISOL

I'm sorry. I didn't mean-

ABRAHAM

-Do not be sorry. She died many  
years ago birthing Isaac. She  
left him with many of  
her...talents.

MARISOL

I'm sure she was a beautiful  
woman.

CONTINUED:

ABRAHAM

She could back the buzzards off a  
gut wagon.

Marisol can't help but to crack a smile as Abraham laughs.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

But truly, she was lovely. There  
was never a more pure heart to  
wreck a man.

They smile.

MARISOL

Have you always been a preacher?

ABRAHAM

No man is leave of God's calling.  
Mine takes many forms in many  
places.

Marisol looks at him as though she is holding something back.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Go ahead. Ask.

MARISOL

Is it true that you have visions?  
That you're clairvoyant?

Abraham laughs shrewdly.

ABRAHAM

You've had some visitors. How did  
you find our fine Mount Hermon  
women?

MARISOL

Ummmm, they were very...kind.

Abraham laughs.

ABRAHAM

You're a horrible liar, Marisol.  
They're as wretched as the hind  
quarters of bad luck.

Marisol laughs and becomes more comfortable.

MARISOL

No. Not at all. I was just  
surprised by their hospitality.

CONTINUED: (2)

ABRAHAM

Just watch what you say around  
them or you will be the center of  
gossip at their next card game.

They laugh together.

MARISOL

We still have some pie leftover  
from their visit. Would you like  
some?

ABRAHAM

How could a man refuse?

Marisol gets up and uncovers the pie. She grabs some  
silverware and a plate.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Tell me, what was David's  
occupation before?

Marisol cuts the pie and searches for an answer.

MARISOL

He was a peace-officer. He has  
always been a lawman.

ABRAHAM

Undoubtedly so.

Abraham smiles to himself.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

He speaks so little of himself.

MARISOL

He is a very modest man.

She smiles at Abraham and sets a piece of pie in front of  
him.

ABRAHAM

And lucky.

She blushes as he bites into the pie.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Apple. My favorite.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREET - DAY

David exits the jailhouse and heads down the street. He passes stores and houses and receives no greetings; only slightly cordial head bows and blank stares.

He shakes his head and chuckles to himself.

INT. GENERAL STORE - SAME

David walks into the General Store. Lorena and Anne look over the paperbacks. He nods and smiles to them. Their tight lips hardly crack a response.

PORTEANCE, the owner of the store stands behind the counter staring at him. She is short and pudgy with a slight hair-slip and could easily pass as a man. She wears a visor with a plastic green shield and an apron.

DAVID

Good day, Sir.

Her face bends into a scowl. A feminine voice responds rudely.

PORTEANCE

And to you, Sheriff.

David turns a bit red with embarrassment.

PORTEANCE (CONT'D)

What can I get you?

DAVID

A pouch of that smoking tobacco and papers, please.

She grabs the items and sets them in front of him.

He waits an uncomfortable second.

DAVID (CONT'D)

How much do I owe you?

PORTEANCE

Your money is no good here, Sir.

DAVID

Pardon?

PORTEANCE

Abraham has ordered your expenses covered.

CONTINUED:

David picks up the tobacco and papers.

DAVID  
I'd really like to pay.

PORTENCE  
Abraham insists.

David reluctantly nods and tips his hat.

DAVID  
In that case...

He grabs some chocolates sitting in a jar and smiles at her. She turns and walks away.

INT. ORPHA'S DINER - LATER

David sits in the corner of the diner next to the window reading an old newspaper.

He looks around the room. The restaurant is nearly full, yet no one passes a glances or strikes a conversation.

He turns his gaze outside of the window. Across the street Naomi and Isaac are in a muted argument. He grabs her arm firmly before she snags it away and heads towards the brothel. He stumbles after her visibly drunk.

Orpha delivers him a bowl of stew and dumplings. He smiles and nods in thanks.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREET - LATER

David makes his way down the street smoking a cigarette. He stops in front of HOOT'S BROTHEL and stares at the front door.

A second later Isaac, Dale, and Monte exit the brothel. They are intoxicated.

ISAAC  
Deputy Dave!

Dale and Monte laugh with Isaac. David haphazardly smiles to get along.

MONTE  
He must be off duty!

Dale and Monte continue to laugh. Isaac moves close to David.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ISAAC  
What are you doing here?

DAVID  
Just passing by.

ISAAC  
Probably a good idea...just keep  
on going.

Isaac points out of town. Dale and Monte smirk like puppets behind him.

David scowls at them and licks his lips.

DAVID  
But now I think about it...I am a  
bit thirsty.

Isaac face turns serious.

ISAAC  
You wouldn't like it here. The  
beer tastes like piss.

DAVID  
Then I guess I'll drink some  
whiskey.

ISAAC  
I don't think you're listening to  
me...Sheriff. I'm telling you,  
no.

David steps towards Isaac.

DAVID  
Did you enjoy that, Isaac?

A look of confusion crosses his face.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Savor it. That's the first and  
last time I'll ever allow you to  
speak to me like that.

Isaac opens his mouth to speak.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Stop...Choose your next words  
carefully.

Isaac holds David's stare, but with less confidence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Nothing. Good. Now get the fuck  
out of my way.

Isaac turns back and looks to Monte and Dale.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Move!

Isaac steps aside just enough to brush up against David as he passes. David walks between Monte and Dale making eye contact with both before he reaches the door to the brothel.

INT. HOOT'S BROTHEL - DAY

The downstairs lobby holds a bar the length of the room along one wall, and the rest of the room is filled with tables and chairs. A balcony sits at the top of the stairs and wraps around the room.

A polished baby grand sits in the corner. Clem and Jedidiah play cards with a two other men from town at a table. A dozen other men sit drinking either at a table or the bar.

NIGEL (30, white), CHARLIE (30, white), and WINSTON (30, black) speak with British accents to half a dozen beautiful prostitutes wearing elegant, yet revealing dresses. The Englishmen are dressed in sober sack suits and Norfolk Jackets.

NAOMI (23), the beautiful red haired prostitute from the porch before, chats with another prostitute at the end of the bar. They whisper to each other as David walks in. She locks eyes with him as posts himself on a stool.

HOOT (50) sets the glass he's cleaning down and approaches David from behind the bar.

DAVID  
You must be Hoot.

HOOT  
I am.

DAVID  
I hear the beer here is excellent.

HOOT  
I've no complaints.

Hoot sets a beer in front of David. He takes a long drink and a deep breath to cool his temper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks about the room and studies the patrons. He spends a moment on the Englishmen, before glancing again at Naomi.

He takes another pull from his beer as Naomi makes her way over to him.

NAOMI

May I sit?

DAVID

Be my guest.

NAOMI

(to Hoot)

Hoot, another round for the Gentleman?

(to David)

I'm Naomi.

DAVID

David.

They shake hands.

NAOMI

I know who you are.

Hoot hands David another beer.

DAVID

Is Hoot his real name?

NAOMI

That's what I hear.

DAVID

What else do you hear?

NAOMI

Whatever falls earshot.

She smiles and studies him for a long moment as he drinks from his beer.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

You have a kind face.

DAVID

That's kind of you, but I'm not here to be entertained.

David motions to the Englishmen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NAOMI

I know about your wife. I'm not soliciting you. I'm a prostitute, not a whore.

David nods.

DAVID

News travels fast.

NAOMI

This town echoes every word Abraham breathes.

DAVID

I'm beginning to notice that.

NAOMI

Stay here long enough and you might start believing him too.

Her eyes move suspiciously about the room.

DAVID

How long have you been here?

NAOMI

Almost a year.

DAVID

How did you come by this place?

NAOMI

I was a married to a soldier at Fort Davis. I met Hoot there right after my husband killed himself. I had no where to go. Hoot offered me a job.

Naomi takes a sip from his beer. Her face turns serious.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Thought I would work, save a little money and move to San Francisco.

DAVID

You're a long way from California.

She sadly smiles.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Why don't you leave?

CONTINUED: (3)

NAOMI

This town is different, David.

DAVID

I can attest to that.

NAOMI

I mean it's not what it seems.  
You just can't leave.

DAVID

How do you mean?

Clem and Jedidiah take a seat a couple of stools from David. Naomi tosses them a flirtacious smile.

NAOMI

Hello, Gentleman.

CLEM

Naomi.

JEDIDIAH

Ma'am.

Naomi leans into David and acts as though she were trying to seduce him. She rubs her hand over his arm, making him completely uncomfortable.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

(whispering)

You're not safe. You need to get far away from this place.

David turns from her and looks at Clem and Jedidiah who stare intensely at him. He looks over to the Englishmen who are oblivious to anything other than the booze and women.

Her lips lightly touch his ear.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

He knew you were coming.

David pushes her away gently.

DAVID

Jesus Christ crucified.

NAOMI

Careful. He hears every word.

Her eyes look up towards the Heavens.

DAVID

Who?...God?

CONTINUED: (4)

NAOMI

No...

A frightened look crosses her face.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Abraham.

A beat.

DAVID

Nice to meet you.

David pushes his stool back. He tosses some money on the bar and stares back at Clem and Jedidiah as he makes his way towards the door.

HOOT

You're money's no good here.

Hoot reaches for the bills sitting on the bar before Clem slams his hands down on them, sliding them into his pocket.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREET - DAY

David and Abraham meet on their horses in the middle of the street in front of SILAS'S MEAT STORE.

Abraham is in a jovial mood, while David seems put off from his day.

ABRAHAM

David! How are you?

DAVID

Fine. Thank you.

ABRAHAM

Is something troubling you?

DAVID

I suppose I should tell you before you hear some fumbled up version. I had a run in with Isaac earlier.

Abraham laughs.

ABRAHAM

Did he rattle your armor a bit?

DAVID

He's awful cavalier with that tongue of his.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABRAHAM  
I wonder where he gets it?

He laughs and winks at David.

DAVID  
He won't escape a second time  
without a beating.

Abraham laughs harder.

ABRAHAM  
That's exactly what he needs.

SILAS (40) enters the street from his store. He is short and fat and is carrying a rope tied at both ends to the feet of two headless chickens. He pulls on their necks draining the last bits of blood onto the dirt street.

Abraham nods to Silas and points to David. A look of disappointment covers his face. He hands the rope and chickens over to David.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Thank you, Silas. You are the  
salt of the Earth.

SILAS  
My pleasure, Abraham.

DAVID  
(to Abraham)  
What is this?

ABRAHAM  
That's your dinner, my friend.

David fakes a smile. Silas turns back towards his store.

DAVID  
Thank you, Silas.

He looks back to David and returns a subtle nod.

ABRAHAM  
He says your welcome.

Abraham laughs.

DAVID  
Will you speak to Isaac? I do not  
want a repeat of this afternoon.

ABRAHAM  
Enjoy your chickens!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Abraham pats David on the shoulder and rides off smiling.

EXT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S CABIN - EVENING

Marisol sits on the front patio. She is sketching in her journal a still life of Argos. Argos jumps out of his slumber and runs towards David.

David rides up to the cabin. The rope is tied to his saddle and chickens bounce around on the sides of his horse. Marisol walks out to greet him. He jumps off the horse and kisses her as she ties up the reins.

DAVID

Feeling better?

MARISOL

A bit strange, but alright.

DAVID

Good. I've brought dinner.

Marisol smiles and hugs David.

MARISOL

(to Argos)

Chicken!

INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S CABIN - EVENING

David cleans the chickens at the table as Marisol peels the shucks off some ears of corn over the stove. Argos lies at David's feet.

MARISOL

Abraham visited me this morning.

DAVID

Alone?

MARISOL

Yes.

DAVID

I just saw him an hour ago. He made no mention of it.

MARISOL

Where did you see him?

DAVID

In town. He gave me these chickens and rode off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Marisol laughs to herself.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
What? What did he say?

MARISOL  
We talked about his wife and the  
town...He was not inappropriate.

DAVID  
I don't like him coming here,  
Marisol.

MARISOL  
What would you have me do?

A beat.

DAVID  
Just be careful what you say. I  
will speak to him.

Marisol smiles at David seemingly unconcerned.

MARISOL  
I'd like to go riding tomorrow.

A beat.

DAVID  
Okay.

EXT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S CABIN - MORNING

David follows Marisol as they carry their saddles through  
the front door. She looks tired and unwell.

DAVID  
Are you sure you're well enough?

MARISOL  
I'm fine.

Marisol stops dead in her tracks, dropping her saddle.

In the front yard, resting on their own horses, sit  
Abraham, Isaac, and Naomi.

ISAAC  
Going somewhere?

A long beat.

CONTINUED:

DAVID  
How long have you been here?

ABRAHAM  
Just now arrived.

David nods. Abraham tips his hat to Marisol.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Marisol. It's a beautiful day for  
a ride.

DAVID  
Yes it is.

Abraham motions to Naomi, who sits tensely on her horse, a nervous expression carved in her face.

ABRAHAM  
This is Naomi. But I believe you  
two already met...at Hoot's.

Marisol looks sternly at David.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Naomi, this is Marisol.

NAOMI  
Pleasure.

Marisol turns to Naomi and nods politely.

ABRAHAM  
We just stopped by to let you know  
I'll be holding a service at the  
town hall Sunday evening.

Abraham turns his focus to Marisol.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
You're more than welcome to join  
us.

Marisol smiles to him and nods approvingly.

DAVID  
Thank you. We'll consider it.

A beat.

ABRAHAM  
Very well then. We'll be on our  
way. Enjoy your ride.

David nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ISAAC  
Don't go too far.

Isaac smirks and turns away.

David peers at Naomi who smiles quaintly at him before she turns. Marisol catches this and scowls.

David watches them ride away. Marisol angrily picks up her saddle and walks to her horse. David watches momentarily and follows.

EXT. HILLTOP - AFTERNOON

David and Marisol sit quietly on their horses on a hill over looking Mount Hermon. David stares at Marisol, who looks towards the town, lost in thought, her face and hair wet from sweat.

She snaps from her trance and half smiles at David. She spurns her horse forward and gallops back towards the town. David takes a deep breath and watches her go ahead for a moment before he follows.

EXT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S CABIN - NIGHT

David sits on the steps of the front porch rolling a cigarette. Argos sits next to him, his nose raised to the cold night air.

David examines the sky and lights his cigarette. Loud coughing and moaning comes from inside the cabin. He throws the cigarette and runs inside.

Marisol runs through the kitchen to the back patio. David rushes behind her. She leans over the steps and vomits as David pulls her hair back.

He pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and cleans her face.

DAVID  
Marisol?

Her face is pale and her eyes water. She leans into him, burying her face in his chest.

INT. JAILHOUSE - DAY

David sits at the desk looking over maps. The maps have been marked and circled and David has taken notes. For the first time we see his pistols.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Naomi shoves open the door and stumbles in. She has been badly beaten. Her face is swollen and bleeding and her arms and neck are severely scratched. She is bawling.

DAVID

Naomi?

NAOMI

Please, help me!

David jumps out of his seat and grabs hold of her, helping her into the chair. He surgically wipes away the blood from her face and checks her wounds.

DAVID

What happened?

She cannot get out the words for crying.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Who did this to you?

She buries her face into his chest and pulls herself into him tightly. He reluctantly loosens his body and comforts her until she calms.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Naomi, who did this to you?

NAOMI

The English fellow.

DAVID

Why?

NAOMI

He's drunk...I was entertaining him and he grabbed his gun...He tried to put it...inside...I wouldn't let him...

She begins to sob again. David wraps his arms firmly around her.

DAVID

Okay. You're okay. Is he still there?

She nods affirmatively into his chest. David grabs his pistols and puts them around his waste. He opens the armory and takes out one of the rifles.

He leans down and lifts her head. He wipes away some blood with his hands and rubs it on his trousers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID (CONT'D)  
I'll be back in a little bit. You  
stay here and wait til I get back.  
Okay?

She nods and tries to collect herself. He walks out the door.

INT. HOOT'S BROTHEL - MINUTES LATER

The door to Hoot's slams open. David walks in forcefully, the rifle at his side. A few men from town play cards in the corner. Nigel and Winston sit at the bar, surrounded by a handful of frightened prostitutes. It is obvious they are drunk.

Everyone stops and stares at David as he marches in.

DAVID  
(to Hoot)  
Where is he?

No one answers and the room becomes silently hostile.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
WHERE!?

Hoot nods to the Charlie sitting in the corner, staring at David, completely intoxicated. He has a new girl on his lap.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
(to Hoot)  
You gonna do anything about this?

HOOT  
Abraham handles these things,  
Mister.

Hoot throws his towel down on the bar and crosses his arms. David calmly turns towards Charlie. The girl jumps off his lap as he approaches.

David turns the rifle around and slams the stock into the Charlie's forehead. Again. And Again.

Nigel and Winston jump from their stools and move towards David. He flips the rifle and slams back the lever action.

DAVID  
Come on, Goddamn. I want you to.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They freeze, but David is beyond anger. He moves towards them and hits Winston in the face with the barrel of the rifle. Nigel backs away to the bar.

NIGEL  
No! No! Okay! Okay!

David turns back to the table. He leans down and punches Charlie in the face a couple more times. He grabs him by the hair and walks him towards the door.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREET - SECONDS LATER.

The door to Hoot's slams open and Charlie flies out. David follows him. He picks him up by his hair again, and walks him down the street.

People trickle out of their shops and homes to watch. David sees Portence as he passes the General Store.

DAVID  
Find the doctor. Get him to the jail, now.

She stands there unresponsive. He drops Charlie and marches towards her.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
DO IT! NOW!

She jumps with a startle and runs down the street.

EXT. TOWN HALL - EARLY EVENING

Marisol walks down the street carrying an empty basket. She stops in front of the town hall. Through the open doors she finds Abraham giving a cult like sermon to the majority of the town.

She walks inside and leans against the back wall.

INT. TOWN HALL - SAME

The congregation sings as their bodies shake and dance and convulse. Abraham, towering over everyone, walks through the crowd putting his hands on their heads.

ABRAHAM  
By using my name they will force out demons, and they will speak new languages.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The parishioners speak in tongues as Abraham moves past them. Silas and Jedidiah walk through the room carrying wooden boxes.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
And they will handle snakes and  
drink poison and not be hurt.

Those moved by the spirit lift rattle snakes from the boxes. They hold them to their faces and raise them towards heaven.

Abraham spots Marisol. A sinister smile covers his face as he watches her study the service.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
I anoint you in the name of  
Christ.

Abraham takes a snake from an old woman. He wraps it around his neck.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Fear not. They are lifeless in  
the hands of the anointed.

Abraham makes his way to the back of the room. He nods at Marisol who stares back frightened. She turns red and sweat leaks from her pores. He closes the door and stands before her.

He takes the snake from his neck and holds it to her.

Marisol shakes her head and takes a couple steps back.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
The spirit led you here. You have  
nothing to fear in me.

He takes a step towards her.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Take the snake.

They lock eyes. Abraham gazes at her intensely, as if he was hypnotizing her. She slowly raises her arms, her hands shaking. She grabs hold of the snake and keeps it as far from her body as she can.

Abraham turns and continues through the room. He looks up towards the sky and tosses the heavens a menacing smile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
If you are bit...if you die  
handling the serpent...your  
salvation is assured.

Marisol hands off the snake to Silas as he passes by with the box. She watches Abraham as he walks through the congregation.

She wipes the sweat from her brow and slowly begins to clap in sync with the rest of the parishioners.

INT. JAILHOUSE - EVENING

The doctor, MORRIS (50s), stands above Naomi stitching her face. He is tall, skinny, and balding, but has a very pleasant demeanor.

MORRIS  
He sure did a number on you, Miss  
Naomi.

Naomi is stripped to her undergarments and holds a mirror in front of her, watching Morris sew thread into her face. Her lips quiver. She adjust the mirror and finds David sitting at the desk staring back at her.

David notices a large 'A' has been branded on the inside of her thigh. She quickly moves her hand to cover it. Her eyes fill with tears.

Charlie sits unconscious in the cell.

MORRIS (CONT'D)  
I'm not sure I'm going to have  
enough thread to stitch the other  
fella.

DAVID  
Don't worry about him. He won't  
be getting any.

The door to the jail flies open. Isaac storms in, his eyes darting around the room. Morris stops stitching as Naomi grabs a blanket to cover herself with. David does not move an inch.

ISAAC  
Where is he?!

David nods towards the cell. Isaac rushes over and looks at Charlie's beaten, unconscious body.

CONTINUED:

ISAAC (CONT'D)  
Is he dead?

David responds with an unapologetic stare.

ISAAC (CONT'D)  
I am not pleased, David.

DAVID  
In case you haven't figured it out  
yet...I don't really give a shit.

ISAAC  
I don't think you understand  
what's going on here!

Isaac pushes Morris out of the way and grabs Naomi. She screams out in pain.

ISAAC (CONT'D)  
For this?! She's nothing more  
than a lick and a promise! You  
stupid fuck!

David rushes from his seat and pushes Isaac into the wall.

ISAAC (CONT'D)  
(to Naomi)  
Goddamn whore! Who's gonna fuck  
you now?  
(to David)  
Abraham will not be pleased by  
this.

DAVID  
Run to your father.

A beat.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
He likes me more anyway.

Isaac pulls out his pistol and points the barrel inches from David's forehead. David stays composed.

ISAAC  
You're mistaken. It's that pretty  
bean-eating wife of yours that  
he's keen on.

David slaps Isaac's arm away from his head. A round goes off and Morris and Naomi duck. David head-butts Isaac square in face, shattering his nose.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Isaac slides down the wall to the floor, bleeding into his hands. David picks up his pistol and whips him with it.

DAVID

Don't you ever speak of my wife!

David grabs him by the legs and drags him outside.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREET - SAME

David drags Isaac into the middle of the street. Isaac attempts to fight him off with his legs, but David is able to strike him with the pistol repeatedly. Isaac becomes a limp bloody mess.

A crowd forms around them as the congregation breaks up and the parishioners leave town hall. Monte pushes through the crowd and rushes David. David sees him at the last second. He flips the pistol around and stops Monte in his tracks.

MONTE

What are you gonna do? I ain't heeled.

A pistol drops in front of Monte. David and Monte look to see Abraham standing feet from them smiling, entertained.

A look of despair moves over Monte's face. He takes a deep breath. David stands ready, emotionless. Monte slowly turns away. He helps Isaac up and moves him through the crowd.

Abraham laughs and pats David on the back. David sees Marisol staring nervously in the back of the crowd. She is sweaty, and looks tired and confused.

ABRAHAM

The show is over my dear friends.

(to Morris)

Morris, please tend to Isaac.

Morris nods and scurries off.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

I warned him. I told him you were a man run through the mill.

Abraham and David notice Naomi leaning against a pillar on the porch of the jail. She is covered in a blanket, staring at David. Marisol watches her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVID  
 I'm taking my wife home. Will you  
 tend to Naomi?

ABRAHAM  
 I'll tend to her every need.

David walks towards Marisol.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
 And David...

He turns back to Abraham.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
 Don't go kicking all the dogs just  
 because one of them has fleas.

David takes Marisol's hand and turns towards the cabin.

Abraham turns and smiles to Naomi. Her eyes fill with tears as she turns and walks back into the jailhouse.

INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S CABIN - NIGHT

David and Marisol eat dinner. She is pale and sweaty and her eyes are heavy and red. She pushes her food around, but does not raise anything to her mouth. Argos sits at the door, watching them intently.

MARISOL  
 What happened to that woman?

DAVID  
 She was beaten up in the brothel.

MARISOL  
 Is that why you were fighting  
 Isaac?

DAVID  
 No. Marisol, you look terrible.  
 How-

MARISOL  
 -I guess that's what happens to  
 pretty whores.

David looks at Marisol strangely. The fork trembles in her shaky hands.

MARISOL (CONT'D)  
 Do you think she's pretty?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVID  
Stop it, Marisol.

MARISOL  
Abraham will take care of her.

DAVID  
Will he? He branded that poor  
girl. Burned an 'A' on the inside  
of her thigh.

MARISOL  
He wouldn't do that.

DAVID  
Why are speaking about him like  
you know him?

She looks up and sways in her chair as if she's about to faint.

MARISOL  
He can see what's inside me...

David jumps across the table and grabs her before she falls into her plate.

He picks her up and carries her to the bedroom.

INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S BEDROOM - LATER

Marisol opens her red eyes. The sheets below her are wet from sweating. David rubs a cool, damp towel over her head. Argos jumps on the bed and lies next to her.

DAVID  
You have a fever.

Marisol's fights to keep her heavy eyes open, as she falls in and out of sleep.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
You'll feel better after it  
breaks.

He leans down and kisses her head.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Soon.

She whispers incoherently as David concertedly watches her fade to sleep.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREET - MORNING

David rides through town on his way to the jailhouse. He is approached by Abraham, Monte, Dale, and three CHINESE MEN, dressed in black frock coats and matching trousers and black soft felt hats. They all have distinguished mustaches.

ABRAHAM

Gentleman. Go on. I'll catch up with you directly.

David studies the Chinese men as they pass.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

A fascinating culture. They say they're trapped in the Samsara, an ever changing world of good and evil. If they do not take control of their desires, they are subject to great suffering, both here and the afterlife.

David watches them as they ride slowly towards the edge of town.

Abraham smiles.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

I didn't have the heart to tell them that heathens are damned to hell anyway.

DAVID

What are they doing here?

Abraham shrugs and lifts his hairless eyebrows.

ABRAHAM

How are you feeling my dear pugilist?

DAVID

Fine. How is Isaac?

Abraham laughs. David's eyes bounce from Abraham to the strange Chinese men.

ABRAHAM

He's full of torment. I should be angry with you, but I never doubt the wisdom of my biases. However, I do think it best you stay out of his business from now on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVID

That won't be a problem. We'll be leaving soon.

ABRAHAM

Are you?

DAVID

Marisol is feverish. As soon as it breaks and she gets back some energy, we'll be moving on.

ABRAHAM

*"No where particular."*

David fakes a smile and nods.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

(Latin)

Vos erant sent hic mihi. EGO mos retineo vos vado. (You were sent here for me. I will not let you go.)

DAVID

What does that mean?

ABRAHAM

I shall embrace your company while I have it.

Abraham turns his horse and rides on to catch up with the others.

INT. JAILOUSE - EVENING

David sits at the desk writing in his journal. He notes the Chinese men, the Englishmen, the rifle, and the spent shells.

A map with detailed locations and notes rests on the desk.

He folds the map and closes his journal and locks them in the drawer.

There is a light knock on the back window. David walks over and pushes the curtain aside. Naomi motions him to come around back.

EXT. BEHIND THE JAIL - SAME

David sneaks around to the back of the building and finds Naomi. Her cuts are bandaged but her face has bruised badly.

DAVID

What is it?

NAOMI

I need to speak to you.

DAVID

Come inside.

NAOMI

I can't. Not here.

DAVID

Why?

NAOMI

Meet me Sunday at first light.  
The Split Fork Creek.

DAVID

What do you know?

NAOMI

I know you just didn't stumble  
into town for no reason.

She inches closer to him.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

And I know you're not safe.

She puts her hand on his face. He allows her to hold it for a moment before he pulls back slowly, her hand falling back to her side.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

You're resistant to him, but  
there's things you don't know  
about this town.

DAVID

Tell me!

The sound of voices stir on the street. Naomi grabs hold of David and pulls him close. She whispers in his ear. Her warm breath sends condensation into the air.

NAOMI

Sunday morning. First light.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She throws a shawl over her head and runs off. David watches her until she is lost in the dark.

INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

David sits in a chair in the corner of the room and watches Marisol. She has grown more pale and sickly. Argos sits at David's side, licking his hand.

EXT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S HOUSE, PATIO - MORNING

David drinks coffee and stares out into the mountains.

Morris exits the front door. David looks at him, reading his expression.

MORRIS

I think she has a serious kidney infection. Back pain, fever, and blood in her urine.

David grimaces.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

I gave her some corn cure and stomach bitters. That should help her keep some food down.

DAVID

Can she travel?

MORRIS

No. It will kill her.

David nods.

DAVID

Thank you, Morris.

Morris walks off the porch and turns back towards David.

MORRIS

...And he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and HE will take sickness away from the midst of thee.

David stares at him unresponsively. Morris smiles and walks away.

## INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S CABIN - AFTERNOON

David sits at the table cleaning his pistols. He stops to stare through the window at distant lightning.

Marisol calls out deliriously. He runs into the room and rubs a wet towel over her head.

## INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

David sits in the chair at the foot of the bed. He watches as Marisol whispers in her sleep. She is drenched in sweat. Argos moans in the corner of the room.

## INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S BEDROOM - DAWN

David awakens from the chair at the foot of the bed. Marisol sleeps in a pool of sweat.

David dresses quietly and leaves.

Marisol opens her red eyes the second he is out of the room.

## EXT. SPLIT FORKS CREEK BED - DAWN

David rides his horse through the dry creek looking for Naomi. She walks from behind a large boulder carrying a bag. She is dressed in baggy pants and a large shirt and boots.

David studies her momentarily and shakes his head.

She motions to her clothes.

NAOMI

Hoot's get up.

She struts towards him flirtatiously.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

How do I look?

DAVID

It suits you.

She laughs and grimaces from the pain in her face.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She shakes her head.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Running?

NAOMI  
We can't stay here.

DAVID  
We?

NAOMI  
David, you're not safe either.

David laughs.

DAVID  
You keep saying that.

NAOMI  
You're a good man, David. I can see that in you. You did a good thing for me and now I want to do a good thing for you.

DAVID  
Come on, Naomi. Please, out with it.

A beat. She looks around to make sure no one is watching them.

NAOMI  
Isaac and Monte have been talking...and the town does not want you. They've been urging Abraham to get rid of you.

DAVID  
Then why hasn't he?

NAOMI  
He says that he knew you would come...that he knew your father...

David's face grows alert.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
And that you would bring him a wife.

He quickly dismounts his horse and rushes towards Naomi. She cowers, expecting to get hit. He grabs her firmly by the shoulders and shakes her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID  
What does that mean!?

She begins to cry.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Tell me!

NAOMI  
Marisol...He wants her.

David pushes Naomi away.

DAVID  
Well, he can't have her.

NAOMI  
I'm sorry, David. She's already  
his. She was his the second you  
brought her to Mount Hermon.

David raises his hand to punch her. Naomi cowers again.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
Please! No!

David stops short of hitting her. She grabs hold of him  
and embraces him tightly. He pulls her arms apart and  
pushes her away.

He hurries towards to his horse. She grabs hold of him  
and spins him around.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
Come with me. We can't go back  
there.

DAVID  
Stop it!

She continues to hug him and cry desperately.

NAOMI  
We can go to San Francisco. I  
will be a good woman to you,  
David.

She tries forcefully to kiss him and he pushes her onto  
her knees.

DAVID  
Stop it, Goddamn!

She grabs a handful of sand and throws it at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Please. Just stop.

A beat.

NAOMI  
I'll be lost out there...

She looks out into the Mountains.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
I'll die out there without you.  
Please.

David looks at her sympathetically.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
Is there no room in your heart for  
me?

DAVID  
I want to help you, but-

NAOMI  
-You don't have to love me.

A beat.

DAVID  
I'm sorry. I'm not leaving my  
wife.

Naomi nods and rises to her feet. David watches her limp  
over to her bag. She struggles to pick it up.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Naomi...wait.

He runs over to his horse and grabs the reins. He walks  
it towards Naomi.

He pulls out a compass from his saddle bag.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Do you know how to use one of  
these?

NAOMI  
No.

DAVID  
Hold it out in front of you, away  
from anything metal.

He puts it in her hands and holds it out in front of her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DAVID (CONT'D)  
The arrow here always points  
north. You see? And that line is  
west.

She nods.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
San Francisco is going to be in  
between them, but it's a long ways  
away.

NAOMI  
I know.

DAVID  
I don't know what else is out  
there. Just stay on that path and  
pray you come across something  
settled.

He hands her the reins of his horse.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Here. He's yours. Keep him  
watered and don't ride him too  
hard and he'll get you to  
California.

She cries.

NAOMI  
Thank you, David.

DAVID  
You best get going. They're gonna  
know you're gone in a couple  
hours. Get some distance between  
you.

She leans in slowly and kisses the side of his mouth. He  
allows her to hold it there momentarily.

He helps her into the saddle. They share one last glance  
before she spurs the horse away.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREETS - MORNING

Marisol stumbles into town distressed and dishevelled.  
She is soaked from sweating, her eyes red as apples. She  
trips onto store patios and front porches in town.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She cries quietly to herself, grabbing at people in town as she passes them. They come out of their homes and stores to watch her.

MARISOL

Help me...I need help...Where is Abraham?

They whisper behind her as she makes her way towards town hall.

MARISOL (CONT'D)

Please...Something is very wrong...I need help...I need Abraham.

She walks onto the porch in front of Silas's meat store. He walks out of his door in time to catch her as she collapses.

Marisol lies on the wooden porch. Silas's hand props up her head. Her eyes dart from face to face. Finally, she sees Abraham move through the crowd and tower above her.

She jumps to her knees and hugs his legs. He places his hands on her chin and looks her in the eyes.

MARISOL (CONT'D)

Abraham...there is something wrong with me...help me...please?

ABRAHAM

(to crowd)

Where is her husband?

CLEM

(to Marisol)

I last saw him at Hoot's...drinking whiskey with that cut-up whore.

Abraham nods. He places his hands on Marisol's head.

ABRAHAM

You are infected, Marisol. A thorn in the flesh and worm in your soul.

Marisol grabs his hands and kisses them and rubs them on her cheek and neck.

MARISOL

Tell me what to do...please...help me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Abraham helps her to her feet.

ABRAHAM

(to Silas)

Silas, my dear old friend. See  
she gets home. And Dale, you help  
him.

(to Anne and Lorena)

Ladies, make yourselves useful,  
and fetch Doctor Morris.

ANNE

Yes, Sir.

LORENA

Yes, Abraham.

Anne and Lorena pick up the bottom of their dresses and scurry off. Silas picks up Marisol and cradles her firmly in his arms. Her body grows limp, but her eyes are locked on Abraham.

ABRAHAM

(to Marisol)

For the sins of those you have  
loved, you must also suffer. Your  
malediction like your beauty is a  
curse, for which I am your only  
panacea.

Abraham nods to Silas and he takes her away.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREETS - AFTERNOON

David walks into town haggard and sore from the long walk back. The wind blows dried weeds and loose dirt around, catching some in small whirlwinds on the street.

INT. HOOT'S BROTHEL - SAME

The bar is full of men from town, including Abraham, Isaac, Monte, Dale, and three new strangers: WILLIAM (late 50s) is the father of the other two - twins named, JOHN and GEORGE (30s). They are dressed in proper New England attire and speak in according accents.

The prostitutes are scattered around the room, sitting among the men. They occasionally get up to gather more drinks.

Abraham sits towards the front of the room. As always, he plays to the gallery of attentive listeners.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABRAHAM

As it were, no one dared raise an eyebrow to us. We were killing more Yankee malefactor than an entire regiment. On paper, we were a company attached to that milksop, Nathan Bedford Forrest, but I've never been one to accept certain jurisdictions.

His audience laughs.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

I believe General Lee referred to us as the Hangmen Militia.

JOHN

You met General Lee?

Abraham laughs.

ABRAHAM

A man who's name no doubt draws blasphemy from you Bostonians.

The room laughs again. Abraham nods.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

I met him...once.

EXT. MANASSAS, VIRGINIA - FLASHBACK

ABRAHAM (V.O.)

It was Virginia...right after the Second Battle of Manassas.

On a large flat field, a sizeable contingency of uniformed Confederate soldiers shooting from behind a vast string of boulders, stand to get overrun by an even larger number of uniformed Union forces.

A young Abraham steps out front and calmly leads his small militia straight towards the Union forces, as if they were invincible. The ground explodes next to him and rounds kick up dirt around his feet. They shoot and kill many Union soldiers.

ABRAHAM (V.O. CONT'D) (CONT'D)

You Yankees refer to it as the Second Battle of Bull Run.

## EXT. MANASSAS, VIRGINIA - FLASHBACK, LATER

On the same large field bodies litter the ground of both forces. Smoke rises from the scorched earth into the light mist floating in the air.

ABRAHAM

It was a beautiful day to behold.  
Only the brushes of war can stroke  
a canvas so vividly.

Through the mist a band of Confederate officers appear. They are led by General Robert E. Lee. They stop and observe Abraham and his militia.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Sulfur filled our lungs, our mind  
and senses sharpened by battle and  
crimson...and death. We rode out  
to pay homage to our comrades  
after the final shots had been  
fired.

Abraham's militia pillages the battlefield. One of his men cuts the ears off a Union soldier. Another scalps the head of a dead black drummer boy.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

I happened upon General Lee's detail. He introduced me to his dedicated staff and we spoke about the battle.

Others dig through the pockets of the dead, stealing boots and pulling teeth. Abraham rides approvingly between them on his tall palomino.

The Confederate Soldiers are repulsed by their actions. General Lee stares down Abraham. His eyes burn with anger at the sight of their deportment. He shakes his head in disgust. Abraham returns the scowl with a coy smile.

## INT. HOOT'S BROTHEL - SAME

All eyes are on Abraham. He has his audience captivated.

ABRAHAM

Then he asked me to dine with him.

GEORGE

What did you say?

CONTINUED:

ABRAHAM

Oh...I respectfully declined. I told him I had a pretty little buckle bunny waiting to feed me a mouthful in Manassas.

The room erupts into laughter.

GEORGE

Did you fight in many battles?

ABRAHAM

That's a question a man should be asking his father.

A beat.

WILLIAM

I have never served in war.

ABRAHAM

No true patriot ever does.

Abraham notices David leaning against the wall next to the door.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Ah...David...He's the one you should be asking young man.

David combs the room and moves towards the bar. He motions to Hoot, who brings him a beer. He sets his hat beside his drink and looks over the crowd.

GEORGE

Is that true, Mister? You've fought in a lot of battles?

A beat.

DAVID

Why don't you just come out and say what you're really asking?

George looks at him disconcertingly.

David shrugs his shoulders and tilts his head, waiting for a response.

GEORGE

I'm not sure-

DAVID

-Just ask me if I've killed anyone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

George becomes uncomfortable and looks around the quiet room for guidance that doesn't come.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
That's what you want to know.

GEORGE  
Well have you? Killed anyone?

DAVID  
I've fought in many battles.  
Obviously you haven't or you  
wouldn't be asking.

GEORGE  
That's just because I never had a  
chance.

David chuckles to himself.

DAVID  
Not strangely, I've heard that one  
before. Listening and reading  
other men's stories about killing  
and war have become a substitute  
for participation.

The room is dead silent.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
But then you get a little older  
and realize you're not half the  
man as the fella whose stories you  
admire so much...

He takes a sip from his beer.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
You hunger to be a hero...you long  
to know what it is to kill your  
enemies...to bleed...to scar...  
And then you wake up one day and  
it's too late. You've lost the  
courage of your youth...or hate  
yourself when you realize you  
never had it.

David pulls out his tobacco and rolls a cigarette.

JOHN  
Are you calling us cowards,  
Mister? You don't think we have  
the ingredients?

CONTINUED: (3)

DAVID

I'm just saying you can't draw  
blood out of a stone.

ISAAC

You're so full of shit.

David looks at Isaac coldly.

ABRAHAM

The lives of those we've killed  
remain in our eyes. The  
expression never leaves our  
face...As if the wind changed the  
second the pin hit the shell.

Abraham tilts his head to study David.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

There's no labor to killing a man.  
But for some, it's living after  
that's work. I wonder, David.  
How many? You carry a heavy  
burden.

DAVID

As you should.

Abraham smiles.

ABRAHAM

My reflection is murderous, but my  
conscience is clean. I am the  
righteous hand of God. I am the  
executioner of the Lord's foul  
bane.

David finishes his beer and slips on his hat as he makes  
his way to the door.

DAVID

And I am his bitter affliction.

He tips his hat to the room.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Good-night.

David walks through the door and out into the street.

## INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S CABIN - NIGHT

David walks into the house to find it in disarray. The furniture is toppled over and their belongings have been tossed around the cabin

He hears some unusual moaning and crying and rushes through the house into the back yard.

## EXT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S HOUSE, BACK YARD - SAME

Marisol clutches a large knife and rocks back in forth. Her dress is ripped revealing much of her naked body. She is covered in blood oozing from cuts she has sliced into her arms and thighs and stomach.

Her eyes are blood red and she cries to herself as she rocks.

Argos lays feet from her in a pool of blood. He cries softly, barely breathing, barely alive.

David runs to Marisol and grabs the knife from her hands.

DAVID

No...no...no.

He wraps his arms around her and hugs her closely. She continues to rock despondently and unresponsively.

DAVID (CONT'D)

What have you done to yourself?

He folds her into his arms and picks her up, and carries her inside.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I've got you now.

## INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S BEDROOM - HOURS LATER

David has placed Marisol into a bathtub. Some of her lacerations have been stitched. He gently rubs a wet cloth over her body and face.

She breathes heavily, her blood-red eyes stare blankly off into space.

Argos lies a few feet from the tub wrapped in a blanket. He stares at David.

DAVID

We're leaving in the morning.

## INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S BEDROOM - DAWN

David sits on the floor, leaning against the wall in the corner of the bedroom, his pistols resting beside him. His eyes are tired and heavy as he watches Marisol's restless sleep. Argos lies at his side.

## EXT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S HOUSE, FRONT YARD - MORNING

David readies the wagon for their journey.

He ties and saddles the horses. He packs food and makes a bed in the back of the wagon.

He searches his belongings for his journal. He cannot find it. He remembers that he has left it at the jail.

He unties one of the horses and makes his way into town.

## EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREETS - MINUTES LATER

As David rides into town, he sees several horses tied to the patio and the door to the jail is open. He dismounts and ties his horse up in an alley between two houses. He waits and watches.

Seconds later Abraham, Isaac, Dale, Monte, George, John, and William exit, all carrying rifles from the armory. They mount their horses and slowly make their way out of town in the opposite direction.

David watches them ride off. He looks back towards his cabin and Marisol indecisively.

He waits until they are out of sight and moves into the jail. The armory is wide open and all the rifles are gone. He uses his keys and opens the desk. He finds his journal and maps and tucks them away under his shirt.

He mounts his horse in the middle of the street. He again stares back towards his cabin, but turns and starts towards Abraham and the rest of the group.

## EXT. OUTSIDE OF MOUNT HERMON - MORNING

Abraham leads as they ride south. The Davis Mountains stand tall, its ridges looming all around them. They follow a trail through the mystical terrain.

Abraham sings in Latin and whistles to himself as he takes in the beauty of the country. It is a beautiful song.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLIAM  
What is that? That song?

Abraham smiles, gratified by the question.

ABRAHAM  
It's a setting of Psalm 51, called  
*Miserere*. Because of its beauty  
it was forbidden by Pope Urban the  
Eighth to be transcribed or played  
outside of the Sistine  
Chapel...Rome.

WILLIAM  
Who stole it then?

ABRAHAM  
A fourteen year-old boy named  
Mozart heard it one morning during  
service. Later that day he wrote  
it down entirely from memory and  
gave it to the world.

WILLIAM  
And where did you hear it?

ABRAHAM  
The Sistine Chapel.

Abraham closes his eyes and continues the song. The  
riders trail behind him in awe.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF MOUNT HERMON - SAME

David watches them from the top of a short hill. He  
hides behind a large boulder.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS - LATER

The terrain around them has become more rugged. Abraham  
leads them down a worn path between two steep draws.

They enter a clearing and come upon a prison sitting in  
the middle of a camp. It is almost completely walled  
with bars and is roofed by thin, rotting wood. Buzzards  
fly overhead.

Inside the prison are two dozen Mexican men, women, and  
children. They are filthy and malnourished and  
desperate. At the sight of Abraham and the others, they  
draw back from the bars and collapse into the middle.

CONTINUED:

A short distance away from the prison, a tent has been erected. A large kettle steams over an open fire.

Jedidiah walks out of the tent, half-dressed, dragging a disheveled and distraught, young Mexican girl, MARIA (20). She is very attractive, with big brown eyes and dark skin. Her hair is black and matted. She obediently squats down next to the fire.

JEDIDIAH

Morning, Gentlemen.

ISAAC

How do you bed down with this filth?

JEDIDIAH

I clean her up before I lay with her..

Isaac looks at Jedidiah and the girl with disgust.

JEDIDIAH (CONT'D)

I aim to marry her, Abraham.

ISAAC

You're not bringing that into our town.

Jedidiah tends the kettle, ignoring Isaac's scowl.

Abraham leads the group over to the cell. The Mexicans inside cry and howl and push each other towards the bars as the men dismount their horses.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

They're as savage as a meat axe.

Abraham turns to Isaac and nods to him a fatherly grin.

ABRAHAM

Pick your prey, Gentlemen. It's a flat rate.

William, John, and George study the Mexican's. William points to a Mexican man his age (50s). He fights to hide himself but the rest of the prisoners push him to the gate of the jail. Monte pulls him out and forces him to the ground.

George points to a young Mexican woman (20s). She too is forced to the gate and pulled out by Monte.

John looks at George disgusted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHN  
You're twisted, Brother. A woman?

GEORGE  
It's in our blood.

John turns towards the prisoners and picks out a young Mexican man (20s). He is the last to be pushed to the gate and pulled out by Monte.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS, OUTSIDE OF ENCAMPMENT - SAME

David squats behind some rocks and brush and watches from a distance on top of a spur. The three Mexican prisoners picked out are now eating a bowl of food around a fire and passing around water and whiskey. The men hover around them, watching and laughing.

David pulls out his maps. He looks around to orient himself and circles an area in the mountains. He takes out his journal and sketches the encampment.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS, ENCAMPMENT - SAME

The men stand over the Mexicans and watch as they lick their bowls clean.

ABRAHAM  
Gentlemen, make your preparations.

William, George, and John load their rifles and pistols. At the sight the Mexican prisoners plead and cry.

Abraham calmly instructs them to rise. He huddles them close and speaks to them with a gentle voice.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
(in Spanish)  
Do not be afraid. Freedom awaits you, if God so chooses. You are at the mercy of his grace, and the aim of these three men. If you make it back to Mexico, we will not hunt you down.

The Mexicans begin to cry and point to their bare feet.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
(in Spanish)  
We will give you a gift. One hour.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He pulls a watch from his pocket and clicks it.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Your time begins now.

The young Mexican male and female immediately take off along separate paths in full sprint towards Mexico. The older male runs over to William and drops to his knees. He cries and kisses William's hand and begs for his life.

William stares at him with an uncertain anxiety. Isaac walks over and pulls the Mexican's head back. He points to the buzzards flying above them and pulls out his watch. He makes ticking sounds with his tongue into the Mexican's ear and dangles the watch in front of his face.

The Mexican breaks into a full on sob and stands up. He takes a last look at Abraham, who nods and tips his hat. He finds the sun in the east, and turns and begins a slow walk west.

DALE  
Don't look like your hombre's  
gonna give you much of a hunt, Old  
Timer.

WILLIAM  
Just the same.

He charges his rifle. Dale rolls his eyes, his face mocking William's courage.

DALE  
It's your dime.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS, OUTSIDE OF THE  
ENCAMPMENT - SAME

David watches from the same spot as before. He watches as the men eat around the fire. His eyes are heavy and he is tired.

He rests against the rocks. He pulls out his pistols and inspects the chambers. He chews on a piece of jerky and drinks water. He closes his eyes for a few seconds. His head slowly drops before he wakes himself up.

He turns back to find the men mounting their horses. He watches as they split up. Dale rides out with William. Monte rides out with John. George is escorted by Isaac and Abraham.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

David runs to his horse and packs his things into the saddle. He mounts and heads out in the direction of Abraham and Isaac.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS, OUTSIDE OF ENCAMPMENT - LATER

David follows Abraham, Isaac, and George from a safe distance. He dismounts as they come to a stop. George raises his rifle and fires.

The Mexican girl, now walking, ducks after hearing the shot. It lands a good five feet from her. She jumps behind a rock and begins to cry. Seconds later, she is running.

A second round zips by her.

George misses shot number three and takes off on his horse in the direction of the girl.

Abraham and Isaac laugh to one another and chase after him.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE OF DAVIS MOUNTAINS - SAME

David watches the scene from above, hidden in the mountains. He is visibly torn by what to do.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS - SAME

The Mexican girl is running through brush. Her tattered clothes are falling off of her. Her face, arms, and legs rip from lacerations as she pushes through the jagged vegetation. Dirty tears stream down her cheeks.

A round goes through her shoulder and she drops to the ground. She picks herself up slowly and turns to see George is no more than 50 meters from her.

She stares at him as he raises his rifle and aims. A round goes through her neck as she drops to the earth.

George watches as the girl squirms on the ground. Isaac and Abraham ride up behind him.

ABRAHAM

Go ahead, Son. Put another one in her.

George hesitantly raises his rifle and fires until the girl grows still.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

George looks back to Isaac and Abraham with an exhilarated expression plastered across his face.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS - SAME

David watches as the men move to the girl. He is visibly upset.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS - MOMENTS LATER

Abraham, Isaac, and George stand above the dead girl. She lies in a pool of blood, her eyes wide open.

Abraham reaches behind his back and pulls out a large knife with a white bone handle. He hands it to George who looks at him quizzically.

ABRAHAM

You have to take the scalp,  
George.

GEORGE

Nah, that's alright.

ISAAC

You wanna remember your first  
kill, don't you?

GEORGE

I won't forget this. Ever.

He laughs uncomfortably. He tries to hand the knife back to Abraham who doesn't take it.

Abraham winks and nods to the girl. George slowly kneels next to her and fumbles with the knife.

ABRAHAM

Doesn't take much. Just a quick  
slit and pull.

ISAAC

I guarantee you she'd take yours.  
They're as savage as Injuns.

George's hands tremble as he hesitantly saws away at her hairline. He cuts slowly and pulls the girl's bloody scalp from her head.

## EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS - SAME

David watches as George finishes scalping the girl. He holds it up to the sky and howls like a wolf.

David sees Abraham staring in his direction. They make eye contact momentarily. Abraham smiles and tips his hat to David, who jumps behind the rocks.

He gathers himself and turns back towards the men. Abraham hands Isaac a short handled shovel from his saddle before he and George ride back the way they came.

David watches them leave and stays with Isaac. Isaac pretends to dig until Abraham is out of sight. He packs the shovel and throws the dead girl on his horse and rides west.

David mounts his horse and tracks him.

## EXT. RIO GRANDE - LATER

David rides behind a tree and watches as Isaac approaches the river.

Isaac rides into the middle of the Rio Grande. He flips the dead girl off his horse and watches as she slowly gets caught in the current and drifts down river.

He turns and slowly rides back towards Mt. Hermon. Once he is out of sight, David pulls out his map and marks it. He looks around and quickly sketches the terrain.

He repacks his gear and strides back to Mount Hermon as quickly as he can.

## EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREETS - LATER

David trots through Mount Hermon on his way back to the cabin.

There is no one on the streets or on porches. He looks around suspiciously as he rides through town.

## EXT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S CABIN - MINUTES LATER

David arrives to find the town has gathered at his cabin. They are packed inside or outside watching and talking through the windows.

David dismounts his horse and pushes his way through the crowd.

CONTINUED:

DAVID

What's going on? What are you  
doing here? Where's Abraham?

INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S CABIN - SAME

David fights his way to the bedroom, pushing everyone in his path out of the way. They hush and whisper as he passes by.

DAVID

Marisol!

He reaches his bedroom door and looks inside. Marisol is tied to the bed, shaking, and lying in a pool of sweat.

Abraham stands over her, whispering into her ear. He gently presses a cross into her forehead.

DAVID (CONT'D)

What the fuck are you doing to my  
wife?

Abraham walks to the edge of the bed. He presents the Bible in his hands and smiles malevolently.

ABRAHAM

She's not yours anymore, David.

Suddenly Hoot, Morris, and Silas appear from inside the room. Silas pushes David back into the crowd and Hoot slams the door in his face.

The crowd mobs David. They beat and curse and push him back outside of the cabin and throw him back into the front yard.

He screams defiantly at them, his eyes turning red and wet with rage.

He finds his horse and mounts. He turns and rides back towards town.

INT. GENERAL STORE - MOMENTS LATER

David rampages through the store. He dumps the contents out of every bottle and jar he can find and fills them with kerosene. He tears away sheets of cloth, soaks them quickly in the gas, and stuffs them into the lids of the bottles.

He packs them into his saddle bag and walks towards the door, leaving a trail of kerosene behind him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He pulls out a match and lights it, tossing it back into the store, setting it aflame.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

David rides down the street lighting the cocktails. He stops indiscriminately in front of various stores and houses and tosses them through the windows leaving in his wake smoke and flames.

He runs out of cocktails towards the edge of town. He rides to Hoot's and dismounts. He loads himself up with ammo and rope and handcuffs and slaps his horse away.

INT. HOOT'S BROTHEL - SAME

Isaac plays on the piano. George, John, and William sit at a table with some prostitutes drinking whiskey and beer, bragging about their kills. George wears the scalp of the Mexican girl on his head, the brown hair falling around his shoulders.

Monte and Dale kick back at the table next to them listening entertained.

JOHN

I missed the first five shots! I  
picked the fastest Mexican out of  
the bunch.

William and George laugh.

JOHN (CONT'D)

He damn near got to the river!  
Monte said that's the farthest any  
Mexican has made it yet.

He takes a pull from his beer and slams it down.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(to Monte)  
That was a damn fine hunt. Wasn't  
it Monte?

Monte shrugs his shoulders and nods.

The front door slams open and the room goes quiet. David walks in slowly and surveys the room. His face is painted with anger.

He pushes back his jacket and slowly removes a pistol. No one budges.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He holds it out to his side and continues to scan their faces.

ISAAC

What are you going to with that?

David turns his stare to Isaac and slowly raises his pistol. He pulls the trigger and the back of George's head explodes, knocking the scalp to the floor. Everyone ducks behind or under a table. David quickly draws his other pistol and holds them both in front of him.

DAVID

Sit up. Everyone.

They slowly rise back to their seats. William looks at George and begins to cry and whimper. David motions to the girls at the table.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You and you...grab everyone's pistols and bring them to me.

WILLIAM

You killed my son.

The girls hesitate.

DAVID

Do it!

They quickly move about the room gathering the guns. They drop them carefully at David's feet.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Girls...you may want to leave now.

All of the women rush to the door and out into the street.

David pulls out a pair of handcuffs and tosses them to Isaac, who is back on the piano seat defiantly.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Cuff yourself to the leg.

Isaac moves slowly to the floor and cuffs his wrist to the piano leg.

ISAAC

(sarcastically)

Heard your wife's sick? Is she okay?

David walks over and kicks Isaac in the chest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He makes his way to the bar and grabs a bottle of whiskey and takes a pull. He studies John and William, who are still crying.

DAVID

How much did you pay to come here?

A beat.

DAVID (CONT'D)

What were those Mexicans worth?

John and William sit silently, uncertain if they should answer. David grabs a glass from the bar and throws it at them.

DAVID (CONT'D)

How much?!

JOHN

(stuttering)

Two-hundred dollars per hunt.

DAVID

Hunt? You call that a hunt?

A beat.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Answer me!

JOHN

I don't know...I don't know.

John cries and pisses down his leg.

DAVID

Why are you here old man?

William shakes his head. David grabs another glass and throws it at him.

WILLIAM

Because...because we wanted to  
kill something.

DAVID

Something...or someone?

William tries to regain his composure.

WILLIAM

Someone...We wanted to know what  
it felt like to kill someone.

CONTINUED: (3)

DAVID

You didn't kill anyone...you  
murdered them. There's a  
difference. You feel it don't  
you?

William nods and continues to sob.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Are you scared?

William nods.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Well, I'm gonna let you kill and I  
ain't even gonna charge you.

David grabs a pistol from the pile on the floor and walks  
over and sets it onto the table in front of John. He  
studies him for a second and steps back to the bar.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You're going to pick up that  
pistol and shoot Monte in his ugly  
fucking face, or I'm going to  
shoot your father dead.

John looks at the gun and sobs. He sets his trembling  
hands on the table and shakes his head.

DAVID (CONT'D)

In fact, go on and shoot Dale as  
well. I don't much like his face  
either.

Monte and Dale are frozen. They stare at David in  
complete fear.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Pick up the pistol, boy.

John's hands shake furiously as he grabs his hair and  
looks over at Dale and Monte.

David raises his pistol and points it at William.

John slowly picks up the pistol. He is lost in fear and  
confusion and tears. He lazily points the gun at the  
Dale and Monte.

David charges his pistol which straightens John's aim.  
Dale and Monte push their chairs back slowly and hold  
their hands up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MONTE

Don't do it, John. Please.

DAVID

I'm giving you five seconds.  
Five...Four.

The pistol shakes in John's hand. He closes his eyes and fires. He shoots holes in various parts of Monte, Dale, and the bar until the rounds are expended.

Monte and Dale fall dead onto the floor in pools of blood. John drops the gun onto the table and buries his face into his hands.

David rests his pistol back into his holsters and relaxes into a stool at the bar. He locks eyes with Isaac who stares at his friends lying dead on the floor.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You say one word, and I'm going to have his Father put one in your dome.

David takes a drink.

Abraham walks in with Morris, Silas, and Hoot. They examine the carnage.

David takes another sip of whiskey and turns towards Abraham.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Your town's on fire.

Abraham smiles.

ABRAHAM

You've turned my little Heaven into Purgatory.

David regards John and William.

DAVID

I had help.

Abraham walks around the room, nudging the bodies with his boot.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Where's Marisol?

Abraham smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

ABRAHAM  
Where she belongs.

He quickly draws a pistol from his holster. David draws in kind. Abraham takes aim and shoots John and William in the head, killing them instantly. He puts the pistol back into his holster and smiles.

More people from town fill the room looking to punish David for the fires. He watches them enter from his stool. Silas releases Isaac from the cuffs.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
(to the crowd)  
Some men walk the earth their entire lives, driven by a force deeper than their own comprehension. It's not God or love or fame they seek...it's revenge.

David's eyes follow Abraham as he marches around the room.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
I've known you'd be coming, David, for quite some time.

EXT. DOWNTOWN, HELENA, TEXAS - FLASHBACK

A young David looks up at a younger Abraham towering above him after he has killed his father. David's view of Abraham is momentarily obstructed by the glaring sun beside his head.

As Abraham puts on his hat, he blocks the sun revealing his face.

INT. HOOT'S BROTHEL - PRESENT, SAME

ABRAHAM  
I took pleasure in killing your father. He was foul a man with loose principles.

David chuckles to himself.

DAVID  
You think I'm here for revenge.  
You think too highly of yourself,  
Abraham.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He reaches into his saddle bag and pulls out a piece of folded cloth.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 I hardly have a memory of my father. You were nothing more to me here than youthful intrigue.

He tosses the folded piece of cloth to Abraham.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 I'm a Texas Ranger. I was sent here by the Governor himself. All these Mexicans you've been killing are floating up in the same strainer a couple miles down river. One was some Mexican general's nephew.

David laughs.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 Revenge?

Abraham unwraps the cloth and holds up the knife.

ABRAHAM  
 This news is shocking to me, David, though it seems you have some bad information. You see we bury the bodies. Mexicans decompose rather quickly.

David looks at Isaac.

DAVID  
 How dirty did you get the shovel today, Isaac?

A look from Abraham draws fear in Isaac.

ISAAC  
 Don't believe him, Father. He's lying.  
 (to David)  
 You're a fucking liar!

DAVID  
 I bet it won't take them long to find that little, scalpless Mexican girl you dumped today.

Isaac's face goes white. Abraham walks over to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ISAAC  
Father, I can explain.

Abraham slaps him with the back of his hand repeatedly until Isaac is on the floor hugging his leg, begging him to stop.

Abraham pushes him away.

ABRAHAM  
You're as crippled as your mother was.

Abraham turns to David.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
I suppose I'll have to try again...with a new wife.

DAVID  
I'll kill Marisol before I let you have her.

A beat.

ABRAHAM  
I have a better idea.

Abraham turns back to Isaac.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Are you ready to redeem yourself?

ISAAC  
Please, Father. Anything.

ABRAHAM  
Drop your pistols, David. They'll be no more shooting today.

He tosses the bundled knife back to David.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREETS - LATER

The town has formed a circle around Isaac, David, and Abraham. A light snow drops from a grey sky. Behind them, much of the town is in flames. Smoke and ash caught in the breeze mixes with the snow and floats by them.

David and Isaac are stripped down to boots and pants. The shiver from the cold and fear. David holds his father's knife tightly in his hand. They face off a few meters from one another, Abraham between them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABRAHAM

Good people of Mount Hermon,  
you're about to witness a Helena  
Duel, the most honorable of  
duels.

He reaches into a pouch on his belt and pulls out a shiny, short-bladed knife and holds it up for all to see.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

I took David's father with this knife thirty years ago. The one he holds in his grip is stained with my blood from the same duel.

He hands his knife to Isaac.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

And now it will surely drip crimson with my son's.

Abraham grabs a bottle of whiskey from Hoot and takes a long drink. He hands it to David.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

But to the victor come the spoils.

PORTEANCE

He should be hung for what he done to our town!

Abraham quickly turns to Portence, silencing her with his gaze.

David takes a pull from the bottle of whiskey and throws it to Isaac. He catches it and pulls a large gulp from the bottle.

ABRAHAM

If Isaac lives, he is forgiven for his doltishness. If David is victor...well...I'm sure God will speak to me on that matter.

DAVID

I want Marisol back. You tell God that.

Abraham smiles and motions them to come together. They extend their arms and take hold of the other's. Abraham wraps their arms together in buckskin.

CONTINUED: (2)

ISAAC

You can scream at him yourself,  
though I doubt he will hear you  
from hell.

Isaac and David stare at one another. They are perfectly matched in height and weight and physical strength.

DAVID

I got my own road there, and it's  
not on any map you've drawn up.

Abraham finishes arranging the buckskin. Isaac and David pull at one another to make sure it's secure.

Abraham remains between them. He grabs them by the shoulders and the three begin to spin.

ABRAHAM

You shall pour out each other's  
blood...and we will cover it with  
dust.

Abraham slowly lifts his hands from their shoulders and steps away.

Isaac and David are visibly dizzy. Isaac thrusts at David several times, but David is able to dodge the strikes.

David regains his equilibrium first and is able to cut Isaac several times in the stomach. Isaac cries out in pain and thrust back cutting David's arms.

They move about in a circle. Isaac continues to thrust cutting him in various places until David is able to catch him off balance and lock his arm. He wrestles Isaac to the ground, pinning him helpless, stabbing him repeatedly with great veracity.

Portence breaks through the crowd and hits David in the side of the head with large piece of wood knocking him off of Isaac.

Abraham grabs Portence by the neck, lifting her from her feet and tossing her back into the crowd.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Stay back you foolish woman!

Isaac rises to his feet with a handful of sand, throwing it into David's face, blinding him. David swings aimlessly, trying to clear his eyes as Isaac cuts him over and over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

David slowly regains his vision. They are both weak and pools of blood form at their feet. David is full of rage. They circle each other slowly taking quick jabs.

Isaac swings and misses. David pulls him closer and thrusts his blade into Isaacs neck. He gasps and drops his knife, reaching for his throat.

David trips him to the ground. He grabs Isaac's knife from the blood soaked sand and stabs him in the eye, killing him.

He pulls his knife from Isaac's throat and cuts himself free of the buckskin. He is badly wounded and bleeding everywhere.

He walks a few feet and stares at the crowd, and the town burning behind them. He faints and falls to the ground.

INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

David's eyes open slowly. He wakes in his bed to find Marisol re-dressing his wounds. She sings the beautiful song she sang to him during the journey. She does not David has woken.

David lies still, watching her clean his wounds silently. He smiles. All is normal.

He painfully lifts his arm to touch her, but she pushes it down coldly.

MARISOL

Please don't. You'll pull your  
stitches out and bleed everywhere.

Pain floods his body.

DAVID

Marisol.

She ignores him.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Look at me.

She drops her towel and looks at him. She is still a little pale, but most of her beauty has returned. She stares distantly upon him.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Please, can you feel my eyes one  
you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

David sits up slowly. Marisol leans away, but David grabs her hand and pulls her close.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Can you feel me in your heart?

Blood trickles from several of his wounds and he becomes visibly weak.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
I need you now. Please, come back to me.

A confused look crosses Marisol's face. David's eyes slowly close as he wobbles to fight from fainting. She grabs him by the neck and lays him back down gently into the sheets.

EXT. DAVID'S DREAM SEQUENCE - FLASHBACK

A clean, scruffy, and shorter haired David, rides in a uniform down a busy street. He passes a longer haired Marisol helping a drunk old man walk.

DAVID (V.O.)  
Farewell to scars and grim hopes  
for dying. Splintered sleep cold  
beneath damp sheets.

They lock eyes as he passes by, equally taken with the other.

DAVID (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Goodbye the burdens that surround  
me hiding. Survived by uniforms  
and gilded feats.

David turns back to see the old man push Marisol away. She shamefully looks towards David, pushing black hair away from her beautiful face.

DISSOLVE TO:

A short bearded, longer haired David and Marisol make love in a spring hidden by thick trees and brush. She straddles him, clothed in her wet undergarments, her dark body and curves shown through.

DAVID (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
She breathes new colors to warm my  
frigid day...

DISSOLVE TO:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They sit on the porch of their cabin in Austin. David has a full beard and Marisol's hair is longer. She lies between his legs, staring out to the beautiful hill country, caressing his arms. He reads the poem aloud to her from his familiar leather journal.

DISSOLVE TO.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Unmasked for me, she takes her  
loving slow...

In the black his voice fades and the voice of Abraham takes over.

INT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S BEDROOM, 2 DAYS LATER - EVENING

David wakes in his bed to find Abraham reading the poem from his black leather journal.

ABRAHAM  
No sense of time beside her where  
I lay...She knows only yearning,  
what else is there to know?

AMBROSE (40), EZRA (40), and PATRICK (40) stand behind him. They are dressed in expensive suits and boots, with clean felt cowboy hats and thick mustaches.

Marisol stands off to the side, near the door.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
That's beautiful, David.

He smiles sincerely.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
You're just full of surprises.

David looks from Marisol to Abraham.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
And so are these pictures and  
maps. You've been busy...when no  
one is watching.

He points to the maps, drawings, and notes sitting on the night-stand. He holds up the journal and smiles to Marisol.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Thank you for sharing, Marisol.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She smiles back and turns a glance to David. He stares back, but sees that she is gone. There are no remnants of their love left in her.

MARISOL

He asked me to help him escape, he almost convinced me.

David turns his head away from her. He is visibly devastated and angry.

ABRAHAM

Did he now?

A beat.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

We're going to give you that opportunity, David. These gentleman just arrived back to the States from a safari in Africa. They've killed animals that God hasn't named yet...and now they're paying a lot money to kill you.

They tip their hats to David who looks at them with disgust.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

You're obviously disadvantaged at the moment, so we're giving you until the first light. The time until then is yours.

The men tip their hats to David once more as they make their way out of the room.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

I've known you for a short time, but I am a keen observer of men. You're a good man, David. Virtue has never been an inconvenient quality for you.

David laughs painfully as he sits up.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

And for that, I will do right by you.

David pulls a bandage from his arm and examines the wound. He throws the bloody cloth at Abraham's feet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Please get him dressed and fed,  
Marisol.

She nods and smiles to Abraham as he leaves the room. She pulls the sheets back from the bed and pulls David's clothing from a trunk.

He watches her for a few moments before he stands. She brings over his clothes and pulls off his bloody undergarments. He makes no effort to help her. She pulls off his shirt and pants and he stands completely naked before her. She avoids looking at his body, focusing only on his chest.

She picks up a fresh pair of underpants and holds them out. He remains still, fixated on her beautiful face.

MARISOL  
Please put these on.

He doesn't respond. She reluctantly kneels down and forces them on one leg at time. He watches her eyes, hoping she will look at him and feel something. She turns her head as she rises and pulls the pants up his legs.

She grabs a fresh undershirt and holds it out to him. He refuses to take it and she frowns. She finally looks at him. Their long stare is intense.

He gently takes her hand and pins it against his chest. He slowly moves it down over his stomach.

DAVID  
Where have you gone?

She stares unflinchingly as he pushes her hand into his underpants. His breathing grows heavy.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Te ame' mas que el' nunca. (I  
loved you more than he ever will)

She thrusts her body behind a slap that firmly crosses his cheek, ripping off a small bandage. She throws the shirt at his face and storms out of the room.

He watches her go.

## EXT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S HOUSE, PATIO - LATER

David limps onto the front porch. Abraham, Patrick, Ezra, Ambrose, and Marisol sit atop their horses in the front yard. Marisol faces the opposite direction. Argos lies in the shade, wrapped in bandages. He gets up gingerly and limps over to David. David leans down and pets his wounded dog.

ABRAHAM

I've placed a rifle and a generous amount of shells in the wagon.

Patrick, Ambrose, and Ezra immediately look over to Abraham with great concern.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Calm, Gentlemen. I assure you, hunting is entirely more entertaining when someone is firing back at you.

He smiles wickedly at them.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

And I imagine young David can shoot a man's pecker through his watch pocket from a thousand meters.

PATRICK

We did NOT discuss this.

ABRAHAM

It's not negotiable. And there's no refund.

Abraham and David are locked in a stare.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Either you hunt, or you don't.

DAVID

I'll be walking south through town shortly. I see anyone on the street, I'm going to shoot them dead.

He glances at Marisol.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Women too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Abraham nods and smiles. He nudges his horse and rides off, the other three men follow closely behind. Marisol turns and takes one last look at Argos, and then David.

He kneels and pets his dog. He looks up at her and meets her gaze. She turns around slowly and rides away.

EXT. DAVID AND MARISOL'S HOUSE, PATIO - SUNSET

David eats and watches a harlequin sunset. He shares his food with Argos, who rests his head in David's lap.

He kisses the dog's head.

DAVID

You stay, Argos. Remind her everyday of me until I come back for you.

He rises and limps to the wagon. He grabs the rifle and a pistol belt full of shells. He grabs a full canteen and throws it over his neck.

Argos limps severely behind him, moaning with every step. He stops at the edge of the yard and sits. He watches and barks as David walks off into the cold night.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Godamn, Mexican whore.

He doesn't look back.

EXT. MOUNT HERMON STREETS - NIGHT

David walks lamely through town in the middle of the street. The debris from burned houses and stores have been cleared. The only remnants remaining are black sand and smoke stains on standing structures.

He searches windows and alleys, but no one is out. He clears the town and struggles out towards the mountains.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Series of shots of David faltering down trails into the Mountains. The cold night passes harshly for him as he struggles through rough terrain and deals with his wounds.

Dawn quickly approaches and the sun makes it's first peek on the horizon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He rests to drink water and smells something fowl. He searches the ground for a moment before he looks into the trees.

Naomi's naked body hangs from a branch not far from the trail. Her throat has been cut and dry blood turned black and dirt litter her frail body.

David stares at her, sadness sweeps his face.

He lightly touches the bottom of her foot and looks up towards a tall peak.

EXT. SIDE OF PEAK - MORNING

David lurches slowly up the peak, stopping every so often to rest. Several of his bandages have fallen from his skin and bleed through his pants and shirt.

He reaches the top and finds a few large boulders to rest against. He scans the trails far below him and sees nothing. He is tired and weak and cold.

He bundles up in his coat and sets his hat on the dirt. He leans up against a large boulder and closes his eyes.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS - MORNING

Ezra, Patrick, Ambrose, and Abraham ride slowly down the trail. They hold rifles in their laps, their eyes swinging from one side of the trail to the other.

They ride quietly. The morning sounds of the lively mountains echo through the silence.

EZRA

There's something I've been  
wanting to ask you, Abraham.

His voice shatters the quiet.

PATRICK

Shhhhh....

He lowers his tone.

EZRA

Why did you insist I bring two  
others? Why three? I'd prefer  
discretion.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABRAHAM

For the same reason you came today. Because they did. You're here, Ezra, because you've never killed a man. None of you have. You're privilege and self-entitlement excused you from the battlefield and now you hate the world for your position when you should hate yourself for your cowardice.

Abraham searches the tops of the ridge.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Killing a man is never what one expects it to be. It's a visceral feeling to some, and to other it's detestable. Either way, you need each other here to do it...Peer pressure, gentleman.

They stare at Abraham, unable to express a reaction.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

And I prefer not to listen to your tittle-tattle afterwards, so I ask you bring friends to share it with, rather than me.

Patrick is nervous. He looks to the others for comfort, but he is completely out of his element.

AMBROSE

This Ranger...is he famous? I mean he burned your city down.

ABRAHAM

He had every reason. It doesn't take a big man to carry a grudge.

PATRICK

Is he a dangerous?

AMBROSE

What's the matter with you, Patrick?

EZRA

He was terribly wounded. He's probably dead.

Abraham looks at them sternly.

CONTINUED: (2)

ABRAHAM

No, Gentlemen. I assure you he is not dead.

AMBROSE

If he is, I expect a free Mexican.

ABRAHAM

You can have the whole lot.

Abraham stops his horse. He closes his eyes and lifts his head momentarily towards Heaven. A shot is fired and echoes through the mountains before the round lodges into Patrick's forehead. He drops from his saddle and breaks his neck on the ground.

Ezra and Ambrose leap from their saddles and duck behind a large boulder just off the trail. Abraham moves slowly behind them.

EZRA

Fuck...Fuck...He ain't dead.

AMBROSE

What are we gonna do?

They look to Abraham who searches the peaks of the ridge for signs of David. Three more shots echo across the trail. Two of their horses drop in succession, as the other two run back down the trail.

Ezra grabs Abraham's sleeves and buries his face in his coat.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

What are we gonna do?

Abraham laughs.

ABRAHAM

You were ready to eat the liver of a Mexican a second ago. You tell me.

AMBROSE

He's killed the horses.

ABRAHAM

I've brought you a battle, gentleman! Do not run from this opportunity.

Ezra pulls his head away from Abraham and looks over at Patrick's dead body.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

EZRA

We can't stay here...I want to go  
home...get me home.

He begins to panic and pull at Abraham.

EZRA (CONT'D)

Please. I don't want to fight.

Abraham pushes him against the rock by his throat. He raises him until his head is above the top of the small boulder. A shot rings out and a second later Ezra's head explodes, shooting a red mist over Abraham and Ambrose.

Ambrose sits in shock. The rifle drops from his hands as he moves them over his head. He stares down the trail they had come. He rises against the boulder slowly.

Abraham picks up the rifle and charges it.

ABRAHAM

You're not worthy of this man.

He smiles warmly at Ambrose, then shoots him through the head.

The fight between David and Abraham ensues. David keeps Abraham from gaining any high ground. He puts a few rounds into Abraham who takes them unflinchingly. He in turn puts a round through David's arm.

Abraham runs himself into a dry ravine surrounded by tall cliff walls. David has run out of rounds. He uses his rifle for leverage and dislodges a large boulder resting at the top of the cliff. It rolls over the edge perfectly, hitting Abraham, and pinning him to the ground, his leg crushed and stuck under the boulder.

David walks down to him. Both are in terrible condition, but David looks much more the worse for wear. He picks up the rifle sitting a few feet from Abraham's reach and breaks it against the boulder.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

What will you do now, David?

David picks up Abraham's pistol and points it momentarily at his head, before he slides it into his pistol belt.

DAVID

I'm not gonna kill you.

Abraham nods.

CONTINUED: (4)

ABRAHAM

You should thank me for killing  
your father. Had he raised you,  
you'd not be the fine man that  
you've become.

DAVID

You're going to die out here  
slowly.

He picks up a few large rocks and lodges them at the base  
of the boulder, securing it.

ABRAHAM

Am I?

DAVID

It's going to be painful. The  
smell will lead them to your body  
in a week. No use screaming  
though. No one will hear you.

ABRAHAM

I always have an audience, David.

David grimaces with pain as he watches Abraham search the  
sky.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Life is painful without her, isn't  
it. Like life without war. You  
loved your men, and you loved her  
because they both needed you.

David spits blood from his mouth.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

With no one to care for, we are  
forced to look inward and examine  
the monsters we truly are.

He smiles again at David.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

It is futile for men like you and  
I to toil over such things.

DAVID

She was never mine to care for, as  
much as I was hers.

David reaches into his boot and pulls out the knife he  
used in the duel, his father's knife.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

He steps on Abraham's shoulder and lodges the knife deep into his forearm. Abraham winces in pain. He looks up at David, but his face is lost in the sun that rests in the sky directly behind his head.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Do it yourself.

David stumbles off of him and limps away. Abraham studies the knife in his arm and drops his head onto the ground.

ABRAHAM  
I cannot, David. Killing oneself  
is a sure route to Hell!

He laughs to himself and turns to watch David trip down the trail until he is out of sight.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)  
We are bound to our fates! I will  
see you again!

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS - LATER

David picks up a large stick and uses it as a cane to help himself down the trail. He reaches the bodies of Ambrose and Ezra. Abraham's palomino has returned and nudges the bodies of the dead horses.

David approaches him slowly. He is able to mount him and continues down the trail.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS, CLIFF - SAME

Abraham tests the weight of the boulder with his free leg. It does not budge. He grips the knife stuck in his arm and pulls it out slowly.

He holds it up and watches the blood drip from it.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS, ENCAMPMENT - LATER

David arrives at the prison. The Mexican's inside the bars are haggard and weak, but wake wildly as he dismounts the horse and pulls out the pistol.

He looks them over as he walks towards the gate. He raises the pistol and shoots the locks off with precision. The gates swing open.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVID  
 Vayate ahora. Eres libre. (Go  
 now. You're free)

David walks over to the tent and pulls it down, exposing bags of rice and potatoes.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 Vayate ahora. Nadie se lastimo.  
 (Go. No one will hurt you.)

He throws the food towards the jail. A few of the Mexicans bravely run through the gate and flee. The others observe David and once they see he is not a threat, they begin to rush out. They grab the food and run.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS, CLIFF - SAME

Abraham opens his eyes from a painful slumber. He whispers something to himself and sits up slowly. He rises onto the toes of his free leg and thrusts himself up, howling and laughing in pain as he breaks the trapped one.

He rips off his shirt violently and tears it into strips. He wraps the strips around his thigh several times and knots it tightly.

He picks up the knife and stabs down onto his leg fiercely. His teeth grind and he drools as he saws away at his leg with the tiny blade.

EXT. DEEP INSIDE DAVIS MOUNTAINS, ENCAMPMENT - SAME

Maria is the last through the gate. She is bruised and battered and can barely walk.

David walks over to her. She makes no effort to fight as he picks her up and carries her to the horse. He helps her onto the saddle. He jumps on behind her and pushes towards the border.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TEXAS GOVERNOR LAWRENCE SULLIVAN ROSS'S OFFICE - SIX MONTHS LATER.

Governor Ross sits behind his desk reading over papers. Thomas enters escorting GENERAL CALDERON. He is a distinguished, middle aged man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He wears a groomed mustache and a neat Mexican uniform decorated with medals.

Governor Ross rises and points to a chair across from his desk.

ROSS

Thomas, would you get the General some tea, please. And a whiskey for me.

Thomas nods and exits the office.

ROSS (CONT'D)

General Calderon, to what do I owe the pleasure?

GENERAL CALERON

I have brought my daughter here to attend school. I thought I would drop by and say hello.

Ross fakes a cordial smile.

ROSS

Good.

GENERAL CALERON

I have received no correspondence from my letters. No wires.

ROSS

There is nothing to communicate.

GENERAL CALERON

The killings have stopped, no?

ROSS

You know as well as I we haven't found a dead Mexican there in six months.

GENERAL CALERON

And what of your investigation?

Ross becomes visibly agitated.

ROSS

There are no more bodies. There is nothing more to investigate.

Thomas returns with a tray of beverages. He hands some tea to the General and whiskey to the Governor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GENERAL CALDERON

Thank, you. Sir.

ROSS

That will be all, Thomas. Thank you.

Thomas bows and exits the office.

GENERAL CALDERON

You sent your Rangers to this town to corroborate the stories of this prison, no?

ROSS

The prison was never found. It doesn't exist.

General Calderon becomes impatient. He sips his tea and looks around the Governor's office.

GENERAL CALERON

And what of Abraham Brant? Hmm? And the man who freed my people from the make-believe prison?

ROSS

We found Brant. He was hardly in a condition to be capable of what he's accused. Regardless, he has since moved and his whereabouts are unknown.

Ross takes a sip from his whiskey.

ROSS (CONT'D)

And the other man you speak of was a Ranger I sent to investigate. His name was David Kingston.

Ross stares at Calderon and ponders how much he wants to reveal.

ROSS (CONT'D)

I never heard from him. I've inquired to his whereabouts, but by all accounts he is dead or missing.

GENERAL CALDERON

Perhaps you'll allow me to send a personal detail to search for this camp and for Mr. Kingston.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ROSS

I don't think so, General. We've moved on from this.

GENERAL CALDERON

I do not think that there has been a suitable resolution to this. I can certainly-

ROSS

-Will that be all, General?

The General smiles and sets his tea onto the saucer resting on the desk. He rises and walks towards the door. He stops and turns back to the Governor.

GENERAL CALDERON

My superior will not be pleased with this investigation. If I could trouble you for a report of the findings-

ROSS

-Absolutely, General. Thank you for your visit...And I will send my people to check in on your daughter from time to time.

General Calderon bows defeated and exits the office. The ending score begins.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROCKY MOUNTAINS, COLORADO - DAY

In a muted scene, THREE WEALTHY MEN on horseback ride through a half-built town. Around them familiar faces of folks from Mount Hermon walk about the street.

The men reach a cabin on the edge of town. They ride up to Abraham who rests on a chair on the front patio reading David's black leather journal. His left leg is gone above the knee.

He looks up from the pages and welcomes them with his intoxicating smile. Marisol walks from the house carrying a child.

Down the street, beyond the cabin at the edge of town, Argos sits staring into the empty mountains, waiting.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM, VILLA, MEXICO - MORNING

In a muted scene, David wakes abruptly from a dream. He stares motionless at the ceiling for a moment, before he sits up and stares through the window.

Outside of it lies a sleepy Mexican village.

David's wounds are mostly healed. Two arms wrap around his chest. Maria kisses his back and neck and ear. Her hands rub his chest and slowly move down his stomach towards his lap.

He stares into the village, uncaring, lost in thought.

FADE TO BLACK.